



# UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

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## *It's just happened ...*

### **The ECE "Gas Week"**



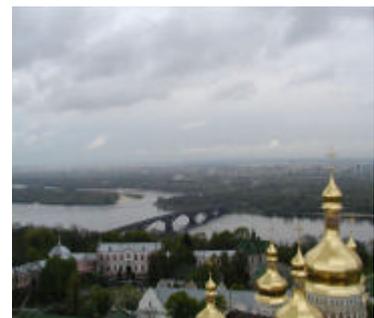
The UNECE held a week of "gas" meetings in Geneva commencing 20 January. One of the highlights of the week was a high level Round Table on "The Wider Europe and New Challenges for the Energy Sector". This launched a series of similar events being organised by UNECE in 2003 on various issues related to the future of post-EU enlargement Europe. Eminent speakers representing the EU Commission, the Russian academic/political sector and a range of global energy/gas companies (Gaz de France, Gazprom, Ruhrgas, Shell Gas & Power and Wingas) participated as panellists in the Round Table. Key issues discussed included: the implications of Europe's increasing energy dependence; the high risks associated with the growing energy imports from more distant areas and countries; the massive investments that could be needed in the energy producing areas surrounding western Europe, such as Russia, countries of Central Asia and southern Mediterranean; and whether the current political, institutional and economic arrangements between Europe and its neighbouring countries were appropriate to meet the challenges of the new energy era.

### **Agreement on pollution information disclosure treaty**

Negotiations on a new international treaty under which companies will be required to publicly disclose information on their output of pollutants came to a successful conclusion in Geneva last week. The ground-breaking treaty has been developed over the past two years under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, in the form of a legally binding protocol to the Aarhus Convention, the UN's flagship convention on environmental democracy issues. Under the new protocol, companies will be required to report annually on their releases (into the environment) and transfers (to other companies) of certain pollutants. The information will then be placed on a public register, known as a pollutant release and transfer register.

### **A new protocol for Kiev**

An Intergovernmental Working Group finalized a Protocol to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context. This Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, will be presented for adoption and signing during the Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" at Kiev in May this year. The new Protocol will require governments to make environmental assessments of their plans, programmes, policies and legislation. It will promote the cross-sectoral approach of the Convention by integrating environmental and health considerations into strategic decision-making that will contribute to sustainable development.



## Air pollution and climate change



A workshop organized under the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, has looked at the numerous links between air pollution and climate change which, while closely related, have mostly been treated as separate problems. It concludes that taking certain climate change measures would yield additional benefits through improved local and regional air quality, while some air pollution abatement measures would also help protect the regional and global climate. The links are so important that there should be more

cooperation between those working in the two areas. The Convention's scientists have already begun to build these links into their assessment framework so that measures to further reduce air pollution can maximize the co-benefits. They are also seeking cooperation with scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. More information on the workshop is available through a press release.

### *In brief ...*

**An Interregional Seminar on E-Med Business**, jointly organized by UNECE, UNESCWA and UNECA, was held in Geneva on 29-31 January. The meeting discussed capacity building in trade facilitation and electronic business in the Mediterranean.

**Economic Recovery in Post-conflict Countries in the Past 10 Years** - UNECE participated in a Round Table on this topic held during International Aid and Trade Europe 2003

### *Coming up soon ...*

- 3-6 UN/CEFACT Steering Group
- 3(pm)-7 Working Party on Brakes and Running Gear, 53rd session
- 4(pm) Briefing for Missions by Executive Secretary, at 3 pm
- 4 Extended Bureau meeting of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development
- 4-7 Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport, 102nd session
- 6-7 TIR Administrative Committee, 33rd session
- 6-7 Administrative Committee for the "Harmonization" Convention, 5th session

### *Facts and figures:*

#### Annual changes in real GDP in the ECE region, 1998-2002

(Percentage change over previous year)

Region	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
UNECE <sup>a</sup>	3.1	3.3	4.0	1.2	2.0
Central and Eastern Europe-15	2.4	1.5	3.9	3.0	2.9
CIS-12	-3.0	4.5	8.2	6.0	4.6
Russian Federation	-4.9	5.4	9.0	5.0	4.0
Western Europe-21 <sup>b</sup>	2.9	2.4	3.6	1.2	1.0
European Union	2.9	2.8	3.4	1.6	0.9
Euro area	2.9	2.8	3.5	1.5	0.8
Europe excluding CIS	2.9	2.3	3.6	1.4	1.2
Europe including CIS	2.1	2.6	4.2	2.0	1.7
North America-2	4.3	4.2	3.8	0.4	2.4
United States	4.3	4.1	3.8	0.3	2.3

Source: UNECE Statistical Division

Notes: The regional aggregates are computed by summing over countries constant price values converted into US dollars using the GDP purchasing power parity of the year 2000.

a) Excludes Andorra, Israel, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino.

b) Includes Turkey.

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