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**ACTIVITIES OF THE UNECE REGIONAL ADVISER ON ENVIRONMENT AND
THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMITTEE'S PROGRAMME OF WORK**

What is a Regional Adviser?

1. The United Nations has a separate budget line for provision of technical assistance. In UNECE this budget line is used to fund the work of six Regional Advisers responsible for outreach activities of the major work programmes. The Regional Advisers, who are experts in their respective fields, provide advisory services and help with developing project proposals, raising funds, managing projects, training, and organizing study tours, workshops and seminars. It is important for the Regional Advisers to have good contacts with representatives of member countries and a good understanding of the situation in their respective fields in member countries and subregions.

Focus of work

2. All activities of the Regional Adviser on Environment are related to the core programmes and expertise of UNECE and are implemented in close cooperation with responsible staff members. The focus is on facilitating the development of environmental cooperation between countries. The work is in line with the reform of UNECE to increase efforts towards policy implementation, in particular in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE).

Link to the programme of work of the committee on Environmental Policy

3. The work of the Regional Adviser relates to the following elements of the Committee's programme of work:

- Follow-up and support to the UNECE environmental conventions and protocols;
- Environmental Performance Reviews;
- Environment Strategy for EECCA.

Selection of projects and tasks

4. The projects and activities build on direct requests by countries to support the wider application of UNECE conventions and their provisions. A related objective is to enhance synergies between the conventions in the field. Direct collaboration with country authorities is important. The projects are set up to achieve results such as new bilateral agreements, national programmes for policy implementation and improved national legislation.

Cooperation with other international agencies

5. Most of the activities are developed and implemented in cooperation with other international organizations. For example, the Initiative on Environment and Security (ENVSEC) with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) is a framework used for some projects. Important synergies achieved in cooperation on projects include more efficient fund-raising, the presence of local offices, complementarity in terms of expertise and access to national authorities.

Fundraising

6. Although the United Nations funds the work of the Regional Adviser, including a travel budget, projects can only be implemented with the support of extrabudgetary contributions. Countries have so far responded positively to the funding requests of the secretariat. Important donors are Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. The UN Development Account funds the CAPACT project (described further below). The fundraising is usually linked to close cooperation with donor countries on substance and continuous dialogue throughout the preparation and implementation of projects.

Examples of projects

A. Dam safety in Central Asia

7. To prevent major dam accidents in Central Asia, UNECE and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), in response to requests from the subregion, launched a project to improve dam safety in Central Asia. Finland is a partner providing expertise as well as funding of activities. Partners in Central Asia include national authorities responsible for water, energy, emergency situations and foreign affairs as well as the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.

8. Central Asia has around 300 major dams and other water control facilities, mostly on rivers shared by countries. The dams are aging and are not adequately maintained. Meanwhile, the number of people living downstream from dams is growing. For example, the Fergana Valley, which is divided among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, has 9 million inhabitants. If a dam upstream from this valley were to break, the consequences could be disastrous.

9. One goal of the project is to help countries to ensure that relevant principles are reflected in national legislation. The second goal is to promote cooperation between countries so that information about the risk of accidents can be shared quickly, and so that countries can effectively warn and help neighbouring countries in case of an accident. The project is of political importance: it is one of the few directions of cooperation where all five countries in Central Asia participate actively.

B. Establishment of the transboundary Chu-Talas Rivers Commission in Central Asia

10. The project is helping Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan establish a transboundary water commission on the Chu and Talas Rivers. The project partners are UNESCAP and OSCE, and the funding comes from Estonia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. In the two countries concerned, the national water authorities are the main partners. The Chu-Talas Rivers Commission represents a mutually beneficial way for Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to share the responsibility for water infrastructure used by both countries. As part of the cooperation, Kazakhstan has agreed to pay part of the operating and maintenance expenses for a number of Kyrgyz dams and reservoirs supplying water to both countries. This is a good model of cooperation between sovereign states and a significant step forward in water relations in Central Asia.

C. CAPACT

11. Several countries in Central Asia are currently increasing their use of coal, which is harming air quality. The project "Capacity-Building for Air Quality Management and the Application of Clean Coal Combustion Technologies in Central Asia" (CAPACT) addresses the technological gaps and raises awareness of air quality management among relevant institutions in Central Asia. The project is funded by the UN Development Account and is managed in close cooperation between UNECE's Environment, Housing and Land Management and Sustainable Energy Divisions. National counterparts include environment and energy authorities. The project specifically promotes the ratification of the Protocols of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution in the region.

D. Central Asia Regional Water Information Base

12. The Central Asia Regional Water Information Base (CAREWIB) project aims to improve information provision in the water and environment sectors in Central Asian countries in order to promote openness and foster public support for rational use of natural resources. The project consortium includes the Scientific Information Centre (SIC) of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC), UNEP/GRID-Arendal and UNECE, and financial support is

provided by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

13. One of the project's priority tasks is to create a regional Internet portal with regularly updated information on water and environmental issues in Central Asia (www.cawater-info.net). The portal is based on existing, though not always easily accessible, information maintained by SIC ICWC and other organizations in the region under the ICWC. Links are being established to information derived from other online resources on water, energy and the environment in Central Asia, as well as to relevant policy processes. Print publications based on the same information are regularly produced and distributed to increase outreach to policymakers, NGOs and the general public.

E. Promotion of cooperation on the Dniester River

14. In 2004–2006 the project “Transboundary Cooperation and Sustainable Management of the Dniester River” was implemented in collaboration with OSCE. The main conclusion of the project was that transboundary cooperation between Ukraine and Moldova needed to be strengthened. Ukrainian and Moldovan authorities signed a Protocol of Intentions as a basis for future work, and a follow-up project will start in summer 2006 to develop an action plan for more effective cooperation.

F. Capacity for Water Cooperation

15. The project “Capacity for Water Cooperation in EECCA” aims to strengthen the capacity for transboundary water management in EECCA. The objective is to create a framework for cross-fertilization and exchange of experience between river basins and countries on regulatory, institutional, methodological and other aspects of integrated management of transboundary waters, and at the same time to bring in valuable experience from other parts of the UNECE region. Three workshops, each with different partners providing funding and expertise, were held in 2004–2005 with the participation of all EECCA countries. Topics included the legal basis for transboundary water cooperation, information management and public participation, and monitoring and assessment.

Conclusion

16. The Regional Adviser focuses on projects that support implementation of long-term core activities of the division. These projects are intended to produce concrete results in a limited time period, usually not more than three or four years. Only projects that are strongly supported by recipient countries and sufficient donor financing are carried out. Synergies with other relevant actors are sought whenever possible.

Issues for discussion

- How can technical assistance be developed further to support policy development in line with the core programmes of UNECE?
- How can the impact of the Regional Adviser's work be improved?

Annex

THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE REGIONAL ADVISER IN 2006–2007

1. The main projects and activities in 2006–2007 are summarized below. The tasks include providing input on substance, raising funds, coordinating contacts with other organizations and managing projects.
2. The Regional Adviser also liaises with and participates in activities of the EU Water Initiative, the EECCA Environmental Strategy and the Initiative on Environment and Security (ENVSEC). Time permitting, the Regional Adviser responds to ad hoc requests for advice from member countries on priority issues where UNECE experience is available.
3. The three main directions of work are:
 - a) *Projects in Central Asia.* In recent years, contacts have been developed with authorities in the region (water as well as environmental authorities), NGOs, subregional organizations and donors. Several of the projects are contributions towards the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Rational and Efficient Use of Water and Energy Resources in Central Asia, developed under the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). Following are examples of ongoing and planned projects:
 - “Capacity Building for Air Quality Management and the Application of Clean Coal Combustion Technologies in Central Asia” (CAPACT), funded by the UN Development Account and implemented in collaboration with UNESCAP (see www.unece.org/ie/capact/). The project, which aims to facilitate ratification and implementation of the Protocols of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution in Central Asia, will be completed in early 2007;
 - Central Asian Regional Water Information Base (CAREWIB), funded by SDC (Switzerland) and implemented in collaboration with UNEP and the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination for Central Asia (see www.cawater-info.net/index_e.htm). The project will be finalized in 2007. A follow-up project is being prepared;
 - A regional project on dam safety in Central Asia within the SPECA framework started in April 2006 with funding from Finland secured for one year (see <http://www.unece.org/env/water/damsafety.htm>);
 - A project supporting the implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Convention in a Transboundary Context, started in January 2006. Funding for a one-year project is secured. See http://www.unece.org/env/eia/central_asia.htm.
 - b) *Projects involving the EECCA region.* Discussions are ongoing with the European Commission on collaboration in the field of national implementation of integrated water resources management within the framework of the EU Water Initiative. Other examples of ongoing or

planned projects are:

- Capacity for Water Cooperation (CWC), a three-year training and networking project for all EECCA countries focusing on capacity-building for transboundary water cooperation. Two workshops are planned for 2006 and 2007 (see www.unece.org/env/water/cwc.htm);
- Development of transboundary cooperation on and sustainable management of the Dniester River. A second project phase will start in 2006 in collaboration with OSCE (see www.dniester.org).

c) *Water projects in **South-Eastern Europe** aiming to promote the development of transboundary water cooperation.* The following projects are planned:

- Support to Serbia to ratify the Water Convention;
- Raising awareness and creating a baseline for future work by producing an assessment and a publication on transboundary water cooperation in SEE.