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#### Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

##### Meeting on Environmental Assessments

Geneva, 16 and 17 April 2013

## Report of the Meeting on Environmental Assessments

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The Meeting on Environmental Assessments was held on 16 and 17 April 2013 in Geneva.

### **A. Attendance**

2. The Meeting was attended by representatives of the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) countries: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

3. Representatives of the European Environment Agency (EEA) attended the Meeting.

4. A representative from the Regional Environmental Centre for the Republic of Moldova (REC-Moldova) was also present.

5. Representatives of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) GRID-Arendal and Zoï Environmental Network also took part in the Meeting on Environmental Assessments.

### **B. Adoption of the agenda**

6. Meeting participants adopted the agenda for the Meeting on Environmental Assessments, as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2013/1.<sup>1</sup>

### **C. Election of the Chair**

7. The Meeting on Environmental Assessments elected Ms. Irina Komosko (Belarus) as Chair.

## **II. Legal and regulatory basis for publication of state-of-the environment reports**

8. Participants were invited to report on the legal and regulatory basis in their countries for the publication of state-of-the environment (SoE) reports. The representatives of the Environment Agency of Austria, the Croatian Environment Agency, the Czech Environmental Information Agency, the Macedonian Environmental Information Centre, the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency, the Slovenian Environment Agency and the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment briefed the Meeting on the procedures and regulations regarding SoE reports in their countries.

9. In Austria, the Federal Act for the Comprehensive Protection of the Environment (1984) had been the basis for the subsequent Environmental Control Act (1985), which had established the Environment Agency of Austria with the mandate to draft SoE reports.

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<sup>1</sup> Documents and other materials from the meeting are available on the ECE website from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=32326>.

10. In Croatia, the Croatian Environment Agency was responsible for preparation of SoE reports every four years, in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act (2007). The report was drafted with the involvement and input of all the ministries and institutions concerned. The Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection was responsible for delivering the SoE report to the Croatian Government, which in turn submitted it to the Croatian Parliament.

11. The Report on the Environment of the Czech Republic was prepared annually on the basis of the Government Act of 1998 on the right to environmental information, as amended, and the Government Resolution of 1994. The report was submitted for approval to the Government and subsequently to the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Parliament. The Czech Environmental Information Agency was the body under the Czech Ministry of Environment responsible for the preparation and publication of the SoE report.

12. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Environmental Information Centre had been established by the Law on the Environment (2005) as part of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, to prepare environmental assessment reports, including the SoE report. Also in accordance with the 2005 Law, the guidelines on the form, content, targets, methodology, data sources and report assessment had been adopted. The guidelines regulated the development of environmental reports in detail.

13. In Serbia, the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency, within the Ministry of Energy, Development and Environmental Protection, affirmed the Agency was responsible for preparing the SoE reports on a yearly basis, in accordance with article 76 of the Environmental Protection Law (2004). In 2009, the Law had been amended to add indicators to the report and, in 2011, a by-law on a National List of Indicators had been adopted. Article 77 of the Law on Environmental Protection described the contents of the SoE report.

14. In Slovenia, the Slovenian Environment Agency, part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment was mandated to produce the SoE report and the indicators mentioned in the Environmental Protection Act from 1993, amended in 2004 in order to fully harmonize the country's environmental laws with EU environmental directives.

15. The legislation regulating SoE reports in Switzerland was based on the Environmental Protection Act of 1983. Another related piece of legislation was the Federal Law on Statistics (1990), according to which the Federal Office for the Environment was obliged to provide the public with official statistics, compiled by the Government and its offices, including environmental data.

16. A consultant to the secretariat presented a summary of national reviews on the existing legal and regulatory basis relating to the publication of SoE reports in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, except Turkmenistan.<sup>2</sup> Only a couple of countries did not have specific legislation for the production of the SoE reports (Armenia and Azerbaijan), whereas the rest of the countries of the subregion did have specific laws or decrees providing for the production of SoE reports on a regular basis.

### **III. Institutional mechanisms for the production of state-of-the-environment reports**

17. Participants were invited to share information on the institutional and coordination mechanisms established in their countries for the submission of data and information on

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<sup>2</sup> This country neither submitted a national report nor attended the meeting.

individual parts of the reports and the institutions responsible for the drafting the SoE reports.

18. In Austria, the national SoE report was drafted and published by the Environment Agency of Austria. The body was mandated to prepare the SoE report in cooperation with relevant data owners, such as the Austrian Provincial Governments, Statistics Austria and the Austrian Energy Agency, which took into account comments and feedback from the External Consultation with the Austrian Ministry of Life before publishing. All expertise was provided in-house by the editorial team within the Agency except for expertise sought from Biocides (the Austrian Health Agency). Sometimes an external editor was contracted to edit the report.

19. In Croatia, the Croatian Environment Agency was responsible for production of the SoE report, which included coordinating the drafting process and serving as a source of data and a focal point for the Croatian Environmental Information System containing 44 databases. The cooperation network involved in drafting the report comprised some 20 institutions engaged in monitoring, data collection and production of indicators. The closest collaborator was the Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection, but other major contributors included the Ministry of Agriculture; the Ministry of Health; the Croatian National Institute of Public Health; the Croatian Water Agency; the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries/National Research Council; the Hrvoje Požar Energy Institute; the State Institute for Nature Protection; the Meteorological and Hydrological Service; the Croatian Forest Research Institute; the State Geodetic Administration; the competent cantonal authorities; the Croatian Bureau of Statistics; scientific institutions; and NGOs.

20. In the Czech Republic, the SoE report was prepared by the Czech Environmental Information Agency. Cooperation and provision of data sets were arranged at the level of deputy ministers. The structure of SoE reports was adopted by the Ministry of Environment. There were 26 collaborating institutions which provided data sets for the report. Some of the data were obtained from relevant departments of the ministries, as well as from other State and governmental institutions. The Czech Environmental Information Agency also cooperated with one university and three private companies providing data.

21. The Macedonian Environmental Information Centre was responsible for the management of the information system in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, including collection, processing and presentation of data at the national level, according to article 40 of the Law on the Environment. Consequently, the Information Centre was responsible for submission of data and preparation of the annual report, as well as environmental indicators and SoE reports on the national level. The Environmental Statistics Report was prepared in cooperation with the State Statistical Office. The SoE report was developed by the coordination body, established by the Minister, composed of representatives of relevant bodies, organizations and institutions possessing the environmental data. Municipalities or the City of Skopje might prepare SoE reports for their respective areas under their own responsibility. The national SoE report was approved by the Government; the Environmental Statistics Report was approved by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning and the State Statistical Office; and the annual reports and SoE reports for municipalities were approved by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.

22. In Serbia, the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency was responsible for establishing and maintaining the national Information System for Environmental Protection. A set of already-existing independent monitoring networks on the local, regional and national levels provided the basis for the Information System on the environment. Data were provided by 11 main sources, including the Statistical Office, the National Hydrometeorological Service, the Institutes of Public Health and Nature

Protection, the Province of Vojvodina, the Secretariat for Environmental Protection, universities and others.

23. In Slovenia, production of the SoE report was under the responsibility of the Slovenian Environment Agency within the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment. The institutional mechanism for the production of the report included the International Cooperation Service (three to five editors) receiving data from 20 institutions with 100 experts involved.

24. The Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, while not explicitly mandated by law to prepare the national SoE report, had been publishing the Swiss SoE report since 1990. The last SoE report that had been based on indicators had been published in 2007. That report had been produced by a steering committee composed of 5 persons, a project management team of 5–10 persons, a group of 40–50 experts (for selection of indicators), a writing team and mandate holders.

25. A consultant to the secretariat presented a summary of national reviews on the existing institutional framework for the production of SoE reports in the 11 countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In most of the countries production of the report was the responsibility of the ministry of nature or environmental protection and/or the State agencies or committees on environmental protection in cooperation with the corresponding State agencies and members of expert groups, as well as with universities and other scientific institutions.

26. In the discussions, some countries of the subregion updated the Meeting regarding the production process for national SoE reports and the institutional mechanisms involved. Armenia was in process of developing the corresponding legal basis for preparing its SoE reports. Azerbaijan had already established a working group responsible for the preparation of its national SoE report, and the first draft of the report was ready and would be published soon. In Kazakhstan, the responsibility for producing national SoE reports had been recently switched to the Informational and Analytical Centre of Environmental Protection of the Ministry of Environment Protection, which would from now on be in charge of producing national reports on the basis of data and information contained in the State Fund of Environmental Information managed by the Centre. Tajikistan had planned to produce its first national SoE report in October 2013 and had established a working group within the Environmental Committee to that end. At present, however, no funding had been made available for the production of the report and to support the activities of the working group to that end.

#### **IV. Structure and content of state-of-the-environment reports**

27. Participants were invited to share information on the structure and content of the national SoE reports, as set out under sections A to I below.

28. A representative of EEA made a presentation on regular reporting processes managed by the Agency. EEA was tasked with reporting on the state of, trends in and prospects for Europe's environment every five years, which it did in its State and Outlook of the Environment reports (SOERs). Presently the Agency was in the process of preparing the 2015 report. Since EEA was a European Union (EU) institution, the reporting exercise in 2005 had served to assess performance under the six environmental action programmes. The report's publication had been timed to allow policymakers to be able to take stock of the implementation of the plans they had set up 10 years before: whether the objectives had been met; what had to change; what had to improve; and what the direction forward should be. The long, more rigid and more comprehensive five-year reporting cycle could be complemented by the process of the flexible and regular update using the indicators, which

did not give the whole picture, but gave the right signals and targeted messages for a particular year on a particular topic.

29. The 2010 SOER report had had a synthesis part for policymakers and a thematic part on water, air, etc., based on indicators reflecting the picture for each individual sector, as well as a country part where each country had been invited to provide information, based on a template using the information from the SoE report. The same structure would be kept for the 2015 report. Learning from countries' feedback on the 2010 report, some of the elements would be reduced and would be more focused, and interaction between the countries and the experts would be more proactive. The 2015 SOER report would also be designed as a dynamic electronic tool, with a number of interactive mechanisms that would give more updated information than a paper publication.

#### **A. Consistency of reports with the Guidelines for the Preparation of Indicator-based Environment Assessment Reports in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia**

30. Participants were invited to provide details on the extent to which the structure of their national SoE reports had been adapted to the requirements of the ECE Guidelines for the Preparation of Indicator-based Assessment Reports in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Preparation Guidelines),<sup>3</sup> and to indicate which additional country-specific sections had been included.

31. In Austria, the content of the national SoE report included 18 chapters, and had been using the same flexible structure for all chapters on environmental topics for the past four reports (12 years), ensuring continuity and enabling comparability, focused on environmental targets (international, EU, national); situation and trends; analysis; and recommendations. In the last report, a new chapter on environment and health had been added. Some specific characteristics of the Austrian SoE report included: a "Comprehensive Assessment and Outlook" section for every topic, with expert conclusions; and specific as well as targeted recommendations focused on particular actors/sectors. The report had one main target audience: high-level policymakers and administrators.

32. In Croatia, the national SoE included 7 environmental topics/chapters, 10 sectoral pressures topics/chapters and 1 general topic/chapter. Every chapter contained: indicators (data and information, graphs, maps, etc.); a status assessment with reference to the indicators presented (including benchmarking according to national, and for some issues EU/international, targets); an assessment of the achievement of the objectives of the national Environmental Strategy and Plan, as well as sectoral strategies and planning documents; and conclusions and recommendations for policymakers. The aim of the national SoE report was to assess the state of the environment in Croatia based on credible, timely, relevant, consistent, legitimate, transparent and targeted data and evidence-driven information, and accordingly to assess whether the objectives of the Environmental Strategy and Plan, sectoral strategies and planning documents had been achieved.

33. In the Czech Republic, the SoE report included sections on methodology, key messages, main positive findings, main negative findings and driving forces. Those were followed by an indicator-based assessment. At the end of the report there was a chapter including the global and European context of driving forces affecting the state of the environment. The 2011 report contained a section about data availability because of certain

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<sup>3</sup> ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/INF/6, Part Two, available from <http://www.unece.org/env/efe/Belgrade/Proceedings/Item2a/Item2a.html>.

lacunae; for example, a biodiversity indicator had been omitted due to the lack of relevant current data. Since 2010, the report had also included a glossary of terms and a list of abbreviations to better describe and clarify the terminology and abbreviations used. The methodology for the report followed the trend applied in the EU and was consistent with the ECE Preparation Guidelines.

34. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the structure and content of the SoE report was entirely consistent with the ECE Preparation Guidelines, incorporating all the parts defined therein. It also included additional sections specific to the country, such as a section on sustainable development, spatial planning and health and environment; a section on environmental impacts from tourism, industry, the use of pesticides, genetically modified organisms, contaminated sites, chemicals and noise; and sections on other thematically linked areas, like national parks and the protection of cultural heritage.

35. The structure and content of the Serbian SoE report for 2006, issued in 2007, followed the Driving Forces-Pressures-State-Impacts-Responses (DPSIR) model and had been prepared according to the ECE Preparation Guidelines. The SoE report for 2010, issued in 2011, applied the indicator structure, in accordance with the by-law on the National List of Indicators. The 2011 report contained 10 topics: air and climate; water quality; biodiversity; soil and agriculture; waste and material flows; forests, hunting and fishing; renewable resources; economic and social pressures; environmental financing; and implementation of legislation.

36. Since 2007, Swiss SoE reports included an assessment of environmental policy and were shorter and more structured. Target groups for the report included policymakers and the interested public. The report was divided into four parts: stocktaking of environmental policy implementation (Part I); state of the environment (Part II); forward-looking information and Switzerland in the international context (by 2015) (Part III); and a description of the methodology applied, based on the DPSIR model and indicator-based assessment (Part IV).

37. A consultant to the secretariat presented a summary of the national reviews on the issue of consistency of the state-of-the environment reports with the ECE Preparation Guidelines in the 11 countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In some countries (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Uzbekistan), the SoE reports were partially consistent with the ECE Preparation Guidelines. In Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, the SoE reports were based on the Preparation Guidelines. Armenia had not produced SoE reports since 2002; instead, sector-oriented assessment reports were published.

## **B. Use of environmental indicators in state-of-the environment reports**

38. Participants were further invited to identify which of the environmental indicators included in the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia<sup>4</sup> had been used in their SoE reports; what graphs had been included; what specific additional indicators had been used; and to what extent cross-country comparisons had been made using the indicators.

39. In Austria, the SoE report included the EEA core set of indicators, indicators elaborated under international conventions and national indicators.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Part One.

40. In Croatia, the indicator-based SoE report included the National List of Indicators and the EEA core set of indicators, as well as other international indicators applicable to Croatia.

41. In the Czech Republic, the SoE report covered eight topics with 36 key indicators, including air and climate; water management and water quality; forests, soil and landscape; the industry and energy sector; transportation; waste and material flows; and financing. Since 2008 the report was based on the EEA core set of indicators and on the DPSIR model, providing conclusions relevant to policy-making based on data obtained from monitoring systems both from within and outside the environmental sector. The indicators were related to the main environmental topics, and reflected State environmental policy and its objectives. The indicators were user friendly. The indicator assessment structure included, among others, a DPSIR framework, references to current conceptual and strategic documents and impacts on human health and ecosystems, as well as graphic and textual assessments with international comparisons (using data from Eurostat, EEA and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and references.

42. In Slovenia, there were about 180 indicators in the system, but not all of them were updated every year. An editorial team decided which indicators had to be updated on the basis of the idea that indicators referred to core environmental issues; indicators on the state of the air, water and land, for example, were updated every year, whereas those relating to other sectors, like transport, energy and agriculture, were updated every two years. All indicators were published on the Slovenian Environment Agency website.<sup>5</sup> The system was built to be useful for multiple purposes — to provide quality-checked data and information or an “evidence base” for SoE report and other reports on the national and international levels, but also to provide information and messages to experts and the general public and to engage the most important institutions and experts in disseminating environmental messages.

43. In Switzerland, the system of indicators had many points in common with the EEA core set of indicators, and also included national indicators. Indicators were basically to guide environmental observation (DPSIR framework) and environmental reporting (products for the public and policymakers). Online reporting was undertaken through an indicator database portal<sup>6</sup> and environmental status reports were posted online.<sup>7</sup> Print products include a publication entitled *Environment Switzerland* and a series of thematic reports. Indicators were managed in the database operational in four languages (German, French, Italian and English), which consisted of modules on indicator metadata, indicator assessment and the data themselves. Indicators were managed in a workflow that required a lot of offline work, which was done in close contact with experts. Environmental reporting on the state of the environment online included such online products as a map viewer<sup>8</sup> in four languages; environmental status reports (topics, short overview, DPSIR, including indicators); indicators (the charts and tables providing a rapid visual overview of the present situation and future trends of the environment in Switzerland); data (planned for mid-2013), including access to all online Federal Office for the Environment databases and integrated data sets (i.e. global megatrends); as well as publications, providing a list of available publications including international reports.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://kazalci.arso.gov.si>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bafu.admin.ch/umwelt/indikatoren/index.html?lang=en>.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.bafu.admin.ch/umwelt/status/index.html?lang=en>.

<sup>8</sup> [www.map.bafu.admin.ch](http://www.map.bafu.admin.ch).

### **C. Data assurance and control systems**

44. Participants informed the Meeting about their national data quality assurance and control procedures applied to data submitted for SoE reports by the various ministries and institutions.

45. In the Czech Republic, the editorial team relied on the quality of data obtained from collaborating institutions, but the data were based on specific methodologies and were recalculated and verified during processing. The editorial team insisted on the availability of quality and reliable data over a long period of time. The indicators covered as many causal links as possible, being selected to represent both the causes and consequences of other phenomena in the DPSIR chain.

46. A consultant to the secretariat presented a summary of national reviews regarding the data assurance and control procedures applied to data submitted for SoE reports by the various respective institutions of the countries concerned. In most countries, official data used in the national SoE reports were provided by the relevant State agencies and institutions that had taken part in the preparation of the report, and they were responsible for the quality of data provided. In Belarus, efforts were undertaken to verify the official data. In Uzbekistan, a special working group in charge of preparing the SoE report, coordinated by the State Committee on Environment, undertook the analysis and control of the official data provided by the relevant institutions.

47. In Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Slovenia and Ukraine data were received from the official sources, i.e., the relevant State agencies responsible for monitoring the various areas of the environment in accordance with standardized methodologies, and subject to the relevant controls. It was also noted that there was no common understanding of the exact meaning of data control and validation procedures. To avoid any differences in interpretation, it was proposed to raise the question during the next session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring meeting in November 2013, with a view to agreeing on the exact meaning of data control and validation procedures.

### **D. Use of modern technologies for data presentation**

48. Participants exchanged the experiences of their countries and organizations on the use of modern technologies for better presentation and dissemination of environmental data and indicators (diagrams, maps or other visual formats).

49. A representative of the Czech Republic gave a presentation on the use of the national Information System of Statistics and Reporting, a single reporting tool for all environmental statistics outputs (SoE report, statistical environmental yearbook, regional statistical environmental yearbooks and others). The Information System also acted as a one stop shop for environmental information services: data and information were user-friendly and at an appropriate level of aggregation, and were presented to end users as soon as they were registered and verified by the authorities. Currently, the Information System was able to give data access to partners on the national and international levels, using a general communication interface. The System was available via the web,<sup>9</sup> and was divided into several environmental topics and their indicators.

50. A representative of Austria provided some insights on Austria's experience in implementing modern information technologies for environmental reporting, based on the

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<sup>9</sup> <http://issar.cenia.cz/issar/page.php?id=1760>.

idea that the future of reporting was not just to present the end product on the web, but also to share and transfer the information, for example, to EEA.

51. In the discussions, the EEA representative clarified that the concept behind the use of the software for environmental reporting referred to by EAA was the Shared Environmental Information System, which was used as a common platform for sharing information. EEA tried to provide countries with the possibility to use the existing platform and made all its tools available free of charge to everybody.

52. During the discussions, a representative of Kazakhstan outlined the country's experience on environmental data presentation using the information technologies.

53. A consultant to the secretariat presented a summary of the national reviews regarding the use of modern technologies for better presentation of environmental data and indicators in SoE reports in the 11 countries of the subregion. All countries had reported on the use of different kinds of visual materials, such as diagrams, maps, tables, charts and photos. The Russian Federation was currently working on organizing the interactive visualization of its SoE report on the official website of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

## **V. Publication and dissemination of state-of-the-environment reports**

54. Participants exchanged information on the periodicity of issuing SoE reports in their countries, publication in paper and/or electronic formats, translation in additional languages and channels and means of dissemination of the reports.

55. In Austria, the Environment Agency of Austria was mandated by the law to draft and publish the SoE report every three years, which was then delivered by the Ministry to the Austrian National Assembly. The ninth edition — the 2010 State of the Environment Report — had been delivered to the Austrian National Assembly in July 2010 and the tenth report was currently in the process of production.

56. To date, Croatia had prepared and adopted two SoE reports and a third was currently being drafted.<sup>10</sup> The SoE report was published in the Croatian language in paper and electronic versions (CD-ROM), and was also available via the websites of the Croatian Environment Agency and the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (for the 2007 SoE report, the Environment Agency had produced a summary in English).<sup>11</sup> To inform the public of the report's release, on the date of publication press releases were issued, a briefing was held for journalists and Government websites announced the report's publication; after the publication date, the Government continued to take advantage of various environmental events to continue raising public awareness of the report, including celebrations for the Day of Environment, Energy Week, on water, on the protection of forests, etc. The report was disseminated to policymakers (representatives of the national Government, public institutions and municipalities), universities, public libraries, the general public, political parties, NGOs and others. Regarding cooperation with EEA, the Croatian Environment Agency had provided data, information and chapters to EEA for the SOER report 2010.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.azo.hr/IzvjescaOStanju>.

<sup>11</sup> Available from <http://www.azo.hr/2007StateOf>.

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer/countries/hr>.

57. In the Czech Republic, the SoE report had been prepared and published annually since 1998. Between 1998 and 2007 a printed summary in Czech- and English-language versions had been published, as well as a comprehensive assessment in Czech in electronic format (CD-ROM). Between 2008 and 2010, both printed and electronic (CD-ROM) versions of the full report in the Czech and English languages had been produced. Since 2011, the report had only been published on USB flash drives, in Czech and English versions, and was also available on the website of the Czech Environmental Information Agency and the Ministry of Environment.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the report was presented at specialized events, as well as quoted in newspapers and journals.

58. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the SoE report was published every four years in the Macedonian and English languages in paper and electronic formats available on the website of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning. The report was disseminated free of charge by the Ministry's Public Relations Office with a copy disseminated to the relevant institutions. A number of other environment assessment reports were published in the former Republic of Macedonia, such as the annual report on the quality of the environment, the report on environmental indicators and the environmental statistics report, as well as daily and monthly air-quality information reports.

59. In Serbia, the SoE reports were produced annually in electronic format and were available on the website of the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency ([www.sepa.gov.rs](http://www.sepa.gov.rs)), as well as in paper format (1,000 copies). Reports were disseminated to Ministries and specialized institutions and at specialized events. Special publications (brief, brochures on targeted topics) were also produced periodically. Parts of the report were also published on occasion in newspapers and other media. Three years ago the report had been translated into English, but since 2009 that had no longer been possible owing to a lack of financial support.

60. In Switzerland, the SoE report was published every two years (every four years from 2015 onwards), in both paper and electronic formats (online) in four languages. The latest report would be released in the beginning of July 2013, whereas the following one would be published in the beginning of 2015. The report was publicized through the insertion of a special supplement on the report in the national environmental magazine, through press releases and through the Internet. Since 2005, the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment had aligned its activities in terms of dissemination of environmental information by reinforcing the use of the Internet, giving a new dimension to data sharing: information and products like maps, short SoE reports, indicators, graphs and tables were made available on the Internet, covering around 20 environmental issues; and in 2012 the map viewer had been updated.<sup>14</sup> All of those websites would be continuously updated in 2013, with a focus on interlinking maps and tables and more interactivity in data display. All the products were available in four languages focused on the DPSIR model, allowing for the analysis of the state of the environment within the cause-and-effect chain.

61. A consultant to the secretariat presented a summary of national reviews regarding publication and dissemination of SoE reports in the 11 countries of the subregion. In Armenia, one SoE report had been published, in 2002, in the Armenian, English and Russian languages. Azerbaijan was preparing its first SoE report for 2008–2013. Five of the

<sup>13</sup> See

[http://www1.cenia.cz/www/sites/default/files/Report\\_on\\_the\\_Environment\\_of\\_the\\_Czech\\_Republic\\_2011\\_pro%20web%20a%20USB.pdf](http://www1.cenia.cz/www/sites/default/files/Report_on_the_Environment_of_the_Czech_Republic_2011_pro%20web%20a%20USB.pdf)[http://www1.cenia.cz/www/sites/default/files/Report\\_on\\_the\\_Environment\\_of\\_the\\_Czech\\_Republic\\_2011\\_pro%20web%20a%20USB.pdf](http://www1.cenia.cz/www/sites/default/files/Report_on_the_Environment_of_the_Czech_Republic_2011_pro%20web%20a%20USB.pdf) and [http://www.mzp.cz/en/report\\_on\\_environment\\_czech\\_republic\\_2011](http://www.mzp.cz/en/report_on_environment_czech_republic_2011).

<sup>14</sup> See [www.map.bafu.admin.ch](http://www.map.bafu.admin.ch).

eleven countries — Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Ukraine — published their SoE reports on an annual basis; Georgia and Kyrgyzstan published theirs once every three years; Uzbekistan published once every three to four years; and Belarus issued its report once every four years.

62. Most of the countries produced their national SoE reports in both paper and electronic formats (online, usually on the web pages of the ministry of environment), including Kazakhstan (in Russian);<sup>15</sup> the Republic of Moldova;<sup>16</sup> the Russian Federation;<sup>17</sup> Ukraine (with a resume in English);<sup>18</sup> Georgia (in Georgian and English);<sup>19</sup> Kyrgyzstan (in Kyrgyz and Russian, and in English in the future);<sup>20</sup> Uzbekistan (in Uzbek and Russian);<sup>21</sup> Belarus (in Russian and English).<sup>22</sup> The report was in most cases disseminated to the relevant Government agencies and other stakeholders.

## VI. Links with other assessment reports

63. Participants shared information on other types of environmental assessment reports published regularly or on an ad hoc basis in their countries and on links of those reports, if any, to the SoE reports.

64. In the Czech Republic, the Czech Environmental Information Agency was responsible for the publication of several environmental reports other than the national SoE assessment reports, such as regional SoE reports, *The Environment in the Czech Republic 1989–2004*, and *The Economy and the Environment in the Czech Republic after 1989*. The Regional SoE reports assessed the environment in the regions, and were published in the Czech language only in print versions as well as in electronic versions on the Internet. The comprehensive assessment on the development of the Czech environment, *The Environment in the Czech Republic 1989–2004*, had been published in 2005 in Czech and English. *The Economy and the Environment in the Czech Republic after 1989* had been published in 2008 in Czech and English. That publication provided a comprehensive report on the development of the Czech economy, and its environmental impacts, from 1989 to present.

65. In Serbia, the Serbian Environmental Protection Agency prepared other thematic reports besides the SoE report, such as the annual report on air quality, the annual yearbook of data on water quality, and a periodical report on soil.

66. A representative of GRID-Arendal made a presentation on two SoE reports produced by the centre: *Caspian Sea: State of the Environment* and *Vital Caspian Graphics*. The presentation focused on the structure and approach used in both reports, the target audiences and monitoring of the reports' impact, as well as current activities and future plans in relation to the reports. The next edition of the Caspian Sea SoE report was planned to be released in few years, and it would be based on the new regional monitoring

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.eco.gov.kz/new2012/activity-of-state-authority/information-about-the-environmental-situation-in-the-regions-of-kazakhstan/>.

<sup>16</sup> Available from [www.mediu.gov.md](http://www.mediu.gov.md).

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.mnr.gov.ru/regulatory/list.php?part=1101>.

<sup>18</sup> Available from <http://www.menr.gov.ua/>.

<sup>19</sup> Available from [www.moe.gov.ge](http://www.moe.gov.ge).

<sup>20</sup> Available from [www.gov.kg](http://www.gov.kg), [www.nature.kg](http://www.nature.kg), [www.unpei.org](http://www.unpei.org) and [www.undp.kg](http://www.undp.kg).

<sup>21</sup> Available from <http://uznature.uz/rus/publikatsii.html>.

<sup>22</sup> See [http://minpriroda.gov.by/ru/new\\_url\\_1968165295/new\\_url\\_1467880245](http://minpriroda.gov.by/ru/new_url_1968165295/new_url_1467880245) (Russian language version) and [http://minpriroda.gov.by/en/nac\\_dokl](http://minpriroda.gov.by/en/nac_dokl) (English version).

programme, where one of the main goals was to identify regional indicators and benchmarks.

67. A representative of Zoï Environmental Network gave a presentation on that organization's experience in and approach to environmental reporting. The expert focused on the organization's methodology and its threefold practice aimed at products, processes and communication strategy.

68. A representative of the State Administration of Environmental Protection in the Donetsk Region of Ukraine provided an overview of the Automated Environmental Monitoring System of Donetsk Region, including its main functions and features, the technological structure, the methods of reporting on the state of environment and others. The experience gained from ECE work on environmental indicators had been used in elaborating the System. The presentation also addressed priority and strategic directions in the development of the System and activities aimed at its further development to improve environmental reporting methods and mechanisms in the region.

69. In Switzerland, in addition to the SoE report, other national reports included environmental status reports online, thematic reports and "forward-looking information" reports.

70. A consultant to the secretariat presented a summary of national reviews regarding other types of environmental assessment reports published regularly or on an ad hoc basis in the countries of the subregion and their links, if any, to the SoE reports. Most of the countries reporting regularly published other types of environmental assessment reports, generally as a requirement under multilateral environmental agreements to which they were Parties. Belarus published annual analytical reviews of the state of the environment, as well as providing environmental information to consumers at various levels. Georgia issued an annual state of human health report. The Republic of Moldova had produced a report on child health and environment 2010. The Russian Federation published a number of assessment reports on different areas of the environment. Ukraine and Uzbekistan issued sectoral assessment reports.

## **VII. Use and evaluation of state-of-the environment reports**

71. Participants shared examples of the practical use of the SoE reports in their countries and their report evaluation procedures.

72. A representative of Austria noted that its national SoE report was currently being used to guide decisions on the use of structural funds for regional policy for the period 2014–2020 and also served as the national reference on the environmental situation in Austria. Specific recommendations in the report to address repeated shortcomings had been implemented (e.g., strengthening environmental statistics in some distinct areas where there was missing information).

73. In the Czech Republic, the national and regional SoE reports were directed mainly to policymakers and public administrators, but were also frequently used by the general public, enterprises and universities. The SoE report was a support and evaluation of policy strategies, in particular, State Environmental Policy. The report was also used for creation, implementation and evaluation relevant to policymaking, and was supported by the inclusion of environmental aspects into sectoral strategies.

74. A representative of Serbia gave an example of the practical use of Serbia's SoE report in the field of air quality, where the implementation of new regulations had made it possible to undertake an advanced assessment of air quality.

75. A representative of the Russian Federation gave a presentation on the preparation of the SoE report for Moscow, which was prepared annually by experts of the Department for Environmental Management and Protection of the Moscow City Government and its subordinate organizations on the basis of environmental monitoring of the various environmental media, the implementation of State regional ecological controls and analysis of legal practice in Moscow.

76. A consultant to the secretariat presented a summary of national reviews regarding the use and evaluation of SoE reports in the countries of the subregion. The countries had reported that their SoE reports were mainly used for environmental decision-making, socioeconomic planning, and as the basis for various policy documents and scientific publications targeting a wide range of stakeholders and decision-makers, as well as the general public, scientific and public organizations, and various international organizations. The analysis showed that there were no procedures for the evaluation of the reports in the participating countries.

## **VIII. Conclusions and recommendations**

77. A representative of Austria made a presentation summing up the work of Austrian Environment Agency and briefed the Meeting on the challenges encountered and the lessons learned during the process of production the national SoE report, as well as on findings, conclusions and recommendations for the preparation of the future national reports.

78. The Meeting took note of the information provided and thanked the secretariat for a successful selection of experts who had provided exhaustive information on various aspects of preparing the national SoE reports, as well as related regional and city SoE reports. The present discussions would help the members of the Working Group on Environmental Assessment and Monitoring to prepare for the next Meeting, which should result in production of a set of lessons learned that could be of assistance to countries publishing such reports for the first time, as well as those seeking to improve their SoE reports.

79. Taking into account the discussions held during the meeting, participants of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia were invited to resubmit answers to the secretariat's questionnaire (circulated prior to the meeting) according to the clarifications provided during the meeting, as follows:

(a) Regarding the structure of the national SoE reports, countries were advised to provide the table of contents the report, which could serve as a basic outline;

(b) With regard to the indicators used in the report, countries should provide the exact list of indicators used in the last national report (or the report under preparation) and indicate which of the indicators used came from the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. If the country used additional indicators, it was advisable to explain briefly the reason for their use or the reason for not using the indicator from the Guidelines;

(c) Concerning the publication of the SoE reports, countries were requested to provide the links to the sites where the reports were made available on the Internet;

(d) Regarding the use of modern technologies for data presentation in the SoE reports, it was necessary to indicate exactly which software had been used, as well as to provide a link to the Internet site to demonstrate the concrete application of modern technologies.

80. The requested updated information would be used for the preparation of the analytical report, which would be presented at the fourteenth session of the Working Group in November 2013.

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