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## Environment



**SAVE WATER, GROW GREEN!**  
**ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE**  
7<sup>TH</sup> MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN 21-23 SEPTEMBER 2011

### Committee on Environmental Policy undertakes mid-term review under the "Environment for Europe" process



At its nineteenth session, held from 22 to 25 October 2013 in Geneva, the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) addressed a number of issues to advance environmental governance and sustainable development in the region and, in particular, undertook a mid-term review of the outcomes of the Seventh "Environment for Europe" (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21–23 September 2011). The meeting was attended by representatives of 41 Governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and the Regional Environmental Centres.

#### UNECE multilateral environmental agreements

The chairs of the UNECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) presented information on the status of the MEAs, as well as on efforts to strengthen national implementation and compliance. The UNECE MEAs were found to be robust instruments, having progressed both in terms of increased membership and improved national implementation. CEP praised the work of the MEAs, stressed, however, that more efforts were needed to ensure adequate political support for their implementation. In particular, the secretariats of the MEAs should be strengthened and more resources allocated from the United Nations regular budget for that purpose. CEP requested that a report on the opening of the UNECE MEAs and other UNECE instruments to accession by States outside the region be prepared for its next session.

The Astana Water Action (AWA), an action framework to advance the sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems, had overall made good progress. AWA stakeholders were encouraged to continue to implement the actions still under way and invited to provide a progress report to CEP at its session in 2015 or 2016. The secretariat was asked to disseminate the AWA commitments and results either through a brochure or on the UNECE website.

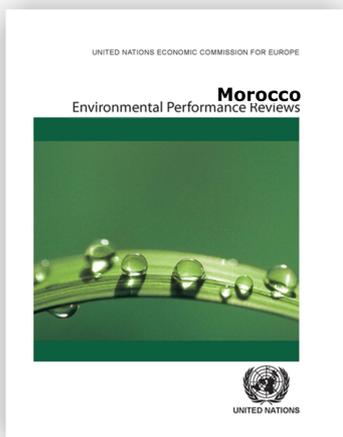


Regarding efforts to establish a green economy, a comprehensive overview, prepared jointly by the UNECE and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) secretariats, showed that many organizations were carrying out a wide range of activities to green the economies in the region. Kazakhstan and its partners were working on the further development of the Green Bridge Partnership Programme, including its procedural and institutional set-up. An updated report on the progress and future prospects in greening the economy in the pan-European region, including the priorities for greening the economy in the region and possible modalities and options to achieve it, was requested for the twentieth session of CEP in 2014.

#### Environmental assessment

The third cycle of environmental performance reviews (EPRs) was advancing well, with Montenegro and Serbia expressing interest in undergoing a third review in 2014. CEP adopted the recommendations in a number of new EPRs (third EPR of the Republic of Moldova and second EPR of Croatia), including for the EPR of Morocco — the first EPR

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undertaken by UNECE outside the region. A second EPR of a non-UNECE State was under consideration, with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) inviting UNECE to undertake an EPR of Tunisia.

The establishment of a regular process of environmental assessment and reporting and the development of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) were progressing slowly. To support this process, it was proposed to establish a coordination mechanism for the development of SEIS in the form of a group of "Friends of SEIS". MEAs, such as the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), declared their intention to apply SEIS in their reporting, and CEP invited other MEAs to consider whether their reporting mechanisms were aligned with SEIS principles and to revise them as necessary. CEP further requested that the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators support the activities of the "Friends of SEIS" group in pursuing the implementation of their mandates.



### **Eighth EfE Ministerial Conference to be held in 2016**

Concluding the mid-term review, CEP agreed to organize the Eighth EfE Ministerial Conference in 2016.

Regarding the other work of its session, CEP welcomed the progress achieved in a number of cross-cutting activities, including the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (Strategy for ESD) and the Pan-European Programme on Transport, Health and Environment. The proposal to organize a high-level meeting of education and environment ministries in the framework of the next EfE Conference, in order to assess 10 years of implementation of the Strategy on ESD and the way forward, was supported widely. Regarding the European Environment and Health process, the UNECE secretariat would organize the appointment of the four ministers from the environment sector to the third term of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) (2015–2016). A panel discussion on the process would also be organized at the next CEP session with the participation of the Chairs of the EHMB and the Environment and Health Task Force.

CEP further adopted the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for the biennium 2014–2015, and approved, among others, the strategic framework for 2016–2017, the list of publications for 2014–2015 and recommendations on assessment of criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events, as well as the list of countries eligible for financial support.

The importance of including a gender perspective in the preparation for activities/events and policy discussions within the UNECE environmental governance framework, in line with the UNECE gender action plan, was recognized and the gender mainstreaming efforts already being made by the UNECE Environment subprogramme were welcomed. The twentieth session of CEP will be organized in Geneva from 28 to 31 October 2014. □



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