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FUTURE UNECE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT<sup>\*/</sup>

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<sup>\*/</sup> The Committee on Environmental Policy discussed this document at its tenth session and adopted chapter IV (The way forward).

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### Introduction

1. With both the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” on the agenda, the 2002-2003 biennium offers an exceptional opportunity for the UNECE member States and their Committee on Environmental Policy to take stock and reflect on: the achievements of the UNECE environmental activities in the past five to ten years; the challenge of the principles of sustainable development to the Committee’s work and the strategic options for the future; and the cooperation between the Committee and the governing bodies of the conventions and other players in implementing these options.

2. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe established the Committee on Environmental Policy and adopted its terms of reference in 1994. During a decade of expanding work programmes, serviced by the UNECE Environment and Human Settlements Division, the way in which the Committee on Environmental Policy works has also changed. The Committee has engaged in regional and national policy dialogues, in particular through the peer reviews of environmental performance reviews. Most of the legally binding conventions and protocols developed under the auspices of the Committee have come into force during the past decade. The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme’s Steering Committee has been set up. Together with the governing bodies of the UNECE conventions, the Committee on Environmental Policy now represents a unique and powerful consensus-based policy forum for discussing environmental issues and bringing forward regional priorities.

3. A paper on strategic directions for the environment is expected to help the Committee tackle the above and emerging issues. This paper clusters its main issues around three recurrent themes that also provide a link with the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (South Africa) (including the corresponding outcome of the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development) and the decisions of the Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Kiev. These are: pan-European harmonization and governance; programmes and strategies; and cross-sectoral cooperation and integration. Furthermore, the paper puts forward suggestions for future work. It is envisaged that the paper will become a guide for the Committee on Environmental Policy for the five to ten years following its adoption to structure and continuously adapt its programme of work.

## I. REGION-WIDE HARMONIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

4. Within the region several factors have played an important role in the coordination and harmonization of policy responses to environmental problems and the implementation of sustainable development.

### A. The “Environment for Europe” process

5. The “Environment for Europe” process, launched at the 1991 Dobris ministerial meeting, has been a unique multilateral process, bringing all countries in the region together on an equal footing. Two elements have become particularly important in the process: cooperation among major players and public participation. Through the series of environmental ministerial conferences since 1991, the “Environment for Europe” process has involved all countries of Europe, North America, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and initiated important policy decisions and priority actions. The transatlantic and Eurasian dimensions of the process have proven to be crucial. The “Environment for Europe” process has created, or coordinated, a number of mechanisms for regional and subregional cooperation, such as the Environmental Action Programme (EAP) Task Force, the Project Preparation Committee (PPC) and the Regional Environmental Centres (RECs). In particular, the process initiated the extension of the programme of environmental performance reviews of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to countries in transition by the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. The periodic region-wide assessment reports on the state of the environment, published by the European Environment Agency (EEA), are another achievement of the process. The Third Pan-European Assessment Report included, with the assistance of UNECE, information on Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

6. The successes of the “Environment for Europe” process would not have been possible without the contributions from the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy and the conventions’ governing bodies. These include: the negotiation of numerous regional multilateral agreements (including the most recent ones on strategic environmental assessment; civil liability; pollutant release and transfer registers) and the Guidelines on strengthening compliance with and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements in the UNECE region; the preparation of regional assessment reports through the environmental performance review (EPR) programme for countries in transition and of Guidelines on the development of state-of-the-environment reports; the preparation of guidelines on environment and energy (on reforming energy pricing and subsidies); the preparation of elements for a strategy on environment and education; and the development of subregional strategies (e.g. on environment, water and security in Central Asia).

7. In their declaration at the Kiev Conference, the Environment Ministers invited UNECE through its Committee on Environmental Policy to monitor the implementation of the Kiev Declaration, to reflect the relevant commitments of the Kiev Declaration in its work programme, and to assist in assessing progress in the implementation of the environmental commitments of this region stemming from the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation, as well as the September 2001 UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

8. The Kiev Declaration stressed the need 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 Ministers invited UNECE through the Committee on Environmental Policy to develop this strategy without delay.

B. Agenda 21 and follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development at the regional level

9. Building on Agenda 21, adopted at the Rio Conference, there has been during the past ten years an increasing commitment to the principles of sustainable development worldwide. In the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation special emphasis was given to regional implementation, thus assigning an important role to the United Nations regional commissions and other regional and subregional institutions. The UNECE region, with its economic potential and impact on the environment, has an important responsibility for following up the World Summit’s results, and for encouraging the shift towards sustainable consumption and production so as to promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of the ecosystems and link environmental sustainability to poverty reduction.

10. The Commission on Sustainable Development, during its eleventh session, endorsed this approach, acknowledging the diversity and specificities of each region and the existence of a regional institutional architecture related to the three dimensions of sustainable development. The efficacy of this regional architecture – encompassing institutions that address financial, economic, social or environmental issues – was tested and proven during the preparatory work for the World Summit. Regional implementation enables the countries of the region to better and more specifically relate their priorities and modalities to the implementation process. The Commission on Sustainable Development invited the regional commissions to consider organizing regional implementation meetings, within the framework of two-year action-oriented “implementation cycles”. In this regional implementation process, the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy could play a key role in strengthening the environmental pillar of sustainable development, in collaboration with other regional and subregional organizations and bodies.

C. UNECE conventions and environmental policy

11. The UNECE conventions and their subsequent protocols laid the legal basis for improving the environment in the region. At the same time they were at the origin of many successful programmes contributing to their implementation and initiatives like capacity-building and subregional cooperation. The work leading to the adoption of the conventions and the ongoing work under the conventions form a highly dynamic policy development process. The Guidelines for Strengthening Compliance with and Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in the UNECE Region (ECE/CEP/107) are an important tool, recognizing that each agreement is negotiated in a unique way and enjoys its own independent status. Important synergies can be derived from inter-linkages among the conventions regarding ratification, financing of implementation, compliance, public participation and access to information, information gathering and management, capacity-building, institutional aspects and outreach. Promoting synergies should not be a top-down administrative

process, but demand-driven: interlinkages and synergies should arise from common needs identified at the working level, both in the national and in the transboundary context.

12. Moreover, international environmental agreements, in particular the UNECE conventions, can play an important role in preventing conflict and promoting cooperation. Many conventions contain provisions for dispute settlement and for establishing cooperation mechanisms. Transboundary environmental projects can, moreover, help to rebuild confidence among different communities.

13. Despite the remarkable progress achieved so far, much effort on the part of the Committee on Environmental Policy and the governing bodies of the conventions is still needed in two major areas: facilitating compliance with and implementation of the legally binding instruments (in particular in certain subregions), and forging coherence by strengthening interlinkages where demand-driven. The Committee could contribute to the work of the conventions in particular in the area of capacity-building as well as by enhancing coordination among the various bodies. Furthermore, the Committee can use its influence to promote the national implementation of the conventions through its delegates.

#### D. The European Union and its enlargement

14. The upcoming enlargement of the European Union (EU) will create new conditions region-wide. The enlargement has many dimensions, which represent not only a challenge but in the first place an opportunity for environmental gains for the EU, for its new member States and for the countries staying outside the EU. Twenty-five countries will soon be applying the same environmental policies, standards and rules, and many of the most environmentally active UNECE member countries will be part of the EU. On the other hand, countries that are not going to join the EU will need UNECE also in the future as a broad regional environmental policy platform for discussion and sharing experience. The strong commitment of the EU to the “Environment for Europe” process and other region-wide environmental cooperation was reaffirmed at the Kiev Conference.

15. EU legislation and UNECE conventions have much in common, in substance, in the way they have been negotiated and developed, and in the way they are being implemented. In many ways they interact and are mutually beneficial, which becomes visible in the application of EU legislation and UNECE conventions in the transboundary context. For example, the basic principles of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes need to be implemented irrespective of EU borders. On the other hand, the EU Water Framework Directive may serve as a strong instrument for facilitating the implementation of the UNECE Convention even beyond the borders of the EU. The governing bodies of the conventions, together with the Committee, need to address the relationship between the UNECE conventions and EU legislation, in order to capitalize on the impact of the EU enlargement on the implementation of the conventions.

16. The Committee needs to take stock of, and monitor environmental responses to subregional changes, in particular EU enlargement, in all UNECE member States. UNECE needs to increasingly tailor its activities to the less well-off countries in transition, thus ensuring that disparities in environmental performance among subregions do not increase in the future. In the

EPRs, UNECE is already taking into account the capacities of the reviewed countries to implement the recommendations to improve their environmental performance. By referring to a global political mandate within the United Nations and the concrete usefulness of its cooperation with other United Nations bodies, like the other regional commissions, UNECE can be more attractive also to EU members in the future. The acknowledged effort of UNECE to include civil society fully into its environmental work is also a comparative advantage. A well-balanced and consistent continuation of this work must be envisaged.

17. In the environmental area, the most obvious implications of EU enlargement for UNECE will relate to the work of the Committee on Environmental Policy and the governing bodies of the UNECE environmental conventions. The new EU member countries will have to allot many of the limited resources in their environmental administrations to coping explicitly with the EU requirements. They will have fewer resources available to actively participate in the work of UNECE, which will face a new political environment. One of the crucial points concerns the ability of UNECE to attract broad and active participation, both from its transatlantic members and from non-acceding countries in transition. Even if the latter value their bilateral contacts with the EU, and some of them aspire to membership in the future, they still lack a multilateral forum other than UNECE to have an impact on events in the region. This means that fund-raising to support the participation in UNECE meetings by experts from these countries will become even more important.

18. The growing emphasis under the UNECE conventions on better implementation offers an additional dimension for open multilateral cooperation in the region, in particular at the subregional level. In international environmental legislation, the experience of good practices and problems of implementation come from the national level. UNECE can provide a useful forum for this, so that all countries in the region can benefit. Finally, as several UNECE conventions are open to global membership, the work under the conventions can increasingly take into account also developments outside the region.

#### E. Conclusions

19. In response to the rapidly changing environmental, economic and social challenges of the UNECE region, the Committee has shown efficient flexibility and focused result orientation while implementing its 1994 terms of reference. It should further strengthen its role in safeguarding the environmental pillar with regard to new policy challenges such as sustainable development and security. Exercising this role can be seen as further implementation of its terms of reference.

20. The Committee has made vital contributions, in collaboration with partner organizations, to the "Environment for Europe" process. The Committee will continue to collaborate with all partner organizations in the "Environment for Europe" process and respect their independent responsibilities and contributions. The Committee is therefore ready to take up coordinating responsibility for certain new tasks within the continued "Environment for Europe" process, such as monitoring the outcome of the Kiev Declaration and developing a communication strategy.

21. Recognizing that each agreement is negotiated in a unique way and enjoys its own independent status, the cooperation among the UNECE conventions' governing bodies should

continue in order to take stock of demand-driven interlinkages and to create and use corresponding synergies. At regular intervals, for instance every two or three years, the bureaux of the Committee on Environmental Policy and the conventions' governing bodies should discuss the strategic directions of their work to encourage the sharing of information and the dissemination of new ideas, also with a view to enhancing compliance and implementation of cross-cutting provisions locally and regionally.

22. The Committee can provide a forum to address regional responses to impacts, challenges and opportunities created by EU enlargement for various subregions and for the UNECE region as a whole. The governing bodies of the conventions, together with the Committee, need to address the relationship, both normative and practical, between the UNECE conventions and EU legislation, in order to capitalize on the impact of the EU enlargement on the implementation of the conventions. Success in providing a positive response will depend on the Committee's ability to attract broad and active participation from all countries of the region, including non-acceding countries in transition, and by strengthening the transatlantic dimension. One way to achieve this would be through effective participation in the design and implementation of subregional environmental partnerships, which would ensure that differences among subregions in environmental performance do not increase in the future.

23. The fund-raising activities will be further strengthened to provide more extrabudgetary resources for the longer term, in particular for tailor-made activities and to ensure broader participation. The activities should address the funding of the Committee's work programme, and of work on capacity-building and implementation done jointly under the UNECE conventions. The fund-raising process should involve working together with other institutions and aim to involve more donors.

## **II. PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIES**

### **A. The environmental performance review programme**

24. One decade has passed since the Lucerne Ministerial Conference asked UNECE to undertake Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs) in the countries in transition. During these 10 years the UNECE EPR programme has generated continued demand from countries in transition for both initial and follow-up reviews. The Kiev Declaration welcomed the report "Environmental policy in transition: Lessons learned from 10 years of EPRs" and supported the implementation of its recommendations, noting that EPRs had been an important instrument for countries with economies in transition for sharing experience and for promoting good environmental management in specific countries. The Kiev Declaration stressed that the EPR programme should continue to assist countries to assess progress, to promote policy dialogue through peer reviews, to help stimulate greater accountability and to offer tailor-made recommendations on how to reduce the overall pollution burden. The first round of reviews should now be completed and the second round proceed. Countries and organizations are encouraged to make broader use of the reviews and support their wider dissemination.

25. The second reviews should take into account the particular needs of individual countries as decided in Kiev, emphasize in particular implementation and financing, and give greater emphasis to the integration of the environment with other sectors. The second reviews should

also be used as a tool for the implementation of the Environment Strategy for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). Moreover, they should take into account progress towards the targets and goals specified by the Kiev Conference, the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit and the United Nations millennium development goals as they relate to national environmental management and, in particular, they should assess environmental issues in the context of democracy, justice and poverty eradication. They should devote more attention to performance in meeting national policy targets and legislation, and international commitments such as conventions. The second reviews should make optimum use of existing data and work in close cooperation with the EEA and other organizations to maximize efficiency.

#### B. Monitoring and assessment

26. To help EEA, the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring compiled lessons learned from the data collection for an indicator-based report on progress in environmental management in Europe, which focused on network strengthening, data availability and data processing. The report resulted in recommendations for improving the environmental monitoring capacities in the region, and in particular to maintain the pan-European framework for cooperation on environmental reporting and information management; to ensure an appropriate level of investment in basic monitoring infrastructure; to establish mechanisms for the provision of environmental information by countries, in particular in EECCA; to improve the international comparability of environmental information; to ensure the submission by countries of environmental data to international organizations and the governing bodies of conventions.

27. In their Kiev Declaration, the Ministers invited organizations and institutions to join in implementing the above recommendations. They expressed support for the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and its activities, particularly on strengthening the environmental information and observation capacity in the 12 countries of EECCA. The Kiev Declaration recognized that the regional cooperation framework provided by the Working Group needed to be further developed as an instrument for UNECE member States to provide recommendations, propose action plan and improve the coordination of international activities within the region. The monitoring work can make use of the wealth of experience of the UNECE environmental conventions to streamline international reporting in the region.

#### C. Subregional partnerships and strategies

28. Many of the region's environmental problems remain unsolved mainly owing to the difficult economic situation. Reconciling basic environmental and health concerns with severe economic constraints is very difficult for some countries in transition. It is therefore essential to closely monitor such disparities and their evolution, and to design measures to prevent subregions drifting apart. Any further divergence might have undesirable repercussions for the environment and security.

29. Important initiatives for the environment and sustainable development have been taken or are under way. One example is the Environment Strategy for Countries of EECCA

(ECE/CEP/105/Rev.1), initiated by their Environment Ministers. Another example is the Strategic Partnership on Water for Sustainable Development<sup>1/</sup>. A third example is the South-East Europe and the Mediterranean initiative on the introduction of the integrated water resource management approach for Transboundary waters<sup>2/</sup>, and a fourth one is the Central Asian Initiative on Environment, Water and Security, initiated by Central Asian States. This initiative aims to strengthen cooperation to protect water-basin ecosystems, use water rationally and improve governance to ensure this subregion's sustainable development and its security.

30. All four initiatives have much in common, and have been welcomed and endorsed by the Ministers in Kiev. UNECE has contributed to their development in various ways, in particular with its expertise in transboundary water management and protection. Experience with the implementation of UNECE environmental conventions elsewhere can significantly help to achieve the goals set by these initiatives. There is a need to work out the future interrelationships between these initiatives, and to define the specific responsibilities for their further development, coordination and evaluation, as well as for the development and servicing of corresponding work programmes. The work should include capacity-building, legal assistance and financing.

31. Technical assistance – through workshops, pilot projects and advisory missions – by UNECE to member States in Central Asia, the Russian Federation, the Southern Caucasus and South-Eastern Europe has also been a tool for responding to particular needs. These activities have taken place to help countries implement relevant policies and receive advisory services on particular issues for which they need expertise. This assistance is reported to the Committee on Environmental Policy and the governing bodies of the conventions. Technical assistance is provided increasingly in cooperation with other regional commissions, and with other partners active in the subregions, to ensure that it is cost-efficient and uses all available synergies; meets the requests from member countries; and focuses on clearly stated objectives including the implementation of conventions.

#### D. Conclusions

32. The first round of EPRs will be completed and the second round will proceed. The second reviews should focus more on implementation and financing, and on the priorities of the countries. The reviews should assess how environmental issues could be viewed comprehensively and in an integrated manner with other sectors at all decision-making levels.

33. The future activities of the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring should put emphasis on strengthening the environmental information and observation capacity, particularly in the 12 countries of EECCA. The EPR programme should support the strengthening of monitoring work through country-based recommendations, in order to measure and assess real progress made in implementation, using a relevant set of indicators. The monitoring work should make use of the wealth of experience of the UNECE environmental conventions.

34. The Committee will aim at giving more cohesion to the subregions by providing an open and active forum for subregional debates on the environment. The Committee should stand ready to contribute to the further development, coordination and evaluation of the subregional partnerships and initiatives, in particular the Environment Strategy for the Countries of EECCA,

and the Central Asian Initiative on Environment, Water and Security, as well as the South East European and the Mediterranean Initiative. As some of the tasks relate to the implementation of the conventions, the work and experience under the UNECE conventions will constitute a crucial input.

35. The work of the regional adviser will be further linked to and integrated in the key priority areas of work on environment in UNECE, and the Committee should assess, in the context of overall technical assistance, the impact of the regional adviser's activities every other year. The close contacts of the regional adviser with the secretariats of the conventions should continue. The regional adviser will play a key role in the capacity-building component of subregional partnerships and initiatives.

### **III. CROSS-SECTORAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION**

#### **A. Integrating environmental concerns**

36. There is a consensus that significant efforts still need to be made to integrate environmental concerns into other sectors, whether economic or social, through a wide range of policy, legal, institutional and financial measures and incentives. During the 10 years since the Rio Conference, actions and programmes in the UNECE region have moved towards that goal, but sustainable development is still in its infancy. The Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development reiterated the need to promote the integration of the three components of sustainable development into the work of the regional commissions in a balanced way. The Kiev Declaration underlined the importance of the shift towards sustainable production and consumption patterns, and called for the promotion of environmental policy integration with sectoral policies, including continued promotion of the internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments.

37. Experience in cross-sectoral cooperation shows how difficult it is to achieve results. The difficulties arise for a variety of reasons, such as the different professional cultures in individual sectors or the compartmentalized approaches in both the national administrations and international organizations. Cooperation between the different levels of government within the environmental sector also needs to be closer. Cross-sectoral cooperation projects have become important starting points and testing grounds for the responses to the widely accepted need to integrate environmental concerns into other sectoral policies. These projects offer opportunities both for achieving substantive goals and for replacing purely compartmentalized thinking by comprehensive and integral approaches.

38. Many of the most complex environmental problems are cross-sectoral. The Committee has established cross-sectoral linkages, activities and cooperation with other UNECE committees (e.g. human settlements, transport, and sustainable energy) with the conventions' governing bodies and also with other international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO). In addressing the cross-sectoral dimension, the Committee undertook initiatives on cross-sectoral projects and programmes and encouraged the development of cross-sectoral legal instruments.

39. Examples of the active role of UNECE in launching cross-sectoral programmes and projects are:

- The establishment of a UNECE-WHO Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme, coordinated and implemented by a newly established tripartite Steering Committee. The Kiev Ministerial Declaration includes a commitment to implementing this Programme;
- The establishment of the Task Force on Environment and Energy jointly with the Committee on Sustainable Energy. The joint work resulted in Guidelines on Reforming Energy Pricing and Subsidies (ECE/CEP/103). The Ministers in Kiev endorsed these Guidelines and invited both Committees to examine the role of economic instruments in promoting the use of renewable energy;
- The joint UNECE/Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) "Rational and efficient use of water and energy resources in Central Asia" project in the context of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECAs). This project greatly contributed to the development of the above-mentioned Central Asian Initiative on Environment, Water and Security.

40. Examples of legal instruments – binding or non-binding – with cross-sectoral or cross-cutting character and impact developed under the auspices of UNECE are:

- The Protocol on Water and Health, jointly developed by UNECE and the WHO Regional Office for Europe, and adopted at the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, London, June 1999, strengthens the cross-sectoral cooperation in ensuring adequate water quality;
- The Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, adopted and signed during the Kiev Ministerial Conference, underlines the cross-sectoral approach in assessing the environmental impact of sectoral plans and programmes;
- The Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters to the 1992 Conventions on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents was also adopted and signed during the Kiev Conference, an indication of innovative cooperation between legal instruments in tackling a problem of common concern;
- Public participation is a cross-cutting and cross-sectoral issue enshrined in the Aarhus Convention, adopted during the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in 1998. Its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR), adopted and signed during the Kiev Conference, will provide an important mechanism for generating information on potentially polluting activities and bringing it into the public domain. It will increase corporate accountability in many sectors;
- The Guidelines for Strengthening Compliance with and Implementation of MEAs in the UNECE Region (ECE/CEP/107) were endorsed as an important tool to strengthen compliance with and implementation of all UNECE legal instruments on the environment.

## B. New priorities

41. Some policy areas that received attention in the recent report on the lessons learnt from ten years of UNECE environmental performance reviews (CEP/2003/2) are: agriculture, tourism and solid waste management (urban, rural, industrial), which have not yet been tackled.

42. Most of these issues are among the thematic clusters of the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. When organizing the regional implementation meetings, as suggested by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session, UNECE will need to consider, with the contribution of other international organizations, how it can address these and other cross-cutting issues such as education for sustainable development, sustainable consumption and production patterns, gender and poverty within the broader thematic clusters as it progresses through the series of two-year action-oriented "implementation cycles".

43. Environmental education was recognized at the Kiev Conference as a core component of education for sustainable development, and as a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and good governance. The UNECE Environment Ministers decided that it was important and timely to develop a UNECE strategy for education for sustainable development. They acknowledged that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was the lead agency and coordinator with regard to education for sustainable development at the global level, and they invited UNECE to work with UNESCO and the Council of Europe on a regional strategy of education for sustainable development.

## C. Conclusions

44. To be effective, cross-sectoral cooperation should take place at all relevant levels: governmental (involving ministries, and authorities at different levels) and that of stakeholders (representing various sectors and industries). The Committee on Environmental Policy should continue to strengthen its cross-sectoral projects and programmes, and promote the implementation of cross-sectoral legal instruments. The achievements and challenges in the cross-sectoral work undertaken so far with the involvement of UNECE will be examined with a view to making it more effective, by choosing the most effective modalities and tailor-made organizational structures. In line with the Kiev Declaration, the implementation of legal instrument relevant for cross-sectoral integration should be strengthened, and their efficiency, effectiveness and coherence should be improved.

45. The social and economic dimensions of existing activities including those of a cross-sectoral nature can be strengthened only with the strong commitment and involvement of member countries. When member countries are committed, the Committee can promote and facilitate the linking of the environment with the other dimensions of sustainable development at the national and subregional levels, taking into account the possibilities of integrating all dimensions into already existing programmes activities. This could be done by providing policy guidance, and through technical assistance, in particular in the case of integrating environment into poverty-reduction strategies.

46. Cooperation with key partners inside and outside the region will be enhanced to facilitate the implementation of relevant cross-cutting and cross-sectoral instruments and policies, in particular the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Kiev Ministerial Conference.

47. The Committee on Environmental Policy will actively revise the environmental concerns in defining, together with UNESCO and the Council of Europe, a regional strategy for education for sustainable development. Support for sustainable production and consumption patterns should be the main aim of such a strategy. The improved cooperation during recent years between UNECE and the other regional commissions, in particular on the regional implementation of sustainable development policies, should be strengthened. UNECE can, as requested by the other commissions, continue to provide information on its programmes, e.g. under the convention and the EPR work.

48. It is expected that UNECE will share its experience with the other regional commissions in a more structured way. This sharing of experience should focus on the outcome of UNECE work that is relevant to global forums.

#### IV. THE WAY FORWARD

49. As has been emphasized throughout this document, the UNECE environmental work is not done in a vacuum. The changing scene is providing new challenges and opportunities that have to be taken up carefully. The gaps and deficiencies in the activities have to be tackled using the experience and expertise that UNECE has acquired over the years. The Committee on Environmental Policy has decided to continue on the chosen track by further developing its core activities as reflected in its 1994 terms of reference.

50. The strategic choices stemming from the three recurrent themes discussed in the first three chapters of this document - pan-European harmonization and governance; programmes and strategies; and cross-sectoral cooperation and integration – can be summarized as the following five overarching strategic directions or goals:

##### **Goal 1: Contributing to the “Environment for Europe” process**

51. The Committee will continue to collaborate with all partner organizations in the “Environment for Europe” process. In line with the Kiev Declaration, the Committee is invited to take up some new responsibilities for the coming years. The following tasks will help to achieve the above goal:

52. **Task 1.1: Monitoring the outcome of the Kiev Declaration.** In monitoring the outcome of the Kiev Conference, the Committee in consultation with other PSBs and in cooperation with other relevant organizations and institutions will have overall responsibility for supporting the effective implementation of the Kiev decisions. The Committee will also include commitments of the Kiev Declaration in its work programme, as appropriate. It can be envisaged that this will lead to a mid-term assessment discussion by the Committee in 2005. An open-ended Preparatory Group will convene to coordinate the preparations for the next Conference to be held in 2007, with UNECE serving as secretariat. The Committee and the Preparatory Group will ensure

efficient preparatory work, for instance by holding joint meetings with a coordinated agenda when possible.

53. **Task 1.2:** *More cohesion among UNECE subregions.* The Committee will aim at enhancing the cohesion of its subregions by providing an efficient and flexible forum for subregional debates and for the exchange of experience on environmental policies. The Committee will contribute to subregional partnerships and initiatives, in particular the Environment Strategy for the EECCA Countries, the Central Asian Initiative on Environment, Water and Security and the South-East Europe and the Mediterranean Initiative, in cooperation with relevant international organizations.

54. **Task 1.3:** *Communication strategy for the “Environment for Europe” process.* The Committee will develop, in consultation with other PSBs and in cooperation with the EAP Task Force and other relevant organizations and institutions, a communication strategy to raise awareness of the “Environment for Europe” process among a wider audience of stakeholders and the general public based on the achievements of the process. The communication strategy should also aim at increasing the transparency of the “Environment for Europe” process itself. The experience of the UNECE conventions with regard to communication should be taken into account.

## **Goal 2: Improving environmental governance**

55. Improving region-wide environmental governance has emerged as, and will continue to be, one of the major substantive goals of the Committee. Better governance can be supported through the EPRs, strengthening environmental monitoring, promoting the implementation of legal instruments, and capacity-building through advisory and technical assistance.

56. **Task 2.1:** *Continue and focus the environmental performance review programme.* The first round of reviews will be completed and the second round proceed. Reviewed countries will be invited to give an interim report to the Committee within three years after their first environmental performance review. The second reviews should focus more on implementation and financing, and on the priorities of particular importance to the countries. In reviewing implementation, the second reviews should analyse the means through which progress has been accomplished, in order to provide a better understanding of how best to proceed. The reviews should assess how environmental issues could be viewed comprehensively and in an integrated manner with other sectors at all decision-making levels.

57. **Task 2.2:** *Strengthen environmental monitoring.* The UNECE Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring can serve as an instrument for UNECE member States to provide recommendations, propose action and improve coordination of international initiatives to enhance environmental monitoring, in particular in EECCA. It will promote the use of indicator-based mechanisms for periodic environmental assessments and the evaluation of environmental policies, and will put emphasis on strengthening the environmental information and observation capacity, particularly in the 12 countries of EECCA. The EPR programme should support the strengthening of monitoring work through country-based recommendations. The monitoring work should make use of the wealth of experience of the UNECE environmental conventions and contribute to streamlining international reporting in the region.

58. **Task 2.3:** *Cooperation with key partners.* It is expected that UNECE will be more structured in sharing experience with other regional commissions and will make the outcome of the Committee's work available to global forums when relevant. The Committee and the convention's governing bodies will continue and further strengthen their cooperation with key partners, including non-governmental organizations. In particular, the implementation of decisions under the "Environment for Europe" process and the regional implementation of the World Summit and Agenda 21 require broad cooperation with all relevant partners in the region.

59. **Task 2.4:** *Role of the regional adviser.* The work of the regional adviser will be further linked to and integrated in the key priority areas of work in the Division, and the Committee should assess, in the context of overall technical assistance, the impact of the regional adviser's activities every other year. The close contacts of the regional adviser with the secretariats of the conventions should continue. The regional adviser will play a key role in the capacity-building component of subregional partnerships and initiatives.

### **Goal 3: Making international legal instruments more effective**

60. International legal instruments – conventions, protocols and recommendations – have played a central role in the development and consolidation of UNECE environmental policy. After a decade that yielded a significant number of such instruments, the main challenge now is to improve their effectiveness by promoting and facilitating their implementation on the ground. To this end, the following major tasks have to be carried out:

61. **Task 3.1:** *Promoting synergies and sharing experience among the UNECE environmental conventions.* Recognizing that each agreement is negotiated in a unique way and enjoys its own independent status, the cooperation among the UNECE conventions' governing bodies should continue in order to support demand-driven interlinkages and to create and use corresponding synergies from the bottom up. The Committee on Environmental Policy could contribute to the work of the conventions in particular in capacity-building, by strengthening cooperation with relevant bodies and by providing support to the implementation of the conventions and protocols. At regular intervals, for instance every three years, the bureaux of the Committee on Environmental Policy and of the conventions' governing bodies should discuss the strategic directions of their work to encourage the sharing of information and the dissemination of new ideas, with a view to enhancing compliance and implementation of cross-cutting provisions.

62. **Task 3.2:** *Harvesting positive impacts of EU enlargement.* The Committee will provide a forum for addressing regional responses to impacts, opportunities and challenges created by the EU enlargement for various subregions and for the UNECE region as a whole. The enlargement of the European Union is seen as a dynamic opportunity for partnerships and a possibility for gains for the region's environment. The experience of cooperation between the UNECE legal instruments and EU legislation should be built upon. The governing bodies of the conventions, together with the Committee, need to address the relationship between the UNECE conventions and EU legislation, in order to capitalize on the impact of the EU enlargement on the implementation of the conventions.

63. **Task 3.3:** *Facilitating subregional cooperation.* There is a need to tailor the UNECE environmental activities to specific subregions, in particular EECCA and South-East Europe,

through technical assistance, advisory missions and capacity-building to respond to the particular needs of these countries. Assistance is increasingly provided with other partners to ensure that it is cost-efficient and uses all available synergies in a flexible way and meets the requirements of members countries.

**Goal 4: Integrating environmental concerns into sectoral policies**

64. Ministers in Kiev stated that the profile of environmental issues within governments needed to be raised and the involvement of sectoral ministries in environmental protection strengthened. Integrating environmental concerns into sectoral policies has recently been a major aim of the Committee and the conventions' bodies. Experience in cross-sectoral cooperation shows how difficult it often is to achieve results. As it is increasingly urgent to implement the principles of sustainable development, this heightens the need to integrate environmental concerns into sectoral policies. The following tasks will help to achieve better interaction:

65. **Task 4.1: *Enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation.*** To be effective, cross-sectoral cooperation should take place at all relevant level. The achievements and challenges in the cross-sectoral work undertaken so far with the involvement of UNECE will be examined with a view to making it more effective. The successful activities, adding significant value, should be continued and strengthened. The implementation of instruments relevant for cross-sectoral integration and their efficiency, effectiveness and coherence should be improved. The current UNECE environmental cross-sectoral programmes should ensure effective support to national and regional initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production. If governments are committed to it, the Committee can promote better coordination of environmental activities, with relevance for UNECE, on the national level.

66. **Task 4.2: *Education for sustainable development.*** The Committee on Environmental Policy will introduce environmental concerns when drafting, together with UNESCO and the Council of Europe, a regional strategy for education for sustainable development. Close cooperation with different international organizations and NGOs with expertise in education on sustainable social development will be crucial when drawing up the strategy. The development of the strategy should support the implementation of the related parts of the Environment Strategy for the EECCA countries.

**Goal 5: Contributing to the regional implementation of the environmental pillar of sustainable development**

67. Building on Agenda 21 and on the outcome of the World Summit in Johannesburg, the Commission on Sustainable Development invited the regional commissions to consider organizing regional implementation forums, within the framework of two-year action-oriented "implementation cycles". In this regional implementation process, the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy will play a key role in strengthening the environmental pillar of sustainable development, in collaboration with other regional and subregional organizations, bodies and NGOs. Two tasks derive from this responsibility.

68. **Task 5.1: *Assessing the regional implementation of the Johannesburg Summit's commitments.*** The Committee will assist the region's Environment Ministers in assessing

progress in the implementation of their environmental commitments stemming from the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation as well as the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Summit. The results of this work should support the regional implementation meetings organized in preparation for the sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as it recommended at its eleventh session, with the participation of UNECE member countries, all relevant partner organizations and stakeholders.

69. **Task 5.2:** *Interlinking environmental work with social and economic dimensions.* The social and economic dimensions of existing activities including those of a cross-sectoral nature can be strengthened taking into account sustainable production and consumption patterns, gender and poverty eradication to the extent possible. This can be done only with strong commitment and involvement by the member countries, following a bottom-up approach, with focus on learning from national practices. The Committee should be ready to promote and facilitate the interlinking of the environment with the other dimensions of sustainable development at the national and subregional levels, by providing policy guidance and through technical assistance.

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70. The five strategic goals, together with the corresponding actions, form a consistent and realistic strategy for the coming years. By implementing these goals, the Committee on Environmental Policy should ensure and strengthen synergies with key partners, in particular with the governing bodies of the conventions and, when appropriate, with other committees within UNECE, and encourage cooperation with other regional commissions, relevant United Nations bodies, other global, regional and subregional international organizations and with different partners in the non-governmental and private segments of society and the economy.

#### Notes

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<sup>1/</sup> The “Strategic Partnership on Water for Sustainable Development” was launched at the World Summit in Johannesburg by the EU and the 12 countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia as part of the global “Water Initiative: Water for Life – Health, livelihoods, economic development and security” (EU Water Initiative).

<sup>2/</sup> Mediterranean component of the EU Water Initiative.