



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
19 October 2010

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Eleventh session

Geneva, 2 and 3 September 2010

Report of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment on its eleventh session

Note by the secretariat

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I. Introduction

1. The eleventh meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment was held on 2 and 3 September 2010 in Geneva.

A. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by delegations composed of representatives of both ministries of environment and of statistical offices from the following 21 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Georgia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine.

3. Representatives of the European Environment Agency (EEA) also attended the meeting. From the United Nations system, representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH) attended.

4. Representatives of the Institute "Cadaster" of the Russian Federation were also present.

B. Adoption of the agenda

5. The agenda, as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2010/1, was adopted.¹

C. Adoption of the report of the tenth session

6. The report of the tenth session, as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2009/2, was adopted.

II. Outcomes of the sixteenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy and of the meeting of its Extended Bureau of concern to the Working Group

7. The Secretary of the Working Group presented the relevant outcomes of the sixteenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy and of the meeting of the Extended Bureau of the Committee. The Committee had expressed its high appreciation for the work carried out by the Working Group, in particular its initiative to review the implementation of the recommendations on monitoring and information management from country environmental performance reviews. The Committee also approved the Guidelines for Developing National Strategies to Use Air Quality Monitoring as an Environmental Policy Tool (ECE/CEP/2009/10) for the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and of South-Eastern Europe, and called upon those countries to implement them. The Committee had adopted its programme of work for 2010-2011, including the

¹ Documents and other materials from the session are available on the UNECE website, http://www.unece.org/env/europe/monitoring/11th_mtg.html.

activities on environmental monitoring and assessment, as presented in document ECE/CEP/2009/3, with some revisions (ECE/CEP/155, para. 46).

8. With regard to preparing Europe's Environment Assessment of Assessments (EEAoA) report for the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference (Astana EfE Ministerial Conference), the Committee acknowledged that the EEAoA would not be a typical state-of-the-environment report. It agreed with the main thrust of the EEAoA to provide a critical review and analysis of the existing environmental assessments in order to: (a) make a gap analysis of the regional needs and priorities for conducting assessments; (b) evaluate progress on targets, implementation of conventions and agreed actions; and (c) develop proposals for a framework and options to build a regular process for regional environmental assessments, including potential costs. A Steering Group on Environmental Assessments had been established to guide the preparation of the EEAoA. The Committee strongly supported the Working Group's active involvement in the preparations of the EEAoA report and had included the Chair of the Working Group as a member of the Steering Group. The first meeting of the Steering Group had taken place in Geneva on 25 and 26 March 2010, during which the general content of the EEAoA had been identified. Information on and documents for that meeting were available on the following dedicated web page: <http://www.unece.org/env/efe/Astana/SGEA.html>. The second meeting was scheduled for 1 November 2010, back to back with the Committee meeting.

9. The Secretary of the Committee on Environmental Policy presented the progress in preparing the Astana EfE Ministerial Conference. The Committee had decided on the date of the Conference — 21–23 September 2011 — and on its two main themes: "Sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems" and "Greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development". The next milestone in the Conference's preparation would be the seventeenth session of the Committee, to be held in Geneva, from 2–5 November 2010. At that session the Committee was expected to agree, among others, on the Conference agenda, on the outline for the two thematic documents and on the Conference's outcomes. The information about the session and documents were made available on the following website: <http://www.unece.org/env/cep/17thsession.html>.

10. The Working Group took note of the information provided.

III. Coordination of environmental monitoring and assessment activities at the regional level

A. Support to the preparation of the Assessment of Assessments report for the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference

11. The representative of the EEA briefed the Working Group on the latest developments in preparing the EEAoA. Many countries had nominated national contact points (NCPs) and the experts for the EEAoA. Two meetings had taken place in Copenhagen: one, organizational, in February 2010; and a training of NCPs in May 2010 to familiarize them with the information tools and the EEAoA portal. The bilingual portal (English and Russian) served as a platform to collect and host a virtual library of information submitted by countries. The members of the Working Group were invited to upload on the portal recent (since 2005) national environment assessment reports. In addition to being an information source for the EEAoS, the virtual library would provide an opportunity to have a repository to support the work under the two themes of the Conference by harvesting substantial information from the collected documents and materials. The next step in preparing the EEAoA was the review of the EEAoA template, which was located in a password protected area of the portal. Upon request, members of the

Working Group would receive the necessary credentials (login and password) to be able to comment on the template.

12. While the collection of literature in the virtual library was a process that would continue up until the Astana Conference, the deadline for submitting information to support the preparation of the EEAOA was 15 September 2010. The information submitted could be in the national language; however a short summary of the information and the online form were required in English. The EEA emphasized that the EEAOA would not assess data per se but rather the data-based assessments.

13. The Working Group took note of the information provided. It invited those members of the Working Group who had not done so as yet to confirm to the secretariat the NCP for the EEAOA, to submit materials to the virtual library by 15 September 2010 and to review the template by the end of October 2010.

B. Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators

14. The Vice-Chair of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators informed the Working Group of the outcomes of the Task Force's second and third meetings, held in Geneva on 3 and 4 May and on 1 and 2 September 2010, respectively.

15. The second meeting had reviewed the indicators on renewable freshwater resources, freshwater abstraction, protected areas, renewable energy consumption, passenger transport demand and freight transport demand. In that regard, countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South Eastern Europe had been recommended to cover the gaps in the publication of individual indicators, taking into account good national experiences presented at the meeting and using the recommended international methodologies and standards. Furthermore, the Joint Task Force had reviewed selected indicators not covered by the Guidelines: the indicator of environmental expenditures; agri-environmental indicators; and energy and environment indicators. It had agreed on the indicator for environmental expenditures.²

16. The third meeting had reviewed five additional indicators from the Guidelines: reuse and recycling of freshwater; polluted (non-treated) wastewaters; forest and other wooded land; energy intensity; and composition of road motor vehicle fleet by fuel type. The Joint Task Force had considered a few energy-related indicators not covered by the Guidelines and agreed on the texts of indicators for final electricity consumption and gross electricity production. The Task Force had agreed that an extension of its mandate for two more years was needed. Future work would include finalizing the review of indicators from the Guidelines (20 indicators), clarification of definitions and continuation of data reporting on indicators with a view to identify gaps and opportunities for filling those gaps.³

17. The Working Group welcomed the progress achieved by the Joint Task Force. The activities carried out had not only advanced the revision of environmental indicators, including the identification of some new indicators for the core set, but had also provided a good platform for networking and sharing of experience thereby enhancing cooperation between environment and statistical institutions at the national level. The work done contributed to deepening the understanding of environmental indicators and the necessary

² Detailed information on the outcomes of the second meeting is provided in document ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2010/2, available on the website of the UNECE Statistical Division at <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2010.05.enviro.htm>.

³ Detailed information on the outcomes of the third meeting is provided in document ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2010/7 available at <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2010.09.enviro.htm>.

national data to populate them. Subsequently, that had triggered many related processes at the national level, including re-examination by countries of their national set of indicators. The Working Group acknowledged the need for extending the mandate of the Joint Task Force through 2011–2012, at the end of which period a revised set of indicators would be released to support the production of national environment assessments.

C. Assessment and data-collection activities in other forums of relevance to the Working Group

18. The secretariat of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) gave a presentation of progress made in preparing a second assessment of transboundary waters in the UNECE region for the Astana EUE Ministerial Conference. The assessment covered the UNECE region with a particular focus on the Eastern European, Caucasian, Central Asian and South-Eastern European subregions. Information on the following areas had been collected from countries: surface and groundwater resources (distribution among the riparian countries within a basin/aquifer); pressures on water sources and their importance (water uses, polluting activities, diversion, etc.); the quality and quantity status of transboundary watercourses; transboundary impacts of activities; cooperation on water (joint bodies, agreements, joint monitoring, etc.); trends; and response measures that had been taken. The assessment would contain the following features: subregional summaries; a stand-alone executive summary; basins maps with accompanying illustrative graphs; surface water and groundwater presented in an integrated way; country figures and statistics; and selected thematic maps. The assessment for the South-Eastern European subregion had almost been completed and had been endorsed as a model for the other subregions. The assessments for Eastern and Northern Europe, as well as for the Caucasus, would be completed by the end of 2010. The assessments for Central Asia and for Western and South-Western Europe would be finalized by May 2011.

19. The representative of WHO/ECEH informed the meeting about relevant outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, which had been held in Parma, Italy, in March 2010. The Conference had adopted a Ministerial Declaration complemented by the Commitment to Act document, setting four regional priority goals with a view to reduce environmental risks to health by 2020. The four goals were ensuring public health by improving access to safe water and sanitation; addressing obesity and injuries through safe environments, physical activity and healthy diet; preventing disease through improved outdoor and indoor air quality; and preventing disease arising from chemical, biological and physical environments. Each commitment goal was supported by action required to make that commitment a reality. As a follow up, WHO would hold consultations from 25–27 November 2010 in order to upgrade the Environment and Health Information System (ENHIS) so as to enable monitoring of the implementation of the new commitments and actions. The consultations would also allow for identification of data gaps in the region, and of country challenges in providing the information with a view to develop adequate tools to address these gaps and challenges.⁴

20. The Working Group took note of the information presented.

⁴ More information on ENHIS is available at <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/data-and-evidence/environment-and-health-information-system-enhis>.

IV. Implementation of recommendations on monitoring and information management from country Environmental Performance Reviews

A. Azerbaijan

21. A representative of Azerbaijan presented the progress in implementing the recommendations on environmental monitoring and information management resulting from the first Environmental Performance Review (EPR) of Azerbaijan, conducted in 2003. The secretariat had prepared a document to facilitate the discussion (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2010/5). A second EPR was being carried out at present and some preliminary results were included in the document. The Secretary to the Working Group also presented complementary information in light of the second EPR's preliminary outcomes.

22. Five recommendations had been made to Azerbaijan in 2003. Some of the recommendations had been implemented, such as ensuring a better coordination of monitoring activities by including all institutions involved in environmental monitoring under the auspices of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources; enhancing the monitoring of quality of bathing water and of forests; establishing legal and policy frameworks to support the environmental monitoring; and improving the dissemination of environmental information to the general public through the Internet and by means of publications, brochures and bulletins. A pioneering endeavour had been the publication of an annual statistical compendium, including environmental data, in three languages and publishing it on the website.

23. However, many challenges in improving environmental monitoring in Azerbaijan remained to be overcome. Those included improving the monitoring of the air-quality network, enhancing monitoring of and revising the parameters for monitoring surface water and groundwater quality, improving the coordination of Caspian Sea monitoring efforts, enhancing the monitoring of soil, enabling the self-monitoring of enterprises, adequately maintaining the analytical laboratories, and producing state-of-the-environment reports and reports on environment and health.

24. In the subsequent discussions, delegates posed questions, made comments and provided practical guidance on how to implement better the recommendations of the EPR. The Chair of the Working Group proposed that a template for slideshow presentations be developed for future reporting by countries, with a view to ensuring coherence, consistency and brevity in presentations and subsequent discussions.

B. Bosnia and Herzegovina

25. A representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina presented the progress in implementing the recommendations of the first EPR, conducted in 2004. Currently, a second EPR was being conducted.

26. The national institutional set up for environmental governance was rather complex in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and included a variety of institutions at the State, entity, cantonal and local levels (e.g., at the State level only eight persons were engaged in environmental governance). In the current institutional set-up, 86 institutions were supposed to take part in the environmental monitoring and information system. The existing environmental legislation and policy framework provided a good basis for advancing environmental governance; however, the cumbersome institutional structure made

coordination difficult among the relevant authorities and hindered the implementation process.

27. Many weaknesses remained to be overcome in establishing a good environmental monitoring system. While quality control was undertaken for air, water and waste, noise, soil, nature and biodiversity were not monitored on a regular basis and scattered data and ad hoc reports were prepared through individual projects. Furthermore, technical equipment at existing monitoring stations was outdated; quality control procedures were lacking; and dissemination of monitoring results was poor, in particular to decision-makers. Other challenges included the absence of registers of polluters, emissions inventories and statistical data related to mobile sources; inadequacy of monitoring and assessment programmes; reluctance to share data among different institutions; poor quality, uncertainty and incompleteness of data; and insufficient funding allocated to the development and maintenance of monitoring and information systems. Concerning the self-reporting of enterprises, data on pollution were being collected from enterprises; however, they were stored at the entity level and did not reach the State level. Moreover, collected data were not consistent and comparable.

28. There were some good starting points for improving the situation in environmental monitoring and assessment. A project called RANSMO⁵ had been developed with the European Union (EU) to enhance sustainable environmental management in Bosnia and Herzegovina and bring the country closer to EU environmental standards. RANSMO aimed at developing and implementing a nationwide monitoring system as a tool to aid environmental decision-making, in line with the relevant EU Directives and with the European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET).

29. In the following interactive discussion, participants shared their experience and provided advice on how Bosnia and Herzegovina could improve its environmental monitoring. Most important was to have a good legislative and standards basis for the monitoring system. Delegates recommended establishing a competent environmental institution at the State level and strengthening the institutional capacity across the country, and elaborating a law on self-monitoring of enterprises to support the enforcement of the EPR recommendation. The development of a national programme aimed at identifying and channelling funds to ensure a good functioning of the newly developed monitoring system was also suggested. Involvement of the private sector in such a programme was a prerequisite for its good functioning. It was also thought that good implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) could address some environmental information needs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

C. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

30. A delegate of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia presented the developments in the implementation of recommendations on monitoring and information management from the first country EPRs, carried out in 2002. The secretariat had prepared a document to facilitate the discussion (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2010/4). A second EPR of the country was currently being carried out and was due to be completed by May 2011.

31. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had advanced well since its first EPR. Most of the EPR recommendations in question had been implemented. Public access to environmental information was enabled through the development of two laws, the

⁵ A project on development of national environmental monitoring system funded by the European Union.

framework Law on Environment, adopted in 2005, and the Law on Free Access to Public Information, adopted in 2006. A strategy for the implementation of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and an action plan had been adopted in 2005 to support the implementation activities under the Convention. Moreover, an appropriate legislative framework had been established to comply with EU environmental legislation, including a framework environmental law, a number of sectoral laws and secondary legislation.

32. The adoption of two strategies — on environmental monitoring and on environmental data management — in 2004 constituted an important step in improving the environmental monitoring system. A national programme on environmental monitoring was under preparation. The institutional set-up for monitoring air, water and waste had also been strengthened and cooperation had been enhanced among relevant institutions. However, monitoring of soil, noise and biodiversity was not conducted on a continuous basis and required considerable improvement.

33. The Environmental Information Centre (EIC) acted as a focal point for environmental data. A database of relevant, valid, comprehensive, accurate, transparent and publicly accessible information on the state, quality and trends in all environmental areas had been established within the EIC. The EIC was also responsible for fulfilling national reporting obligations. The Strategy on Environmental Data Management provided the institutional, technical and technological framework for the development of the National Environmental Information System (NEIS), with a view to upgrading the existing system and to efficiently supporting an integrated environmental policy- and decision-making.

34. Four environmental inventories had been developed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, namely the cadastre of air polluters and pollutants; the inventory of emission data based on the CORINAIR⁶ programme; a greenhouse gases inventory; and a wastewater discharges and waste inventory. Three additional inventories needed to be established, namely a national Pollutant Release and Transfer Register, an inventory of national emissions ceilings and an inventory on large combustion plants.

35. One challenge was to ensure close cooperation between the Public Relations Office (PRO) of the EIC and citizens information centres established in municipalities. To that end, it was envisaged to create a new division within the PRO that would coordinate the regional offices. However, such a division had not been established due to financial constraints.

36. In the ensuing discussion, the delegates exchanged views on the information provided. The Working Group congratulated the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the progress made.

V. Latest developments in environmental monitoring and assessment at the national, subnational and company levels

37. Participants reported on major ongoing and planned actions in their countries since the last Working Group meeting in September 2009, regarding the modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks; development of inventories of air emissions, wastewater discharges and waste; expanding monitoring of biodiversity; improvement of data handling; enhancement of institutional mechanisms for data sharing and exchange;

⁶ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/emep-eea-emission-inventory-guidebook-2009>.

publication of environmental assessments; and reporting to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

38. Fourteen countries had submitted written reports that had been circulated among the members of the Working Group and made available on the website prior to the meeting. At the meeting, participants made short oral presentation highlighting key developments.

39. In the area of national monitoring networks, countries reported some progress made. In November 2009 Albania had established new rules for environmental monitoring through the decision on rules and procedures for establishing and implementing national environmental monitoring. Armenia had acquired six automated air-monitoring stations. The stations were not yet fully functional as yet, however, due to a lack of adequate skills and qualified experts, as well as the financial means, to maintain the technical equipment. To improve atmospheric air monitoring, Azerbaijan planned to install 15 automated monitoring stations in 2011.

40. The State programme for developing the national environmental monitoring systems for 2006–2010 had provided a good basis for monitoring activities in Belarus. A similar programme was being prepared for 2011–2015 and included around 80 activities. Belarus was looking to acquire nine integrated stations for monitoring of atmospheric air, thereby ensuring monitoring in 10 human settlements with over 100,000 inhabitants.

41. Kazakhstan developed a programme for 2011-2013 on upgrading the national hydrometeorological service that included activities for improvement of monitoring networks for atmospheric air, surface water and soil. The State Hydrometeorological Service of the Republic of Moldova had developed a programme for the development and operation of the national environmental monitoring system for 2010–2015, which provided the framework for environmental monitoring in the country.

42. The Russian Federation was focusing on establishing an integrated monitoring system for the Sochi Winter Olympic Games in 2014, envisaging the installation of six automated stations, three monitoring posts and a few mobile laboratories. Three of the six automated stations had been installed and one mobile laboratory was already functioning. In Yakutia, a joint monitoring station had been opened with the United States to monitor a number of parameters, including climate change and mercury pollution. In addition, a major programme on environmental monitoring until 2020, entailing substantial financing, was under discussion with the Ministry of Finances of Russian Federation.

43. With the financial support of the European Commission, Serbia had installed 29 automated air quality monitoring stations (28 stationary and 1 mobile) during 2009–2010, at which 124 automatic parameters would be measured. Information on air quality was made available on the Government website <http://www.sepa.gov.rs>. Tajikistan was developing its environmental monitoring systems as part of the State Environmental Programme for 2009–2019. Ukraine continued to implement successfully the State Environmental Programme for Environmental Monitoring in 2008–2012. That Programme had also provided for setting up a background monitoring station in the Carpathian national natural park in 2010.

43. Concerning developing inventories of air emissions, wastewater discharges and waste, the situation in countries was slowly improving, financial resources and qualified staff being the main bottlenecks in that process. Albania was conducting an inventory of emissions from point and diffuse sources of pollution, evaluating their separate and combined adverse impacts on water, soil and air through project-based activities. A national waste management plan was under preparation in Albania.

44. Daily bulletins on atmospheric air quality were issued in Azerbaijan and disseminated to governmental authorities and other interested institutions and to the public

through the Government website <http://eco.gov.az>. In Belarus, environmental inventories were classified as resources of State importance thereby ensuring a high commitment from the relevant authorities to their development and maintenance. Water inventories were made publicly available on the Government website <http://www.cricuwr.by>. In 2010 the Government of Kyrgyzstan had approved a Classifier of Dangerous Waste to support waste monitoring. The Republic of Moldova had conducted an inventory for land polluted with Persistent Organic Pollutants and had established a database. Serbia had established an inventory in accordance with the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register Protocol and by 2010 had in place a three-year data set.

45. In the area of monitoring of biodiversity some progress was noticed; however, some countries were struggling with a lack of financial resources and qualified personnel. In 2009, Albania had incorporated indicators for biodiversity monitoring in its national monitoring system. In Armenia, continuous monitoring of biodiversity was absent; a weakness that hindered the development of biodiversity and soil monitoring was the discontinuation of work by many academic and research entities due to a lack of funds. Monitoring of biodiversity was progressing well in Azerbaijan; the surface of protected areas had increased from 4.5 per cent to 10.1 per cent, and the forests area was expanding, leading to use of an increased number of related indicators. Belarus was working on developing the monitoring of invasive alien species of plants and animals. Bosnia and Herzegovina had undertaken an efficient monitoring of its forests with the support of the Forest Resources Assessment Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Kazakhstan was advancing monitoring of biodiversity through a United Nations Development Programme/Global Environmental Facility (GEF) project on integrated conservation of priority globally significant wetlands. In 2010, Kyrgyzstan had completed the national inventory of its forests and was now finalizing the processing of the data and information collected. Montenegro was developing a forest inventory. The Republic of Moldova planned to develop by 2011 a programme for biodiversity monitoring. Ukraine had approved a State Programme “Ukrainian Forests” for 2010–2015, which would undertake an inventory and assessment of forests, and their monitoring.

46. Improvement of data handling required considerable resources and was developing unevenly in the subregions. In Armenia, the improvement of standards and norms were addressed through the Action Programme for 2009–2011 developed under the European Neighbourhood Policy. A new law was under development in Armenia to support self-monitoring by enterprises. In Belarus, to ensure a high quality of data, all laboratories that participated in monitoring activities in the country needed to comply with established standards and required accreditation in the national accreditation system. Kazakhstan was developing a web portal for managing State registers/cadastres of the country’s natural resources, which would provide an automatic information system for collection, classification, storage and analysis of those data.

47. The Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro had been mandated by the Government to implement the annual environmental monitoring programme and to establish a national list of indicators. During 2009–2010, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Moldova, jointly with the National Statistical Bureau and with the support of the Norwegian Statistical Bureau, had conducted an analysis of existing atmospheric air and water monitoring systems and related indicators with a view to their revision. Serbia had created an integrated cadastre of polluters based on the latest information technologies and offering an online application for self-registration of polluters. In Ukraine, an Information and Analytical Centre of the State environmental monitoring system ensured a good management of environmental data. Digital map databases for five oblasts were created in 2009–2010 in Ukraine and geographic information systems maps had been established for all 25 regions.

48. Enhancement of institutional mechanisms had progressed gradually in the countries. Albania enforced cooperation among relevant institutions and authorities at the national and subnational level by means of Governmental decisions; ultimately, the Agency of Environment and Forestry was in charge of data collection and production of environmental assessments reports. Armenia was improving cooperation among institutions through a UNDP/GEF 2009–2011 project on development of institutional and legal capacity to strengthen the environmental monitoring and information system for global environmental governance. Kyrgyzstan was enabling cooperation among its many authorities handling environmental information through the establishment of inter-institutional working groups and other measures. Serbia was increasing its institutional capacity through the creation of an efficient network of organizations dealing with environmental monitoring, data management and reporting. The cooperation between Ukrainian institutions engaged in environmental monitoring was ensured by concluding inter-institutional agreements.

49. Publication of environmental assessments was improving in many countries. Albania had made annual environmental data available through the Government website <http://www.moe.gov.al>, and had published a national state-of-the-environment report. It also provided regular reports to EEA. In Armenia, 26 State and administrative reporting formats and 5 bulletins supporting the collection of environmental information had been made available on Government websites (e.g., <http://www.armstat.am> and <http://www.mnp.am>). Armenia planned to launch an eco-portal by the end of 2010. In order to comply with the provisions of the Aarhus Convention, Belarus planned to produce a national state-of-the-environment report in two languages by the end of 2010.

50. Kazakhstan published a national state-of-the-environment report and disseminated it through the website of the Ministry of Environmental Protection. An environmental information centre (the Aarhus Centre; <http://www.aarhus.kz>) was facilitating access by the public to environmental information in Kazakhstan. Serbia had participated for the first time in the EEA European State and Outlook of the Environment Report (SOER) 2010. Ukraine had been extensively using environmental indicators in the production of national environmental assessments and reports. Its analytical environmental information centre was functioning well; the public asked questions about the environment and received responses through a website.

51. Many of the reporting countries provided national reports to MEAs in accordance with the established reporting procedures. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia also reported to EEA. Belarus diligently fulfilled its international reporting obligations as a Party to 13 global and 9 regional MEAs.

52. The Working Group noted the progress achieved in strengthening national monitoring networks, in enhancing institutional mechanisms and in the publication of environmental assessments, as well as in using environmental indicators for reporting. Overall, monitoring of atmospheric air and water was progressing well, while monitoring of waste, soil and biodiversity was lagging behind. Some progress had been made in data handling.

VI. Draft guidelines for developing national strategies to use water-quality monitoring as an environmental policy tool

53. In accordance with its work programme (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2008/6, Annex I, task 1.1), the Working Group considered the draft guidelines for developing national strategies to use water-quality monitoring as an environmental policy tool. The guidelines aimed at helping countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as interested South-Eastern European countries, to revise their water-quality monitoring programmes to

make monitoring a practical tool for environmental policy development, target setting and pollution abatement strategies. The draft guidelines were prepared by a consultant to the secretariat. The draft had been circulated to the Bureau of the Water Convention, and had received positive comments. The consultant presented the draft Guidelines (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2010/6).

54. The Working Group welcomed the draft and provided comments. Participants felt that some issues were not reflected sufficiently in the draft, such as health and radiological aspects, and adaptation to climate change. The use of the terms “emissions” and “discharges” should also be more accurate to ensure a correct translation into the Russian language. Some delegates indicated that due to summer holidays they had not succeeded in consulting all the relevant institutions on the draft guidelines, and requested an extension of the deadline for comments.

55. The Working Group gave a general approval to the draft guidelines as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2010/6. It invited members to provide additional comments on the draft guidelines to the secretariat by 15 December 2010. The draft would be revised, if necessary, to reflect comments made and would be submitted to the Bureau of the Working Group for consultation. The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its special session in May 2011, would then be invited to adopt the draft guidelines as an important and valuable document to support countries’ efforts.

56. The Working Group welcomed the proposal to submit the draft guidelines related to water-quality monitoring, once adopted, as well as the Guidelines for Developing National Strategies to Use Air Quality Monitoring as an Environmental Policy Tool, to the Astana EfE Ministerial Conference as a contribution to the Conference’s deliberations on enhancing environmental information systems.

VII. Reporting to the Committee on Environmental Policy

57. The Working Group invited its Chair to report the results of its eleventh session to the seventeenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

58. The Working Group requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau of the Working Group, to revise the Group’s Terms of Reference with a view to submitting them to the Committee for an extension of the Working Group’s mandate beyond 2011.

VIII. Other business

59. The Working Group noted that its next meeting was scheduled to be held in Geneva on 6 and 7 September 2011.

IX. Closure of the meeting

60. The Working Group requested its Bureau and the secretariat to follow up on the decisions of the meeting.
