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Item 5 (f) of the provisional agenda

#### **The Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference: proposed outcomes of the Conference**

## **Proposed outcomes for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference**

### **Note by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

At its twentieth session (Geneva, 28–31 October 2014), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) mandated its Bureau, with support from the ECE secretariat and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to proceed with the preparation of the Eighth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016), including preparing relevant documents to facilitate the organization of the Conference (ECE/CEP/2014/2, paras. 84 (c) and 98 (gg) (xi) c).

The present document was prepared at the request of and in consultation with the CEP Bureau with a view to supporting CEP in identifying and preparing or negotiating, as appropriate, the outcomes of the Conference.

CEP will be invited to consider and deliberate on the possible outcomes of the Batumi EfE Ministerial Conference.



## Introduction

1. As decided by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) at its twentieth session (Geneva, 28–31 October 2014), the organization of the Eighth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016) is ongoing.
2. At its 2014 session, CEP agreed unanimously on the two themes for the Conference, i.e., greening the economy in the pan-European region; and improving air quality for a better environment and human health. To focus the ministerial discussion under the two themes, a set of questions has been developed by the CEP Bureau, with support from the ECE secretariat and in consultation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). These questions are included in the CEP document presenting the draft agenda for the Batumi Ministerial Conference (ECE/CEP/2015/L.1).
3. CEP also agreed to hold a segment on education for sustainable development (ESD), in the form of a High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, in the framework of the Conference with a view to assessing progress during the first 10 years of the ECE Strategy for ESD and to consider its future development.
4. Based on the relevant provisions contained in the EfE Reform Plan,<sup>1</sup> the CEP Bureau with support from the secretariat prepared the present document to facilitate the deliberations on the possible outcomes of the Conference.
5. In that context, countries and EfE partners are invited to identify bilateral, trilateral and multilateral initiatives relevant to the Conference themes that can be launched at the Conference. Final consideration of all initiatives will be undertaken by CEP at the latest at its special session in February 2016.

## I. Possible outcomes of Environment for Europe ministerial conferences

6. The EfE Reform Plan stipulates that conference outcomes may include an agreed outcome of two pages on follow-up and further actions, strictly limited, in terms of scope, to the themes of the conference. In addition, a chair's summary of the conference should be prepared.
7. Conference outcomes can include statements, initiatives, agreements and pledges by interested ministers and stakeholders on specific subjects and/or for specific subregions.
8. Conference outcomes may also include policy tools (e.g., strategies, action plans with time frames, guidelines, recommendations, good practices and lessons learned) that are presented to the conference by interested countries and/or organizations taking the lead for these issues, and that were not negotiated within the preparatory process for the conference.

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<sup>1</sup> The Reform Plan of the EfE process was developed by CEP during 2008 and adopted on 29 January 2009 (see the report of CEP on its special session (ECE/CEP/S/152 and Corr.1, annex I) available from [www.unece.org/index.php?id=4804](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=4804)). The plan was subsequently endorsed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe at its sixty-third session (Geneva, 30 March–1 April 2009) (see E/2009/37–E/ECE/1448, chap. IV, para. 6).

9. Assessment reports (used in the preparation of or presented to the conference) that are important for the implementation of the conference outcomes may also be considered as conference outcomes.

## II. Possible agreed outcomes of the Batumi Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

### A. Ministerial Declaration

10. The Batumi EfE Ministerial Conference could culminate in the adoption of a two-page Ministerial Declaration on follow-up and further actions related to the two main themes of the Conference.

11. Similar to the Astana Ministerial Declaration, the two-page document could be focused on the expected decisions to be taken under the two conference themes. A possible framework for such a document could be as follows:

(a) **Introduction:** a short introductory paragraph presenting the date and place of the Conference and the number of participating countries, followed by a paragraph on countries' continuing commitment to protect the environment and the contribution of the EfE process to this cause (maximum length, a quarter of a page);

(b) **Greening the economy in the pan-European region:** decisions on follow-up and further actions taken at the Conference under this theme (maximum length, half a page);

(c) **Improving air quality for a better environment and human health:** decisions on follow-up and further actions taken at the Conference under this theme (maximum length, half a page);

(d) **Following up on Astana key commitments:** ratifying and implementing the ECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); implementing the Astana Water Action (AWA); conducting the third cycle of ECE environmental performance reviews (EPRs); establishing a regular process of environmental assessment and developing the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) across the region to keep the pan-European environment under review; and continuing the work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Environmental Action Programme Task Force (EAP Task Force) and strengthening the work of the Regional Environmental Centres (maximum length, half a page);

(e) **Closing:** announcing the venue of the next conference; thanking the Government of Georgia for hosting the Conference (maximum length, a quarter of a page).

12. A draft of the agreed outcome will be developed by CEP at its twenty-first session and its special session in February 2016 and submitted to the Conference for adoption. The CEP Bureau requested support from the ECE secretariat in preparing possible elements for a first draft of the ministerial declaration to facilitate the Committee's task (see annex).

13. In this context, it should be emphasized that progress in implementing the main outcomes of the Conference will be reviewed during the mid-term review of the Batumi Conference to be organized by CEP about two years after the Conference (e.g., in 2018),

taking into account the lessons learned from the mid-term review of the Astana Conference (ECE/CEP/2014/10).<sup>2</sup>

## **B. Statement on education for sustainable development**

14. The High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, which is being organized in the framework of the Conference, might culminate in a separate Batumi Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development to be adopted during that segment of the Conference.

15. A draft statement is being prepared by the ECE Steering Committee on ESD and will be submitted to the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries for adoption. CEP will be informed about developments in that regard.<sup>3</sup>

## **III. Initiatives, policy tools and assessments**

### **A. Getting the pan-European region ready for sustainable development: keeping the pan-European environment under review**

#### **1. Shape and organization of the regular environmental assessment process based on the Shared Environmental Information System in the pan-European region**

16. Following up on the commitment of Ministers in Astana to establish a regular process of environmental assessment and to develop SEIS across the region, an evaluation report in that regard will be prepared for the Batumi Conference. The report will comprise two sections:<sup>4</sup> (a) a model for the regular process of environmental assessment to be agreed by CEP before the Conference; and (b) an assessment of progress in developing SEIS across the region, based on the adopted SEIS targets and performance indicators (ECE/CEP/2014/8).

17. CEP mandated its Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to prepare the progress report on developing SEIS. At the same time, the shape and organization of the regular process of environmental assessment has been developed by the Group of Friends of SEIS (ECE/CEP/2015/10) for consideration by CEP at its present session and a subsequent decision regarding its presentation at the Batumi Ministerial Conference.

18. Launching the SEIS-based regular process of environmental assessment in the pan-European region could be envisaged during the Conference, as well as on the margins of the Conference as a promotional event.

#### **2. Sixth Global Environment Outlook: regional component for the European region**

19. The Sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) is under development by UNEP and will be launched in 2018. The regional component of GEO-6 covering the European region is expected to be launched in 2016 and could serve as a valuable contribution to the

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<sup>2</sup> Document prepared for the twentieth session of CEP, available from [www.unece.org/index.php?id=35032](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35032).

<sup>3</sup> The Steering Committee on ESD has begun preparations for the High-level Meeting, including preparing the draft Statement on ESD. If ready in due time, a version of the draft Statement will be submitted as an information paper (in English only) to CEP at its special session in October 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Depending on the word length the report might need to be processed as two separate documents.

Batumi discussions. The European regional GEO-6 will build on existing assessments, including *The European environment — state and outlook 2015 report* (SOER 2015) produced by the European Environment Agency (EEA) in 2015.

20. In addition, based on key findings of the European regional GEO-6, two policy briefs could be prepared for the Batumi Ministerial Conference covering the green economy and the clean air themes. CEP could consider mandating its Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to develop such policy briefs.

21. In that regard, the regional component of future GEOs could be considered for inclusion in the regular process of environmental assessment in the pan-European region, as a main input and output of EfE ministerial conferences to support the discussions on the state of the environment, as well as the development of policy briefs on the themes of the conferences.

## **B. Getting the pan-European region ready for sustainable development: multilateral environmental agreements, mechanisms, policies and institutions supporting the post-2015 development agenda**

### **1. Economic Commission for Europe Environmental Performance Reviews — celebrating 20 years of success and getting ready to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**

22. In 2016, the ECE Environmental Performance Review (EPR) Programme will celebrate its twentieth anniversary. Since 1996, 45 countries have participated in the Programme as reviewed countries and/or by providing experts and financial support. Twelve international organizations have provided their knowledge and expertise. Altogether, 42 reviews have been produced in the three cycles of the Programme, with the third cycle now approaching its midpoint.

23. A ceremony will be organized to celebrate the successes of the ECE EPR Programme and to bring them to the attention of policymakers. The event will provide an opportunity to look into the future of this policy tool, in particular by highlighting the role EPRs can play in supporting the achievement and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in countries covered by the Programme.

24. The celebratory event will be prepared by the ECE EPRs secretariat. CEP will be invited to consider promoting EPRs as an effective and practical policy tool at the Batumi Ministerial Conference.

### **2. Implementation of the Astana Water Action: fostering progress towards improved water management**

25. Following to a decision by CEP, a second report to assess the progress in implementing AWA will be prepared for the CEP special session in February 2016 and subsequent submission to the Batumi Ministerial Conference.

26. Based on inputs by AWA stakeholders, the report will be developed by the ECE secretariat with guidance from the Bureaux of CEP and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). The report will follow a similar format to the first progress report (ECE/CEP/2013/12), prepared for the Committee's nineteenth session.<sup>5</sup> In addition, following a recommendation by the CEP Bureau, a leaflet summarizing the key findings of the report, including graphs and

<sup>5</sup> Available from [www.unece.org/index.php?id=32257](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=32257).

charts to present the AWA statistics and figures in an interactive way, will be prepared for the Conference.

### **3. Assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins**

27. A stocktaking report of a series of assessments of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins will be considered by the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention (Budapest, 17–20 November 2015). One of the assessments will be of the Alazani/Ganykh River Basin, shared by Azerbaijan and Georgia, a full version of which will be presented at the Batumi Ministerial Conference. Further nexus assessments may also be presented, together with information on measures being taken to follow up on the assessment conclusions and recommendations.

28. The presentations could provide the basis for the Conference delegates to affirm the value of the intersectoral, cross-border approach used in the assessments, as a means of ensuring sustainable development, including greening the economy — through, for example, increasing efficiency in resource use and mainstreaming environmental protection into sectoral policies and decision-making — as well as promoting regional economic integration and dispute prevention. Also, the nexus methodology could be welcomed as an efficient approach facilitating the cross-cutting and cross-sectoral integration of issues for the various future assessments that may be requested in the region.

### **4. Central and Eastern European Regional Action Programme to Combat Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought**

29. The United Nations Convention to Combat of Desertification (UNCCD) Regional Committee for Central and Eastern Europe proposed to enhance its cooperation under the EfE process and would like to use the platform of the Batumi Ministerial Conference to launch and further promote the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) Regional Action Programme to Combat Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought.

30. The Regional Action Programme is being prepared following a decision by the UNCCD Annex V Parties at their regional meeting in 2013. The initiative will be presented at the twelfth session of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties in October 2015 in Turkey and finalized by end of 2015. Subsequently, it could be presented during the Batumi Ministerial Conference, as appropriate, as well as at a side event organized on the margins of the Conference. In presenting the initiative, its role in supporting CEE countries in achieving related SDGs and targets could be emphasized. CEP will be invited to consider this initiative as one of the outcomes of the Conference.

## **C. Greening the economy in the pan-European region**

### **1. Pan-European strategic framework for greening the economy**

31. Taking into account developments in green economy in the framework of other Regional Commissions shared during the twentieth session of CEP, and building on the existing fruitful collaboration between ECE and UNEP, CEP decided that a joint proposal for a pan-European strategic framework for greening the economy should be elaborated in time for the Batumi Ministerial Conference to support the commitment made by ECE ministers in Astana to take the lead in greening the economy.

32. The proposed strategic framework should include practical examples, good practices and tools to be used for accelerating the transition to a green economy, while promoting a

bottom-up approach. It should also build upon existing knowledge products and platforms, and contain a proposal for a “Green Economy Action” similar to the Astana Water Action.<sup>6</sup>

33. The strategic framework is expected to serve as a tool for environment ministers to initiate and sustain discussions on the green economy in their national Government and, ultimately, to drive the green economy agenda forward. The framework will enable the assessment of progress in greening the economy across the pan-European region and will thereby also contribute to regional implementation of SDGs by supporting countries’ efforts to accomplish related targets and indicators.

34. The strategic framework is being developed under the auspices of CEP by ECE and UNEP, with support from other relevant partners (e.g., EEA, OECD and the World Health Organization (WHO)) and in consultation with organizations participating in the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Europe and Central Asia. This pan-European policy tool will be submitted to the Conference for prospective adoption by ministers and a commitment to implement it.

## **2. Strategic environmental assessment as a core tool for green economy**

35. From 2013 to 2016, the secretariat of the ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, together with OECD, UNEP and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), are implementing the Greening Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood (EaP GREEN) programme.<sup>7</sup> The EaP GREEN programme aims to improve both environmental policies and management approaches within a green economy framework. This should result in higher productivity and competitiveness in global markets, as well as better management of natural capital, enhanced environmental quality of life and more resilient ecosystems and economies. The promotion of strategic environmental assessment (SEA), as well as environmental impact assessment (EIA), is the component of the EaP GREEN programme implemented by ECE.

36. The EaP Green programme’s four-year term will be completed in 2016, with results presented at dedicated events in Georgia in fall 2015 and in Ukraine in fall 2016. On the occasion of the Batumi Efe Ministerial Conference, subject to availability of resources, the ECE secretariat is considering organizing an awareness-raising event on the use of SEA as an essential planning tool for green economy. The event will aim to showcase the legislative developments and the institutional changes introduced in the European Union’s Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries through the programme, and to discuss successes and challenges during the implementation stage. It will also present examples of the practical application of SEA in accordance with the Protocol on SEA and the new legislation developed in the EaP countries. In that regard, the ECE secretariat will explore the possibility to join forces with the EaP GREEN partner organizations to organize a common event promoting SEA and EIA, green governance and finance, and presenting demonstration projects on green procurement and organic agriculture.

## **3. Transport, health and environment partnership: jobs in green and healthy transport**

37. A report on the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme Partnership on jobs in green and healthy transport will review the various methods and definitions used to identify jobs associated with cycling and green jobs in this area.

<sup>6</sup> See [www.unece.org/env/awa](http://www.unece.org/env/awa).

<sup>7</sup> The programme is financed by the European Commission and is assisting the six European Union Eastern Partnership countries — Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine — in their transition to green economy. See [www.unece.org/env/eia/about/eap\\_green](http://www.unece.org/env/eia/about/eap_green).

Furthermore, the report will analyse the relevant data collected from cities in the European region and explore cycling's potential role in job creation.

#### **4. Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth**

38. In October 2014 the International Labour Organization (ILO) High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) decided to elaborate a youth employment initiative involving the five key elements of the post-2015 development agenda identified by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

39. To do so, HLCP established an Inter-Agency Task Team to develop a Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth to support efforts in the achievement of SDGs in the area of youth employment and build on past and ongoing experience gained from joint action, lessons learned and good practice in the area. The draft strategy for the initiative includes four interconnected elements: a strategic multi-stakeholder alliance; expanded and scaled-up regional and country level action on decent jobs for youth; a knowledge platform on decent jobs for youth; and funding modalities and resource mobilization. The strategy for the Global Initiative will be submitted by 31 July 2015 for discussion by HLCP.<sup>8</sup>

40. The four interconnected elements make the case for the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), knowledge generation and sharing, capacity development (improving education and training policy, peer learning) and communication. A direct link to both ESD and green economy can be made. The five-year strategy is expected to be launched towards the end of 2015. UNEP has proposed that the initiative be featured at the Batumi Ministerial Conference under the green economy and/or the ESD segments. CEP will be invited to consider the UNEP proposal.

#### **5. Central Asia Initiative**

41. The Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSDD) in Central Asia is considering an initiative to accelerate the transition towards green economy and improve national air quality management. Currently, a subregional green economy assessment is being conducted, as a first step to designing a road map towards green economy. For the road map, ICSDD will need to garner support and build cooperation. To kick-start the process, the initiative could be launched as a subregional action using the high-level platform of the Batumi Conference.

### **D. Improving air quality for a better environment and human health**

#### **1. Batumi Action for Cleaner Air**

42. The Bureau of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) has proposed an initiative ("Action for Cleaner Air" or something similar), which could be designed as a catalogue of recommended actions, structured by sectors, that would facilitate measures for air pollution abatement actions. Other partners, such as UNEP and WHO have expressed support for such an initiative at an inter-agency meeting between ECE, UNEP and WHO in February 2015.

43. The objective of the initiative would be to bring these measures to the attention of policymakers and thus to raise the profile of what can be done. The initiative is also intended to assist and guide Governments to adjust their priorities and action plans according to the difficulties they face with regard to improving air quality in the future. The

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<sup>8</sup> UNEP is a member of the Task Team, which is chaired by ILO.

structure of the catalogue of recommended actions according to sectors could also open the door to work with other programmes within ECE, as well as external partners.

44. The initiative, prepared by the Bureau of the Air Convention, will be presented at the Batumi Conference main session on clean air theme, and subsequently launched at a side event on the margins of the Conference. CEP will be invited to consider the draft initiative submitted by the Bureau of the Air Convention (ECE/CEP/2015/L.5) as one of the outcomes of the Conference.

## **2. Assessment report under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution**

45. An assessment report is currently being prepared under the Air Convention, which will be ready for review at the Executive Body session in May 2016. The report will bring together current scientific knowledge on air pollution, remaining challenges, benefits of further abatement measures and synergies with other policy areas. The main target group will be politicians and policymakers.

46. The Batumi Conference will provide a good opportunity to present the main messages of the air pollution assessment report, possibly at a separate side event, including a launch ceremony. The event would be organized in partnership with relevant stakeholders, including the Nordic Council of Ministers' Climate and Air Pollution group.

## **3. Aral Sea Initiative**

47. The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) is considering undertaking an initiative to plant trees over vast surfaces of the dried bottom of the Aral Sea, with a view to stabilizing the sea bottom and decreasing the dust polluting large areas of the region. This initiative, to be developed by IFAS, could be launched as a subregional action using the high-level platform of the Batumi Conference.

# **IV. Chair's Summary and the report of the Conference**

48. A Chair's Summary will be prepared during the Conference jointly by the host country and the secretariat in cooperation with EfE partners. It will focus on the substance of the Conference, providing a summary of discussions and decisions made at the Conference.

49. A report of the Conference will be prepared by the secretariat as a post-session document. Information on the Conference and its outcomes will be made available through the ECE website. After the Conference participants will be invited to submit their statements and interventions to the secretariat for posting on the website.

## Annex

### **Possible elements for the draft Ministerial Declaration: “Cleaner, greener, smarter!”**

The CEP Bureau requested support from the secretariat in preparing elements for the draft ministerial declaration to facilitate the work of CEP at its twenty-first session in October 2015. The elements below follow the structure presented in paragraph 11 above and include comments by the CEP Bureau.

#### **Possible elements**

1. We, the Ministers and heads of delegation from [number] countries in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Representative of the European Commission, met in Batumi, Georgia, from 8 to 10 June 2016, in the framework of the Eighth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference.
2. We confirm our commitment to improving environmental protection and advancing sustainable development in the ECE region. We value the EfE process as a unique pan-European platform for addressing environmental challenges, improving environmental governance, promoting environmental and cross-sectoral cooperation among countries and as a pillar of sustainable development in the region for 25 years. We reiterate the importance of the involvement of civil society in decision-making to improve the environment.
3. We emphasize the urgency of mainstreaming the environmental dimension into economic policies, including by greening the economies in the region. We reiterate our commitment to take the lead in the transition to a green economy as a key path to sustainable development and poverty eradication and an approach to redirect investments and trade to support a green and inclusive economy.
4. In greening our economies, we aim to enhance economic prosperity and improve human well-being and social equity, while reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. We will increase the internalization of those externalities that cause the loss of or damage to natural capital, and will enhance the ecological infrastructure and improve the sustainable use of natural resources. We will foster the circular economy and transparent and responsible business practice, and further work towards cleaner and more resource-efficient production processes. We will develop the human capital for green jobs, including by providing relevant education and training, and increase the availability of such jobs, ensure access to essential services, and promote public participation and education for sustainable development.
5. [We therefore adopt the pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy — a tool equipping countries with knowledge on actions and instruments for achieving green economy objectives and, at the same time, contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — and commit to implementing it and to reporting on progress thereon to the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP). We furthermore endorse the Batumi Action for Greening the Economy and encourage countries to make use of it to facilitate the transition to a green economy.] We commend the good cooperation between ECE and the United Nations Environment Programme and invite the two organizations, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, to support countries in their efforts to green their economies.
6. While praising the good progress achieved in the pan-European region in the past three decades in decreasing emissions of the main air-polluting substances and their

impacts, we are concerned that air pollution, both outdoor and indoor, remains the largest environmental health threat and an important risk factor for major non-communicable diseases. We therefore commit to improving air quality for a better environment and human health, including by integrating air pollution reduction measures into financial and development policies as well as other sectoral policies, as appropriate.

7. [We endorse the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air and welcome the initiatives launched by interested countries and other stakeholders aimed at improving the air quality to protect public health and ecosystems. We invite countries and other stakeholders to implement the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air and to report on progress to CEP.] We will also strengthen the role of civil society in addressing air pollution and its impacts and we commit to ensuring adequate monitoring of air pollution, in particular ground-level monitoring, as well as assessment and reporting in accordance with the principles of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS).

8. We appreciate progress achieved under the ECE multilateral agreements (MEAs) and recognize the need to strengthen the engagement of civil society and the private sector in their implementation. We invite countries to ratify, implement and provide adequate resources for the relevant MEAs, inter alia, the ECE Convention on the Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) and its three most recent protocols, including their amendments. We recognize the significant opportunities provided by the ECE MEAs to support, where appropriate, the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, including SDGs.

9. We express our satisfaction with the progress in the third cycle of the ECE Environmental Performance Review (EPR) Programme, which will run until 2021, and encourage relevant interested countries to undertake a third EPR. We also recognize that EPRs may contribute to the review of the implementation of SDGs.

10. While welcoming progress in developing SEIS to support the regular environmental assessment process with a view to keeping the pan-European environment under review, we invite countries to continue their efforts to have the pan-European SEIS in place by 2021. [We also take note of the key messages of the European component of the Sixth Global Environmental Outlook, and acknowledge the role of this assessment in identifying environmental concerns that need to be addressed in the region.]

11. We welcome the work of the Environmental Action Programme Task Force and we invite the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to continue its activities in cooperation with relevant partners.

12. We recognize the role of Regional Environmental Centres in implementing initiatives to improve environmental governance at the local, national, subregional and regional levels and encourage them to strengthen their activities.

13. We acknowledge progress in implementing the Astana Water Action — a useful framework for advancing a sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems — and encourage interested countries and organizations to continue using this initiative according to their needs. [We further welcome initiatives supporting countries' efforts under the two themes of the Conference, such as [name relevant initiatives].]

14. We invite CEP to convene in 2018 a mid-term review to assess progress in the implementation of the main outcomes of this Conference.

15. We invite offers of interest from Governments to host the next EfE Ministerial Conference in 2021, celebrating 30 years of the EfE process, for consideration by CEP.

16. We express our gratitude to the Government of Georgia for having hosted this Conference and we wish to thank it and the people of Georgia for the warm hospitality we have received.

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