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New International treaty requires industries to report on pollutants

The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the UNECE Aarhus Convention, signed by 36 countries and the European Community in May 2003 in Kiev, Ukraine, is set to enter into force on 8 October 2009 following France's ratification, which was deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General on 10 July.

Described by Ján Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, as "a milestone in the advancement of public access to information about sources of environmental pollution in the UNECE region", the Protocol will help identify the biggest polluters in communities across Europe. It also covers facilities releasing large quantities of greenhouse gases known to contribute to global warming and thus offers a new tool to countries battling climate change.

Pollutant release and transfer registers are inventories of pollutants from industrial sites, but also smaller, widespread sources such as traffic, agriculture and small and medium-sized enterprises. Under the Protocol, facilities will be required to report annually on the amounts of certain pollutants they release to the environment or transfer to other facilities. The information will then be placed on a public register accessible through the Internet. ■

The full text of the Protocol is available in the three official languages of the UNECE (English, French and Russian) at: <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/docs/prtrtext.htm>. This page also contains unofficial translations in Spanish, Dutch, Georgian and Macedonian.

For more information visit <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr.htm> or contact Michael Stanley-Jones (public.participation@unece.org).



Executive Secretary participates in Aral Sea Summit follow-up

Ján Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, delivered an opening statement at the meeting on "Enhanced regional cooperation: coordination meeting on follow-up to the IFAS Summit", organized in Ashgabat on 16 July by the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy. In the presence of high-level representatives of Central Asian countries, the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), other UN agencies, international and regional organizations and the international development community, Mr. Kubiš outlined the contribution of UNECE to the implementation of the summit decisions.

UNECE – in close cooperation with GTZ (German Agency for Technical Cooperation) – implements a 3-year programme on institutional strengthening and legal reform in the area of regional water resources management in Central Asia, initiated and financed by the Government of Germany in the framework of the Berlin Process, which is part of the Water and Environment Pillar of the Central Asia Strategy of the European Union.

The Programme facilitates the accession of all Central Asian countries to all relevant UNECE conventions, first of all the Water Convention*, provides assistance to improved monitoring of water resources and the development of a transparent and easily accessible regional database. UNECE works closely with the IFAS Executive Committee on the successful implementation of summit decisions, in particular the strengthening of institutions and modernization of legal frameworks for regional water resources management.

The Final Document adopted at the meeting emphasizes that "more effective functioning of the regional structures, operating on a strong and modern legal basis, would facilitate the elaboration of mutually advantageous solutions to problems related to the water and energy nexus."

During his stay in Turkmenistan the Executive Secretary was received by H.E. Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, the President of Turkmenistan. They discussed



closer cooperation between Turkmenistan and UNECE in a broad range of areas including water resources management and energy security. Mr. Kubiš also had meetings with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Water Economy and Minister for Motor Transport of Turkmenistan during which discussions focused on practical ways of strengthening cooperation between Turkmenistan and UNECE. ■

For more information contact Marton Krasznai (marton.krasznai@unece.org).

Not an official record - For information only

* Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

Colour gauge for walnut kernels

A new colour gauge for walnut kernels has been issued, supplementing the *UNECE Standard for Walnut Kernels* (DDP-02).

Walnut kernels are classified in three classes according to their quality and colour:

“Extra” Class must be uniformly light-coloured kernels with practically no dark straw and/or lemon-yellow colour and with no dark brown.

Class I kernels must be of a colour not darker than light brown.

Class II covers kernels of a colour not darker than dark brown. Darker kernels may be marketed in this class, provided the colour is indicated on the package.

Only the original chart as distributed by the United Nations should be used for the purposes of the Standard — photocopies or printouts are not valid. The printed colour gauge should be observed by daylight or white fluorescent light and not be exposed to sublight. ■

The chart is available from the UN Publications, Sales and Marketing Section (unogbookshop@unog.ch)

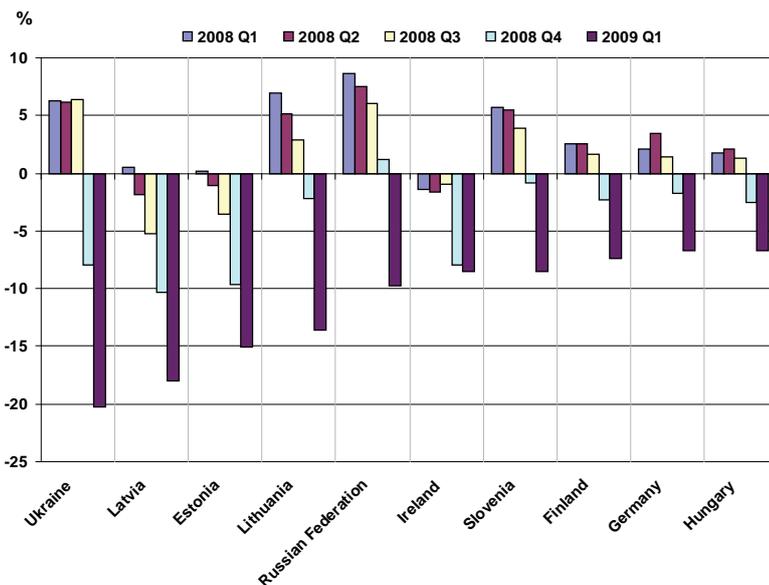


FACTS AND FIGURES

Economic crisis hits hardest in Ukraine and the Baltic countries

Preliminary data for the first quarter of 2009 show that gross domestic product (GDP) fell at an accelerating pace in the EU and CIS countries. Compared to the corresponding quarter in 2008, Cyprus, Greece and Poland were the only EU countries to record an increase, albeit a small one. In the CIS area, growth continued in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but it was noticeably slower.

Sharpest declines of GDP in the EU and CIS countries
(in per cent, same quarter of the previous year)



Source: *UNECE Statistical Database* (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data>), *CIS Statistical Committee and national statistics*.

The Baltic countries and Ukraine recorded the sharpest decline in GDP. The contraction of their industrial production (see *UNECE Weekly No. 326*) was accompanied by even sharper falls in construction output.

In January-March 2009, Ukraine's construction output dropped by more than a half, if compared to the first quarter of 2008.

In the Baltic countries, the corresponding falls ranged from 28% in Latvia to 37% in Lithuania. In service activities, the Baltic countries also recorded the sharpest decreases (more than 10%) within the EU and CIS area.

Preliminary national accounts data for the first quarter of 2009 do not indicate any immediate recovery from the economic crisis in the region. Labour-intensive sectors are struggling, and rising unemployment will most likely put further pressure on private consumption. ■