



Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference

**Astana, Kazakhstan
21–23 September 2011**

Report of the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference

“Save water, grow green!”



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I. Introduction

1. The Seventh “Environment for Europe” (EfE) Ministerial Conference was held from 21 to 23 September 2011 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

A. Attendance

2. The Conference was attended by delegations from 44 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE): Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United States of America and Uzbekistan. Representatives of the Holy See also participated.

3. In addition, delegations from Brazil and Japan, United Nations Member States not members of ECE, participated, as did representatives of Palestine, a Permanent Observer to the United Nations.

4. From the United Nations system, representatives of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) attended.

5. Representatives of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), the

International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia (ICWC) and the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) were present.

6. Representatives of the European Union, including the Council of European Union, the European Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA), also attended the meeting.

7. Representatives from the five Regional Environmental Centres (RECs) took part in the meeting: the REC for Central and Eastern Europe (REC-CEE); the REC for the Caucasus (REC-Caucasus); the REC for Central Asia (CAREC); the REC for the Republic of Moldova (REC-Moldova); and the REC for the Russian Federation (REC-Russia).

8. Representatives from the following financial institutions participated: the World Bank, the Eurasian Development Bank and the International Financial Corporation.

9. Many other organizations and major groups, including academia, business, local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and parliamentarians were also represented.

10. The secretariat was provided by the ECE. A list of participants is available on the ECE website.¹

B. Organizational matters

11. The Conference adopted a Ministerial Declaration (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/2/Add.1). In addition, the results of the Conference discussions are reflected in the Chair's Summary (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/2/Add.2). To avoid duplication with those documents, the present report gives only a brief factual overview of the Conference sessions.

12. The Conference was a paperless event. Official and information documents of the Conference, as well as the presentations, keynote addresses and interventions made at the Conference, are provided on the Conference's website.²

13. The European ECO Forum organized and coordinated the participation of NGO representatives in the Conference. The Conference gathered many business and industry representatives, who also participated in a Green Innovations, Technologies And Ecoservices Fair,³ organized on the margins of the Conference.

14. Daily reporting on the work of the Conference, as well as a summary report at the end of the Conference, was carried out by the Division of Reporting Services of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).⁴

15. The EfE partners organized 43 side events on issues related to the two main themes of the Conference on the margins of the Conference.⁵

¹ <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/efe/Astana/Tabs/fifth/AstanaLoP.pdf>.

² <http://www.unece.org/env/efe/Astana/documents.html>.

³ <http://www.ecotech.kz/en/aboutex>.

⁴ <http://www.iisd.ca/yimb/unece/efe7>.

16. The Conference opened with a laser show projection on the theme of environmental challenges in the region. The First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Mr. Umirzak Shukeyev, welcomed delegates in an opening address.

17. The Chair of the Conference, Mr. Nurgali Ashim, Minister of Environmental Protection of Kazakhstan, opened the Conference and welcomed delegates. The Chair highlighted that the main objective of the Conference was to address a number of agreed issues under the two main themes of the Conference: (a) sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems; and (b) greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development. The Chair also emphasized that the Conference would conduct most of its work in an interactive way in the form of round-table discussions.

18. Keynote addresses were delivered by the Executive Secretary of ECE, Mr. Jan Kubiš, and, via a video recording, by the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Achim Steiner.

C. Adoption of the agenda

19. The agenda, as contained in the document ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/1, was adopted.

II. The “Environment for Europe” process: 20 years of pan-European cooperation

20. The session on the theme, the “Environment for Europe” process: 20 years of pan-European cooperation, was chaired by the Chair of the Conference, who opened the session with introductory remarks.

21. Mr. Bedrich Moldan, former Minister of Environment and Senator, Czech Republic, gave an address entitled “From Dobříš to Astana: 20 years of pan-European cooperation”. The Executive Secretary of ECE then accepted the Josef Vavroušek Honourable Award, conferred on ECE by the Charta 77 Foundation and the Environmental Partnership Foundation in recognition of the Commission’s extraordinary contribution and support to the EfE process — a process initiated by Josef Vavroušek, Minister-Chairman of the Federal Committee for the Environment of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, in 1991.

22. The Chair of the Conference presented the “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/6).

23. The Executive Director of EEA, Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, presented the key findings of the “Europe’s Environment Assessment of Assessments” report (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/8).

24. The Minister of the Environment of Finland, Mr. Ville Niinistö, presented the findings of the *Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* in the ECE region (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/9).⁶

25. Statements from the floor were delivered by ministers and heads of delegation of the following delegations: Poland (on behalf of European Union and its member States),

⁵ <http://www.efe.kz/raspeng.html>.

⁶ The full text of the *Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters* is now available as an online publication at <http://www.unece.org/env/water.html>.

Georgia, Estonia, Romania, United States, Germany, Italy, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, European ECO Forum, Kazakhstan Association of Enterprises for Sustainable Development, ESCAP, UNDP, CAREC and OSCE.

III. Sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems

26. The session on sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems was chaired by Mr. László Borbély, Minister of Environment and Forests of Romania, who opened the session with introductory remarks.

27. To facilitate discussions under this agenda item, a thematic substantive document on sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems was prepared by the ECE and the OECD Environmental Action Programme (EAP) Task Force secretariats (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/3, section I). Also, a number of information documents on this theme were prepared by relevant EfE partners. These documents are posted on the Conference website.

28. Keynote addresses were given by Mr. Sándor Fazekas, Minister of Rural Development, Hungary; Mr. Nurgali Ashim, Minister of Environment Protection, Kazakhstan; Mr. Gheorghe Şalaru, Minister of Environment, Republic of Moldova; Ms. Sascha Gabizon, co-Chair of the European ECO Forum Board and Executive Director of Women in Europe for a Common Future; Ms. Letitia Obeng, Chair of GWP; and Mr. Sagit Ibatullin, Chairman of the Executive Committee of IFAS.

29. The Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Ms. Sibylle Vermont (Switzerland), presented the Astana Water Action (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/5).

30. Following the plenary session, the meeting split into three parallel sessions of a multi-stakeholder round table on sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems. Round-table parallel session 1 (in English, French and Russian) was moderated by Ms. Vermont. Round-table parallel session 2 (in English and Russian) was moderated by Mr. Hugo von Meijenfeldt, Ambassador, Deputy-Director General for the Environment and Special Envoy for Climate Change of the Netherlands. Round-table parallel session 3 (in English and Russian) was moderated by Mr. Chyngyzbek Uzakbaev, Deputy Chairman of the Committee of Water Resources and Melioration, Kyrgyzstan.

IV. Sustainable management of water and greening the economy

31. The session on sustainable management of water and greening the economy was chaired by Mr. Bruno Oberle, State Secretary, Director of the Federal Office for the Environment of Switzerland, who opened the session with introductory remarks.

32. To facilitate discussions under this agenda item, a thematic substantive document on sustainable management of water and greening the economy was prepared by the ECE and the OECD EAP Task Force secretariats (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/3, section II). Also, a number of information documents on this theme were prepared by relevant EfE partners. These documents are posted on the Conference website.

33. Keynote addresses were given by Mr. Ville Niinistö, Minister of Environment, Finland; Mr. Rinat Gizatulin, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Russian Federation; Ms. Anna Golubovska-Onisimova, President of the Ukrainian environmental NGO “MAMA-86”, representing European ECO-Forum; Mr. Simon Upton,

Director, Environment Directorate, OECD; Mr. Mykola Melenevskiy, President of the ICPDR; and Mr. Tulegen Sarsembekov, Deputy Chief, Department of Technical Assistance, Eurasian Development Bank.

34. Following the plenary session, the meeting split into three parallel sessions of a multi-stakeholder round table on sustainable management of water and greening the economy. Round-table parallel session 1 (in English, French and Russian) was moderated by Mr. Gheorghe Constantin (Romania), the Chair of the European Union Water Initiative Working Group for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Round-table parallel session 2 (in English and Russian) was moderated by Mr. Zaal Lomtadze (Georgia), Chair of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy. Round-table parallel session 3 (in English and Russian) was moderated by Mr. Marek Gromiec (Poland), Professor, International Expert in Water Resources Management and winner in 2010 of the Grand Prix Cannes Water Award, the Swedish Baltic Sea Water Award and the Culligan Gold Water Award.

V. Greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development

35. The session on greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development was chaired by Mr. Ruslan Bultrikov, Vice-Minister of Environment Protection of Kazakhstan, who opened the session with introductory remarks.

36. To facilitate discussions under this agenda item, a substantive document on the segment theme was prepared by the ECE and UNEP secretariats (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/4). Also, a number of information documents on this theme were prepared by relevant EfE partners. These documents are posted on the Conference website.

37. Keynote addresses were given by Mr. Milan Hovorka, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Czech Republic; Mr. Gerald Farthing, Deputy Minister of Manitoba Education, Canada; Mr. Jochen Flasbarth, President of the Federal German Environment Agency, Germany; Mr. Kamaliddin Sadikov, Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Nature Protection, Uzbekistan; Mr. Jan Rączka, President of the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management, Poland; Mr. Janis Brizga, Head of the Board of Green Liberty, European ECO Forum; Ms. Martina Bianchini, Vice President of European Union Government Affairs and Public Policy, Dow Chemical, and Chair of the International Chamber of Commerce Green Economy Task Force; and Ms. Viera Feckova, Global Product Specialist for Resource Efficiency, International Finance Corporation.

38. The plenary session had a break of 30 minutes during which Ministers and other Heads of Delegation met in a closed session with the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Mr. Karim Massimov.

39. Following the plenary session, the meeting split into three parallel sessions of a multi-stakeholder round table on greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development. Round-table parallel session 1 (in English, French and Russian) was moderated by Ms. Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director of EEA. Round-table parallel session 2 (in English and Russian) was moderated by Mr. Jan Dusik, Deputy Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe. Round-table parallel session 3 (in English and Russian) was moderated by Mr. Deltcho Vitchev, Director, Renaissance Finance International, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

VI. Reporting on the outcomes of the discussion under the thematic segments

40. A session devoted to reporting on the outcomes of the discussion under the thematic segments was chaired by the Conference Chair, who opened the session with introductory remarks.

41. Mr. Borbély, the Chair of the thematic segment on sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems, reported on the main findings of both the plenary and round-table sessions under that thematic segment.

42. Mr. Oberle, the Chair of the thematic segment on sustainable management of water and greening the economy, reported on the main findings of both the plenary and round-table sessions under that thematic segment.

43. Mr. Bultrikov, the Chair of the thematic segment on greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development, reported on the main findings of both the plenary and round-table sessions under that thematic segment.

VII. Adoption of Conference outcomes

44. A session devoted to adoption of the Conference outcomes was chaired by the Chair of the Conference. The Chair opened the session and presented the draft Ministerial Declaration as submitted to the Conference by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy. The Ministerial Declaration was adopted by acclamation (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/2/Add.1).

45. Statements were made by the following delegations: Poland (on behalf of European Union and its member States), Czech Republic, Belarus, European ECO-Forum, United States and Canada.

46. Ms. Vermont, presented a summary of commitments to the Astana Water Action. Twenty countries and four organizations registered a total of 75 specific commitments under that initiative. Their participation was acknowledged in a ceremony presenting them with sage (*Salvia officinalis*) seeds and tea as a symbol of wisdom and foresight for the sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems.

47. Mr. Bedrich Moldan (Czech Republic), Vice-Chair of the Preparatory Bureau for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) informed the Astana Conference about developments in the preparations for Rio+20, which would be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012.

VIII. Closure of the Conference

48. The Chair of the Conference presented the Chair's summary of the Conference (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/2/Add.2).

49. Intervention from the floor was made by the delegation of REC-CEE.

50. The ECE Executive Secretary made closing remarks.

51. The Chair thanked all participants for their fruitful work and expressed his confidence that the commitments taken at the Conference would contribute to a better environment in the region.

52. The Chair invited the Conference speakers to send the electronic versions of their presentations, keynote addresses and interventions to the ECE secretariat for posting on the Conference website.

53. The Chair thanked the interpreters for their work and closed the Conference.

54. The Conference thanked the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy for an excellent preparation of the event. It also thanked the ECE secretariat for a successful and smooth organization of the Conference. The Conference expressed its gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan for having hosted the event and for the warm hospitality extended to the participants.
