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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

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REVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2009

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. At its previous special session (13–15 October 2008, ECE/CEP/150), the Committee on Environmental Policy requested the secretariat to prepare a revised programme of work for 2009.
2. The Committee carries out work in accordance with the strategic goals adopted in 2003 (CEP/2004/2) to structure and adapt its programme of work. Specific activities in the draft programme of work for 2009 relate to the following main processes and strategic goals:
 - (a) **Goal 1: Contributing to the “Environment for Europe” process.** Programme activity 1, “Environment for Europe” reform;
 - (b) **Goal 2: Improving environmental governance.** Programme activities 2 and 3, Environmental Performance Reviews and environmental monitoring;
 - (c) **Goal 3: Improving the effectiveness of international legal instruments.** Programme activity 4.1, implementation of multilateral environmental agreements;
 - (d) **Goal 4: Integrating environmental concerns into sectoral policies.** Programme activity 4.2, environment and security; and programme activity 4.3, promoting environmental partnerships with the private sector;
 - (e) **Goal 5: Contributing to regional implementation of the environmental pillar of sustainable development.** Programme activities 5, 6, 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3: sustainable development in the region; integration of environmental and sectoral policies; education for sustainable development; transport, health and environment; and environment and health.

SUBPROGAMME 01– ENVIRONMENT

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 1

“ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” REFORM

3. At the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007), ministers agreed to undertake a reform of the “Environment for Europe” (EfE) process to ensure that the process remained relevant and valuable, and to strengthen its effectiveness as a mechanism for improving environmental quality and the lives of people across the region. They decided that the reform should focus on, although may not be limited to, the following aspects:

- (a) The format, focus and priorities of the EfE process and Ministerial Conferences;
- (b) Evaluating the performance and impact of the EfE 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 more effectively promote the region-wide dimension of environmental cooperation;
- (g) The full cost of the EfE process and the effective allocation of available resources;
- (h) Future secretariat arrangements.

4. Ministers invited the Committee to develop, in consultation with EfE partners, a plan for the EfE reform so that it could be endorsed by the Commission at its next session (30 March–1 April 2009).

Work accomplished

5. The Committee held a first substantive discussion on the EfE reform during its fifteenth session. At the request of the Committee, the secretariat, with assistance of the Bureau, prepared a draft outline of the EfE reform plan that was discussed at the meeting of the Committee’s Extended Bureau (23–24 June 2008) and used as the basis for the draft reform plan. The draft reform plan was discussed in depth at a special session of the Committee (13–15 October 2008).

Work to be undertaken

6. The reform plan will be further discussed at the next special session of the Committee, scheduled to be held from 27 to 29 January 2009, with the aim to finalizing it for the subsequent endorsement by the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 2

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

7. The Environmental Performance Review (EPR) programme is continuing its second cycle of reviews on the basis of the recommendations adopted by the Fifth EfE Ministerial Conference (Kyiv, 2003) and by the Committee. The second reviews focus on the particular environmental concerns of the reviewed countries, with an emphasis on integration (sustainable development),

implementation and financing. Ministers at the Sixth EfE Conference in Belgrade invited reviewed countries to implement the recommendations of their country reviews in accordance with their needs and priorities.

8. At its fifteenth session, the Committee decided that interim reporting regarding the implementation of the recommendations by reviewed countries should be compulsory between two consecutive reviews, and become a regular part of the EPR procedure.

Work accomplished

9. The Expert Group on Environmental Performance continued to support and offer advice on the preparation and conduct of the EPRs. It also carried out detailed expert reviews prior to the Committee's peer reviews and reported back to the Committee. The Committee reviewed the draft of the second EPR report of Kazakhstan and adopted the recommendations (21–23 April 2008). Since then, second reviews of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have been undertaken. In October 2008, the Kazakhstan report was launched with the following events: a round table at the national Senate; a presentation at the Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe (EAP Task Force) session; and a workshop for non-governmental organizations and the business community organized in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).¹

Work to be undertaken

10. The draft EPR report of Kyrgyzstan will be examined by the Expert Group (26 January 2009) and peer reviewed by the Committee (28 January 2009). The launch event for the EPR of Kyrgyzstan is foreseen for summer 2009 (tentatively in June). The main mission of the review of Uzbekistan will take place in April and the report will be peer reviewed at the Committee's next regular session (October 2009). Other reviews will take place in spring and late autumn 2009. Several candidate countries have expressed their interest to having a second EPR.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 3 **ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING**

11. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment will help countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE) to strengthen their environmental information and observation capacities. The Working Group will focus its efforts on the areas emphasized by ministers in Belgrade, in particular indicator-based assessment, environmental monitoring and reporting by enterprises and support to environmental assessment(s) for the next EfE Ministerial Conference.

Work accomplished

12. At its ninth session (4–5 September 2008), the Working Group: (a) discussed the results of the Sixth EfE Conference and of the Committee's fifteenth session; (b) considered proposals of the European Environment Agency on the preparation of the assessment report(s) for the next EfE Conference; (c) discussed implementation by Belarus, Kazakhstan and Serbia of the recommendations on environmental monitoring and assessment in the second EPRs of those countries, and (d) considered environmental monitoring and assessment activities of other forums. The Working Group organized a round table on latest developments in environmental monitoring

¹ The first two events were held in Astana, the third in Almaty.

and assessment and prepared its work programme for 2009–2010 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2008/2, annex 1).

Work to be undertaken

13. On the basis of its renewed mandate and the main directions of work on environmental monitoring and assessment agreed by the Committee, the Working Group will focus on improving environmental observations, data collection and reporting capacities in EECCA, the Russian Federation and interested SEE countries, in particular by: (a) helping developing national strategies for the use of monitoring as environmental policy tool; (b) providing countries with practical guidance for the effective implementation of recommendations on monitoring and information management in the EPRs; (c) training monitoring experts and statisticians in indicator production; (d) developing practical guidance on model enterprise monitoring programmes and corporate environmental reports; and (e) contributing to environmental assessment(s) for the next EfE Ministerial Conference.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 4

BUILDING CAPACITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

4.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

14. Since the 1970s, five regional environmental conventions and 12 protocols have been negotiated and adopted in the framework of UNECE. The responsibility for implementation activities lies with the governing bodies.

15. All the UNECE protocols have entered into force except for the three adopted at the Fifth EfE Conference in Kyiv, namely the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Protocol on Civil Liability and Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

16. The Committee provides a catalysing forum in which all government representatives, including the governing bodies of the conventions, can share their experiences with promoting and assessing implementation of these regional environmental instruments as well as identifying means of improving compliance with them. Furthermore, the Committee supports, as appropriate, the implementation of the conventions and their protocols.

Work accomplished

17. The sixth informal meeting between the Bureaux of the Committee on Environmental Policy and of the governing bodies of the UNECE environmental conventions was held on 12 February 2007 at the invitation of the Chairperson of the Committee's Bureau. The aim of the meeting was to share experiences and seek synergies and areas of cooperation and to assess and promote the implementation of environmental legal instruments in the region. In this context, a paper on the implementation of UNECE multilateral environmental agreements, prepared by the secretariat, was discussed and submitted by the Committee through the Working Group of Senior Officials to the Sixth EfE Conference in Belgrade. The paper assessed the progress achieved and problems encountered in the conventions' implementation and gave an overview of capacity-building activities in the UNECE region. It also provided a basis for ministers to make policy recommendations for enhancing the conventions' implementation by Governments.

Work to be undertaken

18. It is envisaged that informal meetings between the Bureaux of the Committee and the governing bodies of the conventions will continue to be held annually. The next informal meeting is scheduled for October 2009, and it was agreed that participants would discuss the EfE reform plan as well as other issues to be agreed by the Committee's Bureau.

4.2 ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY

19. The Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative, a joint initiative of UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe and UNECE, builds on the combined strengths and field presence of the lead organizations to perform three key functions: (a) assessment and monitoring of linkages between environment and security; (b) capacity-building and institutional development; and (c) integration of environmental and security concerns and priorities into international and national policymaking. One component of the Initiative's activities is to strengthen implementation of UNECE regional environmental conventions.

Work accomplished

20. To date, assessments of environmental and security risks have been completed for Central Asia, Southern Caucasus and Eastern Europe. Based on the assessments, the Initiative has developed and implemented specific work programmes aimed at reducing tensions and solving the problems identified (see www.envsec.org).

Work to be undertaken

21. UNECE will continue to collaborate within the ENVSEC framework, in particular through projects supporting implementation of UNECE regional conventions. Examples of ongoing and planned projects with UNECE involvement are: (a) pilot implementation in Central Asia of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context; (b) a regional cooperation project on dam safety in Central Asia; (c) support for the development of water cooperation in the Kura-Aras river basin; and (d) development of cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine with respect to the Dniester River.

4.3 PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

22. The Committee, recognizing the importance of strengthening the engagement of the private sector in the environmental activities of UNECE, initiated and sustained discussions on ways to attract private-sector interest to the Committee's work and the EfE process, and on how such partnerships could address environmental and sustainable development objectives.

Work accomplished

23. The Bureau convened an informal meeting with representatives of the private sector during the meeting of the Extended Bureau on 24 June 2008. The secretariat prepared a compilation of existing examples on private sector engagement within UNECE (e.g. the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division and other divisions), and submitted it to the Bureau in advance of the June meeting.

24. Building on the conclusions of the June informal meeting and its existing experience with working with the private sector, the Committee convened (in October 2008) a round-table discussion on promoting environmental and sustainable development objectives with the

participation of leading environmentally active private-sector companies and umbrella associations. The round table contributed to strengthening the interest of the private sector in the Committee's work and the EfE process. The round table also identified possible ways to forge successful partnerships between the public and the private sectors in member States, as well as to improve these partnerships' quality so that they might better serve the interests of the broader community.

Work to be undertaken

25. Following the October round table, the Committee decided that creation of a long-term mechanism for communication and cooperation with the private sector was a priority. To this end, the Committee gave an extended mandate to the Bureau to undertake necessary steps in this direction, including continuing to involve private sector representatives in its work, e.g. through the EPR programme, environmental monitoring activities and the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP). Depending on the level of interest, the private sector could also be involved in future conferences convened under the EfE process.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 5

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNECE REGION

26. Building on Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development invited the regional commissions to consider organizing regional implementation meetings within the framework of the two-year implementation cycles of the Commission.

Work accomplished

27. The third UNECE regional implementation meeting on sustainable development was held on 28 and 29 January 2008 in Geneva. It reviewed the region's progress vis-à-vis implementing commitments made at the World Summit regarding the following thematic clusters: agriculture, rural development, land management, drought and desertification, and Africa. It evaluated the progress achieved, obstacles and constraints remaining in these areas. The meeting also discussed linkages between thematic priorities and cross-cutting issues, e.g. sustainable production and consumption patterns, education for sustainable development and finance.

28. The outcome of the discussions, reflected in the Chairman's summary, was presented at the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (New York, 5–16 May 2008). This contributed a UNECE regional perspective to the global-level debate. Moreover, in cooperation with the Commission secretariat and the other regional commissions, the UNECE secretariat organized an interactive discussion during the session, which focused on region-specific barriers and constraints as well as lessons learned and good practices.

Work to be undertaken

29. Subject to decision by the Commission at its spring 2009 session, a fourth UNECE regional implementation meeting on sustainable development will be organized in autumn 2009, in preparation for the Commission's eighteenth session (New York, May 2010). This eighteenth session will serve as a review session of the fourth implementation cycle, focusing on transport, chemicals, waste management, mining and the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 6

INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SECTORAL POLICIES

30. Integrating environmental concerns into the activities of other sectors, whether economic or social, is one of the key challenges to effective implementation of environmentally sound sustainable development principles. Since the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, actions and programmes in the UNECE region have worked towards this goal, but significant efforts are still needed through a wide range of policy, legal, institutional and financial measures and incentives.

31. The Committee has established cross-sectoral linkages, activities and cooperation with other UNECE committees (e.g. Transport, Housing and Land Management) and the conventions' governing bodies, as well as with other international organizations such as the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization (WHO-EURO). UNECE environmental cross-sectoral programmes should be further encouraged to ensure effective support for national and regional initiatives. This would accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production, thus promoting social and economic development.

6.1 EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

32. At the Fifth EfE Conference in Kyiv, ministers agreed on the preparation of a strategy for education for sustainable development (ESD) and invited UNECE to work with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Council of Europe and other relevant actors on a regional ESD strategy. The High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries (Vilnius, 17–18 March 2005) adopted the UNECE Strategy for ESD and established a Steering Committee for ESD to oversee the Strategy's implementation and review its progress.

Work accomplished

33. The Steering Committee has held three meetings thus far (December 2005, December 2006 and March–April 2008), which have seen major outcomes such as the adoption of the workplan for 2005–2007 (phase I), the decision to hold a joint high-level segment on ESD during the Sixth EfE Conference in Belgrade and the recently adopted workplan for 2008–2010 (phase II). A number of activities have been carried out: (a) subregional workshops on ESD; (b) the establishment of a comprehensive reporting mechanism; and (c) a collection of good practices in ESD. Most countries are showing commitment to establishing the necessary policies and institutional structures to implement the Strategy. A Joint Statement on ESD, expressing commitment to further implementation of the Strategy through the two implementation phases and beyond 2015, was adopted in Belgrade. The mandate of the Steering Committee to oversee the regional implementation of the Strategy was extended until 2015.

Work to be undertaken

34. In accordance with the adopted workplan for phase II – including its substantive content, time frame for implementation, and financial implications (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/5) – future activities will focus on coordination, capacity-building and the sharing of experience to support and further ESD in the region. These activities will include workshops and trainings, sharing good practices and case studies, and strengthening the use of electronic tools, awareness-raising and the review of implementation. The two key phase II priorities are: (a) the development of national action plans for ESD; and (b) development of ESD competences. The next meeting of

the Steering Committee will be held on 19 and 20 February 2009; the Bureau will hold its seventh meeting in November 2008.

6.2 TRANSPORT, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

35. THE PEP was established in 2002 under the joint auspices of UNECE (Environment and Transport Divisions) and WHO-EURO. The objectives of THE PEP are to promote policy integration and sustainable transport development, notably in urban areas, through the sharing of best practices, capacity-building and awareness-raising. The programme focuses in particular on the challenges and solutions available to the Russian Federation and to EECCA and SEE countries.

Work accomplished

36. At its sixth session (28–29 April 2008), the Steering Committee of THE PEP discussed preparations for the Third High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment and assessed progress made with respect to its work programme. It agreed that the main objectives of the High-level Meeting would be: (a) to strengthen Member States' commitment to the integration of transport, health and environment policies at the national level, with a special focus on the challenges faced by EECCA and SEE countries; and (b) to reinforce the role of THE PEP as a unique policy platform for promoting integrated approaches to transport development, taking into consideration the health and environmental concerns and adapting strategies and measures accordingly. Securing stable financial support for THE PEP was cited as an important criterion.

37. A workshop on sustainable and healthy urban transport with a focus on EECCA and SEE (Chisinau, 29–30 October 2008) was held as a continuation of THE PEP workshop series. (Similar events were organized in Cyprus, Moscow, Tbilisi and Telc, Czech Republic.) The Chisinau workshop was organized in cooperation with the Ministries of Transport, Health and Environment of the Republic of Moldova and the National Scientific and Applied Centre for Preventative Medicine, with support from Switzerland. The workshop highlighted specific urban transport challenges in EECCA and SEE and provided an input to the upcoming High-level Meeting.

38. Five meetings of the Extended Bureau of THE PEP were held to continue preparations for the High-level Meeting (February in Brussels, held jointly with the European Commission; April in Geneva; August in Rome; and October in The Hague and Chisinau).

Work to be undertaken

39. The Third High-level Meeting (Amsterdam, 22–23 January 2009), will be hosted by the Netherlands under the theme, "Making THE Link: Transport Choices for our Health, Environment and Prosperity". Key publications to be submitted to the Meeting include: (a) the review, *Trends and developments in the pan-European region (1997–2007)*; (b) recommendations from THE PEP assessment report; and (c) a brochure on policy integration. Government representatives are expected to come up with a final outcome document on future activities and areas of cooperation intended to reinvigorate THE PEP and its objectives and to contribute to sustainable and healthy living, in particular in cities across the pan-European region. It is also expected that the High-level Meeting will give the mandate for a renewed workplan for THE PEP that will include concrete projects and tools for achieving the programme's goals. Guidance on measures and strategies for policymakers in sustainable urban transport and a relay diffusing best practice across the region will also be developed.

6.3 ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

40. WHO-EURO Ministerial Conferences have been organized since 1989. These bring together ministers of health and environment and other stakeholders to strive for consensus and make political commitments to promote a safe and healthy environment. Ministers entrusted the European Environment and Health Committee with the tasks of following up on their decisions and serving as a steering committee for the preparation of the next Ministerial Conference, which will be held in Italy in autumn 2009.

Work accomplished

41. The Committee on Environmental Policy elected five members to represent the environment sector on the European Environment and Health Committee for a period of two and half years, i.e. until the next Ministerial Conference in 2009. High-level preparatory meetings, organized back to back with the European Environment and Health Committee, were held in October 2007 in Bonn, Germany; in March 2008 in Milan, Italy; and in October 2008 in Madrid.

Work to be undertaken

42. Further meetings will be held to prepare the agenda and issues for discussion for the upcoming Ministerial Conference. The environment and health preparatory process will continue to focus on children as well as address other environmental health issues of increasing concern such as climate change. Cross-cutting issues with a focus on children's environmental health will also be on the agenda of the upcoming event (www.euro.who.int@EEHC).
