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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Tenth session

(Geneva, 20-22 October 2003)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY¹**
Geneva, 4 July 2003

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Hugo von Meijenfeldt (Netherlands) and attended by Mrs. Helena Čizkova (Czech Republic), Mr. Metodija Dimovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Mr. Jon Kahn (Sweden), Mr. Zaal Lomtadze (Georgia), Ms. Lynette Poulton (United States of America) and Mr. Sergey Tveritinov (Russian Federation).

2. The Meeting adopted its agenda as prepared by the secretariat.

**II. OUTCOME OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE'S SESSION
AND REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD SUMMIT
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

3. The Chairman, Mr. von Meijenfeldt informed the Meeting of the outcome of the Commission's session held in March 2003 and, in particular, of the regional follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Mr. Bärlund reported on the outcome of the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development held in New York in April 2003. The regional commissions had been invited "to consider organizing" meetings on the implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, focusing on the three thematic clusters decided upon by the Commission on Sustainable Development for the first cycle covering 2004-2005: human settlements, water and sanitation. The decisions on the specific content and format of these meetings were left at the discretion of the regional commissions. At

^{1/} Prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairman.

its ad hoc informal meeting on 23 June the Economic Commission for Europe could not reach consensus on this matter.

4. The Bureau deliberated on the role of ECE and the Committee on Environmental Policy in the regional follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, concluding that:

(a) ECE should be responsible for organizing, convening, coordinating and reporting in relation to the regional implementation meetings;

(b) The substantive input should be provided by the relevant organizations and subsidiary bodies active in the region as part of their regular work programmes;

(c) ECE should constitute the formal decision-making body and be responsible for reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development;

(d) The leadership as well as the responsibilities of all the actors involved would need to be clearly defined;

(e) Coordination of the sustainable development activities at the highest possible level was found useful, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) being referred to as an example in this regard;

(f) Any subsequent increase in workload should be met with corresponding supplementary human and financial resources. Without appropriate staffing and funding, effective input was not feasible;

(g) The environment sector had a central role to play in the activities for sustainable development, but should not bear the bulk of the work. In addition to the environment sector, already actively engaged in the work for sustainable development, the increased involvement and sharing of the burden by the actors in the social and economic sectors was considered to be crucial for making progress.

5. The Bureau considered the proposal to postpone the tenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy to mid-January 2004, in order for it to be held back to back with the ECE Regional Implementation Meeting on Sustainable Development, which was planned to take place in the third week of January 2004. It was decided, however, to maintain the date of 20-22 October 2003.

III. DECISIONS TAKEN AT THE KIEV CONFERENCE AND POSSIBLE NEW ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE COMMITTEE'S PROGRAMME OF WORK

6. The Bureau discussed the decisions taken at the Kiev Conference as regards the future of the "Environment for Europe" process and the Committee's role in the monitoring of the Kiev Declaration. Based on a table prepared by the secretariat, it considered how to best reflect the relevant commitments in its work programme. The Bureau agreed that the table, revised according to the comments, should be submitted to the Committee to provide a basis for discussion (CEP/2003/20).

IV. THE ENVIRONMENT IN A CHANGING EUROPE

7. At the initiative of the ECE Executive Secretary, a series of sectoral round tables are being held to discuss the impact of the political and economic changes in Europe, and in particular of the enlargement of the European Union. The Bureau exchanged views on a round

table to be organized during the tenth session of the Committee on the environmental impacts of the changes in Europe.

8. The Bureau agreed on the importance of the topic, and considered that it was appropriate to reserve 2.5 hours for such a discussion. Some concerns were expressed, however, as to the time remaining for discussing the items directly related to the programme of work of the Committee. The Bureau consequently requested the secretariat to allocate sufficient time for the remaining agenda items.

V. DISCUSSION ON THE FUTURE ECE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

9. The Bureau discussed the final draft of the document on future directions for UNECE environmental policies, which had been revised in accordance with the decisions taken at the Kiev Conference and at the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

10. The Bureau agreed that it was more appropriate to call the document “strategic directions” rather than the more formal “strategy”, which would not only imply goals but would also necessitate indicators for monitoring their implementation.

11. The Bureau agreed on the overall contents and structure of the document. It recommended clustering and streamlining the goals to better reflect their strategic nature. The Bureau requested that the document be finalized to reflect its comments as well as those made the previous day at the meeting with the bureaux of the governing bodies of the ECE environmental conventions. It is envisaged that the document will be discussed and adopted at the Committee's tenth session.

VI. TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

12. The Bureau was informed of the outcome of the first session of the Transport, Environment and Health Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) Steering Committee, held on 10-11 April 2003, as well as on the progress in the implementation of the 2003-2005 programme of work. The activities include a web-based clearing house on transport, environment and health, sustainable and healthy urban transport and planning, transport-related health impacts, costs and benefits, focusing in particular on children, and indicators to monitor the integration of environmental and health aspects into transport policies.

13. The Bureau was also given an account of the outcome of the eighth meeting of the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) held in Copenhagen in April 2003 and of the intergovernmental preparatory meeting for the upcoming Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, organized by the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe (WHO/EURO) in Stockholm on 26 - 27 June 2003. Further intergovernmental meetings were scheduled to take place on 27 - 28 November 2003 in Evora, Portugal, and another (venue to be specified) on 3 - 4 March 2004.

VII. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE "ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE" PROCESS

14. The Ministers in Kiev invited the Committee in consultation with other ECE principal subsidiary bodies and organizations to develop a communication strategy to raise awareness of the "Environment for Europe" process among a wider audience of stakeholders and the general public. The Bureau stressed the importance of this initiative and discussed how the Committee could best develop such a strategy. It agreed that the work for a communication strategy under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution should be made use of. It decided to invite the Committee to set up a reference group to assist a consultant to develop a strategy, and highlighted the importance of involving both substantive experts and communication professionals in the work.

VIII. TENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE AND SPECIAL SESSION OF THE WORKING-GROUP OF SENIOR OFFICIALS "ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE"

15. The Bureau agreed to hold the tenth session of the Committee on 20 - 22 October 2003.

16. It requested the Committee on Environmental Policy to take note of and agree to the decision taken at the Kiev Conference to convene a special session of the Working Group of Senior Officials "Environment for Europe" to decide on the host country and the date of the sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe". The special session of the Working Group of Senior Officials is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 23 October, from 3 to 6 p.m.

IX. NEXT MEETING OF THE BUREAU

17. The Bureau decided to hold its next meeting on Monday, 20 October 2003 at 8 a.m.