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**CONCEPT PAPER ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE
SECOND ROUND OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS (EPRs)**

Introduction

1. In 1993, at the Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Lucerne, the UNECE was entrusted with carrying out Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs) in its member countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which were not OECD members. The EPR programme aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the efforts made by Member countries to manage their environment, and at offering their governments tailor-made recommendations on improving environmental management to reduce pollution, to better integrate environmental policies into sectoral policies and to strengthen cooperation with the international community. In 2004, the UNECE had reviewed the performance of 23 countries, thus ending the first cycle of reviews.

2. The EPR programme has been conceived as a revolving exercise. In October 2003, at its tenth session in Geneva, the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) decided to proceed with a second cycle of EPR reviews. Following the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference held in Kiev in 2003, this second round of reviews, while taking stock of the progress made since the first, would put particular emphasis on implementation, integration, financing and the socio-economic interface with the environment. There is a common understanding that a second review has to be performed about five years after the first.

3. A second round of reviews was carried out for Bulgaria and Estonia in 1999 and in 2000. The second round for Belarus and the Republic of Moldova will be peer reviewed at the 12th session of the CEP in October 2005. These reviews will take account of the Kiev recommendations and reflect the new environmental priorities that have arisen over the past five years. Before going any further in the implementation of the EPR programme, it would be useful if the Committee agreed on the new structure of the EPR report that has been developed to take account of this new context. The reports of the second round of reviews for Belarus and the Republic of Moldova will serve as test cases and offer possible alternatives for a standard report structure, out of which the Committee will retain its preferred option. The second round of reviews will then continue following this selected pattern.

I. ELEMENTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT IN THE SECOND ROUND OF REVIEWS

4. The second round of reviews should build upon the findings and recommendations of the first review. Although covering exactly the same issues, they should reflect the progress in the environmental situation since the first review and report on how the recommendations made in the previous review have been implemented.

5. The recommendations on the second round of EPRs adopted in Kiev (see box below) should be fully implemented: they will be instrumental in shaping the structure of the second round. It was also recommended that cooperation with the Environmental Performance Review programme of OECD be continued and strengthened, and that reviewed countries provide an interim report to the CEP on implementation of the recommendations of the first review within three years of its conclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROGRAMME

Adopted by the Fifth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe", Kiev, 2003.

The second round of Environmental Performance Reviews should:

- Measure progress made in implementation, including implementation of the recommendations from the first review, using a relevant set of indicators;
- Focus more on issues of implementation;
- Remain flexible and focus on the priorities of the countries, including, in particular, new concerns that have arisen;
- Examine issues of financing;
- Give greater emphasis to the integration of the environment with other sectors at all decision-making levels and to its socio-economic interface;
- Make maximum use of existing data.

6. Other key elements which will be taken into account are the new objectives that have emerged since the early 2000s, such as the Environment Strategy for countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), at the regional level, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and sustainable development principles (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation) worldwide.

II. OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE EPR REPORTS AND OPTIONS FOR ADJUSTMENT

7. The report of the second EPR of Belarus can be found at the following address: <http://www.unece.org/env/epr/studies/belarus/welcome.htm> and that of the Republic of Moldova at: http://www.unece.org/env/epr/studies/moldova_2/welcome.htm. Reference will be made to these two documents for supporting the proposals below.

8. As often requested from the secretariat, an *Executive Summary* is proposed in the report of the Republic of Moldova. It would replace the preface at the beginning of the report and give an overview of the main findings or draw attention to any issue of interest. This executive summary would also highlight progress made and the main features and conclusions of the report; it would not contain recommendations.

9. The *Introduction* will include short information on physical context, selected economic indicators, human context (linked to the environment) and institutional context. It will also summarize the situation of the environmental media, i.e., air, water, soil and waste, as these issues will not be systematically be covered in the second round of reviews. This introduction will take stock of progress made on all these topics since the first review. This part, built on essential and non-speculative elements, will not contain any recommendations.

10. In the *Implementation of the recommendations of the first review*, there will be a detailed assessment of the progress made in implementing the recommendations, which will be commented one-by-one or in an aggregated manner, when possible. This chapter may be placed either after the introduction (see Belarus EPR) or as an annex to the report (see Republic of Moldova EPR).

11. Part 1: *Policy making, planning and implementation*, gives the overall strategic, institutional and legal context of the environmental policy in the country. It consists of 4 chapters. The significant progress made by the country since its first review, regarding policy and legislation and the general framework for intersectoral cooperation, is reflected in Chapter 1. The entire Chapter 2 is devoted to compliance and enforcement, which is currently a high priority. Chapter 3 reflects the situation of environmental monitoring and information, an aspect, which was traditionally weak in all countries in transition and hampered their ability to make progress in environmental management, as information is an indispensable decision-making tool. Chapter 4 focuses on international cooperation achievements.

12. Part 2: *Mobilizing financial resources for the environment* covers the environmental revenues and environmental expenditures. This issue is addressed in one chapter in the EPR of Belarus and in two chapters in the EPR of the Republic of

Moldova. Dealing with this issue in two chapters makes the expertise easier since the experts have a narrower field to cover, fewer people to meet, and can carry out an in-depth analysis. The upcoming review of Ukraine will contain two separate chapters, which proved to be easier to handle from an organizational point of view.

13. Part 3: *Integration of environmental concerns in economic sectors and promotion of sustainable development* would contain two to four chapters according to the specific problems of reviewed countries. This issue was well covered in the first round of reviews, but concerns may have changed as a result of economic improvement in many countries. The chapters in Part 3 will include environmental, economic, social and sectoral interfaces chosen on a case-by-case basis jointly by the country and the secretariat. They could either follow the classical “situation-pressure-management tools” pattern, when the issue was not covered in the first review, or, when the issue is covered for the second time, they could provide an update and assessment of the progress made since the first review, and concentrate on a few selected, narrower issues, or new concerns that have arisen in the meantime.

14. The annexes could include the *Implementation of the recommendations of the first review* (Annex 1) and the usual tables on the situation of the country in respect of international agreements. Instead of an update of the standard “Selected economic and environmental data” of the first review, a list of about two hundred carefully selected indicators on pollution, use of natural resources, environmental pressures and sustainable development is proposed in the review of Belarus. This list of indicators could become a standard component of all EPRs if the candidate countries would agree to make an extra effort to gather the relevant data. It should be noted that these indicators are usually displayed in the State-of-Environment reports, or in any national reporting to international conventions, therefore they do not have to be specifically gathered for the EPRs.

15. Finally, it has been suggested that, in each chapter, the section on *Conclusion and recommendations* would be presented differently. Instead of having a short introduction for every recommendation (as in the first round of reviews and the second of Belarus), a single note would summarize all conclusions and introduce the recommendations that would simply be listed thereafter (see second EPR of Republic of Moldova). In general, the preference of the international experts writing the text goes to the first option, as they find it easier and more effective to conclude and simultaneously make recommendations on a single issue.

III. CONCLUSIONS

16. The CEP at its 12th session is invited to give feedback on the proposals of the secretariat concerning the structure of the second round of environmental performance reviews and on the way the relevant recommendations of 2003 Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” have been taken into account in the proposed structure. The CEP may wish to make further suggestions to improve the EPR reports by commenting, for instance, on the relevance of an executive summary, of an enlarged list of indicators, or on the structure of the section on conclusions-recommendations in each chapter.