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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY DISCUSSES STRENGTHENING COOPERATION IN THE ARAL SEA BASIN

Ján Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, visited the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) on 16 July in Almaty. The visit was part of broader efforts by UNECE to actively support the sustainable development of Central Asia, in particular by strengthening transboundary water cooperation. UNECE efforts build on the solid basis of international legal instruments, in particular the UNECE environmental conventions, as well as on internationally accepted tools and approaches like integrated water resources management and the river basin approach.

“UNECE stands ready to further assist the countries of Central Asia in finding mutually acceptable, cooperative solutions to the complex problems related to the water and energy nexus in the region. There are no easy or rapid solutions; however, we support the efforts led by the Executive Committee of IFAS to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks for regional

cooperation. Strong and modern regional institutions will enable IFAS member countries to effectively address present and future challenges”, Ján Kubiš told the Committee.

UNECE closely cooperates with the Executive Committee of IFAS in an ambitious programme, which aims to improve regional institutions and legal frameworks for water management in the region. The Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Water Resources Management, implemented by UNECE and funded by the Government of Germany through GTZ in the framework of the Berlin Water Process, is part of the Water and Environmental Pillar of the European Union's Central Asia Strategy.

The programme identifies ways to modernize institutional agreements, to increase the efficiency and coordination of the regional organizations and to strengthen their analytical capacity. These efforts are supplemented by strengthening the understanding and application of international water law in the region: national capacity-building workshops are organized in Central Asian countries with an emphasis on the UNECE Water and Espoo Conventions. The programme also contributes to improved water monitoring and information exchange — a key tool to support decision-making at the regional level. □

For further information, please visit:

<http://www.unece.org/env/water/cadialogue/cadwelcome>.

EMISSIONS OF SULPHUR OXIDES AND OZONE-FORMING POLLUTANTS FALL SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE EU

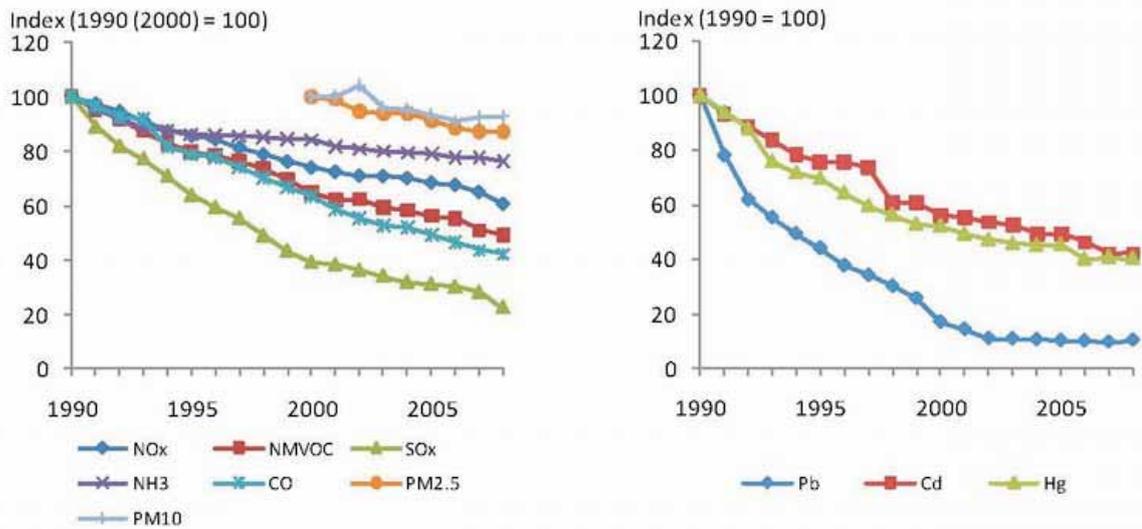
The annual European Union emission inventory reported under the UNECE Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) Convention, compiled by the European Environment Agency for the period 1990-2008 and released on 12 July 2010, shows that the EU-27 has cut sulphur oxides (SO_x) emissions by 78 % since 1990. The decline was particularly sharp in 2008, falling 20% compared to 2007.

SO₂ is an important air pollutant that acidifies ecosystems and forms harmful fine particulate matter in the atmosphere. Since the early 1990s a combination of measures has helped reduce emissions, including introducing low sulphur fuels and fitting pollution control equipment in European industrial facilities. Lower emissions from public power plants in Bulgaria, Poland and Spain contributed to the 20 % annual emission reduction in

2008. Spain, for example, reduced its SO₂ emissions by using less coal to generate electricity and instead relying on natural gas and renewable energy sources such as wind, photovoltaics and biomass.

CO, NMVOCs and NO_x are main contributors to the formation of ground-level ozone, a harmful pollutant that can trigger respiratory problems, contribute to premature mortality and also damage plants, reducing agricultural crop yields. EU-27 emissions of these ozone precursors fell in 2008 in a number of Member States, including France, Spain and UK, particularly from public power plants. Emissions from road transport also fell significantly in these Member States, partly reflecting reduced traffic due to the economic recession.

EU-27 emission trends for the main air pollutants, particulate matter and heavy metals



Other key findings of the report include:

- In 2008 EU-27 emissions of fine particulate matter fell by 13 % (PM_{2.5}) and 8 % (PM₁₀) compared to 2000, however emission trends have not improved much in the last five years.
- NO_x emissions from road transport have decreased by 40 % since 1990, mainly due to the introduction of three-way catalytic converters in passenger cars and stricter regulation of emissions from heavy goods vehicles across Europe. Road transport nevertheless remains the most important source of the ozone precursors NO_x and CO, contributing 41 % and 34 % of EU-27 emissions in 2008 respectively.
- NO_x emissions from aviation have tripled since 1990, representing 5 % of the total EU-27 emissions.
- EU-27 emissions of mercury, cadmium and lead have dropped by 60 % or more since 1990, reflecting improved control of emissions from sources such as electricity production, industry and road transport. However, the rate of decrease in total emissions of these three toxic heavy metals has slowed over the last five years. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/european-union-emission-inventory-report>

STATISTICIANS DISCUSS INNOVATIVE COMMUNICATION APPROACHES

The UNECE Work Session on the Communication of Statistics, held from June 30 to July 2 in Paris, was filled with innovative presentations and dynamic discussions. Topics and themes ranged from the challenges of internal communications to the latest trends in social media that can bring numbers closer to external audiences.

A key-note speaker challenged the audience to create a consumer-oriented website. An energetic tandem from the Netherlands presented a new visual iPhone application for statistical data and discussed the use of Twitter in publicizing the latest statistical data.

Representatives from the U.S. shared their experience on promoting and conducting the latest U.S. Census and stressed the importance of team efforts in dealing with such a tremendous task. A participant from Denmark talked about combining information and entertainment to explain numbers to the general public.

A journalist from *The Guardian* reminded everyone that users express more interest in data, which opens many opportunities for creating quality products by crowd sourcing, i.e. involving the general public in the process of data interpretation.

The work session also covered the issues of credibility and ways to develop a recognized brand for a statistical organization. □

For more information, please visit:

<http://unece.org/stats/documents/2010.06.communication.htm>, or contact Vadim Isakov at vadim.isakov@unece.org.



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