



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

CEP/2005/4
21 July 2005

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Twelfth session,
(Geneva, 10-12 October 2005)
(Item 3 of the provisional agenda)

**REPORT ON THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU
OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**
(Geneva, 8 June 2005)

Prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairman

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), Mr. Wieckowski (Poland), Mr. Sergey Tveritinov (Russian Federation) and Mr. Jürg Schneider (Switzerland). Mr. C. Ashley (United States of America) was also invited to attend.

II. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 60TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

2. The Bureau was informed about the decisions taken by the Commission, which are summarized below:

A. Sustainable development in the UNECE region

3. Mr. Bärlund, Director of the UNECE Environment and Human Settlements Division, informed the Bureau about the decision to hold a second Regional Implementation Forum on 15 and 16 December 2005, on air pollution, climate change, energy and industrial development as well as on related cross cutting issues.
4. The Bureau reiterated the importance of further improving the organization and logistics of the next meeting and striving for a more interactive and dynamic dialogue. It requested to focus the discussions on two or three specific and pragmatic issues within the clusters and to allow only short interventions, followed by questions.
5. Information was also provided on two meetings organized back to back with the Forum, namely the meeting of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, to be held from 13 December (afternoon) to 14 December 2005 (morning), and that of the Industrial Accidents Convention, to be held from 14 December (afternoon) to 15 December 2005 (morning).
6. Ms. Panariti provided information on the meeting organized by the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) (Rome, April 2005), for the preparation of the Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development to be adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention. During the meeting she highlighted the relevance of the UNECE Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, which was received with interest by participants.

B. UNECE cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

7. The Bureau discussed the Memorandum of Understanding between UNECE and OSCE and its implications for the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP). The Bureau was also informed about the review of the OSCE commitments, to be taken up at the OSCE Economic Forum, to which the UNECE is expected to provide substantive contributions. The cluster on environment is expected to be dealt with in Spring 2006.
8. The Bureau, taking into consideration the information provided, called upon the secretariat to make best use of its resources and, to that end, it urged the secretariat to request OSCE to postpone the review on environment to the year 2007. This would enable the UNECE secretariat to coordinate its input for the above meeting and for the preparation of the Belgrade Report on the state of the environment for the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in 2007.

C. The UNECE reform

9. The Bureau was informed about the progress report on the state of the UNECE, prepared by a team of external evaluators, expected to be available by the end of June 2005.

III. PREPARATIONS FOR THE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” CONFERENCE IN BELGRADE

10. The secretariat informed participants that the first session of the Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO) would be held from 12 October (afternoon) to 13 October 2005 back to back with the CEP session, to be held from 10 to 12 October 2005 (morning). The agenda will be issued by mid July.

11. The first meeting is expected to discuss possible items for the agenda of the Belgrade Conference and an overarching theme for the Conference.

IV. PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

12. The Bureau discussed and agreed on the provisional agenda for the twelfth session of the Committee. Under item 3, the Bureau requested to have an additional item on financial resources. To that end it requested the secretariat to prepare a table indicating regular and extra budgetary staff against each cluster of activity within the environment subprogramme.

A. Environmental Performance Reviews

13. The secretariat introduced the contents for a Concept Paper on revisiting the structure of the second round of Reviews. The purpose of the paper is to reach an agreement on the reviews' structure to be implemented in the forthcoming second round.

14. The Bureau agreed to present such a paper for discussion at the next Committee session. The paper will include all relevant elements for the second round of the Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs), as decided in previous meetings, the Kiev recommendations on those reviews, as well as new trends in policy development and priorities at global, regional and national levels. The paper will also contain options for improving the presentation of the document.

15. The Bureau stressed that the focus of the second round of reviews should remain on implementation, including implementation of the recommendations from the first round, in order to evaluate progress made since the first review.

16. The Bureau also agreed upon the major policy issues selected for the in-depth discussion during the Committee session under the EPR item, i.e. “Mechanisms for enforcement and compliance” and “Management of eco-funds”.

17. The suggestion to have facilitators for each topic to guide the discussion during this session was also welcomed and the Bureau requested the secretariat to proceed in drafting a background paper and in organizing the discussion.

B. Education for sustainable development

18. The Bureau was informed about the outcome of the High-level Meeting held in Vilnius on 17 and 18 March 2005, and on the adoption of the Vilnius Framework for the Strategy's implementation. The Meeting was successfully attended by more than 40 member States with a balanced representation of the environment and education sectors.

19. The meeting set up an Expert Group under the leadership of the Netherlands to develop indicators for assessing the effectiveness of the Strategy's implementation. It is expected that the Group will hold its first meeting in September 2005.

20. The first meeting of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development will be held from 13 to 14 (morning) December 2005, back to back with the Regional Implementation Forum (see item 2(a)), and is expected to draw up its work programme for the coming two to three years to implement the Strategy.

21. The Bureau agreed that the Committee on Environmental Policy discuss how best it can contribute to the Strategy's implementation and how to support cooperation between the two sectors for the following session of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development and its future work

22. The secretariat stressed that additional funds are needed to carry out its functions.

C. Environmental monitoring

23. The Secretary to the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment reported on the results of the fifth session of the Working Group, held in Geneva on 2 and 3 June 2005. The Working Group discussed the preparation of the pan-European environmental assessment report for the Belgrade "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference and agreed on its work program for the period up to the Belgrade Conference, including donor support needs.

24. The Working Group will provide overall technical guidance for the preparation of the Belgrade report and the review of its draft; it will assist with data and information collection and will ensure coordination with related assessments and data collections, including the 2007 progress report on the EECCA Strategy, the 2007 UNEP/Global Environmental Outlook (GEO-4), the 2006 UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on environment statistics, the WHO/Euro-Environmental Health Information Service (EHIS) and the second OECD Environment Outlook.

25. Following a roundtable with the active participation of business and industry, the Working Group will prepare guidelines to strengthen enterprise self-monitoring and reporting. Other capacity-building activities in EECCA will include: the finalization of a manual on the application of environmental indicators, further development of an electronic EcoReporting database, the preparation of recommendations on the adaptation of monitoring networks and the promotion of state-of-the-environment reporting guidelines.

26. An amount of 155,500 Euro was made available or pledged from Tacis and bilateral donors to support the Working Group's activities.

27. The Bureau took note with appreciation of the outcome of the Working Group's meeting and supported the Working Group's appeal to donors for financial support to implement its program.

D. Communication strategy

28. The Bureau discussed the outcome of the meeting on the Communication Strategy held with stakeholders on 7 June 2005 and reiterated its usefulness.

29. The Bureau requested the secretariat to redraft the paper following comments provided by the meeting participants. The suggested changes were related not only related to its contents. In fact, following the discussion, participants requested that a Communication Plan be drawn up, as a necessary tool to facilitate the implementation of the Strategy. It was also suggested that the WGSO consider the possibility of setting up an Expert Group to elaborate such Communication Plan once the Strategy has been adopted.

30. To that end the Bureau felt that, in order to have the sufficient time to elaborate the Plan, the Strategy should be endorsed by the Committee at its next session (October 2005), and thereafter be submitted to the Working Group of Senior Officials for adoption in October 2005 (instead of 2006 as was suggested by the Committee at its last session).

E. Multilateral environmental agreements

Meeting between the Bureaux of CEP and the ECE Environmental Conventions

31. Members of the Bureau discussed the outcome of the meeting between the Bureau of CEP and that of the ECE Conventions (6 June 2005), and felt that such meetings should continue to be held in the future if enough substantive issues are on the agenda.

32. The agenda of this meeting included discussions on: (a) financial and human resources allocated for environmental activities within the UNECE; (b) synergies between the UNECE environmental conventions at both international and national levels; (c) possible items to be negotiated for discussion/adoption at the 2007 Belgrade Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe"; and (d) means for addressing public participation in international forums relevant to the environment and putting forward issues for discussion at future meetings.

33. The Bureau supported the items that were put forward for next year's discussion, i.e. procedures for ratification and implementation of international legal instruments in Member countries, the preliminary agenda for the Belgrade Conference, and progress in the implementation of the guidelines on public participation in international forums.

34. The Bureau agreed that the next meeting be tentatively held on 5 June 2006, to be confirmed at the Bureau meeting in early 2006.

F. Activities of the Regional Adviser and his contribution to the Committee's programme of work

35. The Bureau took note of the activities of the Regional Adviser particularly in relation to UNECE conventions and their protocols, the EECCA Strategy and the Water and Security Partnership in Central Asia. The Bureau suggested that at the next Committee session, the Regional Adviser report on how the EECCA countries are implementing the EECCA Strategy, focusing in particular on their achievements and the difficulties they have encountered.

G. Transport, health and environment

36. The Bureau was informed about the outcome of the third session of the Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), held in April 2005, and in particular about the outcome of the discussion on the organization of the third High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment to be held in 2007. Delegations agreed to identify topics of high political interest for the High-level Meeting.

37. The Committee may discuss how it could improve the visibility of THE PEP. Furthermore, the Bureau agreed that the third High-level Meeting on THE PEP should be organized back to back with other events foreseen in 2007, only if there are clear subject driven synergies.

H. Health and Environment

38. The Bureau took note of the information concerning two meetings of the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC), the first held in Paris in January 2005 and the second in Copenhagen in June 2005.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

39. The Bureau discussed the proposal put forward by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on the possibility of participating in the CEP Bureau meetings as observers. The Bureau decided to request NGO representatives to better explain the reason for such request in writing for consideration at the next Bureau meeting in October 2005, prior to the Committee session.