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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Tenth session

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(Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda)

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Note by the secretariat

1. The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its seventh session in September 2000, adopted terms of reference for the Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring (ECE/CEP/74, annex III). Preparations for the Kiev Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe", particularly support to the development of 3rd pan-European assessment report (*Kiev Assessment*), figured prominently in these terms of reference.
2. The Working Group provided substantive inputs to the Kiev Conference "Environment for Europe. It contributed to the preparation by the European Environment Agency (EEA) of the *Kiev Assessment*, which the Ministers welcomed. It developed Recommendations on Strengthening National Environmental Monitoring and Information Systems in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and Guidelines on the development of state-of-the-environment reports. Both were endorsed by the Kiev Conference.
3. The Working Group helped to improve the visibility and capacity of environmental monitoring and information units in the Environment Ministries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). In addition to country focal points in the Working Group, networks of EECCA monitoring experts were established on information technologies, air pollution, inland surface waters, waste, indicators, state-of-the-environment reporting, and on remote sensing. EECCA country experts learned about and started to implement, step by step, relevant tools, guidelines, methods and classifications that had been developed by EEA and its member countries. The Working Group's activities were supported by funds from the Government of Denmark and the European Commission.

4. The Ministers in Kiev supported the Working Group in its activities, in particular on strengthening environmental information and observation capacity in EECCA. They recognized that at the regional level further development of the cooperation framework provided by the Working Group was required, and they invited donors to support the Working Group.

5. The Working Group, at its fourth session held in Geneva on 4-5 September 2003, discussed a follow-up to provisions of the Kiev Ministerial Declaration relating to monitoring and assessment (CEP/AC.10/2003/2). It agreed that there was a rationale for continuing and even widening the scope of its activities. The Working Group offered its services as facilitator to achieve the objectives on environmental monitoring and information management of the Environment Strategy for Countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia adopted in Kiev. In view of the importance of environmental assessments recognized by the Ministers in Kiev, many members of the Working Group held the view that the assessment component had to be explicitly reflected in the name of the Working Group. Draft terms of reference for a working group on environmental monitoring and assessment, as prepared by the Working Group in September, are annexed to the present note.

6. Should the Committee decide to renew the mandate of the Working Group, voluntary contributions would be needed to support its activities in 2004 and beyond. These would allow it to continue to strengthen EECCA monitoring and observation capacities and to integrate them into major international networks, in particular those that are developed by EEA focusing on areas that were emphasized by the Ministers in the Kiev Declaration and the Environment Strategy for EECCA. This would also help to ensure, in due course, the active involvement of EECCA countries in the preparations of the fourth assessment report. Electronic equipment, tools and guidelines for better environmental networking and information management; environmental indicators and state-of-the-environment reporting; monitoring of pollution sources; and remote sensing application for environmental monitoring would be among the priority activities.

7. The Committee is invited to adopt the terms of reference for the working group on environmental monitoring and assessment and to call upon the European Commission and interested member States to provide funds to support the implementation of its mandate. Should the required funds not be forthcoming, the Working Group would not be in a position to pursue its activities.

Annex**UPDATED TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE WORKING GROUP
ON ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT**

1. Pursuant to the decisions of the Fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Kiev, 2003), the Committee on Environmental Policy renames the Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring as the *Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*. The Working Group should serve as an instrument for UNECE member States to provide recommendations, to propose action plans and to strengthen international initiatives within the region in the areas of harmonized and cost-effective environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting, with a view to supporting decision-making processes.
2. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment will promote the coordination of efforts in the above areas, and in particular towards preparations for the Ministerial Conferences “Environment for Europe”. It should contribute:
 - (a) To the development of assessment reports on the state of the environment by the European Environment Agency (EEA);
 - (b) To an appraisal of monitoring and assessment requirements within the framework of the “Environment for Europe” process as well as national and international monitoring and assessment requirements, including obligations under 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) Strengthening environmental information and observation capacity, including monitoring networks, in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, serving as facilitator to achieve the environmental monitoring and information management objectives of the Environment Strategy for these countries;
 - (b) Improvement of data collection, transfer and use;
 - (c) Enhancement of international comparability of environmental information;
 - (d) Promotion of the use of indicator-based mechanisms for periodic environmental assessments and evaluation of the effectiveness of environmental policies and decision-making;
 - (e) Improvement of coordination and optimization of environmental assessments, including strategic environmental assessments and outlooks, and reporting;
 - (f) Outlining compatible standards and formats for environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting;
 - (g) Cooperation on a harmonized environmental meta-database, on sources of data and data sets, institutes, reports and other information products using modern information technologies, as well as linking of relevant web sites.

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. Pursuant to a decision by the Ministers in Kiev, donors will be invited to provide support for the Working Group's activities and the preparation of assessment reports on the state of the environment by EEA.
5. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment will be open to all UNECE member States and include EEA. Participation of international organizations and NGOs active in the UNECE region should be guided by normal UNECE procedures.
6. 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, and in cooperation with major groups including environmental NGOs and the private sector.
7. The UNECE secretariat will provide the necessary secretariat assistance and conference facilities to the Working Group at the United Nations Office at Geneva, in accordance with UNECE rules and practices.
8. The Committee on Environmental Policy will review the present terms of reference after the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe".