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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

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

Fourth meeting
Geneva, 13 October 2006

REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING

INTRODUCTION

1. The fourth meeting of the Executive Committee of the Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO) for the preparation of the sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (the Belgrade Conference), to be held in Belgrade on 10–12 October 2007, took place in Geneva in the afternoon of 13 October 2006, back-to-back with the third meeting of the WGSO (12–13 October 2006). This report has been prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson.

2. The following members of the Executive Committee participated: Hungary (Ms. Mária Gálvölgyi), Italy (Mr. Massimo Cozzone), Kyrgyzstan (Ms. Baglan Salymambetova), the Russian Federation (Mr. Sergey Kononuchenko), Serbia (Mr. Miroslav Spasojevic, accompanied by Mr. Mihailo Djukic and Ms. Tea Terzic), Sweden (Mr. Jon Kahn), Switzerland (Mr. Juerg Schneider) and the United States (Mr. John Michael Matuszak, Mr. Bronson Griscom and Mr. Chuck Ashley).

3. Participating as observers were the Co-Chairperson of the OECD Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme (represented by Ms. Aziza Nasirova), the Chairperson of the Project Preparation Committee (Mr. Rodney Matthews and Mr. Craig Davies), the Chairperson of the Council for the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (Ms. Sylvi Ofstad Samstag, accompanied by Ms. Ivonne Higuero), a representative of the Presidency of the European Union (Ms. Ann-Britt Ylinen and Ms. Henna Haapala), a representative of the European ECO-Forum (Ms. Victoria Elias) and a representative of the Regional Environmental Centres (Mr. Andrei Isac). The list of participants is available at <http://www.unece.org/env/efe/wgso/Belgrade/ExecomMeetings.htm>.

4. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Miroslav Spasojevic (Serbia).

5. Following the discussions and decisions of the WGSO at its third meeting, the Committee further discussed the development of the provisional agenda of the Belgrade Conference, the activities planned as input to the Conference agenda, the outcomes of the Conference, and the schedule for its own fifth meeting and the fourth meeting of the WGSO, in order to provide further guidance to the secretariat for preparing the documentation for the fifth meeting (14–15 February 2007).

I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

6. The Chairperson opened the meeting, and the Executive Committee adopted the provisional agenda as set out in the working paper WGSO/EXECOM-4/2006/1.

II. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE

7. The Committee requested the secretariat to prepare the first draft of the provisional agenda for the Belgrade Conference, in accordance with the agreed draft outline of the Conference agenda (ECE/CEP/AC.11/2006/2, annex 1) and taking into account the discussions at the third meeting of the WGSO, for the Committee's fifth meeting in February 2007. The Committee emphasized the need to cluster the issues under the session on partnerships. It also recommended including the issues of environmental competitiveness and environmental financing in the Belgrade agenda. The Committee also asked that a timetable for each item/session be included in the draft provisional agenda.

8. In view of the large number of proposed Category I documents, the Committee requested that the final drafts of these documents be submitted to the secretariat no later than 15 January 2007 for timely circulation to the Committee. Documents submitted after the deadline would not be considered. With the exception of the European Environment Agency's Belgrade

Assessment and the EAP Task Force's¹ EECCA Strategy report, which would have separate submission deadlines, Category I documents should not exceed 8,500 words. At its fifth meeting, the Committee would review and consider these drafts and make decisions regarding the Category I documents for the Conference. The secretariat would prepare a list of proposed Category I and II documents to facilitate the discussion.

9. The Committee reiterated the need to develop a synthesis report containing the executive summaries of relevant Category I and II documents, which would facilitate the work of the ministers at the Conference by providing them with a user-friendly and concise overview of major Conference documents. The secretariat offered to prepare a draft template to ensure the consistency of the format of executive summaries for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.

10. With regard to the Ministerial Declaration, the Committee requested the secretariat to provide a first draft of possible elements. The deadline for submission of this draft to the Committee is 20 December 2006.

III. THE BUDGET REQUIRED FOR THE CONFERENCE AND THE PREPARATORY PROCESS

11. In light of the comprehensive discussion of the budget issue by the WGSO, which had noted with appreciation the pledges of financial support by some donor countries, the Committee did not see the need to elaborate further on this item.

IV. THE THIRD MEETING OF THE WGSO AND THE FOURTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

12. As agreed, the fourth meeting of the WGSO would take place in Geneva on 30 May – 1 June 2007, back-to-back with the special session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (29 May 2007). Regarding its own fifth meeting, initially scheduled for 14 February 2007, the Committee requested the UNECE secretariat to explore the possibility of postponing this meeting by one week. The secretariat would do so and would inform the Committee of the result in due course.

V. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

13. The Chairperson thanked the members of the Executive Committee for the constructive discussion and closed the meeting.

¹ Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Plan for Central and Eastern Europe.