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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Fifteenth session
Geneva, 21–23 April 2008
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

PROGRAMME OF WORK 2008–2009

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF
THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Bureau agreed on a questionnaire to be sent to UNECE Governments, based on paragraph 38 of the Belgrade Ministerial Declaration, to solicit views from Governments on the reform of the “Environment for Europe” process and, on the basis of responses, to compile an options paper for the fifteenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

The Bureau reviewed the ongoing activities of the Committee, and in particular discussed proposals to modify procedures regarding the Environmental Performance Reviews at the Committee’s sessions. The Bureau also agreed on the Terms of Reference of a working body on environmental monitoring and assessment to be submitted to the Committee for the approval.

The Bureau further agreed on the Committee’s provisional agenda.

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The meeting was attended by Ms. Ruzanna Davtyan (Armenia), Mr. Zaal Lomtadze (Georgia), Mr. Bert-Axel Szelinski (Germany), Ms. Eldrid Nordbo (Norway), Mr. Jon Kahn (Sweden), and Mr. John Michael Matuszak and Mr. Chuck Ashley (United States of America). Mr. Czeslaw Wieckowski (Poland) and Ms. Narin Panariti (Albania) were absent. The UNECE secretariat was represented by Mr. Kaj Bärlund, Ms. Christina von Schweinichen, Ms. Monika Linn, Ms. Catherine Masson, Mr. Mikhail Kokine, Ms. Brinda Wachs and Ms. Natalia Golovko.
2. The Bureau adopted its agenda, noting the need for ample time to discuss the reform of the “Environment for Europe” process.

II. THE OUTCOME OF THE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” CONFERENCE IN BELGRADE

A. The reform of the “Environment for Europe” process

3. Following the request of member States at the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007) and as reflected in the Belgrade Declaration, the Committee was invited to develop, by the end of 2008 in consultation with EfE partners, a plan for the “Environment for Europe (EfE) reform. The Bureau discussed planning regarding the preparation of the reform on the basis of a note prepared by the secretariat.
4. The Bureau agreed that an options paper was critical as a basis for the discussion of the reform at the Committee session, and that it should reflect the views of UNECE Governments. It was therefore decided that the secretariat would send out a letter to solicit views from Governments and, on the basis of responses, compile an options paper in advance of the Committee’s fifteenth session (21–23 April 2008).
5. During the Bureau meeting, a questionnaire based on paragraph 38 of the Belgrade Declaration was prepared and agreed upon. The secretariat was requested to send it out immediately, together with a letter to Governments.

B. The Ministerial Declaration: decisions taken to be reflected in the Committee’s programme of work

6. To reinforce the Committee’s activities as reflected in its programme of work, the secretariat had prepared a paper to provide the Bureau (and the Committee). This paper consisted of a compilation of the decisions taken at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference and reflected in the Belgrade Declaration, as well as the statements contained in the Chair’s Summary that were relevant to the Committee’s mandate and programme of work. This paper was prepared in view of the discussions to be held on the Committee’s programme of work, while also taking into consideration the goals contained in the document CEP/2004/2 ([Future UNECE strategic directions for the Environment](#)), which was adopted in 2004 as guide for the Committee to structure, assess and continuously adapt its programme of work.

7. The Bureau although recognizing the usefulness of such paper, agreed to postpone the discussion until later, so as to consider it in conjunction with the overall reform of the EfE process.

III. REVIEW OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S PROGRAMME OF WORK

A. Environmental Performance Reviews

8. The secretariat presented a background paper on proposals to modify the peer review procedure, in particular to involve the Committee more deeply in the process. Three non-exclusive options were proposed to the Bureau as a basis for discussion. The Bureau decided all three options were feasible and requested the secretariat to submit them to the Committee for discussion and subsequent decision. The Bureau felt that enlargement of the process, i.e., allowing member country representatives to participate in the Environmental Performance Review (EPR) Expert Group, could have cost implications that should be borne by the countries themselves and not taken on through the limited available resources of the Committee or EPR Trust Funds.

9. According to the outcome of the discussion held on the modification of the peer review procedure at the Committee session, the Terms of Reference of the EPR Expert Group will also be revised by the Committee, including membership of the Expert Group for the next biennium. The secretariat informed the Bureau that the number of members of the Expert Group would remain stable while a few of the members would be replaced to give an opportunity to other countries from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe to participate in the EPR process.

10. The Bureau asked the secretariat to make a request to countries for contributions to the EPR Trust Fund sufficiently in advance to allow countries time to process the demand.

B. Environmental monitoring

11. The Bureau considered the results of the eighth session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2007/2), the report on the implementation of the Working Group's mandate (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2007/3 and Add.1), and its recommendation the Bureau that it be converted it into a Working Party.

12. The Bureau discussed future work of UNECE on environmental monitoring and assessment in the light of the Belgrade Ministerial Conference's invitation to continue this activity. The Bureau agreed on the draft terms of reference of its working body on environmental monitoring and assessment to be submitted to the Committee for its approval and, thereafter, to UNECE Executive Committee for endorsement. The Bureau asked for clarification from the secretariat of the difference between an UNECE Working Group and a Working Party.

IV. PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

13. The Bureau agreed with the provisional agenda for the fifteenth session of the Committee, with some modifications according to the discussion held. The request to allocate enough time for the item on the EfE reform process was put forward.

14. The Bureau requested postponing the meeting between the Committee and the UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements Governing Bodies Bureaux to autumn 2008, instead holding it in April 2008.

V. REPORTING ON PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

15. The Bureau reviewed, for the 2008–2009 biennium, the draft expected accomplishments related to each cluster of activities, together with the related indicators of achievement contained in a paper prepared by the secretariat. Each Sectoral Committee is expected, at the request of the UNECE Commission, to conduct biannual evaluations related to their subprogrammes' performance.

16. The Bureau was also informed on the reporting related to the accomplishments of the 2006-2007 budget year for each accomplishment, on the results achieved and lessons learned, including areas needing adjustment.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

17. Members of the Bureau discussed its composition, due to retirement of Mr. Szelinski and the prolonged absence of some members the Bureau. Consultations will take place among delegations for putting forward new candidatures.

18. The Bureau agreed to prolong the Committee's session by half-day and to have the Bureau meeting after the CEP session in the afternoon. The idea was to allow enough time for the discussion on the EfE reform. The Committee's session therefore will be held from 21 to 23 April 2008 (morning only) and the Bureau will meet on 23 April in the afternoon. The Bureau intends to discuss further steps in the preparation of the EfE reform, taking into account of the deliberations taken at the Committee session on that item.

19. The Bureau was informed that Mr. Kaj Bärlund would be retiring. Mr. Bärlund was thanked for his valuable leadership during all his years in office.
