



# UNECE Weekly

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# 100

*The UNECE Weekly editorial team is proud to present to you this 100<sup>th</sup> issue. We hope that during its almost two years of existence, UNECE Weekly has given you a fair overview of the numerous activities going on in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.*

*We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your kind comments and reactions and to wish you a happy holiday season.*



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

### **UNECE Launches Programme of Work on Coal Mine Methane**

The first session of the newly launched Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane was held on 6 December and attended by participants from over 20 countries, including Australia and Brazil, representing a good balance from government, NGOs and the private sector. The Group agreed that its focus would include not only coal mine methane (CMM), but also abandoned and active mine methane, and that its activities would specifically relate to the development and profitable recovery and use of CMM. Such activities embrace the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental since recovery and use of CMM otherwise emitted to the atmosphere mitigates climate change, improves mine safety and productivity, and generates revenues and cost savings. A key area of work for the Group of Experts will be to provide support for the UNECE project on "Development of CMM Projects in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS", which is co-financed by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the UN Foundation. A highly interactive Final Panel was conducted during the session, with the aim of understanding the reasons for the key barriers to financing CMM projects and identifying possible solutions.



### **UNECE Confirms that Coal has a Key Role in Meeting Future Energy Demand**

The Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Coal in Sustainable Development met on 7-8 December to focus on the key current and emerging issues that will have an impact on the coal sector, with particular emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS. The expert presentations provided on (i) global coal supply and demand, both current and forecast, and (ii) commercially available clean coal technologies and technological innovations under development, and the ensuing discussions all served to confirm the solid future for coal in helping to meet increasing global energy needs. The meeting also discussed the development of coal mine methane projects; emissions standards and legislation; and coal sector restructuring, including how the UNECE can seek to assist member countries undergoing restructuring to mitigate the economic and social impacts thereof.

### **Bureau Meeting**

The Extended Bureau of the Committee on Sustainable Energy met on 9 December, when it received an update on the various programmes of work under the Committee's remit, including Energy Efficiency 21, Energy Security, Gas, Coal, Coal Mine Methane, Electric Power and Supply of Fossil Fuels. The Bureau also discussed arrangements for the next full session of the Committee (June 2005). This session will include a one-day event on energy security and a one-day event focussing on climate change/Kyoto Protocol issues.

For further information contact Charlotte Griffiths  
([charlotte.griffiths@unece.org](mailto:charlotte.griffiths@unece.org))

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## Forests and wetland: suppliers of clean water and first line of defence against floods

A Seminar on the role of ecosystems as water suppliers, held on 13-14 December, reviewed relevant experience and best practices in protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems. Over the past decade, the ecosystem approach has been developed into a strategy, which has become part and parcel of integrated water resources management.



Wetlands and forests mitigate floods and store water in areas of flood formation. These ecosystems are vital for groundwater recharge: while moving through the soil, water is getting rid of impurities. They withhold sediments and reduce erosion. And they have important ecological functions. There are many examples of unsustainable management of wetlands and forests. In some countries the protection of forests and wetlands and their sustainable use have not always been a priority of State budget allocations. Lack of awareness or economic and technical choices of development, which do not take a long-term perspective, have often caused destruction of ecosystems with negative consequences for the water resources.

UNECE – with its 1993 Guidelines on the ecosystem approach in water management – and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, which counteracts the loss of ecological functions and processes resulting from pollution, water deprivation and destruction of wetlands, are among the driving forces of the ecosystem approach in water management.

Governments have invested and continue to invest large amounts of money in water-related infrastructure. However, flood control, drinking water supply and recreation cannot solely rely on infrastructure. The wise use of water-related ecosystems is a cost-effective alternative to infrastructure development, considering the environmental services that water-related ecosystems can provide.

The implementation of environmental conventions is crucial for poverty reduction, developing tourism and protecting the environment. And information campaigns, “green schools” and thematic competitions about wetlands and forests as water suppliers are innovative means to promote awareness.

For more information contact Rainer Enderlein ([rainer.enderlein@unece.org](mailto:rainer.enderlein@unece.org)).

### Facts and figures:

Life Expectancy in Years, Selected UNECE Countries, as of 2000					
Country	men	women	Country	men	women
Iceland <sup>1</sup>	77.6	81.4	Czech Republic	71.7	78.4
Sweden	77.4	82.0	Armenia	70.5	74.5
Canada <sup>2</sup>	76.3	81.7	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia <sup>2</sup>	70.5	74.8
Italy <sup>3</sup>	76.3	82.4	Serbia and Montenegro <sup>1</sup>	69.9	74.9
Norway	76.0	81.4	Poland	69.7	78.0
Netherlands	75.5	80.6	Slovakia	69.1	77.2
Spain <sup>1</sup>	75.5	82.7	Bulgaria <sup>4</sup>	68.2	75.3
Austria	75.4	81.2	Lithuania	67.6	77.9
Cyprus <sup>4,5</sup>	75.3	80.4	Hungary	67.1	75.6
France	75.3	82.8	Romania	67.0	74.2
Belgium	75.1	81.4	Estonia	65.2	76.1
United Kingdom <sup>6</sup>	75.0	79.7	Latvia	64.9	76.0
Luxembourg	74.9	81.3	Kyrgyzstan	64.9	72.4
Germany	74.8	80.8	Republic of Moldova	63.9	71.2
Denmark <sup>1</sup>	74.3	79.0	Belarus	63.4	74.7
Finland	74.1	81.0	Ukraine	62.4	73.6
United States <sup>7</sup>	74.1	79.5	Russian Federation	59.0	72.2
Portugal	72.4	79.4			
Slovenia <sup>1</sup>	71.9	79.1			

- <sup>1</sup> 1999-2000;
- <sup>2</sup> 1999;
- <sup>3</sup> estimate;
- <sup>4</sup> 1998-1999;
- <sup>5</sup> Government-controlled area only;
- <sup>6</sup> England and Wales only;
- <sup>7</sup> preliminary;
- <sup>8</sup> 1998-2000

Source: UNECE Gender Statistics Database

**For further information please contact:**  
**Information Service,**  
**UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)**  
**CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland**

**Tel: +41(0)22 917 44 44      E-mail: [info.ece@unece.org](mailto:info.ece@unece.org)**  
**Fax: +41(0)22 917 05 05      Web site: <http://www.unece.org>**

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