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Andrey Vasilyev, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary, was among the United Nations officials, alongside Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, and Sylvie Motard, from UNEP, who welcomed the 3 teams of the Zero Race upon their return to Geneva on 24 February.

The electric cars, powered by solar energy, had left the Palais des Nations in August. Environmentally friendly and virtually silent, the cars and motorbike circumnavigated the globe, crossing 17 countries and making a celebrated pit-stop at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Cancún, Mexico, from 29 November to 10 December 2010.

In his address, Andrey Vasilyev stressed that “today, the entire international community shares the same concern of climate change. There is a clear consensus among scientists, policy-makers, experts and business leaders that concerted action is needed to address climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions”.

He recalled that UNECE is servicing the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations, which leads several activities aiming at reducing the harmful emissions of motor vehicles. This work has resulted in

UNECE CELEBRATES RETURN OF ZERO EMISSIONS RACE



reductions of emission limits by 95% since the 1970s. Over the last years several Regulations have been developed to ensure the highest standards for vehicles that operate on alternative fuels such as electricity (fully electric or Hybrid-Electric vehicles), Liquefied Petroleum Gas and Natural Compressed Gas. The World Forum is now working on the development of a new global technical regulation related to hydrogen and fuel cell vehicles.

Andrey Vasilyev also said that UNECE had recently launched a project funded by the United Nations Development Account on the development and implementation of a

monitoring and assessment tool for CO² emissions in inland transport to facilitate climate change mitigation.

“Along with UNECE, the World Forum is developing recommendations on fuel quality, and is working on the definition of a concept for Environmentally Friendly Vehicles and the methodology to evaluate it”, he concluded.

The organizers of the Zero Race are now planning a race in Europe during the summer 2011. □

UNECE FOSTERS SEED-POTATO IMPROVEMENTS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND CIS



On 22 February, UNECE signed a four-year technical-cooperation Agreement with the world-renowned Swiss agricultural research station Agroscope

Changins-Wädenswil (ACW) to raise the standard of cultivation, quality control and certification of seed potatoes in the Russian Federation and other CIS countries.

These countries still lack trained certification inspectors and adequate testing laboratories. Without proper testing for diseases and pests, seed potatoes are being placed on the market and the use of infected seed potatoes is contaminating the soil and reducing output. Current yields average only 14 tons per hectare, compared with the European average of 35-40 tons. Seed-potato certification systems, when in place, can boost the yield and prevent soil contamination.

Signing the Agreement, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary Andrey Vasilyev said, “Through this ambitious technical cooperation programme with our Swiss partners, on the basis of the UNECE International Standard for Seed Potatoes, we’ll be spreading the know-how for producing significantly higher yields of quality crops. The Russian Federation, because of its enormous territory and excellent climate, has a great, untapped potential for producing quality potatoes - as do other CIS countries. Because the potato is the world’s number one non-grain commodity, if the United Nations can help create sustainable systems for supporting high-yield potato cultivation, this will not only increase world food security but also help eliminate poverty”.

Agroscope Director, Dr. Jean-Philippe Mayor, pledged that his organization would:

- Provide the Russian Federation with professional and technical advice on cultivating and certifying seed potatoes.
- Help set up laboratories for quality control of seed potatoes at all stages of production and distribution.
- Train producers, quality inspectors and laboratory staff from both the Russian Federation and other CIS countries.

Not an official record - For information only

Financed by the Russian Voluntary Contribution Fund, this project will bring together growers, regional administration personnel, and quarantine and certification services.

Strategically planned technical visits in June, July and October 2011 will provide expertise and advice at critical points in the seed-potato certification cycle: elimination of contaminated plants in early June; acceptance/rejection of the crop in July; and laboratory tests for viruses in October.

Local personnel will be trained during the field visits. In addition, in June, the same people will go on a one-week training course in Switzerland at Bioreba laboratory, Basel, and at Agroscope ACW, Nyon. □

The UNECE Standard on Seed Potatoes can be downloaded in English, French and Russian from:

http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standard/potatoes/pot_e.htm.

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UNECE KICKS OFF FIRST ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF TURKMENISTAN

UNECE kicked off the Environmental Performance Review (EPR) of Turkmenistan on 22 February in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. The team of international experts that will perform the review, initiated upon the request of the Government of Turkmenistan, will remain in the country until 3 March 2011. The review is coordinated by UNECE and enjoys the logistical support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Turkmenistan.

During its two week-stay in the country, the EPR team will have series of meetings with a broad range of Government officials and other key actors. On 24 February, a plenary meeting was held with key international organizations in the country. Participants discussed the projects and programs in environmental protection and sustainable development, including energy, pollution prevention, water, waste, forestry, biodiversity and protected areas. A second meeting with environmental NGOs discussed environmental protection and sustainable development issues, and public participation in environmental matters. □



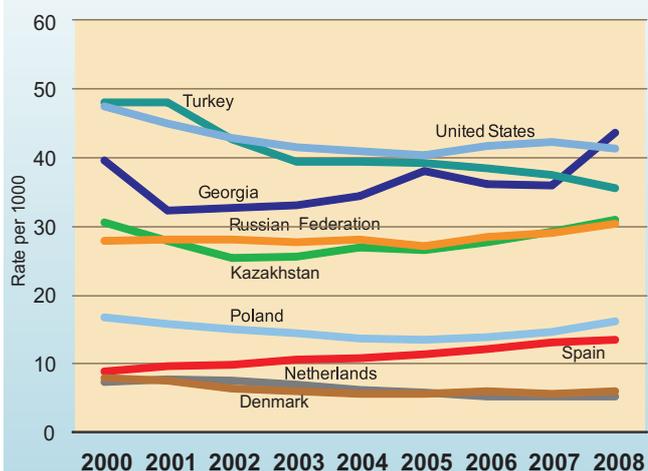
For more information, please visit:

<http://www.unece.org/env/epr/mandate.htm>.

FACTS AND FIGURES

ADOLESCENT FERTILITY TRENDS VARY LARGELY IN THE REGION

Adolescent fertility rate in the UNECE region from 2000 to 2008



In the UNECE region, an average of about 29 teenagers out of 1,000 gave birth in 2008. While this overall average is the highest one recorded since 2000, the levels and trends vary largely among UNECE countries. In Northern and Western Europe, adolescent fertility rate have fallen. Decrease was also observed in the United States while the level there remains much higher than in other Western countries.

In many countries of Southern, Central and Eastern Europe and in Central Asia (altogether 17 countries), the downward trend turned to a slight increase in the second half of the decade. In most cases, the adolescent fertility level of 2008 remained lower than that in 2000. However, in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Greece, Malta, the Russian Federation and Spain the increase led to a higher level in 2008 compared to 2000.

It is well known that adolescent pregnancies carry extra health risks to the mother and the baby. Teenage mothers and their children are also more likely to be socio-economically disadvantaged, and many adolescent pregnancies are unwanted. The reasons for the recent increase in adolescent fertility rates in some countries would require a closer investigation to enable appropriate policy response. □

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