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Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators

Third session
Geneva, 11–13 July 2011

Report of the third session of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators

Note by the secretariat

Summary

Under the revised terms of reference for the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators for the period 2011–2012 (ECE/CEP/161, annex II), approved by the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in March 2011, the Joint Task Force is mandated to submit reports to the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Conference of European Statisticians on its accomplishments (ibid., para. 4).

This document presents the outcomes of the third session of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators, which took place from 11 to 13 July 2011 in Geneva. At its third session the Task Force: (a) reviewed six indicators of the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;[1] (b) undertook an initial reading of proposed additional indicators for inland and seawater not covered by the Guidelines (c) discussed developments and plans for work on the indicators under a project of the European Community on a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in the European Neighbourhood countries and the Russian Federation.

[1] Available from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe website at http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2007/ece/ece.belgrade.conf.2007.inf.6.e.pdf.

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Contents

I. Introduction

A. Background

1. The third session of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators was held in Geneva from 11 to 13 July 2011.

2. Opening remarks were made by Mr. Marco Keiner, Director of the Environment Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and Ms. Lidia Bratanova, Director of the Statistical Division of UNECE. The speakers welcomed the participants and noted that the Joint Task Force was a unique gathering of environmental experts and statisticians in the region. It was also noted that in March 2011 the UNECE Executive Committee had approved a new mandate for the Joint Task Force for the period 2011–2012.

B. Attendance

3. Environmental experts and statisticians from the following UNECE member States took part in the third session: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

4. A representative of the United Arab Emirates participated under article 11 of the Economic Commission for Europe's terms of reference.

5. Representatives of Eurostat and the European Environment Agency (EEA) also attended the meeting.

6. In addition, representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations attended the meeting: the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Armenia, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Ozone Secretariat, the United Nations Statistics Division, the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution and the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT). A representative of Zoi Environmental Network, a non-governmental organization, also attended the meeting.

C. Adoption of the agenda

7. The Joint Task Force adopted the agenda for its third session as contained in document ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2011/1.[2]

D. Organizational matters

8. The meeting elected Ms. Irina Komosko (Belarus) as Chair and Ms. Aigul Yepbayeva (Kazakhstan), as Vice-Chair of the Joint Task Force.

[2] Meeting documentation, including national reviews and presentations are available online from a dedicated UNECE website (http://live.unece.org/stats/documents/2011.07.environ.html).

E. Adoption of the report of the second session

9. The Joint Task Force adopted the report of its second session, contained in document ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2010/7.

II. Review of the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators

10. The Joint Task Force discussed six further indicators from the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Prior to the session all members of the Joint Task Force from countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe had submitted national reviews of the application of the indicators in question in their countries. The reviews were prepared on the basis of a questionnaire drafted by the secretariat. The data included time-series data on the indicators for the period 1990–2010. The questionnaire also covered information on effective inter-agency cooperation mechanisms to produce the indicators, data quality assurance and control procedures for the production of the indicators and publication of the indicators in statistical compendiums and state-of-the-environment reports.

A. Biochemical oxygen demand and concentration of ammonium in rivers

11. A consultant to the secretariat presented a summary of national reviews on the application of the indicator on biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and the concentration of ammonium in rivers. The majority of the 16 reporting countries had reported data for the development of that indicator. Each country had submitted data from one (Azerbaijan, Belarus and Kazakhstan) to six water courses (Armenia) for which measurements of five-day BOD (BOD5) and ammonium concentration had been carried out. The Republic of Moldova had not reported data on the indicator.

12. Many countries (e.g., Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and the Russian Federation) published the results of BOD5 and ammonium concentrations in different publications. Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan did not publish such data.

13. The majority of countries had available time series and spatial distribution of concentrations of BOD5 and ammonium in water in rivers. Applied methodologies for the determination of concentrations of BOD5 and ammonium differed from country to country.

14. The summary of country responses to the questionnaire proposed recommendations to individual countries for improving data collection for the production of the indicator and their publication in environmental assessment reports.

15. In the following discussion, questions were raised as to whether national measurement methodologies followed relevant International Organization for Standardization (ISO) or European Standard (EN) standards. Armenia reported on the application of ISO 5815:1989 and ISO 6778:1984 for determination of BOD5 and ammonium. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was using EN 25813:1992 for the determination of BOD5. Other countries applied national methodologies for the determination of BOD5 and ammonium in freshwaters. Several countries indicated that they were in the process of introducing the implementation of ISO standards, which, however, took time and resources.

16. The members of the Joint Task Force from the Republic of Moldova apologized for the delay and informed participants that they would provide information on the indicator shortly.

B. Nutrients in freshwater

17. The consultant to the secretariat then presented a summary of country reviews on the following three sub-indicators: nutrients in rivers, nutrients in lakes and nutrients in groundwaters.

1. Nutrients in rivers

18. The majority of countries, in particular, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation, had reported measurements of nitrates starting in 1990, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia starting in 2000 and Azerbaijan starting in 2005. Belarus had not reported data on measurements of nitrates. In addition to the above-mentioned parameters, Armenia had reported the concentrations of phosphates in rivers.

19. Many countries (e.g., Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and the Russian Federation) published the results of nutrient concentrations in different publications. The Republic of Moldova had reported on the publication of data — however, without reporting the data themselves. Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan did not publish such data.

20. Armenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were the only countries that had indicated the application of the following international methodologies for the determination of nutrients: phosphates — ISO 6878:1998; nitrates — ISO 7890:1986; and total phosphorus — United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standard 3125:1998. Other countries applied national methodologies. Applied methodologies for the determination of nutrient concentrations in rivers differed from country to country.

21. Analysis of concentrations of phosphates in rivers began in Montenegro in 1990 (phosphates); in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (phosphates), in the Russian Federation and in Uzbekistan beginning in 2000; and in other countries even later. In Kyrgyzstan, total phosphorus was not analysed and was replaced by the analysis of mineral phosphorus.

22. The summary of country responses to the questionnaire proposed recommendations to individual countries for improving data collection for the production of the three sub-indicators and their publication in environmental assessment reports.

23. In the discussion, it was stressed that many countries used national methodologies rather than international standards. Discontinuity of data series could appear if countries switched to international standards. That showed the need to work together, e.g., through conventions, to engage countries in a joint effort towards achieving greater comparability. It was also pointed out that the information should be used to measure the impact of different industries on water quality.

2. Nutrients in lakes

24. All countries, with the exception of Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Uzbekistan, reported data on nutrients in lakes. Armenia was carrying out measurements for three parameters (phosphates, total phosphorus and nitrates); Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and the Russian Federation

provided data for two parameters (total phosphorus and nitrates); Belarus for one parameter (total phosphorus); and Georgia for one parameter (nitrates).

25. Armenia was the only country that had reported data on the concrete depth of sampling; other countries had reported averaged data, either by verticals or for the entire lake. Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan had not presented several morphometric characteristics of the lakes.

26. Analysis of nutrient concentrations in lakes had started in 1990 in Georgia (only nitrates), Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, and during the 2000s in other countries. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had terminated measurements of nitrates in lakes in the mid-2000s.

27. Armenia was the only country that had indicated the application of the following international methodologies for the determination of nutrients: phosphates — ISO 6878:1998; nitrates — ISO 7890:1986; total phosphorus — EPA 3125:1998. Other countries applied national methodologies. Different countries applied different analytical methods for the determination of nutrient concentrations in lakes.

28. Several countries (e.g., Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and the Russian Federation) published the results of nutrient concentrations in different publications. The Republic of Moldova had reported on publication of data — however, without reporting the data themselves. Azerbaijan did not publish such data.

29. The summary of country responses to the questionnaire on the indicators proposed recommendations to individual countries on improving data collection for the production of the indicators and their publication in environmental assessment reports. Armenia indicated that it could provide data by verticals soon. Some countries indicated that monitoring was not complete because of limited resources due to institutional restructuring and that some data were missing because of methodology changes.

3. Nutrients in groundwaters

30. Data on nutrients in groundwaters had been obtained from four countries only: the Russian Federation, six water objects; Belarus, two water objects; Montenegro, two water objects; and Armenia, one water object. All countries reporting on that indicator measured the concentration of nitrates in the samples of groundwaters taken from exploratory wells, as requested by the questionnaire. Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uzbekistan had not report on the indicator (not taking into account problems with water supply in some of them).

31. Belarus, Montenegro and the Russian Federation published the results of groundwater quality in various publications. In Armenia such data was not published.

32. Insufficient and discontinuous time series, as well as low numbers of samples analysed per year, did not allow for the development of the indicator at present. There was also no common methodology for measuring concentrations of nitrates in groundwaters in the countries.

33. The summary of country responses to the questionnaire proposed recommendations to individual countries on improving data collection for the production of the indicator and their publication in environmental assessment reports.

34. In the ensuing discussion, it was pointed out that the difficulty in reporting on the indicator was an insufficient understanding of what was required. If it concerned chemical pollutants of groundwater used for drinking, then most countries were conducting regular

monitoring. With regard to the background monitoring of groundwaters, without a link to water supply for the population, the information was less available. A clear definition of the indicator was needed for countries to be in a position to give full information on it.

35. In several countries the monitoring of groundwater quality was limited because of a lack of resources. It was noted that it was important to include measures related to the treatment of groundwater. Some countries were using groundwater for irrigation, for which monitoring was rarely done. A similar approach applied to groundwater used for industrial needs.

C. Nutrients in coastal seawaters

36. A consultant to the secretariat presented a summary of national reviews on the indicator on nutrients in coastal seawaters. Of the total reporting countries, only six had access to the sea and, therefore, coastal waters — namely, Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Montenegro and the Russian Federation. However, the Russian Federation was the only country which had data available for the development of the indicator. The data covering the concentrations of nutrients in coastal waters of the Dagestany coastal zone of the Caspian Sea were in full compliance with the needs of the indicator. Measurements of nutrients in seawaters were being carried out in accordance with national methodologies.

37. It was recommended to the countries having access to the sea to apply the Russian experience (the State Oceanographic Institute) in the development of the nutrients in coastal seawaters indicator.

38. In the discussion that followed, it was pointed out that all countries reporting to the Black Sea Commission had data on nutrients. Ukraine would provide additional information on the indicator.

D. Areas affected by soil erosion

39. A representative of UNCCD made a presentation on that Convention and the assessment of its implementation. UNCCD had developed a new monitoring and reporting system to track and evaluate progress of its implementation through its 10-year strategic plan and action framework 2008–2018. The new UNCCD performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) was an online monitoring, assessment and reporting system. It was funded by the Global Environmental Facility and implemented jointly by the UNCCD secretariat, UNEP and the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). The project aimed at assisting UNCCD with its fourth reporting and review cycle on the implementation of the Convention. In particular, the UNCCD PRAIS project focused on (a) development of reporting tools for the fourth national report; (b) development of the capacity of affected Parties to report on the performance indicators; and (c) establishment of a knowledge management system that would inform and guide subsequent assessment of the implementation of UNCCD (PRAIS portal). In 2010 Parties would be providing information on performance indicators, financial flows and best practices on sustainable land management technologies. Starting in 2012, the Parties were requested to report also on impact indicators, including land cover status.

40. The consultant from the secretariat made a presentation on country responses to the indicator on areas affected by soil erosion. That indicator included two types of data: on wind erosion and water erosion; and on total soil erosion.

41. The majority of counties reported data on the indicator. Georgia, Montenegro and Uzbekistan did not have data available. Time coverage of data differed from country to

country: from an annual basis, in the case of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova, to once every 15 years, in the case of Belarus. Kyrgyzstan had indicated problems with regular monitoring. With the exception of Azerbaijan, all countries had reported incomplete data, which did not allow for the development of the indicator. In Azerbaijan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, the general public did not have access to the published data .

42. The summary of country responses to the questionnaire proposed recommendations to individual countries on improving data collection for the production of the indicator and their publication in environmental assessment reports.

43. In the ensuing discussion, it was pointed out that data on degradation in the Russian Federation would no longer be collected every 5 years, but every 15 years. In several countries there was no distinction between erosion due to the impact of water or wind. Georgia would send information on that indicator as soon as possible. Azerbaijan would check their data and provide revision of the data on soil erosion. The UNCCD representative noted that the frequency of reporting according to international standards was four years for impact indicators and two years for performance indicators. A question was raised on how to account for the erosion of soil induced by anthropogenic sources (e.g., grazing) and what could be done to prevent it.

E. Pesticide use

44. A representative of Norway made a presentation on the Norwegian experience with surveys on pesticide use in agriculture. The response rate of the surveys was quite high — 70 per cent — and of a very good quality. The surveys covered the area of the crop, the type of plant, the use of biological agents, the type of equipment and detailed the use of pesticides, etc. The surveys aimed to also record what kinds of pesticides were used, in which months the various crops had been sprayed and the intensity with which the crops had been sprayed. Recently, the surveys had been extended to cover pesticide use in greenhouses.

45. The consultant from the secretariat made a presentation on country responses on the indicator on pesticide use. The majority of countries, in particular Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Russian Federation, had reported data on the indicator. The Republic of Moldova had stated that the indicator was not being developed in the country. Montenegro and Uzbekistan had not reported any data. The data reported by the Russian Federation did not comply with the requirements for the development of the indicator.

46. Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia published data on pesticide use in different types of documents. Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation also published data on deliveries of pesticides. In the case of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the data on the indicator was not made available to the general public.

47. The summary of country responses to the questionnaire proposed recommendations to individual countries on improving data collection for the production of the indicator and their publication in environmental assessment reports.

48. In the follow-up discussion, countries shared their experience with the estimation of pesticide use and the way the information was collected from agricultural enterprises and farmers. As a good example, the Republic of Moldova shared experience with their survey on pesticide use, which had been carried out for the first time in 2010.

F. Consumption of ozone-depleting substances

49. The representative of the UNEP Ozone Secretariat gave a presentation on the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The key obligations under the Montreal Protocol included control measures, regulatory measures (e.g., licensing systems) and data reporting. In general, the Ozone Secretariat did not have the mandate to undertake quality control of the data. However, in 2005 the Parties had requested the Ozone Secretariat to revise the reporting format to include also the export destination, which allowed for cross-checking the information provided by the importing and exporting countries and helped to reveal discrepancies.

50. The consultant from the UNECE secretariat made a presentation on country replies on the indicator on consumption of ozone-depleting substances (ODS). The consumption of ODS was registered in all reporting countries, either by the customs or by the environmental authorities. In most of the countries, ODS consumption had been reduced during the reporting period. In Kazakhstan, ODS consumption had increased 1.5 times during the past 20 years. Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro published data on ODS consumption in environmental reviews or statistical yearbooks. Belarus had not provided information on publication of data on the indicator, while the rest of the countries reported that that information was not available for the media.

51. Some mismatches were noted when comparing the data submitted by the countries to the UNEP Ozone Secretariat and to the UNECE secretariat. The Joint Task Force recommended, for instance, that the Russian Federation harmonize the data on real consumption of ODS with those recalculated via ozone-depleting potential to avoid misinterpretation. It also recommended to several countries, such as Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, that they add missing data for the purpose of developing the indicator.

III. Consideration of indicators of inland and seawater not covered by the Guidelines

52. A consultant to the secretariat presented additional indicators which were currently not included in the Guidelines. A brief state-of-play of water-related indicators at the international level was described. In particular, EEA had seven water-related indicators. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Eurostat had 11 indicators related to inland waters and 7 indicators for coastal waters. OECD focused on the impact of economic activities. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Aquastat global information system was involved in collecting water-related data. The United Nations Statistics Division and UNEP were collecting 10 water-related indicators through questionnaires.

53. The proposed additional indicators were described according to the modelling framework of driving forces, pressures, states, impacts, responses (DPSIR) adopted by EEA:

- Total water use: Pressure
- Water supply industry: Pressure, response, impact
- Population connected to wastewater treatment: Pressure, response, impact
- Wastewater treatment facilities: Pressure, response
- Concentration of pollutants in seawater and sediments (excepts nutrients): State.

54. A representative of the United Nations Statistics Division presented the Division's work on water accounts and statistics. Recently, the Statistical Commission had adopted the System of Environmental Economic Accounts for Water (SEEA-Water) (2007) and the International Recommendations for Water Statistics (IRWS) (2010). SEEA-Water covered all the physical and economic stocks and flows associated with water. It also covered emissions of pollutants and water quality. IRWS had been developed to assist countries in establishing and strengthening information systems for water, which in turn supported the design and evaluation of better water policies for integrated water resources management. In particular, the recommendations: (a) supported the collection, compilation and dissemination of internationally comparable water statistics in countries; (b) supported the implementation of SEEA-Water; and (c) provided the necessary information for deriving coherent and consistent indicators, enabling comparisons over time and between countries from an agreed list of data items.

55. IRWS had been sent out for printing and translation into the six official United Nations. The updated *Handbook of National Accounting: Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting* was currently undergoing a global consultation. It would be submitted for adoption in February 2012 to the United Nations Statistical Commission. Once it is approved, SEEA-Water would have to be revised to be fully compatible.

56. The representative noted that some water data provided by countries to the United Nations Statistics Division were not completely coherent. For example, data given for the amount of water abstracted from the water utilities per person per day was a very small number. Countries were encouraged to review the data provided to the Division and to check for inconsistencies.

57. The representative of the Statistics Division proposed the following concrete measures in relation to the additional indicators:

(a) *Total water use*: consider the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7.5 indicator. It might be better to measure or estimate abstractions of water by agriculture (International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) 1–3), water supply industry (ISIC 36), cooling for electricity (ISIC 35 without hydroelectricity) and all other industries;

(b) *Water supply industry*: consider abstractions per capita by water supply industry (ISIC 36), losses and the amount of water that was actually supplied to households;

(c) *Population connected to wastewater treatment*: consider MDG 7.9 indicator, included in the IRWS, table 4.16 of data items;

(d) *Wastewater treatment facilities*: consider waterborne gross emissions and the emissions removed by wastewater treatment facilities. Emissions could be measured in terms of BOD and chemical oxygen demand (COD), among others;

(e) *Concentration of pollutants in seawater and sediments*: consider waterborne emissions discharged into the sea in terms of BOD and COD, among others.

58. A representative of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution gave a presentation on environmental data collection within the Black Sea Commission. Six Black Sea countries reported to the Commission: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine. The Commission implemented the provisions of the Convention and adopted the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan, which had consequently been updated in 2009. Based on the Strategic Action Plan 1996, a Black Sea Monitoring System had been established. The updated Action Plan helped to develop/ improve the existing monitoring system and to provide comparable data sets for pollutant loads (from direct discharges and river inputs) and for other parameters. The Monitoring Programme addressed the main transboundary environmental problems in the Black Sea region: eutrophication; water pollution and water quality; biodiversity change and decline;

and habitat destruction. The parameters subject to monitoring included BOD5, total nitrogen, total phosphorus, total suspended solids, flow, heavy metals and total petroleum hydrocarbons. Complementary to the monitoring of pollution, the Monitoring Programme included monitoring of pollution loads, including river discharges, industrial discharges, and municipal (wastewater treatment plant) discharges.

IV. Discussion of developments and plans for future work on indicators under a project for countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Russian Federation

59. The Deputy Director of EEA presented the European Community (EC) project on the Shared Environment Information System (SEIS). In 2010, EEA had been contracted by the European Commission to gradually extend SEIS to countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Russian Federation (as well as nine countries in the southern Mediterranean) under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The project aimed to promote the protection of the environment in those countries through improvements in environmental monitoring, as well as data and information sharing and enhanced networking and cooperation with the national authorities for environmental information and statistics related to environmental policies, legislation and conventions.

60. The priority themes agreed by countries under the ENPI/East part of the project were water (freshwater), waste (household and municipal waste) and air (emissions and climate change). The key issue was promoting cooperation within the countries, regions and different cross-border areas. In that regard, national focal points were appointed from environment ministries and national statistical offices. The cooperation should help in enhancing data flows and assessing whether the monitoring in place was fit for purpose and able to provide inputs for indicator development relevant for policymakers. The work of the Joint Task Force on the enhancement and development of indicators was central to the successful implementation of the project in the ENPI/East area. Many of the national focal points appointed for the ENPI-SEIS project were also Joint Task Force national focal points.

61. It was also reported that the EEA indicators were currently being reviewed and that there might be a need for revision of some of the core set of 37 indicators. Mapping indicators for policy needs was essential. An annual indicator-based assessment would be restored with a particular theme each year. In 2011 the indicators were being used to address the green economy concept.

62. With regard to the “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference in Astana in September 2011, EEA had already produced a series of state-of-the-environment reports for the “Environment for Europe” process. For the Ministerial Conference in Astana, EEA was preparing an assessment of recent national and multinational assessments within the pan-European region. The analysis included around 800 documents with relevance to water quality/management and green economy/resource efficiency, which were the two main topics to be discussed in Astana. At the Ministerial Conference, a declaration would be proposed for endorsement. The declaration aimed to engage countries in the development of indicator-based assessment processes on a regular basis, underpinned by SEIS. The endorsement was expected to help ensure countries’ support for the assessment activities and make funding available.

63. The speaker also presented the key EEA product: *The European Environment — State and Outlook 2010*. The report provided an assessment of the most up-to-date information and data from 32 EEA member countries and six cooperating countries in the

Western Balkans. It also addressed four regional seas: the North-East Atlantic, Baltic, Mediterranean and Black Seas.

64. Under the ENPI-SEIS project, the EEA team had already visited Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The EEA team was working closely with the Joint Task Force and the UNECE secretariat. Following the country visits, country reports on the state of play would be prepared together with action plans for the next phase of work. A "cookbook" of SEIS good practices was being prepared. It built on the experience of the EU and other countries that could be useful for the European neighbourhood region. The next county visits, planned for the autumn of 2011, included the Republic of Moldova, Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

65. Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan shared their experience with EEA country visits. Progress had been made on setting national priorities in the area of the environment, as well as identifying the methodological needs for the update of the environmental reports and the areas that needed improvement in the information systems.

66. In the follow-up discussion, it was clarified that each country of the project should prepare a report with the help of the Zoi Environmental Network within three to four months after the country visits. The country reports of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan would be available for the meeting of the ENPI/SEIS Steering Committee in November 2011. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan expressed interest in participating in a similar project in the near future.

V. The way forward

67. In conclusion, the Joint Task Force:

(a) Encouraged countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and interested countries in South-Eastern Europe (target countries), to start or improve collecting data to regularly produce the six indicators discussed at the present session and to publish them in environmental assessment reports and/or environmental statistics compendiums at the national level;

(b) Invited members of the Joint Task Force to establish or strengthen working relations with national organizations and institutions responsible for reporting on the above six indicators to the governing bodies of relevant multilateral environmental agreements;

(c) Invited members of the Joint Task Force to submit to the secretariat, **by 25 July 2011**, amendments and/or additions to their respective country responses to the questionnaires on indicators that had been discussed at the third session;

(d) Requested the secretariat, taking into account the discussions at the third session and written amendments/additions received from countries, to prepare a revised summary of country responses to the questionnaires **by 10 August 2011**;

(e) Invited members of the Joint Task Force to submit to the secretariat, **by 1 September 2011**, proposals for amendments and comments to the descriptions of the proposed five additional indicators for inland and seawater;

(f) Agreed to consider, at its next session to be held in Geneva from 18 to 20 October 2011, back to back with the annual meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (20–21 October 2011), six further indicators from the Guidelines, and invited members of the Joint Task Force, in close collaboration with relevant national organizations and institutions, including national focal points in relevant multilateral environmental agreements, to prepare for submission to the

Secretariat, **by 15 September 2011**, replies to questionnaires on the six indicators, as follows:

(i) Waste generation (number 33 of the Guidelines);

(ii) Final waste disposal (number 36 of the Guidelines);

(iii) Transboundary movements of hazardous waste (number 34 of the Guidelines);

(iv) Ambient air quality in urban areas (number 2 of the Guidelines);

(v) Threatened and protected species (number 19 of the Guidelines);

(vi) Trends in the number and distribution of selected species (number 20 of the Guidelines);

(g) Also agreed to discuss at the next session proposals for additional indicators on biodiversity to be prepared by the secretariat, and invited members of the Joint Task Force, in close collaboration with relevant national organizations and institutions, including national focal points in relevant multilateral environmental agreements, to submit to the secretariat, **by 10 October 2011**, proposals for amendments and comments to the descriptions of those additional indicators;

(h) Invited members of the Joint Task Force from the countries to which EEA would make country visits under the European Community project on SEIS to facilitate the organization of these visits, including the preparation of presentations and the organization of meetings.

VI. Other business

68. The Joint Task Force thanked donor Governments and EEA (under the above-mentioned EC project on SEIS) for providing travel funds for entitled members of the Joint Task Force.