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## **Environment for Europe Views of Switzerland on the issues of the reform**

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

- **Purpose of the EfE process and objectives it should achieve**

Switzerland recognizes the usefulness of the EfE process as an important framework for multilateral and bilateral cooperation in the UNECE region. The process is a unique multi-stakeholder forum for tackling environmental challenges and for promoting environmental improvement in countries of the region. The participation of civil society is very useful and should be further encouraged. The process should focus these activities on specific needs, especially on those of the EECCA countries.

Ministerial meetings give visibility at the international as well as at the national levels, needed for a better implementation of environmental protection. They give also visibility at the activities of different stakeholders (Governments, international organizations, NGOs, finance institutions, etc.) Furthermore political decision, for instance, on preventing environmental damage or promoting sustainable management of environmental resources is needed and must be taken at ministerial level. Ministerial meetings are also important for the implementation of the UNECE MEAs and other regional and global MEAs.

EfE process can also play a crucial role in the development of global conventions (i.e. POPs Protocol).

- **Scope of issues to be addressed by the Conference**

The process should continue to address pertinent issues like governance, biological and landscape diversity in the framework of the PEBLDS activities, climate change, chemicals, water, sustainable consumption and production, sustainable energy, education for sustainable development, etc. The process should also tackle emerging issues like biofuels or soil and land management as cross-cutting topics.

- **Type of main output(s) of the Conference**

We are in favour of a negotiated Ministerial Declaration. EfE ministerial declaration can also be used as a tool by the Ministers of environment to get their concerns through by other ministries. Other outcomes could be guidelines and recommendations.

- **Duration of the preparatory process**

About 12 months and 3 preparatory meetings (including drafting group meetings).  
The duration of the Ministerial Conference should be of 2 oder 3 days to insure the Ministers' participation.

- **Role of the CEP**

The work achieved by the Ad Hoc WGSO for the preparation of Ministerial meetings should be provided by the CEP.

- **Balance between plenary sessions and interactive discussions**

Plenary sessions should be organized to provide enough time for free discussions: e.g., 1 statement from the Session's Chairman + 2 key speakers + free discussion and could alternate with roundtables, lunch sessions only for ministers, etc.

The possibility to organize mid-term meetings should be examined.

- **Type of documentation for the Conference**

Documentation should be reduced and focussed on some background documents with short summaries included recommendations for policy makers.

**(b) Evaluating the performance and impact of the process**

- **The value added of the EfE process**

In addition to our comments under (a), the process is useful also for the visibility at ministerial level of the achievements and the progress of the UNECE MEAs.

- **Concrete examples of the impact of the process in your country**

The process is relevant for Switzerland as a non EU member country. Furthermore Switzerland represents Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan in the GEF Council (GEF Constituency). Thanks to the EfE process which gives us an appropriate framework, the Federal Office for the Environment can support workshops in Central Asia and Azerbaijan for the implementation of the Espoo Convention, as well as other environmental projects in this region.

- **Major achievements and shortcomings in the preparation for and the execution of the previous Conferences**

**Major achievements**

- Conclusion of new legally binding instruments (Aarhus Convention, Heavy Metal Protocol, POPs Protocol, Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, Protocol on Civil Liability, PRTR Protocol).
- Strengthening of the cooperation with other ministries (development, education, finance, agriculture, land management, energy, etc.)
- National impact of the Ministerial declaration
- Periodical Assessment "Europe's Environment"
- + Comments under point (a).

**Shortcomings**

Lack of implementation of the Environmental Strategy for EECCA

Arduous negotiations of the Ministerial declaration

Between the Ministerial Conferences there are no intermediate sessions to discuss the progress of the process.

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

- **Actions that Governments and EfE partners may take to stimulate broader stakeholder involvement**
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Use of public private partnerships.

**(d) Expanding the use of partnerships as vehicle for improving implementation**

- **Actions that Governments and EfE partners may take to actively engage the private sector and other important stakeholders in partnerships to implement EfE decisions**

Switzerland uses already private-public partnerships in the framework of its cooperation and development policy. EfE process could encourage the exchange of information and experiences on good practices with the private sector.

**(e) Leveraging external contributions of expertise, manpower and resources**

It is already good covered by the contribution of many other stakeholders, international organisations, NGOs, etc.

**(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 UNECE Members**

For example: biofuels, soil and land management, agriculture, competitiveness, taxes, subsidies, trade and other kind of cross-cutting issues that could interest also other ministries. The cooperation with others ministries for the preparation of the Ministerial Conferences is very useful for integration of environmental issues in other policies.

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

- **Cost-effectiveness of resources spent on EfE Conference**

To be able to answer this question we would need the detailed budget and financing plan of the whole process including the cost of Conference and the preparatory meetings.

**(h) Future secretariat arrangements**

- **Possible alternatives to current secretariat arrangements**

Currently, the UNECE is the adequate institution to assure the Secretariat of the process.

**As expressed in Belgrade, Switzerland is of the opinion that the reform should be adopted by the Ministers of Environment either during a level session at the CEP session in December 2008 or January 2009 or during an Environment High Level Segment at the UNECE (Spring 2009).**