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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2006-2007**SUBPROGRAMME 01 - ENVIRONMENT**

At its twelfth session, the Committee adopted its programme of work for 2006 – 2007, as contained in the present document. The Committee's Bureau met in June 2005, and prior to the twelfth session, to review the progress in the implementation of the programme of work, and to advise on further developments in particular programme elements.

The Committee on Environmental Policy carries out work in accordance with its strategic goals contained in the “future UNECE strategic directions for the environment CEP/2003/25” which was adopted in 2003 to structure and adapt its programme of work for the next five to ten years. The specific activities in the programme of work for the period from 2006 to 2007, relate to the following main processes and strategic goals

1. Preparation of the sixth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference, to be held in Belgrade in 2007.
Goal 1: Contributing to the “Environment for Europe” process - Programme activity 4 and 6;
2. Environmental performance reviews (EPRs) and environmental monitoring.
Goal 2: Improving environmental governance - Programme activity 1 and 3;
3. Follow-up and support to the regional environmental conventions and protocols.
Goal 3: Improving effectiveness of international legal instruments - Programme activity 5;
4. Regional follow-up to Agenda 21 and to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.
Goal 5: Contributing to regional implementation of the environmental pillar of sustainable development - Programme activity 2 and 7;
5. Promotion of cross-sectoral synergies through cooperation with other ECE principal subsidiary bodies and international organizations.
Goal 4: Integrating environmental concerns into sectoral policies - Programme activity 8.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 1

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

The EPR programme will continue its second cycle of reviews on the basis of the recommendations adopted by the Kiev Conference and the Committee. All countries that are member States of UNECE, but not members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), are eligible for reviews. The second review should take into account the particular needs of countries as decided in Kiev, emphasizing integration (sustainable development), implementation and financing. The second round of reviews is also being used to support the implementation of the Environment Strategy for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

Furthermore, in accordance with the decision of the Committee, the reviewed countries are invited to voluntarily provide interim reports on the implementation of the first review's recommendations within three years of the conclusion of the first review.

Work accomplished

The EPR Expert Group continued to offer advice and support on the preparation for and the conduct of the EPRs, to carry out detailed expert reviews of EPRs prior to the Committee's peer review, and to report back on them to the Committee.

At its twelfth session, the Committee reviewed the environmental performance of Belarus and that of the Republic of Moldova and adopted the recommendations for these countries as contained in the second EPR reports. The Committee discussed mechanisms for compliance and enforcement as well as on management of eco-funds in countries in transition. It also agreed that the structure of the second reviews will include an executive summary and keep the conclusive part of every chapter as in previous EPRs. The Committee was presented with the interim report on the implementation of the recommendations of the first environmental performance review of Kazakhstan and welcomed the holding of launch events of EPRs such as the one held Tajikistan (September 2005).

Work to be undertaken

A second review is planned for Ukraine (2005-2006) and other countries have indicated their intention to be reviewed: Serbia and Montenegro, Kazakhstan and Armenia. Additional requests for a second round of reviews during 2006-2007, as well as interim implementation reports on the progress made to improve the environmental situation and management in countries since the first review, are also expected. Launching events of completed second EPRs will be undertaken at the request of reviewed countries once the translations into the national language are finished.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 2

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

At the Kiev Conference, Ministers agreed on the preparation of a UNECE strategy for education for sustainable development, and invited UNECE to work with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe on a regional strategy for education for sustainable development.

Work accomplished

Following the decision of the Committee at its eleventh session, a High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries (or equivalent national body responsible for education) was convened in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 17 and 18 March 2005. The meeting adopted by acclamation a UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a practical instrument for promoting sustainable development through education. It also adopted the Vilnius Framework for Implementation, under which a Steering Committee on ESD and an expert group on indicators were set up, to facilitate the coordination and review of the Strategy's implementation. The Meeting also launched the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in the UNECE region.

Work to be undertaken

The Steering Committee on ESD will hold its first meeting on 13 and 14 December 2005 to establish its programme of work and to exchange good practices in the implementation of education for sustainable development programmes and policies. The expert group on indicators is expected to produce a set of indicators for assessing the effectiveness of the Strategy's implementation. The final outcome of the group's work will be presented for endorsement to the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 3

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment will continue strengthen environmental information and observation capacities in EECCA and focus to on areas that were emphasized by Ministers in Kiev, in particular the monitoring component of the Environment Strategy for EECCA. It will contribute to the fourth assessment report on the state of the environment for the next "Environment for Europe" Conference in Belgrade.

Work accomplished

At its fifth session (2-3 June 2005), the Working Group reviewed the draft table of contents for the Belgrade assessment report. It made arrangements to support the EEA in the preparation of the report and to better coordinate it with the assessment and data collection activities undertaken in other international forums. The Working Group also agreed on its work programme for the period up to the Belgrade Conference (CEP/AC.102005/2).

The online catalogue, listing national periodicals on the environment in EECCA countries and the environmental reports submitted by these countries to international bodies, was set up on the Working Group's website following the ReportNet system of the European Environmental Agency (EEA). A round table on enterprise monitoring and reporting was organized. Progress was made in the preparation of a manual on the application of environmental indicators in EECCA countries.

Work to be undertaken

Subject to the availability of extra budgetary resources, the Working Group will:

(a) Support the preparation of the Belgrade assessment report by: (i) providing overall guidance and review; (ii) assisting the EEA in data collection; and (iii) ensuring coordination with other international environmental assessments and data collection activities of relevance to the Belgrade assessment report;

(b) Continue strengthening environmental monitoring and reporting capacities in EECCA by: (i) finalizing the manual on the application of key environmental indicators; (ii) preparing, as a next step and on the basis of the manual, recommendations to Governments on the adaptation of monitoring networks to international reporting requirements; (iii) preparing practical guidelines for EECCA on legal, regulatory, institutional, financial and technical measures to improve enterprise monitoring and reporting; (iv) assisting those countries that have not set mechanisms for periodic state-of-the-environment reporting, to do so using the Guidelines endorsed by the Kiev Ministerial Conference; (v) developing further the EcoReporting electronic catalogue; and (vi) coordinating capacity-building activities by EEA and other institutions concerned under the second Tacis monitoring project.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 4

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The Ministers in Kiev requested the Committee to develop, in consultation with the major stakeholders, a communication strategy to raise awareness of the environmental problems in the UNECE region and to increase the visibility of the "Environment for Europe" process as a policy framework for environment-related initiatives in the region.

Work accomplished

At its twelfth session, the Committee, in taking note of the revised draft “Environment for Europe” communication strategy prepared by the secretariat in consultations with stakeholders and the Committee’s Bureau, requested that the Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO) for the sixth Ministerial Conference to revise the strategy for further consideration after the contents of the Conference agenda have been defined.

Work to be undertaken

The WGSO may consider the proposal to develop a communication strategy with the assistance of a drafting group, once the topics for the Conference agenda are more clearly defined. It may also include a communication plan identifying concrete steps to facilitate its implementation for adoption by the WGSO or its Executive Committee during 2006 in such strategy.

The secretariat will continue to post documents for the Committee’s sessions which are related to the “Environment for Europe” process on the web site and will update its media contact points.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 5

FOLLOW-UP AND SUPPORT TO THE UNECE ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS AND PROTOCOLS

Since the 1970s, five regional environmental conventions and 12 protocols have been negotiated and adopted within the framework of UNECE. The responsibility for the implementation activities lies with the governing bodies.

All protocols have entered into force, except the three protocols adopted at the Kiev Ministerial Conference, on Strategic Environmental Assessment; on Civil Liability and Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters; and on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

The Committee’s role is to offer a catalysing forum in which all government representatives, including the governing bodies of the conventions, can share their experience in promoting and assessing the implementation of these regional environmental instruments, and identify means of improving compliance with them. Furthermore, the Committee supports, as appropriate, the implementation of the conventions and their protocols.

Work accomplished

The 4th informal meeting between the Bureaux of the Committee on Environmental Policy and of the governing bodies of the UNECE environmental conventions was held on 6 June 2005, at the invitation of the chairman of the Committee on Environmental Policy, to continue sharing experiences and seeking synergies and areas of cooperation and to assess and promote the implementation of the environmental legal instruments in the region.

In line with the recommendations from the previous meeting, the informal discussions focused in particular 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 or prepared for discussion or adoption at the 2007 Belgrade Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe"; and (d) means for addressing public participation in international forums relevant to the environment.

Work to be undertaken

It is envisaged that informal meetings between the Bureaux of the Committee and the governing bodies of the conventions will continue to be organized annually. The next informal meeting is tentatively scheduled for 5 June 2006 and will focus primarily on preparations for the Belgrade Ministerial Conference and on the outcome of, and follow-up to, the second regional implementation forum on sustainable development.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 6

ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY FOR EASTERN EUROPE, THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA (EECCA)

The Environment Strategy for Countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) aims at strengthening the efforts of the EECCA countries in environmental protection and at facilitating partnerships and cooperation between these and other countries, and stakeholders in the UNECE region.

The Ministers in Kiev invited the Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe (EAP Task Force) to lead efforts to facilitate and support the achievement of the objectives of the Strategy in cooperation with other relevant international bodies and Regional Environmental Centres (RECs). The EAP Task Force, in cooperation with relevant international bodies, and on the basis of information provided by the EECCA countries, was requested to keep the Committee on Environmental Policy informed about progress in achieving the objectives of the Strategy.

Work accomplished

A Conference of Environment Ministers from the EECCA countries and their Partners was held in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 20 and 21 October 2004. The Conference discussed the action programmes and partnerships elaborated since the Kiev Conference to implement the EECCA Environment Strategy, aiming at providing further impetus for their development and implementation. The EAP Task Force has set up a framework for measuring progress in the implementation of the Environment Strategy

Work to be undertaken

The EECCA countries will continue to be the main focus of the technical assistance provided by the UNECE. The implementation of the EECCA Strategy is also promoted through the environmental performance review programme, environmental monitoring activities and the work under the environmental conventions. Relevant ongoing and planned activities in the subregion include the action programme for the development of transboundary water cooperation in the EECCA region under the work programme of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes as well as the Internationally Supported Assistance Programme for EECCA (and South-Eastern Europe) countries to enhance their efforts in implementing the Industrial Accidents Convention.

The EAP Task Force will report to the Committee on the progress achieved as well as other relevant information. Furthermore, responding to the request from Ministers in Kiev, it will also prepare an assessment report for submission to the Ministers in Belgrade on achieving the EECCA Strategy's objectives, including obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Strategy as well as propose ways to enhance its further impact in the countries.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 7

ENVIRONMENT, WATER AND SECURITY INITIATIVE IN CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asian countries launched the Initiative on Environment, Water and Security at the Kiev Conference. The Ministers in Kiev recommended starting preparations for a partnership agreement on transboundary water problems, environment and security in Central Asia, as part of the follow-up to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and as a contribution to the EU Water Initiative and other water initiatives in the region. The Committee will provide a forum for exchanging information and discussing progress in the implementation of related activities.

Work accomplished

Since the Kiev Conference, the countries in the region and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) have sought to ensure political support for the Initiative through, for instance, signing a memorandum of understanding with the European Union on cooperation with the EU Water Initiative. Since then, several activities and projects have been

carried out in collaboration with the Initiative, to discuss further steps in the implementation of the Initiative. In particular an International Conference was organized on regional cooperation on transboundary rivers, as well as a regional workshop on the prospects of developing norms and standards for water quality in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Work to be undertaken

In addition to numerous activities regarding environmental education, public participation and transboundary water, a high-level Meeting on the Central Asian initiative will be organized in Spring 2006 by CAREC with the main aim of strengthening the Initiative's implementation and discussing its possible input to the Belgrade Conference.

Ways to link this initiative's ongoing work with other activities such as: (i) the environment and security initiative including water aspect, in which UNECE is taking part; (ii) to the activities under the Water Convention, and (iii) to the assistance programmes such as the one carried out by the Industrial Accidents Convention, will be sought.

The UNECE secretariat will continue to support the Central Asian Initiative, in particular through provision of technical assistance, in collaboration with other partner organizations, in water-related and other issues.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 8

INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SECTORAL POLICIES

Integrating environmental concerns into the activities of other sectors, whether economic or social, is one of the key challenges for the effective implementation of environmentally sound sustainable development principles. Since the Rio Conference, actions and programmes in the UNECE region have moved towards that goal, but significant efforts are still needed through a wide range of policy, legal, institutional and financial measures and incentives.

The Committee on Environmental Policy has established cross-sectoral linkages, activities and cooperation with other UNECE committees (e.g. human settlements and transport) and the conventions' governing bodies, as well as with other international organizations, such as the World Health Organization's Office for Europe (WHO/EURO). UNECE environmental cross-sectoral programmes should be further encouraged to ensure effective support for national and regional initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production to promote social and economic development.

8.1 TRANSPORT, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

The WHO/UNECE Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) aims at promoting sustainable transport in the region through specific activities with a special focus on promotion of policy integration and more sustainable means of transport in urban areas. In implementing its work plan, THE PEP Steering Committee pays special attention to the needs of the countries in EECCA and South-Eastern Europe as well as those of ecologically sensitive areas in the region.

Work accomplished

At its third session (11-12 April 2005), THE PEP Steering Committee assessed the progress made in the implementation of its work programme (2003-2005), adopted a new work programme, extending to 2007, and provided guidance on its implementation. In addition, the Steering Committee held preliminary discussions on the preparations for the 3rd High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health to be convened in 2007.

Work to be undertaken

The progress achieved in the implementation of the programme of work will be reassessed by THE PEP Steering Committee at its third session, scheduled for 10-11 April 2006.

The Committee on Environmental Policy is invited to further encourage, support and coordinate efforts from the transport, environment and health sectors for the implementation of THE PEP, and in particular for the preparation of the High-level Meeting to be held in 2007.

8.2 ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

WHO/EURO Ministerial Conferences have been organized since 1989 and bring together Ministers of Health and Environment and other stakeholders, in order to reach consensus and make political commitments towards promoting a safe and healthy environment.

Work accomplished

At its twelfth session, the Committee was informed about the implementation of the commitments made at the fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest, 23-25 June 2004) as contained in the Budapest Conference Declaration and in the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE). CEHAPE provides a framework for developing member States' plans and policies on health and the environment.

The Ministers entrusted the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) with following up on their decisions and serving as a steering committee for the preparation of the next Conference. The EEHC held three meetings in 2005. The second and third, held in Copenhagen (June 2005) and Helsinki (December 2005) respectively, focused on the CEHAPE

regional priority goals, namely Goal 3, “Preventing and reducing respiratory disease due to outdoor and indoor air pollution” and Goal 4, focussing on preventing/reducing disease and disability from exposure to hazardous chemicals, physical and biological agents, and hazardous working environments related to the adverse health effects of hazardous chemicals and radiation.

Work to be undertaken

EEHC will continue its activities in accordance with an output-based work plan and report annually on progress made to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. The 2nd meeting of the CEHAPE Task Force was held in Edinburgh, 20-21 October 2005 and the EEHC meeting will be held in Norway in spring 2006, with a focus on preventing/reducing health consequences of accidents and injuries.

The Ministers in Budapest invited the WHO to convene an intergovernmental meeting to carry out a mid-term review of the process in 2007. It was decided that the fifth Ministerial Conference would be held in Italy in 2009.

The European Environment and Health Committee will work in close cooperation with the “Environment for Europe” WGSO.