

Energy Security

Conference on "Energy Security and Sustainability - the OSCE Perspective" in Turkmenistan



UNECE participated in the high-level international conference "Energy Security and Sustainability - the OSCE Perspective" organized under the Ukraine chairmanship of OSCE and hosted by Turkmenistan in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 17-18 October 2013. UNECE Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj delivered a keynote statement in the opening session, highlighting the role that UNECE has played and can continue to play in the energy security dialogue.

"Energy is at the nexus of economic and environmental sustainability. The economic challenge is to secure affordable and sustainable energy services for energy consumers. Issues of market design, structure and regulation, tariffs, subsidies, access, investments – in fact all of the policy considerations that relate to energy – enter into the energy security equation", he said.

In Ashgabat, the Executive Secretary was received by President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. The two sides discussed energy security issues, the participation of a Turkmen delegation to the forthcoming Committee on Sustainable Energy (21 November 2013 in Geneva); and how UNECE could strengthen its cooperation with Turkmenistan and Central Asia. Other issues for discussion included transport, especially the development of railway and highway corridors. The Executive Secretary also met with Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet and Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov to discuss ways to broaden the cooperation between UNECE and Turkmenistan.

The Executive Secretary also held bilateral meetings with Ukrainian Foreign Minister, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Leonid Kozhara; Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan Hamrokhon Zarifi; UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP, Jacinta Barrins; and representatives from UNECE member States. He also discussed with OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier how to reinforce cooperation between UNECE and OSCE.

Scott Foster, Director of UNECE's Sustainable Energy Division, opened the third segment of the conference with reflections on the links between energy security and sustainable energy. "Above all, achieving sustainable energy for all and energy security will require governments to put in place the policies and regulations that enable producers and consumers to respond to dynamically changing market conditions", he noted.

The conference examined in detail issues surrounding the General Assembly resolution on "Reliable and Stable Transit of Energy and its Role for Ensuring Sustainable Development and International Cooperation". This topic will be the subject of a High-level Panel at the forthcoming Committee on Sustainable Energy. □

Air Pollution

UNECE convention offers policy response to tackle carcinogenic air pollution

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the specialized cancer agency of the World Health Organization (WHO), announced on 17 October that it has classified outdoor air pollution as carcinogenic to humans.

After thoroughly reviewing the latest scientific literature, the world's leading experts convened by the IARC concluded that there is sufficient evidence that exposure to outdoor air pollution causes lung cancer. They also noted a positive association with an increased risk of bladder cancer. Particulate matter, a major component of outdoor air pollution, was evaluated separately and was also classified as carcinogenic to humans.

Although the composition of air pollution and levels of exposure can vary dramatically between locations, IARC's conclusions apply to all regions of the world. The most recent data indicate that in 2010, 223 000 deaths from lung cancer worldwide resulted from air pollution.

Commenting on these findings, Professor Martin Williams, Environmental Research Group at King's College London, Chair of the Executive Body of UNECE's [Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution](#) (CLRTAP) recalled the Convention's 30-year track record in reducing air pollution.

Under the Convention, "emissions of the major air pollutants have been reduced by 30 to 80% over the last 30 years", he said.

In particular, between 1990 and 2011:

- SO₂ levels have dropped by 82% within the European Union, and by 71% in the United States
- NO_x levels have dropped by 48% within the European Union, and by 49% in the United States
- Non-methane volatile organic compounds have decreased by 59% in the European Union
- Primary particulate matter (PM 10) has declined by 31% in the European Union

"This new statement from WHO goes hand in hand with their classification of diesel exhaust as a human carcinogen. The UNECE Air Pollution Convention (CLRTAP) is controlling a major part of carcinogenic air pollution through the revised Gothenburg Protocol. In May 2012, the [revised Protocol](#) adopted national emission reduction commitments, setting ceilings for emissions of particles to be achieved in 2020 and beyond and promoting action on black carbon, covering potentially the most harmful components of air pollution", added Martin Williams.

"So the policy response is clear: countries must adopt targets to reduce emissions and make sure that these targets are enforced", he added.

In the UNECE region, focus should be on car exhaust – and diesel in particular – power generation and industrial emissions.

But air pollution is a worldwide issue, increasingly affecting developing countries. In China and in India, where air pollution is a growing concern, but also in South-Africa for instance, policy action must tackle in particular coal power plants, industrial fumes and poor quality gasoline, since car fleets are growing extremely fast.

CLRTAP covers 51 countries in North America, Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, including high income, middle income and low income countries. "It has therefore a breadth of knowledge and expertise that can be shared with countries outside the region" stressed Prof. Martin Williams. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/env/lrtap/welcome.html>.

Energy

India to apply UNFC as tool for global good-practice based reporting of mineral resources

With global demand for minerals consistently outpacing supply, continuing strong commodity prices provide a boon to mineral-rich nations. Though the mining sector is growing globally, the Indian mining sector is lagging behind, with just 1.2% contribution to GDP over the last decade, as opposed to 5-6% in major mining economies. Reforms are necessary in India's mining sector to reflect evolving understanding of the economic/environmental/social impacts of mining, and the role of the sector within a broader context of sustainable development.

Obstacles to the reform process exist. Amongst a range of issues, the Government of India, state governments, and their corresponding agencies are challenged to: (i) ensure transparent and easily accessible information on India's mineral resource estimates to inform mineral policies and laws, as well as attract Foreign Direct Investment and increase exploration activity; and (ii) improve regulatory processes and oversight.

To this end, the Government of India's Ministry of Mines and Ministry of Coal in collaboration with UNECE, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the World Bank and the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries, are organizing a training workshop for building capacity around (a) effective use of the United Nations Framework Classification for Fossil Energy and Mineral Reserves and Resources (UNFC) to ensure global good practice-based reporting of mineral resource estimates and forecasts; (b) preparation and implementation of Sustainable Mine Plans; and (c) consultations to further inform stakeholders of vagaries in existing licensing procedures.

The event "Sustainable Mining and the UNFC – Challenges and Opportunities in India", will be held in New Delhi, India, 29-30 October with more than 200 participants anticipated. In relation to UNFC, expected outcomes are: (i) increased capacity on UNFC in India; (ii) agreement on the preliminary steps for assimilation of UNFC into the regulatory regime; and (iii) agreement on priority areas and initial implementation mechanisms. □

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22nd UN/CEFACT Forum: towards less paperwork in international trade

UN/CEFACT facilitates international trade and enables e-business through its recommendations and standards, including UN/EDIFACT, UN/XML and the Core Component Library. At present, it is finalizing its Recommendation 14 on the authentication of trade documents to lessen the paperwork burden in international trade.

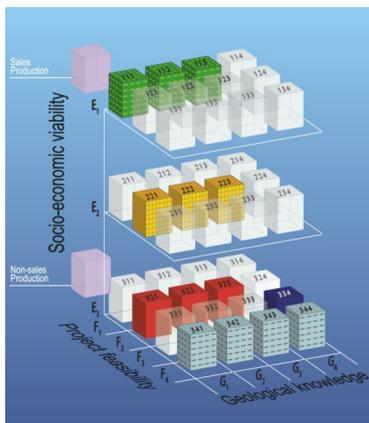
Signatures can sometimes be completely removed from documents. Thanks to the sharing of best practices that UN/CEFACT facilitates, some customs offices accept declarations without a signature. Instead, they establish a relationship with traders, who give them a financial guarantee. As a result, import and export procedures are ultimately cheaper.

In other cases, a signature is necessary for the transaction. The new Recommendation concerns allowing alternative means of authentication to enable the electronic transfer of documents. For example, a certificate of origin for "Made in" labels must usually be validated by an authority. In some countries, it can be sent electronically with an authentication method equivalent to a manual-ink signature. This can again lessen the financial and administrative burden on companies.

Recommendation 14 aims at eliminating altogether the need for a signature or replacing it by an electronic equivalent when absolutely necessary. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/cefact/>.

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Trade

