



COMMENTS BY SWEDEN TO THE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” REFORM

This document includes both answers to the questions put by the Bureau and Executive Director and gives some more general remarks.

a) **The format, focus and priorities of the process and Ministerial Conferences**

- Purpose of the process and objectives it should achieve

Environment for Europe should mainly be directed to achieving a high and equivalent standard of environmental protection throughout the region. It should aim at addressing the serious environmental challenges facing the region, the well established as well as the emerging, and try to grapple them in co-operation including by addressing different sectors and involving stakeholders. Both the process and the Ministerial Conference itself should be designed to take these issues into concern.

The conference, although possibly being more focused and having a smaller format than today, has an important role as a the only platform where environmental concerns are given attention in a pan-European context, including with relevant stakeholders. We are convinced that continued and enforced dialogue is necessary to tackle current and future environmental challenges.

- Scope of the issues to be addressed

Trans-boundary issues should be in focus. Emerging issues should be covered. A more **thematic approach** for the Ministerial Conferences should be introduced, thereby focussing each Conference on a few issues of special political importance in the region. We need a process that can

enable a prioritization of issues to be dealt with at the Ministerial Conferences.

- Type of main output of the Conference

We believe a negotiated outcome could be preferred, however we want to focus more on the learning process inherent in the Conference and its preparations and the process of conveying experiences and good practises and learning from each other and also supporting each other.

- Type of preparatory process

Fewer meetings and meetings of different bodies back-to-back would be preferable. Now too much time is devoted to meetings and not enough to preparing on what is really the issue. The reports on Europe's environment should be done well in advance so that the Conference really can analyse and focus on the important findings coming out of these reports. The UN ECE CEP could be the preparatory forum.

- Duration of the preparatory process and Conferences

We believe that the inter-activity is most important in the preparatory process. Today both the preparatory process and the Conference itself are too long.

- Balance between sessions and discussions

As said, interactivity is most important. Plenary sessions must be more focussed on limited issues to be interesting not only to talk at but to listen to and discuss at.

- Amount and type of documentation for the Conference

The problem is not only quantity but more that it is very hard to take in the structure or general purpose and content of the documentation. Main findings and suggestions is what should be short and taken up-front.

- General comments to this point

We believe that the **Ministerial Conferences** have to be streamlined and made more effective if they are to be continued, and the question of their periodicity has to be discussed. We still need some sort of ministerial input in order to build momentum for solving the environmental problems in the region, and for finding solutions to these problems. Ministerial meetings also give an incentive for progress of the implementation and development of the regional environmental conventions, such as the Aarhus Convention and CLRTAP. Moreover, the ministerial meetings is a unique arena where environmental NGOs and other representatives from civil society come together with ministers from the whole region which not only enables dialogue and exchange of views but also triggers further progress.

Several important activities have been initiated that have to continue until implementation is assured and stable. Implementation and enforcement of what has already been agreed, including Conventions and the EECCA strategy should be core in the coming years. The environmental legislation and administration need to be strengthened and facilitation of the ratification, compliance and enforcement of MEA's is another crucial task in the region.

Sometimes it is said that all we have to do know is implementing what has already been decided. It is indeed true that we lack implementation. But the format of the Conference should be open for both establishing new processes and end those that have fulfilled their purpose. The latter is not least important.

The future of the process should be needs-driven and focussed on results. It would be welcome if the EECCA countries and other EECCA

stakeholders identify what their priorities are in an even more active and concrete way as a basis for the agenda for the future.

We also believe that an important aim should be to achieve synergies and co-operation amongst all those active in the field. Sector integration and dialogue should be called for.

b) Evaluating the performance and impact of the process

- The value added of the EfE process

Sweden believes that the Environment for Europe process has served a value added. It has been important in the efforts to improve the environmental situation in the Central and Eastern European countries. It has been a driving force in setting up national administrations and legislation. It has built a system of environmental review which helps countries identify problems and possibilities and gives incentives for action. It has been a forum for mutual understanding and constructive debate between different regions, as illustrated by the EECCA-strategy.

Environment for Europe has increased the engagement from the EU, the OECD and other international organizations for the environmental problems of the region.

Furthermore the Environment for Europe process has been the starting point for new environmental processes and conventions such as the Aarhus convention, the Education for Sustainable Development process and at the latest meeting, Sustainable Consumption and Production. Therefore, we do need to continue the process, but in a more efficient and streamlined manner.

- Concrete examples of the impact in our sub-region

The sub-regional co-operation in our region has interacted with EfE e.g. when it comes to Education for Sustainable Development where the experiences gained in Baltic 21 has been used for the wide pan-European context and the pan-European process has had impacts nationally and on the bilateral co-operation. The Conferences and reports to the Conferences have been used in developing our bi-lateral co-operation.

- Major achievements and shortcomings in the preparations for earlier conferences

Achievements are several in posing new issues, getting better implementation etc. It is easy also to see the shortcomings in overload of meetings and documents and too little inter-activity.

c) Attracting the broader interest and more active engagement of all stakeholders, in particular the private sector

- Actions that governments and EfE partners could do to stimulate stakeholder involvement

Stakeholders including the private sector could have an important role in the future and their interest has to do with the focus of the process. Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) issues could be of special interest to the civil society. It is also important to clarify both what the stakeholders wish to accomplish and what we want the stakeholders participation to be. A very broad, unfocussed debate is not necessarily attractive to anybody.

- General comments to this point

The work of the **EECCA REC's** needs to be strengthened since they are to assume a more important role in the future. We should, however, also in the future base important parts of the work on the strong and competent existing secretariats as **the OECD EAP Task Force**. The

project activities under the auspices of the OECD EAP Task Force and the EECCA RECs are valuable and should be continued.

Co-operation with **civil society** should be improved and mechanisms and projects need to be developed to enable the civil society to participate and contribute more actively.

Within the framework of this Initiative, the RECS and Cleaner Production Centres could be given special roles and tasks. Non-governmental Organisations could also play an important role in disseminating information and creating public awareness.

d) Expanding the use of partnerships as vehicles for improving implementation

- Actions for partnerships for implementation

Yes, we are in favour of expanding partnerships as an important means for improving implementation. This should be done in dialogue and focussing on special and directed projects.

e) Leveraging external contributions of expertise, manpower and resources

- Activities and approaches to increase external contribution

The issue is not only about amounts but rather about better donor co-ordination and to be more directed in the efforts. The bi-lateral co-operation has to be based on an engagement from both sides and National Strategies and Poverty Reduction Strategies and the like must include environment. It is also a question of national priorities and therefore about strengthening environmental issues in decision making and public opinion.

- Actors to involve

The donor community including banks and national governments.

Cross-sectoral co-operation in and between countries is important here.

f) Assessing ways and means to promote more effectively the UNECE region-wide dimension of environmental cooperation

- Type of issues for EfE conferences that would be of interest and relevance to all EU members.

Based on the reports from EEA and UNEP on environmental issues and Sustainable Consumption and Production, the following issues could be part of the EfE process:

Climate change, chemicals, security and health, trans-boundary water issues and Sustainable Consumption and Production, SCP, with a specific focus on waste, food etc. The appropriate mandate for initiatives on SCP is set in the Belgrade Ministerial Declaration where ministers call for development of national programmes, strategies and partnerships, to support the Marrakech process, dissemination of best practice etc. and ask UNEP to consider a Pan European Initiative on SCP.

g) The full cost of the process and the effective allocation of available resources

- Cost-effectiveness of resources spent on EfE conferences

Much more could be done without meetings and travel. All documents need not be printed. Meetings back-to back is another way of bringing down costs.

- Ways and means to raise sufficient extra budgetary support

A thematic approach might help.

h) Future Secretariat arrangements

We are still in favour of the UNECE Secretariat acting as a secretariat for the EfE process and the Ministerial Conferences.

With regard to the practical work we support the continuation of the OECD EAP Task Force Secretariat which has served an important function in coordinating project activities. Due to its good and credible work, the OECD secretariat is also an efficient door-opener in the EECCA Region.