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Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**Outcomes of the work of the Bureau of the
Committee on Environmental Policy****Outcomes of the work of the Bureau for the period
October 2013–June 2014****Report by the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy***Summary*

At its nineteenth session (Geneva, 22–25 October 2013), the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) elected its Bureau and mandated it to carry out a number of activities, including: (a) to prepare the twentieth session of CEP; (b) to advance the preparations for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference; (c) to contribute to the European Environment and Health process; (d) to update the CEP criteria for financial support for participating in meetings and events; and (e) to continue the work on developing rules of procedure for CEP (see ECE/CEP/2013/2).

To fulfil the above mandates, the CEP Bureau worked via electronic consultations and met in Lisbon on 26 and 27 May 2014. The present document outlines the outcomes of the Bureau's work, including its May meeting, with a view to supporting the work of CEP at its twentieth session.



Introduction

1. In the intersessional period, the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) made preparations for the twentieth session of CEP (CEP-20). The Bureau worked via electronic consultations and met in Lisbon on 26 and 27 May 2014.
2. In particular, the Bureau made efforts to advance the preparation of the Eighth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference. Also, it considered the substance and the organization of a number of agenda items at CEP-20, such as items related to: (a) the ECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); (b) assessing lessons learned from the EfE mid-term review; and (c) contributing to the European Environment and Health process.
3. The Bureau furthermore worked on revising the draft rules of procedure of CEP and considered draft terms of reference for it. It also considered the updated CEP criteria for eligibility for financial support for participation in meetings and events, and the revised calendar of CEP meetings in 2014–2017.
4. In addition, following a request by CEP at its nineteenth session for the Bureau and the secretariat to explore the proposal by the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) to hold a joint meeting of the CEP Bureau and the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) Alternates, such a meeting took place on the morning of 27 May 2014. The joint meeting was organized on the margins of both the CEP Bureau and the EHMB Alternates meetings.
5. In connection with the two meetings organized in Lisbon, the CEP Bureau particularly thanked the Government of Portugal for hosting the meetings. The truly exceptional quality of the assistance provided and the warm hospitality all contributed to a successful meeting.
6. The CEP Bureau comprises the Chair from Portugal and Vice-Chairs from Belgium, France, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Switzerland.

I. Provisional agenda for the twentieth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy

7. The Bureau approved the draft provisional agenda and the draft organization of work for CEP-20 with a number of revisions, which were to be reflected in the final version of those documents. For instance, the CEP Bureau recommended:
 - (a) To schedule the agenda item on the selection of themes for the next EfE Ministerial Conference already on the first and second days of the meeting;
 - (b) To allocate two and a half hours to the item on greening the economy and invite other United Nations Regional Commissions to participate in that discussion with a view to sharing developments in greening the economy in the respective regions;
 - (c) To allocate one and a half hour to the item on the European Environment and Health process and invite the EHMB Alternates to participate in CEP-20, in addition to inviting the Co-Chairs of the EHMB and the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF);
 - (d) To include under the agenda item on MEAs consideration of national implementation reporting under the ECE MEAs.

8. The Bureau requested the secretariat to revise the organization of work of CEP-20 accordingly to reflect its discussion and recommendations.

9. Furthermore, the Bureau considered the drafts of a number of documents that were under preparation to support the work of CEP at its twentieth session, as follows:

(a) The Bureau welcomed the draft document on the opening and promotion of the environmental legal and policy instruments of ECE to countries beyond the region and recommended a number of amendments, such as:

(i) Elaborating further on the pros and cons of opening the ECE MEAs to accession by States outside the ECE region, including the potential implications in terms of resources;

(ii) Providing more information on the promotional activities to be undertaken beyond the region, including the exchange of information and knowledge;

(iii) Elaborating, as feasible, on both the political and technical reasons for broadening the geographical scope of ECE environment work, as well as explaining the rationale of decision for going beyond, or staying within, the ECE region, including the rationale for the decision not to open some MEAs to accession by States outside the region;

(iv) Emphasising the link between CEP and the MEAs, i.e., by inserting a paragraph explaining the role of CEP, as a general governing body of the ECE Environment subprogramme, and its relationship with other governing bodies under the Environment subprogramme;

(v) Identifying questions for discussion based on challenges and lessons learned thus far;

(b) The Bureau supported the idea of preparing for CEP-20 a document presenting an overview of submissions by Parties of their national implementation reports (NIRs) since the first mandatory reporting round, as appropriate, under each MEA. Such a document should also:

(i) Specify in the introductory section the role of CEP in addressing the NIR issue;

(ii) Showcase, as feasible, the burden of reporting on countries, as well as identify the reporting bottlenecks across MEAs;

(iii) Reflect, as feasible, the main challenges in providing an NIR in line with the reporting requirements of MEAs;

(iv) Identify, as feasible, general trends in the reporting process, including with regard to meeting reporting deadlines and the potential need to streamline the national reporting process;

(c) Concerning a document assessing the progress on and perspectives for the Astana Water Action (AWA), the Bureau advised that the plans to report on progress on AWA at the next session of its Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) in November 2015 should be coordinated with the secretariat, with a view to organizing the reporting process in a timely manner for both the EfE Conference and the next session of the Water Convention MOP. Furthermore, the Bureau recommended reporting on AWA to the CEP special session in January/February 2016 and subsequently to the EfE Conference at the beginning of June 2016;

(d) At its Lisbon meeting, the Bureau revised the section on recommendations and questions for discussion of the draft document on greening the economy in the

pan-European region. Furthermore, it made a number of comments to the other sections of the document and requested the secretariat jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to revise the document accordingly. Generally, the Bureau supported the idea to proceed with the development of a pan-European regional framework on green economy, subject to its discussion and a decision by CEP at its twentieth session;

(e) The Bureau heard a briefing at its Lisbon meeting by Michel Amand, the CEP Vice-Chair from Belgium, who chaired the first meeting of the Group of Friends of the Shared Environment Information System (SEIS), and welcomed the progress achieved by the Friends of SEIS. Concerning the draft document on targets and performance indicators for measuring the progress in developing SEIS in the pan-European region, the Bureau recommended revising the document to reflect additional comments by the Friends of SEIS that might be sent to the secretariat by 27 May 2014, as well as additionally coordinating with the European Environment Agency the final version of the document before finalizing it for CEP.

10. The Bureau highly praised the side events organized by the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Europe (UNEP/ROE) during the nineteenth session of CEP and recommended inviting UNEP/ROE to consider organizing a lunchtime side event during the first day of CEP-20, with a view to informing participants about progress in establishing sustainable development goals. In addition, the side event could address regionally relevant outcomes of the first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, 23–27 June 2014).

II. Lessons learned from the Environment for Europe mid-term review of the Astana Conference main outcomes

11. Concerning the lessons learned from organizing the mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Seventh EfE Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21–23 September 2011), the Bureau agreed that a survey would be too burdensome for countries. Therefore, the Bureau requested the secretariat to draft, in consultation with it, a short assessment from the perspective of organizational issues, and to submit it to CEP at its twentieth session for further consideration.

III. Advancing the preparations for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

12. At the Lisbon meeting, the representative of Georgia presented the available infrastructure and possibilities for hosting the Conference in Batumi. The biggest meeting room (650 persons) was available in the Sheraton Hotel and a number of other rooms were available at the Sheraton and in nearby hotels (each located within two to five minutes walking distance).

13. One important challenge was the financial resources for a conference organized similar to the Astana Conference (e.g., including nine round-table discussions all with simultaneous interpretation into English, French and Russian and the related technical equipment according to the related standards of the International Organization for Standardization, supporting the participation of the eligible delegates and the secretariat, etc.).

14. The Bureau welcomed the presentation by Georgia and recommended to organize the EfE Conference in the first or second week of June 2016 (1–3 June or 8–10 June 2016), given the Parliamentary elections in Georgia in late autumn 2016, and the sessions of the United Nations General Assembly and of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable

Development in late September 2016, as well as the United Nations Environment Assembly meeting at the end of June 2016.

15. Furthermore, the Bureau recommended adapting the needs of the next EfE Conference to the available infrastructure in Batumi. It invited Georgia to prepare a detailed list of host country resource requirements for consideration, including for fundraising purposes, by CEP at its twentieth session. In addition, the secretariat was requested to develop a document presenting organizational issues for the conference, similar to the one for the Astana Conference, but taking into account the availability of infrastructure in Batumi.

16. Concerning the conference framework, the Bureau welcomed the draft annotated outline of the revised framework prepared by the secretariat and recommended the following two themes for the Eighth Conference:

(a) Greening the economy in the pan-European region in the context of the post-2015 development framework, including the sustainable development goals;

(b) Improving air quality for a better environment and human health.

17. The Bureau asked the secretariat to finalize the document by adding the Bureau's recommendations on the two themes and by adapting the conference outline to the Batumi infrastructure. Furthermore, the Bureau suggested CEP should consider organizing sessions during the Conference to look at the various instruments and programmes, such as education for sustainable development, SEIS, MEAs and AWA, with a view to assessing the progress achieved since the last conference and extending the mandates for those processes, as necessary. It also recommended organizing an event to launch the third Environmental Performance Review of Georgia on the margins of the Conference.

IV. Contributing to the European Environment and Health process

18. The CEP Bureau discussed issues related to the European Environment and Health process during its meeting as well as during the joint meeting of the CEP Bureau and the EHMB Alternates. The organization of the panel discussion on the European Environment and Health process during CEP-20, including the potential input and follow-up, was duly considered. It was recommended to invite the EHMB Alternates in addition to the co-Chairs of EHMB and EHTF to participate in CEP-20.

19. In that context, it was suggested to kick-off the panel discussion with a presentation to underline the role of the European Environment and Health process. Another presentation could focus on the issue of air pollution and the cost of inaction. Furthermore, up to three questions would be identified to facilitate an interactive discussion between the panellists and CEP. One question could be about the issue of governance and how to ensure better cooperation and a more cross-cutting approach between the environment and the health sectors. Another question might be about how MEAs and CEP activities could contribute more efficiently to the implementation of the Environment and Health process goals.

20. In that regard, areas for cooperation between the EfE process and the European Environment and Health process would be identified on the basis of the interactive discussion. Also, it was proposed to organize in the evening, on the margins of CEP-20, a joint meeting between the CEP Bureau and the EHMB Alternates to consider and assess the outcomes of the CEP-20 environment and health discussions. Such a meeting could take place from 6.30 to 7.30 p.m. on Thursday, 30 October 2014.

21. Concerning the appointment of the four ministers from the environment sector to EHMB for 2015–2016, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat that before the summer break official letters would be sent out inviting ministers to express their interest in serving on the Board. Such letters were sent out on 1 July 2014 via the ECE member States' Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

22. During the joint meeting of the CEP Bureau and EHMB Alternates, several issues were emphasized, as follows:

(a) A report by EHMB would be prepared for the sixty-fourth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Copenhagen, 15–18 September 2014) and for CEP-20;

(b) A more active participation and engagement of CEP in the European Environment and Health process was sought, including in shaping the agenda of and participating in the upcoming European Environment and Health mid-term review (Tel Aviv, Israel, 10–13 November 2014);

(c) The CEP Bureau was invited to designate its representatives to the meetings of the EHMB Alternates and to the meetings of EHMB, including to the fifth meeting (Vilnius, 30 June–1 July 2014), as well as to the European Environment and Health mid-term review;

(d) Given that the EfE and European Environment and Health processes were at a different stage of preparation for the next ministerial conferences, organization of those two conferences back to back was not deemed feasible.

23. Furthermore, participants at the joint meeting of the CEP Bureau and EHMB Alternates proposed organizing a meeting with the participation of the CEP Bureau, the Chairs of the ECE MEAs and EHMB (and/or their Alternates) and EHTF. Participants suggested that such a meeting could discuss efficient ways to address through the respective constituencies issues related to environment and health in the pan-European region. Timing and modalities for such a meeting remained to be discussed at a later stage, e.g., as a follow-up to the CEP-20 panel discussion.

V. Terms of reference and rules of procedure of the Committee on Environmental Policy

24. CEP had mandated its Bureau and the secretariat to continue working on its draft rules of procedure with a view to provide recommendations to CEP at its twentieth session. The Bureau revised the draft during their Lisbon meeting and submitted the document for the further consideration of CEP.

25. Furthermore, the Bureau considered the issue of updating the terms of reference of CEP adopted in 2007. In this context, the Bureau recommended postponing the revision of the 2007 terms of reference to a latter CEP session.

VI. Criteria for financial support for participating in meetings and events

26. Following a decision by CEP, the CEP Bureau considered updating the criteria for eligibility for financial support for participating in meeting and events. Given that in May 2014 the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita for ECE countries with economies in transition was available for 2012, the Bureau recommended to keep the criteria adopted by CEP at its nineteenth session in October 2013 (which use GDP per capita for 2012).

27. At the same time, should GDP per capita for 2013 be released by mid-September 2014, then the criteria would be revised by the secretariat in mid-September and submitted for the further consideration by CEP at its twentieth session.

VII. Calendar of meetings

28. The Bureau considered the schedule of meetings for 2014–2016 approved by CEP in 2013 and recommended adjusting the schedule of meetings in accordance with the date of the EfE Conference (beginning of June 2016). The adjustments include advancing to the beginning of February 2016 the CEP special session in winter 2016, and scheduling the 2016 CEP regular session at the beginning of December rather than in October, given the time needed to prepare the session after the EfE Conference.

29. In that context, the CEP Bureau agreed to hold a one-day meeting on 26 May 2015 to prepare the twenty-first regular session of CEP in 2015, as well as a short meeting on the afternoon on 26 October 2015, back to back to that session of CEP. The Bureau asked the secretariat to revise the draft schedule accordingly and to submit it to CEP for consideration and approval.
