



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة • 联合国环境规划署
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

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Geneva, 11 June 2008

Dear Ms. Von Schweinichen,

In view of the upcoming Meeting of the extended Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) Bureau meeting of 23-24 June 2008, I am pleased to provide UNEP's additional input to the discussions on the reform of the *Environment for Europe* (EfE) process, following our statements at the 15th Meeting of the CEP. I would be grateful if this contribution could be disseminated among the EfE members.

UNEP has participated alongside UNECE as its secretariat in the Environment for Europe process since its beginning. In collaboration with our partners, we have invested considerable human and financial resources in supporting efforts to improve environmental management and environmental policy development in the region. This has been done through effective mechanisms resulting from, or endorsed by the EfE process, such as the Carpathian Convention, the PEBLDS, and the Environment and Security Initiative. During this time, UNEP has also contributed to a wide range of activities undertaken in the context of the process, such as the preparation of the European assessment reports, the recent report on "Sustainable consumption and production in South East Europe and EECCA", and the discussions on the future of EfE. UNEP welcomes the continuation of the EfE process as a critical space to satisfy environmental aspirations and needs, promote the quality of the environment, and foster the policies and strategies for sustainable development across the pan-European region.

We also fully support the agenda and the strategic discussions on the way forward after Belgrade. The Belgrade Ministerial Declaration "Building Bridges to the Future" reflects a strong commitment for cooperation on environmental protection amongst countries in the Pan-European region. Issues such as ecosystems management, sustainable consumption and production and environment and conflict/disasters that are part of the priorities approved by member states for UNEP's future action are prominently reflected in this Ministerial declaration.

In UNEP's view, the EfE continues to have an irreplaceable role as:

- (i) a genuinely pan-European, multilateral forum for Ministerial stocktaking and guidance on environmental issues of importance to the pan-European region, in which all member states participate on an equal footing as UN member states;
- (ii) a forum for promoting and implementing global agreements and initiatives across the region and
- (iii) a platform for promoting, launching and concluding regional and sub-regional initiatives and agreements.

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In line with Mr. K. Barlund's letter of 31 January 2008 on the topic we are pleased to offer the following comments:

1. Format, focus and priorities of the EfE process and Ministerial Conferences

In addition to activities and initiatives involving all stakeholders in the entire pan-European region which are most welcome, there should also be an increased focus on South Eastern European, Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian sub-regions. A strong and effective EfE process can provide the basis for initiatives solidly embedded in national programmes supported by other institutions and processes.

2. Evaluating the performance and impact of the process

Strengthening of existing activities would greatly benefit from deeper and regular opportunities to monitor and discuss progress in between Ministerial Conferences.

3. Attracting the broader involvement of all stakeholders

UNEP is in favour of the broadest possible active participation and involvement of all major groups and civil society actors in the EfE process. The secretariat could consider the development of a detailed strategy on how to engage civil society in policy dialogue, influence the outcomes of the decisions taken under the EfE process and decision making in countries, and harness the expertise and involvement of major groups including in particular civil society organisations, private sector, trade unions, local and regional authorities and the academia in the area of environment.

Consideration should also be given to the possibility of organizing specific discussions with pan-European stakeholders on global issues, in preparation of Global Ministerial Environment Fora and other important global environmental events. The EfE process with its regular Ministerial meetings may well transform into a most time- and cost- efficient "marketplace" for future environmental policy setting, exchange and cooperation in the pan-European region.

4. Expanding use of partnerships

Increasing the number and scope of partnerships, including but not limited to the private sector, should be a crucial goal for all parties involved in EfE, who should also be requested to report on progress in achieving that goal.

5. Leveraging external contributions of expertise, manpower and resources

In line with the comments under the two points above UNEP supports the idea of selectively seeking expertise and resources from outside the EfE process, including outside the pan-European region. This would benefit the process including by allowing replication of best practices and cross-fertilization with other on-going activities.

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

It would be beneficial that the EfE process does not limit itself to issues that are relevant to the full UNECE region. The EfE agenda should be kept flexible to include, on the one hand issues that are of concern to the European continent only, or specific to a sub-region. In addition, consideration should be given to broadening the agenda with issues that are relevant to the integration of environmental imperatives with other agendas in the social and economic sectors in particular and which therefore might not be limited to the portfolios of Ministers of Environment. Examples of such topics could



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include agrofuels/bioenergy, land management and agriculture, transport, health and crosscutting issues such as subsidies, trade and competitiveness, and costs of inaction.

7. Full costs of the process and effective allocation of resources

In Belgrade, member States committed to a reform of the process and that commitment must eventually translate into more substantial resources for the future EfE process, especially if it is to contribute effectively to improved environmental practices in the region.

8. Future secretariat arrangements

UNEP will continue to fully support the UNECE, *inter alia* in its capacity of secretariat of the EfE process, while also facilitating and participating, with other agencies in processes related to the core mandate of EfE (such as PEBLDS) at the request of member states.

In concluding, we look forward to continuing the discussion at the upcoming CEP meetings and we see the current draft Outline of the EfE Reform Plan as a promising next step in that process.

Yours sincerely,

Christophe Bouvier
Director and Regional Representative for Europe