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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials
“Environment for Europe”

Second meeting
Geneva, 29–30 June 2006
Item 2 (a) of the provisional agenda

**POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR THE AGENDA
OF THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE***

Prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson

INTRODUCTION

1. At the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials “Environment for Europe” (WGSO) (12–13 October 2005), the Chairperson requested the secretariat to prepare a revised background paper on possible themes for the agenda of the Belgrade Conference, taking into consideration ideas and comments provided by WGSO participants during and after the meeting. The revised paper was made available to the second meeting of the Executive Committee for discussion.
2. This further amended version, which reflects the comments and recommendations of the Executive Committee, is being submitted to the second meeting of the WGSO for consideration and approval, as appropriate. It is intended to facilitate the discussion on the agenda of the Conference.

* The Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, to be held in Belgrade (Serbia and Montenegro) in October 2007. This document was submitted on the above date because of processing delays.

3. One of the most important criteria for any agenda item is that it should merit and warrant the attention of Ministers. Another criterion is that, like the previous “Environment for Europe” Conferences, the Belgrade Conference should be of importance to the whole UNECE region, even if some items may not be equally interesting for all parts of the region.

4. At the first meeting of the WGSO, strong support was expressed for a focus on implementation. The Belgrade event should become a “conference of delivery”. Some countries and the partners in the “Environment for Europe” process submitted proposals for possible themes for the Conference agenda as well as activities and documents to be prepared for the Conference. It was also proposed that each of the possible agenda items be structured to include (a) an assessment of progress, (b) an evaluation of problems and (c) the way forward. Following the request from the Executive Committee at its second meeting, the secretariat, in consultation with the Chairperson, has compiled the proposed themes and activities into a more structured format for consideration by the WGSO (see annex).

5. A large variety of assessments and analytical papers are being prepared for the Conference by “Environment for Europe” partners. The WGSO may wish to consider how to transpose the key messages from these assessments into political decisions by Ministers.

6. The WGSO may wish to consider a title or, as suggested by the European Union, a single heading to summarize the Belgrade themes. “*Environment for Europe: building bridges to the future*” has been proposed by the secretariat. Furthermore, there are some suggestions for titling each day of the Conference to reflect the potential issues for that day: “*Preparing the ground*”, “*Building bridges*” and “*Shaping the future*”.

PROPOSED ELEMENTS FOR A POSSIBLE BELGRADE AGENDA

I. “PREPARING THE GROUND”

A. Monitoring and assessment

7. Ministers in Kiev called on the European Environment Agency (EEA) to prepare the fourth assessment report on the state of the environment in Europe for the Conference, building on new partnerships, especially with UNECE and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, para. 30). They encouraged international cooperation to improve the comparability of information, data collection and monitoring capacities. EEA is preparing the Belgrade assessment on the basis of the report outline that was discussed at the June 2005 session of the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA). The WGEMA will consider first progress in the preparation of the report and then the draft report itself at its two subsequent meetings in 2006.

8. Ministers in Kiev expressed their support for the work of the WGEMA, particularly on strengthening environmental information and observation capacities in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). The WGEMA is preparing guidelines for EECCA Governments to help apply a core set of environmental indicators that are consistent with those applied internationally.

9. The WGEMA also launched the preparation of guidelines on improved enterprise environmental monitoring and reporting in EECCA. Active involvement by big enterprises in this activity could lead to the organization of a round table of Ministers with EECCA – and possibly South-East European (SEE) – business and industry representatives at the Conference.

10. Finally, the WGEMA's close cooperation with EECCA territorial environmental authorities may result in a Recommendation on the use of territorial state of the environment reports in decision-making and public information. All three sets of guidelines and recommendations will be presented, through the Committee on Environmental Policy and the WGSO, to the Conference for endorsement.

B. Education for sustainable development

11. Ministers in Kiev recognized the importance of integrating sustainable development into education systems at all levels and invited Ministers of Education and from other relevant government departments to take an active part in the development of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by 2005 (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, para. 58). The High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries in Vilnius (on 17–18 March 2005) unanimously adopted the Strategy as well as the Vilnius Framework for its implementation.

12. The Meeting discussed the coordination and review of the implementation of the Strategy. It decided to establish a Steering Committee to oversee and promote the implementation. It was suggested that the "Environment for Europe" process could be used as a platform for high-level promotion of the implementation. Many delegations stressed that Ministries of Education should have an equal role in a possible ESD-related session at the "Environment for Europe" conferences. In this respect, a special segment on ESD was proposed for the Belgrade Conference (CEP/AC.13/2005/2). The Steering Committee on ESD at its first meeting in December 2005 confirmed its readiness to organize a segment on ESD during the Belgrade Conference and requested its Bureau to follow up on this decision.

13. The Bureau of the Steering Committee at its meeting on 23 February 2006 discussed a more detailed proposal for this segment and submitted the proposal to the WGSO through its Executive Committee (see ECE/CEP/AC.11/2006/7). The outcome of this segment might take the form of a joint statement on ESD by Ministers of Education and of the Environment highlighting the progress made in the process and giving strategic guidance for its continuation. The WGSO is invited to consider this proposal.

II. "BUILDING BRIDGES"

A. Strengthening instruments, policies and partnerships

EECCA subregion

Environment Strategy for EECCA

14. Ministers in Kiev adopted the Environment Strategy for EECCA. They decided to review the implementation of the Strategy at the Belgrade Conference (ECE/CEP/105/Rev.1, para. 19).

15. The Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme (EAP Task Force), in cooperation with other relevant international bodies and Regional Environmental Centres (RECs), was invited to lead efforts to facilitate and support the implementation of the Environment Strategy for EECCA. The EAP Task Force is expected to present an assessment of progress in implementing the Strategy to the Conference. The Task Force is preparing an analytical report on progress in environmental management in EECCA countries to support the assessment of progress in implementing the Strategy. At the WGSO meeting it was suggested that a deeper analysis of both the progress achieved and causes of failure in the implementation of commitments by EECCA countries be undertaken. Moreover, a realistic road map on how to overcome these problems, including policies for capacity-building, should be prepared as a next step.

16. Ministers decided that the Central and East European subprogramme of the EAP Task Force as well as the work of the Project Preparation Committee in the accession countries should be phased out by 2004. They agreed to consider at the Conference the relocation of the secretariat functions, currently with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), to the EECCA subregion.

Central Asian Initiative on Sustainable Development

17. At the first meeting of the WGSO, the Central Asian States drew attention to the Central Asian Initiative on Sustainable Development, which was developed as a so-called type 2 partnership for the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, with the main goal to build favourable political, institutional, economic, information and other conditions for achieving sustainable development goals in Central Asia. In the Kiev Ministerial Declaration a special sub-item (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, para. 63) was devoted to this initiative. The partners of the initiative suggested preparing a special report on progress in its implementation and addressing the development and prospects of the Central Asian Initiative at the Conference.

SEE subregion

18. Issues of interest for the SEE subregion to be addressed at the Conference will be proposed by the host country in consultation with ministers from SEE countries for consideration by the WGSO. A Ministerial Meeting for SEE is scheduled for the mid-May 2006 at the invitation of the Government of Serbia and Montenegro, with the main objective to collect views and ideas from this region.

UNECE region

Multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)

19. Strengthening the implementation of regional Conventions and Protocols and encouraging efforts to improve their efficiency, effectiveness and coherence are a major goal of the "Environment for Europe" process agreed upon by Ministers in Kiev.

20. Following an internal meeting of secretaries of the UNECE MEAs the issue of compliance and reporting mechanisms was identified as a possible issue for the Conference. The discussion on the nature of contributions is ongoing, and more information will be

provided to the WGSO meeting. The WGSO may wish to consider how progress achieved and further strengthening of the implementation of the various instruments might be addressed at the Conference. The European Union has suggested that an independent evaluation be made of the effectiveness of the UNECE's environmental legal and "soft law" instruments.

Environment Performance Reviews (EPRs)

21. Ministers in Kiev supported the continuation of the EPR programmes of UNECE and OECD. A report harvesting positive impacts of international cooperation in the countries reviewed under the UNECE EPR Programme is envisaged for the Conference. It would focus on the implementation of international commitments and their impact on the modernization of national environmental management and practices.

Environment and security

22. UNEP in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has proposed to prepare for the Conference a short, concise and targeted document to facilitate the Ministers' discussions and provide recommendations for a text to be adopted by the Ministers, possibly as part of the Ministerial Declaration. UNEP has made the background information for this document available to the WGSO meeting for consideration.

B. Biological diversity and ecosystems

23. Ministers in Kiev endorsed the Resolution on Biodiversity submitted by the PEBLDS¹ Council and committed their governments to halting the loss of biodiversity by the year 2010 in the pan-European region through national efforts and regional cooperation.

24. The Belgrade Conference could provide a forum for discussing the activities to date in the pan-European region to address the Kiev Resolution on Biodiversity. The achievements, challenges and needs of the region could be assessed and recommendations made to support the follow-up to the Kiev Resolution and attainment of the 2010 target by Europe. UNEP and the Council of Europe, as hosts of the Joint secretariat of PEBLDS, are willing to prepare and service a session on biodiversity and ecosystems during the Conference.

25. European ECO-Forum has suggested that a round-table discussion between Ministers and NGOs on biodiversity issues in UNECE be held at the Conference, with a special focus on the Countdown 2010 initiative, the role and status of the PEBLDS, and further actions and partnerships in this area. UNEP, as one of the hosts of the Joint Secretariat for PEBLDS, is currently discussing with European ECO-Forum and other stakeholders how best to include this issue in light of the proposal submitted by European ECO-Forum.

Other issues within this context

26. Other issues suggested at the WGSO meeting for further consideration by the WGSO were *Land Degradation*, *Financing and Economics of Ecosystems* and *Mountains*. The

¹ Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy.

ongoing and planned activities in these areas should be kept in mind in order to avoid duplication.

III. "SHAPING THE FUTURE"

A. Towards sustainable consumption and production strategies

Assessing the patterns

27. Ministers in Kiev underlined the importance of the shift towards sustainable production and consumption patterns and encouraged regions, subregions and countries to devise, as appropriate, programmes to accelerate this shift. They referred to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which calls for the "development of a 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns that will promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems". Ministers pledged to encourage and promote the development of such a framework of programmes, "taking them to our next conference" (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, para. 28).

28. In the pan-European region, several regional, subregional and national meetings have been held since the initiation of the Marrakech Process. A European Stakeholder Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) was held in Ostend, Belgium, in November 2004. The meeting identified, among other issues, a need to improve coordination, integration and coherence among various EU strategies and policies and to encourage the development of the business environment for the increased innovation and use of available SCP methodologies. It called for cooperation with transition countries in setting up sustainable infrastructure in areas such as waste, housing and energy and the promotion of public-private partnerships to increase investment in these areas.

29. In the Belgrade assessment EEA will analyse developments in the region towards SCP patterns. Salient issues such as cleaner production, food, housing, mobility, labelling and procurement will be analysed across the whole UNECE region. The draft chapter will be available prior to the WGSO third meeting in October 2006. EEA could be asked to submit to the WGSO major conclusions from the draft chapter, which could help the WGSO in selecting key issues for discussions at the Conference.

30. A proposal for preparing a background report on mapping sustainable consumption and production in EECCA and SEE countries has been developed by UNEP in cooperation with Sweden and EEA and is available at the WGSO meeting for consideration. This report will attempt to provide an overview of consumption and production patterns (with case studies) in EECCA and SEE countries and, together with the SCP material from EEA's fourth assessment, could constitute a basis for discussion of the possible development of SCP programmes for the pan-European region.

31. UNEP also proposed to prepare a draft document on SCP patterns in the UNECE region, based on the findings of the case studies in EECCA and SEE and EEA's fourth assessment, with a view to submitting the final document by February 2007. When discussing this proposal, the WGSO may wish to consider how it could usefully complement the Marrakech Process and the follow-up conference on SCP to be held in Stockholm in June

2007. The WGSO may also wish to discuss whether this proposal should apply to the entire UNECE region or focus on specific subregions.

Energy

32. Ministers in Kiev recognized the variety of initiatives undertaken to integrate environmental aspects and sustainable development into energy policy in the region. They welcomed and supported global and regional efforts to improve energy efficiency and increase the share of renewable energy sources. They specifically invited the Energy Charter Secretariat, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, to report on progress in energy efficiency efforts at the Belgrade Conference.

33. The Energy Charter Working Group on Energy Efficiency and Related Environmental Aspects at its meeting in November 2005 confirmed their intention to prepare a progress report on energy efficiency for the Conference and asked the Energy Charter Secretariat to develop the format of the report in close cooperation with other relevant international organizations.

34. The UNECE Sustainable Energy programme has confirmed that it will prepare a background report on financing energy efficiency and climate change mitigation investments in selected countries with economies in transition of the UNECE region as a background paper for the Conference.

Related issues

35. Other issues suggested for the Conference agenda and requiring the WGSO's consideration are water resources management and chemicals management. These issues could be addressed in the context of the assessment of SCP patterns.

B. Towards the twentieth anniversary of the "Environment for Europe" process

36. The "Environment for Europe" process is a unique partnership of the Member States within the UNECE region, organizations of the United Nations system represented in the region, other intergovernmental organizations, regional environmental centres, NGOs and other major groups.

37. Ministers at the Kiev Conference (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, para. 66) strongly supported the continuation of the "Environment for Europe" process and agreed on goals for the future of the process as follows:

- a) To promote the achievement of policy objectives through regional and subregional cooperation on policy responses based on environmental monitoring and assessments, integration with sectoral policies, and governance, including the involvement of civil society, business and industry, and other major groups;
- b) To strengthen the implementation of environmental instruments to which countries are party, including regional conventions and protocols, and to encourage efforts to improve their efficiency, effectiveness and coherence;
- c) To improve cooperation between the regional programmes of United Nations bodies and organizations and other international organizations and institutions;

- d) To mobilize financial resources from all sources, inter alia, from governments, IFIs², donors and the private sector, to support the implementation of regional environmental instruments and subregional initiatives including capacity building;
- e) To support interregional cooperation and links with the global environmental governance structure, where this adds value;
- f) To contribute to UNECE regional implementation of global sustainable development process;
- g) To improve and strengthen monitoring and assessment in the region.

38. The Belgrade Conference will take stock of agreed commitments and tools within the “Environment for Europe” process and assess their effectiveness, analysing problems in their implementation and sharing success stories and good practices to build on for further progress in capacity-building and the implementation of existing commitments. The WGSO may wish to consider what direction the “Environment for Europe” process should take after the Conference.

Cooperation and synergies with other ministerial processes

39. Ministers in Kiev agreed on the need to make cooperation with other ministerial processes in the region more effective and to limit the number of ministerial conferences. They explicitly mentioned the “Environment and Health” and “Transport, Environment and Health” processes as well as the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe. They also agreed to invite Health and Transport Ministers to future “Environment for Europe” conferences and to involve them in the preparatory work as appropriate (ECE/CEP/94/Rev.1, para. 68).

40. Two high-level meetings are scheduled to take place in 2007: the midterm review of the World Health Organization’s “Health and Environment” process and the third UNECE/WHO High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health. The Working Group might wish to explore whether there are clear, subject-driven synergies between these meetings and the Belgrade Conference.

Expected outcomes of the Belgrade Conference

41. After the discussion at the first meeting of the WGSO, a short negotiated document providing strategic directions and a chairperson’s summary were identified as two options. The Executive Committee at its second meeting concluded that the most appropriate option would be to have both a short Ministerial Declaration, which would preferably focus on a small number of specific items with the main political messages for the future, and a chairperson’s summary. It is proposed that the Declaration focus on (a) further developing partnerships that contribute to the implementation of regional MEAs; (b) strengthening the implementation of the EECCA Strategy; and (c) the future of the “Environment for Europe” process. The WGSO may wish to consider this option and decide to establish a drafting group to start work on the Declaration.

² International financial institutions.

Annex

POSSIBLE DRAFT OUTLINE OF THE BELGRADE AGENDA³

*Compiled following the request and recommendations by the Executive Committee
on the basis of issues initially identified by the WGSO and activities submitted to date by “Environmentfor Europe” partners*

“ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE: BUILDING BRIDGES TO THE FUTURE”					
“PREPARING THE GROUND”		“BUILDING BRIDGES”		“SHAPING THE FUTURE”	
Day 1 (Wednesday, 10 October 2007)		Day 2 (Thursday, 11 October 2007)		Day 3 (Friday, 12 October 2007)	
Time	Agenda Item (Cat. I documents)	Time	Agenda Item (Cat. I documents)	Time	Agenda Item (Cat. I documents)
9.00–10.00	<u>Opening Ceremony</u> (1 hour) <i>(plenary session)</i>	9.00–13.00	<u>Strengthening Instruments, Policies and Partnerships</u> (4 hours) <i>(plenary session/roundtable/panel discussion)</i> EECCA SUBREGION ⇒ Progress in implementation of EECCA Strategy ▪ EAP TF Analytical paper ⇒ CA Initiative on SD ▪ [Assessment report] SEE SUBREGION ⇒ [tbd] ▪ [tbd] UNECE REGION ⇒ [MEAs Compliance and Reporting] ▪ [tbd] ⇒ EPRs ▪ Assessment report ⇒ [Environment and Security] ▪ [Assessment report]	09.00–11.00	<u>Towards SCP Strategies⁴</u> (2 hours) <i>(plenary session/roundtable/panel discussion)</i> ⇒ [tbd] ▪ [tbd]
10.00–13.00	<u>Monitoring and Assessment</u> (3 hours) <i>(plenary session)</i> (1 hour) P Belgrade report <i>(selected Ministerial keynote addressees on the report)</i> ▪ EEA assessment ⇒ Monitoring and Assessment Guidelines ▪ Three sets of UNECE Guidelines P <i>(Roundtable with Business and Industry on Environmental Responsibility and Reporting to be prepared jointly by UNECE, EAP TF and REC for CEE)</i> (2 hours)			11.00–12.30	<u>Towards the 20th Anniversary of the EfE</u> (1.5 hours) <i>(plenary session)</i> ⇒ Ministerial Declaration ▪ Draft Declaration ⇒ Chairperson’s Summary ▪ Draft Chairperson’s Summary
Lunch 13.00–15.00	ESD panel discussion (2 hours)	Lunch 13.00–15.00		Lunch 13.00–15.00	
15.00–18.00	<u>Education for Sustainable Development</u> (3 hours) <i>(joint plenary session of Ministers of Education and of Environment “Learning from Each Other: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward”⁵)</i> ▪ Joint Ministerial Statement	15.00–18.00	<u>Biodiversity</u> (3 hours) <i>(roundtable between NGOs and Ministers)</i>	15.00–	

³ Text in square brackets needs further input and consideration by the WGSO. “Tbd” means “to be determined”.

⁴ Other suggested issues such as Energy, Chemicals, Water, Land Degradation, Mountains, Financing and Economics of Ecosystems are mentioned in the descriptive part of the document. The WGSO will decide whether or not to include them in the Conference agenda. It proposed that these themes be part of the agenda item on strategies towards Sustainable Consumption and Production and Biological Diversity and Ecosystems, as appropriate.

⁵ The title is subject to the decision of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD.