



**Economic and Social
Council**

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY¹**

Geneva, 14 January 2004

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Zaal Lomtadze (Georgia), and attended by Mrs. Narin Panariti (Albania), Mrs. Helena Čizkova (Czech Republic), Mr. Bert-Axel Szelinski (Germany), Mr. Sergey Tveritinov (Russian Federation), Mr. Jon Kahn (Sweden) and Ms. Lynette Poulton (United States of America).

2. The Meeting adopted its agenda as prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the chairman.

II. REGIONAL CONTRIBUTION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(a) Information on the Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development

3. Mr. Bärlund, Director of the UNECE Environment and Human Settlements Division, informed the Bureau on the latest developments in the organization of the Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development to be held on 15 and 16 January 2004.

4. The Bureau was informed in particular on the panel discussions organized for each of the three thematic clusters namely human settlements, water and sanitation as well as their related cross cutting issues. It is expected that the meeting highlights progress made in implementing sustainable development goals and identify obstacles and constraints in the three substantive areas. The chairpersons of each session, Ms. Szolgayova from Slovakia, Mr. Roch from Switzerland and Mr. Lomtadze from Georgia, respectively, were to sum up the discussions with the assistance of the

1 Prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairman

secretariat. A chair's summary, building on the session summaries, would then be presented to CSD at its 12th session in April 2004 by the chair of the Forum, the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Ms. Margaret Becket.

5. Bureau members exchanged their view on organizational matters and also invited the chair of the CEP, Mr. Lomtadze, to intervene during the session on cross cutting issues highlighting the relevance of the Committee's activities and the outcome of the Kiev Ministerial Conference. The Bureau also concluded that the outcome of the meeting should be further discussed and requested the secretariat to put that item on the agenda of the next Bureau meeting.

(b) The role of the Committee on Environmental Policy in the regional process for sustainable development

6. The Bureau was invited to discuss the role of the CEP in the regional implementation process, and in particular the ways in which the Committee could promote and facilitate the interlinking of environment with the other dimensions of sustainable development, in collaboration with other regional and sub-regional organizations and bodies.

7. Considering the substantive themes that have been chosen for the next biannual implementation cycle, namely energy, industry, and air pollution, the Bureau stressed the importance of cooperating with the other relevant subsidiary bodies of the ECE as well as with other organizations, to enhance cross sectoral cooperation. In particular the ECE Senior management Group for Sustainable development should oversee the integration of sustainable development in all main sectors of UNECE as well as the meetings of the ECE Steering Group, with the participation of the Commission Bureau, ECE senior management and the chairs of the ECE subsidiary bodies, were referred to as appropriate fora for taking up issues of coordination.

8. The Bureau also discussed ways in which it could assist Environment Ministers in assessing progress in the implementation of environmental commitments within the region emanating from Agenda 21 and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation as well as from the UNECE Regional Preparatory meeting for the WSSD. The Bureau emphasized the importance of making use of the Environment Performance Review processes of the ECE and OECD in assessing the environmental performance of the countries in the region and gradually adjusting them to assess sustainable development goals. Ministers of the Environment should share the responsibility with other ministries for promoting the implementation of sustainable development goals. To that end it was considered important to involve the Prime Ministers and other representatives of the highest political level in the process, as well as the ministries responsible for economic and social affairs.

9. Provided that the organization of regional implementation meetings will become a permanent activity in the future, these fora were considered to constitute an efficient tool for promoting interlinkages between the sectors through the substantive discussions.

III. THIRD MEETING BETWEEN THE BUREAUX OF THE COMMITTEE AND OF THE ECE CONVENTIONS ON FOLLOW-UP AND SUPPORT TO THE REGIONAL CONVENTIONS AND PROTOCOLS

10. The Bureau discussed the third informal meeting of the Bureaux of the Committee and of the ECE Conventions to be held in June 2004 to share experiences and ideas on issues that are common to the conventions with the aim to supporting demand driven interlinkages and in particular on implementation of the ECE Conventions and their protocols and related capacity building. The secretaries of the ECE Conventions informed the Bureau on major achievements and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the conventions and their protocols, completing the information that had been made available in writing for the 10th session of the Committee

11. The Bureau was reminded about the letter that Mr. Berger, the chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention had sent to the heads of delegation of the CEP asking for support in promoting the implementation of the Convention. In his letter, Mr. Berger had wished in particular to raise the awareness of the Committee's delegates, and through them of their governments, of the internationally supported assistance programme established under the Convention for the UNECE Caucasian and Central Asian member countries.

12. Under the Aarhus Convention, an ad hoc expert group has been established by the MOP to explore the scope, format and content of the possible guidelines on public participation in international fora. The invitation to the first meeting of this group, to be held on 3-4 June 2004, has also been sent to the other conventions and to the CEP bureau members.

13. At the third meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention (November 2003), the Parties decided to amend the Convention in order to enable all UN member States to accede to it. As a follow up to the Kiev Ministerial Conference, work is being undertaken to prepare an action programme on integrated water resources management (IWRM) for the EECCA countries, which is composed of two parts: one on IWRM in a transboundary context and the other on IWRM in the national context. To implement this action programme, additional human resources would be needed, particular as concerns activities dealing with IWRM at the national level.

14. The Air Pollution Convention addresses compliance issues mainly through the Implementation Committee. Although the mechanism in use has proven to be effective, some areas of concern remains. Ratification of the protocols in the EECCA region was deemed particularly important to address. It was also pointed out that the involvement of the scientists of the EECCA region in the technical works should be enhanced considering that scientific work is a major step towards countries ratifying the protocols.

15. The outcome of the review of the implementation carried out sofar under the Espoo Convention was not complete and fully representative, as some 60 percent of the Parties to the Convention had completed their reporting. Particular attention will be given to the EECCA countries as only a few of these countries have ratified the Espoo Convention and or signed the SEA protocol and a number of these countries have indicated problems with implementation.

16. Under the water convention, it was noticed that the system of national focal points was not always in place and the need to have an updated list of focal points was essential for streamlining the information to and coordination within a country. Other Convention secretaries confirmed that communication with effective national focal points was essential and that ways to improve the systems of national focal points needed to be further looked into. The difficulty in

finding the right people was pointed out in this regard. Establishing common criteria for the appointment and performance of the focal points, developing terms of reference for them as well as defining a reporting format not only to meet the requirements of the conventions but also to be useful for the Governments, were among the proposals that were put forward for further consideration.

17. The Bureau affirmed that countries that have problems in implementing their legal obligations need more guidance to know how to approach the issue of implementation. This was considered to be a domain where the Committee could be of help. Capacity building was seen as a key element for promoting implementation that was particularly necessary in the pre-ratification phase as well as for properly reporting on implementation. It was considered useful to have focused capacity building activities in support to the implementation of the legally binding instruments.

18. It was also pointed out that the reporting on the implementation of the legal obligations under the ECE conventions is being dealt with by each of the conventions separately. However, the effectiveness of the different actions taken by a country were not brought together under one heading to allow to have a comprehensive view on its effectiveness in some areas as opposed to others, and also vis a vis other countries. The CEP could consider having a role in finding an effective way to provide an overall picture on the conventions' implementation.

19. Other cross-cutting issues common to all the conventions that were proposed for joint discussions included environmental impact assessments and public participation in international forums.

20. The Bureau concluded that the next joint informal meeting to be held on 7 June 2004, would be devoted to discussion on implementation and capacity building.

IV. EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

21. Mr. Kahn from Sweden and Mr. Tveritinov from the Russian Federation informed the Bureau about the first Meeting of the Task Force on Education for Sustainable Development which will be held on 19 –20 February 2004 for preparation of the UNECE Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development. The two-day Meeting will be devoted to an exchange of experiences in education and sustainable development in the countries and to discuss a draft strategy prepared by the secretariat. At this meeting, a small drafting group will be established which is expected to hold two meetings before the summer.

22. The Bureau recommended that UNESCO and European Council would be given a particularly prominent role in the process.

23. Mr. Bärlund in informing the Bureau on the high interest expressed by member countries for this activity, also highlighted the importance of securing sufficient resources for the secretariat to servicing this activity, as well as for assisting eligible country representatives to participate in task force and drafting group meetings. It was pointed out that for the time being this additional programme element had not been met with sufficient resources. He also informed that, the UN General Assembly decided on the reduction of secretarial resources in the ECE for

the next biennium, putting more strain onto the available human resources . The work could nevertheless be started and pursued at least on a short-term basis by means of flexible solutions involving extra budgetary funding.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

24. The work plan for 2004 of the regional advisor on environment was distributed for possible comments of the Members of the Bureau, to be provided in writing to the secretariat. The Regional Advisor was requested to report on his activities at the next CEP session in October 2004.

V. NEXT MEETING OF THE BUREAU

25. The Bureau decided to hold its next meeting on 8 June 2004 back to back with the meeting between the Bureaux of Conventions and of the CEP which will be held on 7 June.
