



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
LIMITED

ECE/EX/2010/L.6
18 December 2009

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Thirty-fourth meeting
Geneva, 26 February 2010

**DECISIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Establishment of the Steering Group on Environmental Assessments
and its Terms of Reference

Note by the secretariat

1. At its sixteenth session (20–23 October 2009), the Committee on Environmental Policy started preparations for the Seventh Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, to be held in autumn 2011 in Astana (Kazakhstan). It agreed on the two main themes for the Conference and welcomed the proposal of the European Environment Agency (EEA) to assess various environmental assessments of relevance to the region and to present the results of such assessments to the ministers in Astana (ECE/CEP/155, paragraphs 39 to 45).
2. The Committee agreed to establish a Steering Group to guide the preparation by EEA of an “Assessment of Assessments” (AoA) report for the Astana Conference. Building on lessons learned from the publication of four ad hoc Pan-European environment assessment reports for the previous Ministerial Conferences, the overall goal is to assess the regional needs, priorities and sustainable long-term mechanisms to keep the pan-European environment under continuous review. Concrete proposals to this effect will be submitted to the ministers in Astana, including recommendations on how to develop a shared environmental information system (SEIS) in the region. The terms of reference of the Steering Group on Environmental Assessments are presented in annex I to this note.

3. The Committee on Environmental Policy invited United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) secretariat to service the Steering Group, which will be composed of representatives of Governments, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, relevant international organizations and institutions, and civil society associations. This will imply:

- (a) Servicing four Steering Group meetings (with interpretation and translation), including the preparation of meeting agendas and reports;
- (b) Preparing background documents and compilation papers for the Steering Group at its request;
- (c) Arranging for financial support to members of the Steering Group from countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE), for their participation in the Steering Group meetings;
- (d) Cooperating closely with two Co-Chairs of the Steering Group and the project team in EEA;
- (e) Liaising with Steering Group members;
- (f) Arranging for country inputs from members of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment from EECCA;
- (g) Helping the Steering Group to assess the needs, priorities and capabilities of EECCA countries to participate in the shared environmental information system in the region;
- (h) Networking with interested organizations, institutions and civil society associations¹.

4. The servicing the Steering Group cannot be ensured from the regular UNECE budget, however. For the period from March 2010 to December 2011, implementation of the above-mentioned tasks will require extrabudgetary funds: (a) to recruit one professional staff (at the P3 level); (b) to cover participation costs of eligible Steering Group members; (d) to cover costs of coordination missions; and (e) to cover information technology costs. A detailed table presenting UNECE resource requirements is annexed to this note (annex II). The Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy has agreed to facilitate the provision of the required extrabudgetary resources for the project.

5. The Executive Committee is invited to approve the establishment of the Steering Group on Environmental Assessments and its terms of reference, subject to the provision of voluntary contributions to the UNECE Local Technical Cooperation Trust Fund on Environmental Monitoring, or contributions in kind.

¹ In addition, the secretariat is expected to be invited to prepare the UNECE input to the AoA report, covering assessments under UNECE environmental legally-binding instruments and relevant activities of UNECE bodies.

ANNEX I

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE STEERING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

1. To oversee the preparation of an “Assessment of the Assessments” (AoA) for the Seventh Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Astana, October 2011), the Committee on Environmental Policy establishes the Steering Group on Environmental Assessments. The main purpose of the AoA will be to provide a critical review and analysis of existing environmental assessments that are of relevance to the region and the two selected topics for the Astana Conference, to identify gaps that need to be covered and priorities that should be addressed for conducting assessments to keep the pan-European environment under continuous review. A report on the AoA to be produced by the European Environment Agency (EEA) will contain concrete proposals for consideration by the ministers in Astana, including recommendations on how to develop a shared environmental information system in the region.
2. The Steering Group will be responsible for:
 - (a) Setting the scope, focus and outline for the AoA;
 - (b) Guiding and assessing the work in progress on the AoA;
 - (c) Reviewing the draft report on the AoA;
 - (d) Facilitating contacts with participating countries and organizations.
3. The Steering Group will be Co-Chaired by the Executive Director of the European Environment Agency (EEA) and a representative of Kazakhstan, host country of the Seventh Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”.
4. The membership of the Steering Group should be balanced and include representatives of Governments, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, relevant international organizations and institutions, and civil society associations. The composition of the group will be decided by the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy in consultation with the Co-Chairs.
5. The Steering Group should minimize the number of its meetings and should work as much as possible by virtual means.
6. The Steering Group will invite countries and organizations to nominate experts to cover specific topics of the AoA and work in topical expert groups, as needed.
7. The Steering Group should encourage relevant organizations and expert bodies that have expressed or will express their interest to contribute to the AoA, to submit relevant information and participate in the process.
8. The Steering Group should cooperate with National Focal Points from the existing Eionet networks and the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to coordinate country inputs.

9. The UNECE secretariat will provide secretariat assistance, resources permitting, and conference facilities to the Steering Group at the United Nations Office at Geneva, including interpretation and translation, in accordance with UNECE rules and practices, and support for meetings held elsewhere. Donors will be invited to provide voluntary contributions to support the AoA and help service the Steering Group.

10. The mandate of the Steering Group will cover the period from 2010 to end 2011. The UNECE secretariat should commence discussions with the Co-Chairs and the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy on preliminary steps for preparing the first meeting of the Steering Group.

11. The Steering Group will regularly inform and report to the Committee on the implementation of its mandate.

ANNEX II

**RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS FOR UNECE TO SUPPORT
THE STEERING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS**

From March 2010 to December 2011

(in United States dollars; rounded)

Object of expenditure	Unit	Unit cost	No. of Units	Total
1. Project personnel: Environmental Assessment Officer (P3)	work-month	11,500	22	253,000
2. Travel of EECCA and SEE members of the Steering Group	member-mission	2,250	32	72,000
3. Travel on official business by UNECE staff to coordination meetings	member-mission	2,000	6	12,000
4. Non-expendable equipment: PC for project personnel	laptop	2,600	1	2,600
5. Net total [1] + [4]				339,600
6. Programme support costs (13% of [5])				44,200
7. GRAND TOTAL [5] + [6]				383,800
