



**United Nations**

# UNECE Weekly

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## **BEIJING 15 YEARS ON: HOW ARE WOMEN FARING IN THE EUROPEAN REGION?**

Fifteen years after the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, UNECE is reviewing the situation of women from a regional perspective in preparation for the global fifteen-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in March 2010.

The [Beijing +15 Regional Review Meeting on "New challenges and opportunities for Gender Equality in the ECE Region: Key Issues and Policy Responses"](#) on 2-3 November will discuss the key issues at stake for gender equality. It will provide an important opportunity to take stock of the progress made on gender equality and women's empowerment and to address the major challenges that lie ahead in the region.

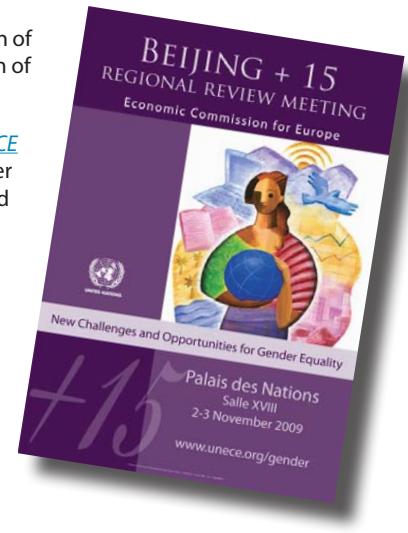
*"Four major challenges to move towards greater gender equality and respect for women's rights have emerged from the review", said Patrice Robineau, Senior Adviser to UNECE's Executive Secretary and Coordinator of the Beijing +15 Regional Review, "to combat violence against women, to ensure equal economic opportunities for women and men, both in terms of employment and incomes, to fill the persistent gender gap in the access to decision-making positions, and to strengthen national mechanisms for gender equality and women's empowerment. The fact that most of these challenges are of a structural nature and were already identified five years ago calls for more vigorous action to address them".*

Almost all UNECE member States submitted national reports which form the regional synthesis report, to be discussed on Monday, 2 November, reviewing progress made in implementing the commitments taken in each of the twelve areas of concern covered by the Beijing Platform for Action. Member States will highlight and discuss achievements and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action since the last review in 2005 and share policy experiences.

The meeting will also feature three interactive panel discussions, examining policy issues, challenges and opportunities across the following themes:

- *Gender sensitive economic policies in the context of the economic and financial crisis.*
- *Gender and the corporate sector.*
- *New partnerships, networks and alliances for gender equality.*

The outcome of the meeting will take the form of Chairperson's conclusions which will constitute both a call for further action in the region on critical issues for gender equality and women's rights, and a contribution to the global review of progress to take place in March 2010 in New York, within the framework of a special session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. □



Two lunchtime side events will also take place: a Panel Discussion on Enhancing Women's Political Participation, organized by UNDP on Monday, and a presentation of UNECE's gender activities on Tuesday.

The programme of the meeting is available at: <http://www.unece.org/gender>.

For more information contact Patrice Robineau ([Beijing15@unece.org](mailto:Beijing15@unece.org)).

## **"THROUGH THEIR EYES"**

*"Through Their Eyes"* presents 32 photographs depicting the socio-economic situation of women in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It offers 32 subjective views of the lives of women, through the eyes of women themselves. Each photo is accompanied by a statement written by the photographer. UNECE is presenting this exhibition on the occasion of the Beijing +15 Regional Review Meeting.

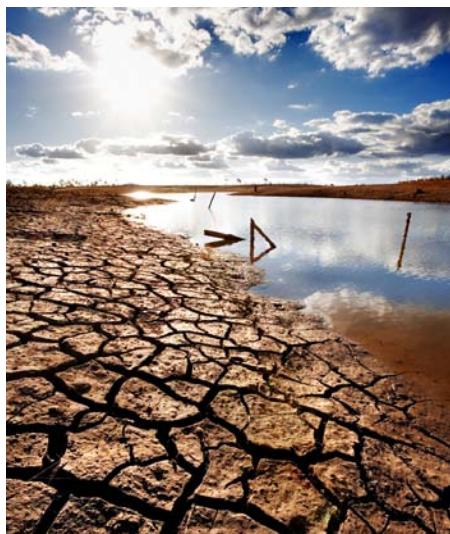
The photographs were entries submitted to a competition launched in 2008. Artists were invited to present their own vision of the economic situation of women in their country, away from stereotypes and traditional role perceptions, but depicting the current reality of women's changing lives. An international jury composed of Saba Amirejibi (film director from Georgia), Anna Bedyńska (photographer, from Poland and chairperson of the jury), Poulette Choque (feminist activist, Belgium), Alexandar Metodijev (journalist, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and Valeria Zacharova (photographer, Slovakia) selected the winners.

The exhibition is a part of a regional project co-financed by the European Commission "Through Their Eyes, Through Ours: Raising the public's awareness about development problems faced by women from developing countries in the EU Eastern Neighbourhood, Balkans and Central Asia." it is being implemented by KARAT Coalition with its national partners: Women in Development Europe - WIDE (Belgium), GenderMediaCaucasus Journalists' Association (Georgia), Permaculture and Peacebuilding Center PpcShtip (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), WOMNET (Germany), Slovak Centre for Communication and Development (Slovakia). □

For more information visit <http://www.karat.org>.



# MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON WATER AND GREENING THE ECONOMY



The UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy has agreed on the two main themes for the *Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference* to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan, in autumn 2011: the *Sustainable Management of Water and Water-related Ecosystems and Greening the Economy: Mainstreaming the Environment into Economic Development*.

Transboundary cooperation and national efforts in water management were seen as essential if the region is to successfully address challenges like increasing water scarcity and its impact on food and energy security and economic development. Issues of water management are at the centre of other growing regional concerns, including the melting of glaciers caused by global warming, which requires improved flood control measures to deal with seasonal flooding, water quality, and members States' increasing financial needs to provide water supply and sanitation.

The Committee also felt that the momentum of the ongoing reshaping of economic policies should be used to ensure better environmental performance. The second item for the high-level agenda on greening the economy could include issues such as the reduction of carbon emissions, energy efficiency, sustainable consumption and production, and the reconfiguration of financing and infrastructure to better accommodate environmental considerations.

The Committee established a Steering Group to guide the preparation for the Astana Conference of an assessment of various environmental assessments that are of relevance to the region. Building on the lessons learned from the publication of four ad hoc Pan-European environment assessment reports for the previous Ministerial Conferences, the overall goal is to assess the regional needs, priorities and to keep the pan-European environment under continuous review. Concrete proposals to this effect would be submitted to Ministers in Astana including recommendations on how to develop a shared environmental information system in the region.

The *"Environment for Europe"* process and its Ministerial Conferences provide a unique high-level platform for Governments,

intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders to discuss, decide and join efforts in addressing environmental priorities across the 56 member countries of the UNECE region. The process that was launched in 1991, and recently went through a reform, has served as an important driver for the development of environmental policy and a number of regional environmental treaties.

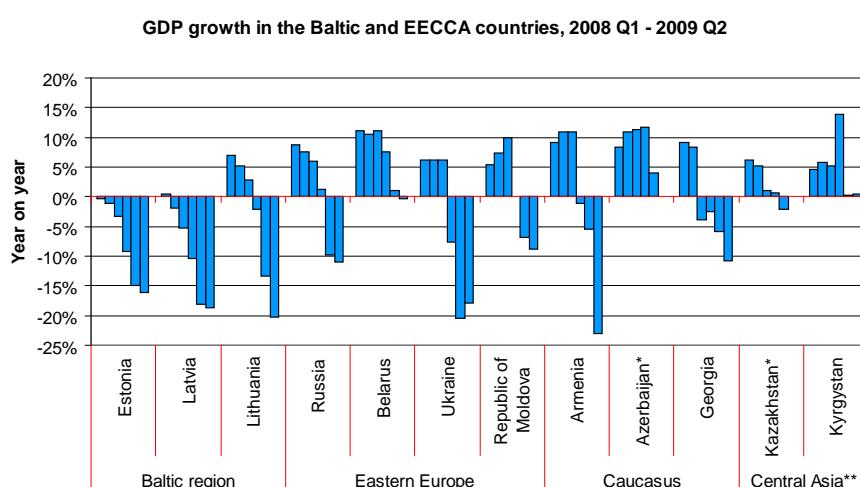
Committee's website: <http://www.unece.org/env/cep/currentSession.html>. Information on the first six *"Environment for Europe"* Ministerial Conferences is available at <http://www.unece.org/env/efe/history%20of%20EfE/fromDobtoBelg.htm>. For more information contact Monika Linn ([efe@unece.org](mailto:efe@unece.org))

## FACTS AND FIGURES

### BLEAK SECOND QUARTER IN BALTIC AND EAST EUROPEAN, CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIAN (EECCA) REGION

The latest national accounts data (second quarter 2009) continue to show a sharp decrease in the Baltic countries. The economic crisis started there already in the first half of 2008, at the same time as in many other EU countries. Only Lithuania was still growing in the third quarter 2008, but then plunged into a fierce downhill. The service sector, which accounts for a high share in GDP in the Baltic countries, has been hit by a particularly sharp downturn.

Armenia and Ukraine were the hardest hit EECCA economies by mid-2009. The dramatic collapse of construction is a common factor in these two countries. Russia's GDP has been falling since early 2009. In the second quarter its GDP contracted by about 10%, year-on-year. As deep a downturn was also seen in Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. The decline of construction deepened the recession during the second quarter in Russia and the Republic of Moldova with a fall of about one-fifth from a year earlier. As a contrast to the other EECCA countries, in Georgia the biggest contribution to the contraction of GDP came from the 20% per cent decline in trade and some service activities. □



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

\* Second quarter 2009 not yet available

\*\* Quarterly data not available for Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan