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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Twelfth session,  
(Geneva, 10-12 October 2005)  
(Item 2 of the provisional agenda)

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE SIXTIETH SESSION OF  
THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

Note by the secretariat

**SUMMARY**

The sixtieth session of the Commission was held in Geneva from 22 to 25 February 2005 (E/2005/37; E/ECE1431). This note provides an overview of the main results and decisions of the session that are relevant to the Committee on Environmental Policy and its activities.

The following were the main agenda items:

- Sustainable development in the UNECE region;
- UNECE cooperation with OSCE;
- The UNECE reform;
- Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 and matters relating to the programme of work planning and evaluation processes;
- Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits;
- Major policy issues of the UNECE and their impact on the UNECE programme of work;
- The work of the UNECE – achievements and constraints;
- Technical cooperation activities in 2004.

### **Sustainable development in the UNECE region**

1. The Commission examined major policy options for water, sanitation and human settlements in the UNECE region, taking into account the outcome of the Regional Implementation Meeting in January 2004, the conclusions of the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in April 2004, and the challenges identified by the Parties to the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and by the Committee on Human Settlements.
2. The Commission stressed that, despite the progress achieved, there was a need for action-oriented local and national measures as well as regional cooperation to speed up efforts to meet the internationally agreed development goals and the commitments of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, particularly in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and some South-East European (SEE) countries.
3. The Commission accepted the proposal that a Chairperson's summary be presented as UNECE's contribution to the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to be held in New York from 28 February to 4 March 2005. It agreed that the summary would be based on the background document E/ECE/1421 «Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region» and on the discussion at the annual session.
4. The Commission decided to organize the second UNECE Regional Implementation Forum in preparation of CSD 14. It also agreed to seek the necessary complementary extrabudgetary funds for the regional preparations for CSD 14.
5. Comments: The secretariat will inform the Committee about the future steps in organizing the Regional Implementation Forum.

### **UNECE cooperation with OSCE**

6. The Commission welcomed the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between the UNECE and OSCE in the hope that this would enhance the effectiveness of the two organizations, the spirit of cooperation and transparency between them and with the Member States. It was also emphasized that the support to the OSCE should not be to the detriment of other UNECE activities and that the additional workload be mitigated by measures identified in document E/ECE/1430/Add.1.
7. Comments: The Environment and Human Settlements Division is expected to provide a contribution to the environment component of the "Review of OSCE Commitments" which will be presented at the OSCE Economic Forum.

### **The UNECE reform**

### Comprehensive report on the state of the UNECE

8. The team of external evaluators selected to undertake a comprehensive report on the state of the UNECE was introduced to the Commission. The team, consisting of Mr. Pekka Haavisto (former Minister for Environment and Development of Finland), Mr. Karl Paschke (former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for internal oversight), Ms. Johanna Bernstein (international lawyer with expertise in international environmental law) and Mr. Tapio Wallenius (expert on public sector administration) informed the Commission of the scope of the evaluation and the methodology to be used. The comprehensive report will provide an analysis of the role, mandate and functions of the UNECE in the light of the changed European institutional landscape and produce recommendations to determine any possible and necessary changes. The methodology consists of an initial desk-study phase, followed by visits to capitals in selected UNECE member countries, and gathering of views through a questionnaire sent to UNECE governments, international organizations and other stakeholders. The team expects to deliver a first draft of the report by mid-June and the final report by the end of June 2005.

9. The Commission was informed that the comprehensive review was not a budget cutting exercise but a timely opportunity to refocus and ensure the best use of available resources and expertise of UNECE, taking into account the work of other organizations also active in the region, and the value added that the UNECE could provide. Member States requested the secretariat to make any necessary modifications to the 2006-2007 programme of work to take into account the outcome of the comprehensive review.

10. At the beginning of March 2005, the evaluation team sent out the questionnaire to countries and relevant international organizations to gather views on the work of the UNECE. The questionnaire addresses general questions regarding the role, functions, governance and management of the UNECE, as well as detailed questions related to the sectoral areas of UNECE work, including environment.

11. Comments: The Committee will be informed about the report of the review team and possible conclusions by Member Governments.

### Towards an E-strategy for the UNECE

12. During the discussion on this topic, the delegations acknowledged the usefulness of the information and communications technologies (ICT) as a means of increasing the efficiency of UNECE activities and enhancing the secretariat capacity to serve and communicate with member States, other partners and the general public. The secretariat was urged to post all materials available in the three languages of the Commission on its website.

13. The Commission encouraged its Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) to further strengthen their efforts to develop and use appropriate e-applications in a cost-efficient manner and agreed to evaluate progress that had been made at the sixty-first annual session.

**Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 and matters relating to the programme of work planning and evaluation processes**

14. The Commission was informed about the state of the UNECE's programme budget submission for the 2006-2007 biennium and about actions taken to implement the recommendations of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW) with regard to the programme budget narratives.

15. The Commission underlined the need to ensure that the outcome of the forthcoming UNECE comprehensive review be taken into account in the programme of work for 2006-2007.

16. The Commission was informed that the 2006-2007 budget submission was still awaiting the final approval of the General Assembly and reiterated the importance of the full implementation of the recommendations on the Programme Budget Narratives. It also adopted the recommendations of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW) concerning programme planning processes. (E/ECE/1430/Add.1).

17. Comments. Implementing the recommendations of the GEPW concerning programme planning processes will require action from the Committee. In accordance with these recommendations, the Committee needs to discuss and provide its input to the draft biennial programme plan for 2008-2009 as contained in documents CRP.1. The biennial programme plan 2008-2009 sets out the subprogramme's objective, strategy, expected accomplishments and related indicators of achievements. It will provide a strategic framework for the activities of the Subprogramme on Environmental Policy in 2008-2009.

**Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits**

18. In September 2005, the General Assembly will meet at the level of Heads of State for a review of the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration. As part of the preparatory process for this Summit, the theme of the high-level segment of the substantive session of ECOSOC in June 2005 will be: «Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits». Like the other regional commissions, the UNECE is providing a regional contribution to this process.

19. Member States underlined the importance of the internationally agreed development goals in the UNECE region and support was expressed for the activities of the UNECE that contribute to the achievement of these goals at the subregional and regional levels.

20. Also covered under this agenda item was the promotion of gender equality. The Commission expressed its view that the UNECE should continue to mainstream gender into its work, as well as continuing to serve as a platform for the exchange of good practices.

21. Comments: The Committee may note that the second round of the Environmental Performance Reviews report on the progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, when appropriate.

### **Major policy issues of the UNECE and their impact on the UNECE programme of work**

22. The Commission noted with appreciation the analysis of the Executive Secretary in respect of UNECE challenges at the global and regional level. It highlighted the need to address aspects of issues such as globalization, transition and environmental policies within the scope of UNECE's mandate. Furthermore, the Commission reconfirmed that the setting of priorities of the Commission rests with the member States and that the overall objective within the UNECE remains the promotion of stability and prosperity across the UNECE region.

### **The work of the UNECE – achievements and constraints**

23. The Chairpersons of the UNECE's Principal Subsidiary Bodies presented their major achievements and the future programme of activities, underlying the difficulty of carrying out their tasks with the budgetary constraints facing the secretariat.

24. In responding to the resource constraints, the Commission asked the Executive Secretary to work with member States to ensure that the resources distribution reflects the priorities set by the Commission.

25. The Commission thanked the Chairpersons of the UNECE's Principal Subsidiary Bodies for their work and presentations. It urged the secretariat, PSBs and all member States to continue to improve both horizontal and vertical communications.

### **Technical cooperation activities in 2004**

26. The Commission reiterated the importance of the UNECE's technical cooperation activities, which should be demand-driven and result-oriented. It welcomed the action taken by the secretariat to implement the Technical Cooperation Strategy endorsed at its 2004 annual meeting. The Commission stressed the need to increase assistance to low-income countries in a targeted and systematic manner. The Commission welcomed the efforts of the UNECE secretariat, carried out in close partnership with UNESCAP to strengthen its support to economic cooperation and development in Central Asia, and in particular work aimed at strengthening the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

27. The Commission also encouraged the development of joint technical cooperation projects in collaboration with other organizations. It emphasized the importance of the work of the Regional Advisers in supporting technical cooperation activities in the fields of environment, transport, statistics, energy, trade, entrepreneurship and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), and development policy.

28. The Commission recognized UNECE's potential in delivering technical assistance in those areas where it has expertise and comparative advantages, and encouraged OECD and other donor organizations to better utilize this potential in their development aid efforts.

29. Comments: The Committee will be informed about technical cooperation activities of the Regional Adviser under item 3(h) of the provisional agenda.