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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring
(First session, 27-29 June 2001)

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FIRST SESSION

to be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
starting at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 27 June

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Major developments of relevance to the Working Group since the adoption of its terms of reference and the work plan.
3. Implementation of the work plan of the Working Group:
 - (a) Support to the development of the Kiev assessment report;
 - (b) In-depth study of the monitoring situation in specific areas;
 - (c) Tools and guidelines;
 - (d) Remote sensing.
4. Other business.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its seventh session in September 2000, established the Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring chaired by the Russian Federation and adopted its terms of reference and work plan (see annexes I and II to the present document).

The Working Group is open to all member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE). Other member States of the United Nations, specialized agencies of the United Nations, other intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) may also participate in a consultative capacity, according to the terms of reference of UN/ECE (E/ECE/778/Rev.3, paras. 11, 12 and 13). The registration procedure is described in annex III.

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda

The Working Group is expected to adopt its agenda.

Item 2: Major developments of relevance to the Working Group since the adoption of its terms of reference and the work plan

Mr. Yuri Tsaturov, Chairman of the Working Group, will present the results of the consultation that he convened in Obninsk (Russian Federation) on 22-23 January 2001 (CEP/AC.10/2001/3).

The secretariat will inform the Working Group about the preparation of a report on the progress made in the UN/ECE region since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Conference) in 1992.

Other international organization and institutions are invited to submit written contributions on their ongoing or planned activities in environmental monitoring and information.

Item 3: Implementation of the work plan of the Working Group

The Working Group will consider the practical steps to be taken for the implementation of its work plan. To facilitate the discussion, the Chairman will circulate a note, prepared in cooperation with the secretariat (CEP/AC.10/2001/4 and addenda). Parts of this note are expected to be discussed under individual sub-items. Representatives of the European Commission or the lead agency of the new EU/TACIS environmental monitoring project for the newly independent States (NIS) are expected to inform the Working Group on how this project will be linked with the implementation of individual elements of the Working Group's work plan. These elements are as follows:

(a) Support to the development of the Kiev assessment report

A draft list of content of the Kiev assessment report was circulated in February 2001 among focal points of the European Environment Agency (EEA) in UN/ECE member countries and among national coordinators for the Kiev report in NIS, for comments. The Working Group will discuss a revised draft list of content, prepared by EEA on the basis of comments received (CEP/AC.10/2001/5), and a draft guideline for data collection (CEP/AC.10/2001/6) also prepared by EEA.

The Working Group will decide both national and international measures to be taken to facilitate data reporting. In this regard, it may consider areas (Kiev report sections) of environmental monitoring and reporting where stronger international action would be needed to improve the situation, particularly in NIS. Proposals for actions in the areas of air pollution, chemicals, waste, and the integration of environmental considerations into sectoral policies, are contained in CEP/AC.10/2001/4 and its addenda.

The secretariat will inform the Working Group about the outcome of an inter-agency consultation on environmental indicators for countries in transition held in London on 1 March 2001 at the initiative of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The Working Group may wish to decide on possible action on the subject (CEP/AC.10/2001/7).

(b) In-depth study of the monitoring situation in specific areas

The Working Group will consider a proposal by the EEA Topic Centre on Inland Waters on information and monitoring systems for inland waters (CEP/AC.10/2001/8).

(c) Tools and guidelines

The Working Group will consider a proposal by the Russian Federation, prepared in cooperation with EEA, on information technologies to improve the use and exchange of data on available sources of environmental information and activities (CEP/AC.10/2001/9).

(d) Remote sensing

The Working Group may wish to decide to invite competent international institutions such as the Joint Research Centre of the European Union to submit proposals on the role and contribution of remotely sensed information to monitoring and reporting on environmental problems across Europe. EEA will circulate a note on the matter (CEP/AC.10/2001/10).

Item 4: Other business

At the time of writing, the secretariat had no points to propose under this item.

Annex I

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP
ON ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING**

as approved by the Committee on Environmental Policy on 28 September 2000

1. Pursuant to the conclusions of the fourth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Aarhus, 1998) and the recommendations of the Pan-European Governmental Meeting “Development of an Environmental Monitoring System in the European Region” (Moscow, December 1999), the Committee on Environmental Policy establishes the Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring for the initial period up to the fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” to be held in Kiev. The Working Group should serve as an instrument for ECE member States to provide recommendations, to propose action plans, and to strengthen international initiatives within the region in the area of environmental monitoring and related areas of common interest for cooperation, with a view to supporting decision-making processes.
2. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring will promote the coordination of efforts in the area of environmental monitoring, and in particular towards preparations for the Kiev Conference “Environment for Europe”. It should contribute:
 - (a) In the short term, to the development of the indicator-based report for the Kiev Conference as requested by the Ministers at Aarhus (the third Pan-European Assessment);
 - (b) In the medium term, to an appraisal of future monitoring and reporting requirements within the framework of the “Environment for Europe” process taking account of broader reporting required by the relevant multilateral environmental agreements.
3. The Working Group should take fully into account the work of existing international networks and forums, and give priority to the following specific areas:
 - (a) Outlining compatible standards and formats for environmental monitoring and reporting;
 - (b) Steps to improve data transfer and use;
 - (c) Cooperation on a harmonized meta-database, on sources of data and data sets, institutes, reports and other information products;
 - (d) Cooperation on a multilingual environmental thesaurus, as necessary;
 - (e) Publication online of state-of-the-environment reports;
 - (f) Linking of relevant web sites;
 - (g) Working, inter alia, on integrated indicators on ecosystem status.

In addition, the scope for application of satellite and other remote-sensing technologies to complement ground-based environmental monitoring systems and networks should be considered.

4. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring will be open to all ECE member States and include the European Environment Agency. Participation of international organizations and NGOs active in the ECE region should be guided by normal ECE procedures.
5. The work of the Working Group should be conducted within a spirit of such full and open access to environmental data as is compatible with the legislation of the participating member States.
6. The Committee on Environmental Policy elects the Chair of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring.
7. The Working Group will report on its work to the Committee on Environmental Policy and through it to the Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials "Environment for Europe" as regards its work in relation to the Kiev Conference.
8. The ECE secretariat will provide the necessary secretariat assistance and conference facilities to the Working Group at the United Nations Office at Geneva, in accordance with ECE rules and practices.

Annex II

**WORK PLAN OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP
ON ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING**

as approved by the Committee on Environmental Policy on 28 September 2000

Task 1: Support to the development of the Kiev assessment report

At the Aarhus Ministerial Conference, the Ministers asked the European Environment Agency (EEA) to produce, before their next conference in Kiev, a new report on the state of the environment in Europe. This indicator-based assessment should be linked to the most recent and up-to-date information emanating from the monitoring networks. Indicators should be presented in the context of environmental (and other) policies and socio-economic developments to serve policy needs more closely and be linked also to the priorities of the Kiev Ministerial Conference.

Work to be undertaken:

The Working Group will contribute to the development of the 3rd pan-European assessment report by: (a) helping to clarify the key pan-European issues to be addressed in it; (b) assessing data needs for monitoring these issues; (c) identifying data sources and reviewing guidelines for data collection; (d) establishing, where necessary, national focal points and institutions to assist in particular in the supply of relevant information for the assessment report; (e) facilitating national data reporting from countries not covered by EEA networks, in particular from the newly independent States (NIS); and (f) assisting in the review of the draft report to be prepared by EEA. The Working Group will appraise the difficulties encountered in linking monitoring data to reporting and make recommendations on how to improve the situation.

Task 2: In-depth study of the monitoring situation in specific areas

ECE countries in transition to a market economy are today facing numerous difficulties in maintaining and improving their systems of environmental information particularly regarding human health impacts. A number of important weaknesses remain as a result. This handicaps the development of appropriate remedies, whether policy or legislative. Furthermore, ongoing monitoring systems cannot be easily integrated in international (global or regional) programmes.

Work to be undertaken:

The Working Group will undertake an in-depth analysis of a significant area (inland surface waters) of environmental monitoring to identify major gaps and obstacles to a comprehensive assessment. At the same time, a broad cross-sectoral analysis will be made to identify possible synergies of common data use. The Working Group will, thereafter, identify

good practices to overcome the most pervasive obstacles and develop recommendations. Attention will be given to the link between monitoring and reporting obligations under relevant intergovernmental processes and agreements.

Task 3: Tools and guidelines

There is a need to strengthen existing networks of environmental monitoring in Europe, promote coordination between them, and build capacity in those countries where support is needed.

Work to be undertaken:

The Working Group will identify areas where there are no common standards and harmonization is needed. It will consider measures to: (a) outline common standards and formats in these areas; (b) improve inter-operability of data to facilitate data transfer and use; (c) develop a harmonized meta-database on sources of data and data sets, institutes, reports and other products; (d) draw up a multilingual environmental thesaurus; (e) standardize online national state-of-the environment reports; and (f) develop guidelines on linking relevant national and international web sites. This work will draw on previous work carried out by the United Nations Division for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Statistical Commission, OECD, UNEP, ECE, EEA and others. The Working Group will develop recommendations on priority actions.

Task 4: Remote sensing

In the pan-European context, region-wide consistent information is difficult to obtain. Furthermore, some areas are remote and poorly covered by ground-based monitoring. Satellite information may play an important role in this context.

Work to be undertaken:

The Working Group will invite appropriate institutions to make proposals on the role and contribution of remotely sensed environmental information to monitoring environmental problems across Europe. It will assess these proposals and make recommendations, as appropriate.

Annex III

REGISTRATION

According to the revised accreditation procedures, all delegates attending meetings at the Palais des Nations are requested to fill in a registration form in English. It can be downloaded from the web site <http://www.unece.org/stats/geneva.e.html>

The completed registration form should be sent to Ms. E. Mary, UN/ECE Environment and Human Settlements Division (e-mail: elisabeth.mary@unece.org, fax: +41 22 917 06 30) as soon as possible, but no later than one week before the beginning of the session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring.

Registered participants will have to pick up their identification badges for entry in the Palais des Nations before the meeting at the Security and Safety Section's Pass and Identification Unit. This is located at the Villa des Feuillantines, 13 Avenue de la Paix (the map can be consulted on the above-mentioned web site). The Unit is open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.