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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

(Special session, Geneva, 18-19 February 2003)

Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials
"Environment for Europe"
(Fifth session, Geneva, 19-21 February 2003)
(Item 6 of the Agenda of 20 February 2003)

**SESSION BETWEEN MINISTERS AND ENVIRONMENTAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANISATIONS
ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY INTEGRATION
AT THE FIFTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE "ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE"**

(Proposal by Eco-Forum¹)

I. General Objectives

- an informal and frank discussion between environmentalists and Ministers about the nature of the bottlenecks for integration of environmental requirements into relevant sectoral and horizontal policies;
- discuss good examples of environmental policies and their integration into sectors and horizontal policies in the UN/ECE region, look at their potential and discuss ways to promote these;
- discuss and clarify roles of governments and environmentalists and their complementarity.
- the session should NOT negotiate a common declaration, as that would change the character of the event too much.

II. Participants

Ministers and environmentalists, representing environmental citizens organizations, and persons with other backgrounds invited by the ECO-Forum, relevant to the issues in the programme (see below).

¹ Working document

The important criteria for selection of participants will be experience in the discussed items and regional balance of the UNECE.

III. Proposed Programme

Topics (3 blocks):

1. Let the market work for the environment

- how can prices really reflect the environmental impacts; taxation etc.
- subsidy policies, environmental liability and green public procurement: direct influence of administrations.
- consumers choice: labelling, education, information, support for NGO work in this field, regulate advertisement.

2. An example of Sectoral Policy integration

The time permits to discuss one example of sectoral policy at the session in Kiev. To ensure the most interesting outcome of the session it is proposed to choose one example from the alternatives listed below with respect to the main focus and overarching theme of the Kiev Conference.

ECO-Forum would appreciate comments and discussion by the members of the Executive Committee on the example of the sectoral policy to be chosen for the session.

(a) alternative example: *Agriculture*

Possible issues:

- What are the basic functions the agricultural sector needs to fulfil for society?
- Does multi-functionality and our global responsibilities require a re-localisation of agriculture in Europe (attention should be focussed on sub-regional and common problems and solutions, e.g. EU, non-EU, accession, non-accession countries and the NIS)?
- What role consumers can play in shifting agricultural practice?
- What needs to change in agricultural policies (at national sub-regional and regional level, e.g. EU, non-EU, accession, non-accession countries and the NIS)?

(b) alternative example: *Energy*

Possible issues:

- What is the potential of increasing energy-efficiency in different parts of Europe?
- How to solve the (social) dilemma that several uses of energy can be seen as basic needs, but on the other hand internalisation of costs in its price is necessary to promote demand management and efficiency improvements?
- Sub-regional issues / energy production and consumption: available technologies, investments, consumer awareness, choice and 'readiness to pay'
- What can be done at the local level, and is the privatisation of the energy sector positive for creative and innovative solutions?
- Which policies in Pan-Europe stand out as positive, what can we learn from them?

3. How to overcome the institutional weaknesses that prevent integration:

- the need for leadership and clear objectives, targets and timetables;
- institutional integration: at national and local levels;
- the role of civil society in bringing together different schools of thought;
- the potential of Strategic Environmental Assessment.

IV. Character of the discussion

The three blocs are briefly introduced by one or two participants. In it they sketch the state of EPI and the main bottlenecks. The discussion then focuses on solving these bottlenecks, on presenting good practise and new ideas. So it must be critical but positive and solution oriented. Each block is 55 minutes.

This leaves:

- 5 minutes for introduction;
 - two NGO and two presentations by Ministers, of maximum 5 minutes each (10 minutes);
 - 20-25 minutes discussion in each block;
 - 10 minutes for wrapping up.
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- In the first block (*Let the market work for the environment*) we could include as well a senior environmental economist for 5 minutes,
 - In the second block (*An example of Sectoral Policy integration*) - one or two persons from local authorities,
 - In the third block (*How to overcome the institutional weaknesses that prevent integration*) - another expert.

Overall duration of the session: 3 hours 30 minutes

V. Preparatory materials

The ECO-Forum should prepare materials that:

- Give a comparison of progress throughout the Europe.
- Present good practice.
- Describes the key options and bottlenecks.

VI. Organization

European ECO-Forum, that delegates practical work to the European Environmental Bureau/EEB

EEB is the co-ordinator of the project. Under the guidance of John Hontelez/Secretary General of the EEB and in the end of the ECO-Forum. The project started officially on 1 November 2002 and run till 30 June 2003. This would include the following stages:

- start up the writing of preparatory materials;
- develop a draft programme;
- find a chairperson for the session;
- manage the selection procedure for NGO participants;
- realize a high level and diversified involvement of Ministers;
- organize the public relations around the event;
- close contact with the Ukrainian organisers of the official conference.

Contact person for the organisation of the Roundtable

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