



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

ECE/CEP/2008/8
29 July 2008

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Special session
Geneva, 13-15 October 2008
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

REFORM OF THE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” PROCESS

DRAFT REFORM PLAN

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document was prepared pursuant to the decision of the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” held from 10 to 12 October 2007 in Belgrade (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/8, para. 38). It was prepared by the UNECE secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) and will serve as an input to the discussion of the reform of the “Environment for Europe” (EfE) process at the CEP special session, with the view to preparing a draft reform plan to be endorsed by UNECE in spring 2009.

The document presents possible objectives and priorities, general principles and modalities of the EfE process after the reform. It also addresses issues related to the future EfE Conferences, such as the preparatory process, format and outcomes, and provides proposals on the implementation aspects under the EfE process.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007) recognized the important value of the “Environment for Europe” (EfE) process as a unique pan-European forum for tackling environmental challenges and promoting broad horizontal environmental cooperation, and as a pillar of sustainable development in the UNECE region. The EfE process was considered to be an important framework for bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the region. The added value of the EfE process was recognized in its close links with other regional and subregional initiatives and processes, which help to integrate environmental and sectoral policies.

2. The ministers in Belgrade agreed that the EfE process, initiated in 1991, needed to be reformed. The purpose of the reform was [to examine the full cost and unique benefits of the process in order to strengthen its effectiveness - USA] so as to ensure that it remained appropriate for, and fully aligned with, the needs of the UNECE region and the evolving political and economic landscape, as well as the environmental priorities of the region.

3. The Belgrade Ministerial Declaration stated that the reform should focus on, although may not be limited to, the following aspects:

- (a) The format, focus and priorities of the process and Ministerial Conferences;
- (b) Evaluating the performance and impact of the process;
- (c) Attracting the broader interest and more active engagement of all stakeholders, in particular the private sector;
- (d) Expanding the use of partnerships as vehicles for improving implementation;
- (e) Leveraging external contributions of expertise, manpower and resources;
- (f) Assessing ways and means to promote more effectively the UNECE region-wide dimension of environmental cooperation;
- (g) The full cost of the process and the effective allocation of available resources;
- (h) Future secretariat arrangements.

4. In order to address the above issues in depth and with due consideration, the ministers invited the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) to develop, in consultation with EfE partners [such as intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector - OECD, Georgia] [, and the Regional Environmental Centres (RECs) - Kazakhstan], a plan for EfE reform so that it could be endorsed at the political level by UNECE in spring 2009.

5. The ministers further decided that the next EfE Ministerial Conference would be organized on the basis of the agreed reform.

II. OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES OF THE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” PROCESS

6. [The main objective of the EfE process should be providing a framework for improving environmental policies, conditions and cooperation in the UNECE region and bridging gaps between countries. This would contribute to enhancing a convergence of environmental standards and would secure conditions for peace and security at the regional as well as the global

level. The process should also seek to contribute to a better quality of life by promoting linkages between environmental protection and social prosperity - Czech Republic].

7. [The political priorities should be based on the commitments already taken under the EfE process. These may might include:

- (a) Improvement of environmental governance, including strengthening environmental institutions and implementation of policy instruments;
- (b) Streamlining the implementation of the existing UNECE legally binding and legally non-binding instruments;
- (c) Enhancing efforts in environmental monitoring;
- (d) Ensuring implementation of the Environmental Performance Review programme;
- (e) Raising public awareness of environmental issues;
- (f) Promoting linkages between environmental policy, economic and social well-being and competitiveness - EU].

8. [Furthermore, thematic priorities of the EfE process would be identified in line with recent needs and in respect to future emerging issues – EU].

9. In the future, the EfE process will be based on general principles and agreements on the operational modalities, as described below.

III. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

10. The ministers in Belgrade agreed that the EfE process should:

- (a) Keep its UNECE region-wide dimension and be open for all interested countries of the region;
- (b) Engage all stakeholders, including the private sector, to strengthen the work in partnership;
- (c) Maintain close links with other regional and subregional initiatives, and focus on specific needs that are not entirely addressed by other cooperative frameworks, instruments or processes in the region and its subregions;
- (d) Concentrate on results-based, action-oriented activities;
- (e) Be kept open to issues on which the process can provide added value;
- (f) Use delivery as a major criterion of its effectiveness. CEP should regularly consider and assess progress achieved under the process.

11. To complement the above principles, a consensus emerged from CEP in relation to the EfE process and the Conference:

- a) On the one hand, the EfE process-related principles are as follows:
 - (i) [Ministers other than those of the environment would be involved to promote policy integration – ~~delete, EU~~]/ [A broader engagement from the Governments is needed to achieve [long-term - Kazakhstan] policy integration between sectors - EU];
 - (ii) [Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure implementation of the commitments taken at the EfE Ministerial Conferences - Belgium];
 - (iii) [Ways and means would be considered to provide more support to subregional activities; - ~~delete, USA~~];

- (iv) [Existing subregional offices, [including RECs - Kazakhstan] should provide support to the implementation of commitments at the national [and subregional - Kazakhstan] levels taken within the process; Montenegro];
 - (v) [[Mechanisms to link – ~~delete~~ - UNDP, Georgia]/[Links between - UNDP, Georgia] the activities under the EfE and global processes and cooperation with relevant global international [and regional - Montenegro] organizations should be [explored – ~~delete~~, UNDP, Georgia]/[enhanced - UNDP, Georgia] - ~~delete~~, USA];
 - (vi) [Implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements [and harmonization of environmental legislation - Kazakhstan] should be one of the targets of the process - EC];
 - (vii) [The Environmental Performance Reviews should be seen as important instruments - EC];
- b) On the other hand, the Conference-related principles are:
- (i) The ministerial level of the Conferences should be maintained;
 - (ii) Specific mechanisms for attracting high-level [participants – ~~delete~~, Sweden]/[participation - Sweden], including those from the private sector, should be developed;
 - (iii) A limited number of priorities [, not more than three - Kazakhstan] should be addressed by each Conference;
 - (iv) [Effective coordination should be enhanced between the regional and subregional partners in the region , [including development of special programmes and institutions - Kazakhstan]- ~~delete~~, USA];
 - (v) An effective communication strategy should be further developed, comprising, inter alia, special events for journalists, circulation of electronic newsletters and maintaining a dedicated website. [The role of TV as the broadest form of mass media should be considered - Kazakhstan];
 - (vi) The outcome documents, in all forms, should be focused and action-oriented;
 - (vii) Carbon neutrality of the Conferences should be [ensured – ~~delete~~, Austria]/[envisaged, depending on the financial resources available - Austria].

IV. THE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” CONFERENCE

Preparatory process

12. Materializing the above-mentioned principles calls for streamlining and improving the preparatory process for the Conferences. In this spirit, the following measures should be taken:

- (a) [Preparations for the Conference should start [18 – ~~delete~~, USA]/[12 - USA]/[18 - Kazakhstan] months in advance [. To help identifying a limited number of priorities for the Conference, the substance of a pan-European assessment report would have to be ready by that time. – ~~delete~~, USA]/[with the identification of a

limited number of priorities for the Conference. The pan-European assessment reports and process can contribute to priority-setting - USA]; - ~~delete, EU~~];

- (b) [Out of these 18 months, six will be dedicated to review the key environmental gaps and challenges identified in the assessment and, on this basis, to select the priority topics to be addressed at the Conference. The remaining 12 months would be used for substantive preparatory work related to these topics - ~~delete, USA, EU~~]
[Preparations for the Conference will start not later than 12 [18 - Kazakhstan] months in advance of the date of the Conference. A limited set of priorities should be identified from the outcomes of the last Ministerial Conference and of the pan-European as well as subregional and national environmental assessments and reports. Early on in the preparatory process, a review will be made of emerging issues and challenges to be taken into account when determining priorities for the Conference – EU, Montenegro];
- (c) CEP would act as the convening body for the preparatory process. To maintain the open nature of the preparatory process and the engagement of all stakeholders, the preparations for the Conferences would be discussed by CEP, at its special sessions. [The latter would follow the rules and procedures that were applied in the past by the Ad Hoc Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO) – pending future discussions, USA]. Furthermore, CEP, at its special sessions, would consider and approve the official documents for submission to the Conference. Special sessions would be scheduled back-to-back with regular CEP sessions, if appropriate. [The CEP Bureau, extended to include major partners, would serve the same role as the Executive Committee for the previous Conferences – pending future discussions, USA];

or, alternatively,

The Ad Hoc Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO) would continue to serve as the convening body for the preparatory process. When appropriate, WGSO meetings would be scheduled back-to-back with CEP sessions. WGSO would, as in the past, consider and approve official documents for submission to the Conference. The Executive Committee would continue to serve as the Bureau of the WGSO;

- (d) Particular efforts would be made to involve private-sector representatives in the [Conference, including in the – USA] preparatory process [including identifying – ~~delete, USA~~]/[and in the identification of the - USA] priority issues;
- (e) [To reduce the amount of documents produced for the Conference, only one official document per selected topic would be prepared by UNECE, in close cooperation with the EfE partners. In the case of a lack of in-house expertise on a given subject in UNECE, another EfE partner would take the lead for preparing the document. The official substantive documentation would thus comprise the pan-European assessment and the issue-specific reports; - ~~delete, EU~~] / [To reduce the amount of documents produced for the Conference, only one official document per selected topic would be prepared by the UNECE or another EfE partner, in close cooperation with other EfE partners. The official substantive

documentation would thus comprise the pan-European assessment and issue-specific reports - EU];

- (f) Interested UNECE member States, EfE partners and other stakeholders could produce other documents featuring their activities and initiatives related to the EfE process, which would be circulated as background documents;
- (g) [The preparatory process would be serviced by the UNECE secretariat - pending future discussions, USA];
- (h) [For the preparatory process of the Conference and the Conference itself, the necessary extrabudgetary financial resources would have to continue to be provided to UNECE to supplement the United Nations core budget resources – pending future discussions, USA]
- (i) The host country should assume relevant financial commitments.

Format

13. The periodicity, duration and the organization of discussions at the Conference should be as follows:

- (a) The Conferences should be held every four to five years, with each Conference lasting two-and-a-half to three days [maximum - EC];
- (b) Based on the previous experience, the Conference should start with an opening event. The host country would be given an opportunity to organize additional events highlighting its special features [outside the official Conference agenda – delete, Kazakhstan];
- (c) The discussions at the Conference should be arranged in an interactive manner and combine various types of sessions, e.g. plenary sessions, roundtables and moderated panel discussions, with a limited number of main speakers from different stakeholders (e.g. UNECE member States, EfE partners and major groups, including the private sector). [When possible, sessions could be run in parallel - delete, Sweden];
- (d) The Conference could be structured around the following main clusters (all of them focusing on the agreed priorities):
 - (i) Plenary sessions for the presentation and discussion of the priority topics;
 - (ii) Sessions on ongoing cooperation and partnerships in the UNECE region and its subregions with different stakeholders, including the private sector;
 - (iii) [A session of NGOs and ministers in the roundtable format - Eco-Forum, Georgia]
 - (iv) Sessions dedicated to announcing new partnerships and initiatives by stakeholders;
 - (v) A brief concluding session with the presentation (and adoption, if appropriate) of the main outcomes of the Conference;

- (e) To address issues relevant to the agenda of the Conference in more detail, side-events should be organized by interested UNECE member States, EfE partners and stakeholders, [~~outside the official Conference agenda - Sweden~~];
- (f) To attract the attention of the private sector, opportunities should be provided for the organization of promotional events such as poster exhibitions, trade fairs, roundtables and environmental award initiatives.

Outcomes

14. Conference outcomes might include:
- (a) A chairperson's summary;
 - (b) Statements [, (decisions) – ~~delete, USA~~] by interested ministers on specific subjects and/or for specific subregions;
 - (c) [[A – ~~delete, EU~~] Possible negotiated [outcome – delete, EU]/[outcomes - EU], [including a roadmap for further action - ~~EC~~] which would be strictly limited to items included in the Conference agenda;- ~~delete, USA~~]
 - (d) [[Soft law – ~~delete, Georgia~~]/[Non-legally binding - ~~Georgia~~] [and legally binding, - ~~Kazakhstan~~] documents ([e.g. – ~~delete, Kazakhstan~~]/[including - ~~Kazakhstan~~], guidelines, recommendations – ~~delete, USA~~], [roadmaps - ~~EU~~], action plans and strategies);
 - (e) [Adoption or decision to start negotiations of new legally binding regional or subregional agreements, if relevant - ~~delete, Turkey~~];
 - (f) Announcement of pledges [, including financial - ~~Belgium~~] by [individual stakeholders – ~~delete, USA~~]/[governments at all levels - ~~USA~~], and of new initiatives and public-private partnerships launched;
 - (g) [Assessment reports - ~~EU~~].

[V. Title to be identified]

15. [The EfE process is an evolving process which comprises the EfE Conferences and the implementation activities between Conferences, including activities by all EfE partners. The implementation phase should also be more focused and results-oriented – ~~EU~~].
16. [The EfE process should continue to build on good practice, also taking into account the [priority - ~~Kazakhstan~~] needs of the region [and subregions - ~~Kazakhstan~~] in the context of globalization, and should include different players such as Governments, producers and consumers, financing institutions and others to achieve the goals of the process – ~~EU, Montenegro~~].
17. [The process should provide additional value to the state of the environment at the pan – European level through enforcement and putting in place the practical tools and financial means for implementation of the political decisions made in the framework of UNECE – ~~Montenegro~~].
18. [The REC network can play a greater role not only in the preparatory process of the Conferences, but also in the implementation of the overall EfE process' objectives and priorities – ~~EU~~].

19. [Active participation by and input of the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, and [South-Eastern Europe – Montenegro] should be recognized as a prerequisite for activities under the EfE process – EU].
20. [The ways and means to strengthen implementation of the objectives and priorities of the EfE process should be regularly considered by the member States, and the required partnerships should be encouraged – EU].
21. [Guidelines to improve the national systems for environmental management, in particular in regard to building and improving the human and technical capacities of EECCA and SEE countries, should developed – Montenegro].
22. [The establishment of a roadmap, with leading countries or organizations for one or more issues as well as specific time frames, would contribute to the EfE process' objectives and priorities- EU].
23. [A mid-term review to give an oversight of the implementation of the EfE commitments would provide renewed impetus to the process – EU]. [For the purposes of this review, a limited number of indicators could be developed - Eco-Forum, Armenia, France, Switzerland]. [The findings of the evaluation process will be translated into recommendations for UNECE member States – Montenegro].
