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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Eighth session

Geneva, 12-13 June 2007

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Reporting to the Committee on Environmental Policy

REPORTING TO THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

**ELEMENTS FOR THE WORKING GROUP'S REPORT ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS MANDATE**

Addendum 1

SYNOPSIS OF RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Submitted by the representative of the Working Group

Summary

The present document contains suggestions on the draft report for the Committee on Environmental Policy on the implementation of the Working Group's mandate, prepared on the basis of responses from Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the questionnaire prepared for that purpose. The questionnaire itself is annexed for information purposes.

1. Generally speaking, the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) take a positive view of the results achieved by the Working Group, in terms of improving their national environmental policy and developing systems and tools for its effective implementation.
2. By being involved in preparing the regular European assessment reports, countries have been able to compare the approaches and methodology which they use in preparing comparable documents at the national level and have gained practical experience in applying established approaches in this area. Almost all the EECCA countries have embarked on a gradual transition to the preparation of national assessment reports on the basis of the corresponding indicators and parameters and, in a number of countries (such as Uzbekistan), these documents are already 85% in compliance with the Working Group's recommendations.
3. This has been facilitated by the presentation of the Working Group's recommendations in the form of a separate document: the Guidelines for the Preparation of Governmental Reports on the State and Protection of the Environment, approved by the Kiev Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" held in 2003.
4. Implementation of the recommendation on ways of improving national environmental monitoring and information systems for EECCA countries has also been reasonably effective, subject to actual economic conditions in those countries.
5. Certain provisions in this document were reflected in materials prepared for the session held by the Government of the Russian Federation on the organization of State environmental monitoring and in the corresponding draft government decision on this matter, and have also been applied in the implementation of other decisions adopted at that session.
6. In May 2006, the Government of the Republic of Armenia approved an outline plan for State environmental monitoring, under which it has considerably increased budget funding for this work, which has been more than doubled. In Georgia, the document was taken into consideration when reforming the country's environmental agencies and creating a monitoring and forecasting centre incorporating the hydrometeorological service, part of the geological service and a number of environmental science and research institutes. The recommendations have been used in Uzbekistan in the preparation of government-ratified environmental monitoring programmes for the period 2006-2010.
7. The documents prepared by the Working Group for the Belgrade Conference represent a logical development and continuation of two documents prepared beforehand by the Working Group and adopted at the Kiev Conference. They spell out practical measures to integrate existing national environmental monitoring and assessment systems into international systems and to ensure a sounder approach to the identification of needs and priorities in environmental protection work at the national level.
8. Thus, the main benefit of the recommendations, guidelines and other documents prepared by the Working Group is the charting, in the light of international experience, of the main areas in which practical steps should be taken by the EECCA countries to provide information support for environmental policy, to improve this policy and to give technical guidance in this area.

9. In the EECCA countries, in tackling issues falling within the remit of the Working Group, the system of intersectoral coordination and cooperation at the national level which is being set in place in those countries has also helped ensure the effective implementation of the documents in question. In virtually all these countries, when formulating positions on matters brought to the attention of the Working Group, attendance by representatives of the ministries and departments responsible for these matters is compulsory and the departments concerned are involved in the implementation of decisions adopted by the Working Group which necessitate a cross-sectoral approach. In recent years this task has also been facilitated by the more extensive involvement of national experts and the representatives of non-governmental organizations and industries in the Working Group's activities.
10. As noted above, participation by the EECCA countries in the activities of the Working Group is also conducive to boosting the resources made available within these countries for tackling priority issues identified by the Working Group.
11. In recent years, there has been a substantial increase in the authority and visibility of the Working Group, at both national and international levels: that standing has been considerably enhanced by the close contacts that have been forged with specialized bodies within the United Nations system, the executive bodies of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) and other international conventions, agreements and programmes.
12. The EECCA countries will also face significant challenges that fall within the remit of the Working Group after the Belgrade Conference, relating, among other things, to the practical implementation of the documents adopted at that conference.
13. In this connection, it is particularly important that it should be accorded permanent status and that the instruments governing its activities should be made more precise.

ANNEX

Questionnaire for EECCA country members of the Working Group

Country	Surname and first name of person completing the questionnaire
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1. Benefit to your country of its involvement in the preparation of assessment reports for the "Environment in Europe" conferences. Examples:
2. Adoption of recommendations, guidelines and other documents of the Working Group in your country. Examples:
3. Expected benefit to your country of documents prepared for the Belgrade Conference relating to the application of environmental indicators, the preparation of assessment reports, the conduct of environmental monitoring and the accountability of enterprises:
4. Effectiveness of interdepartmental corporation in your country in the context of participation in the Working Group:
5. Involvement in the Working Group's activities of national experts and representatives of non-governmental organizations and industries:
6. Visibility of the Working Group in your country. Examples:
7. Fundraising in your country for the implementation of the Working Group's programme of work. Examples:
8. Assessment of the steps taken by the Working Group to develop ties with the governing bodies of multilateral environmental agreements, UNECE bodies and other international networks and forums:
9. Whether the activities of the (ad hoc) Working Group should be continued or terminated or whether it should be converted into a permanent body:
10. Terms of reference of the Working Group, if it is considered that it should remain in operation.
