

Executive Secretary



The Executive Secretary at BakuTel with President Ilham Aliyev

Visit of the Executive Secretary to Azerbaijan

The Executive Secretary was in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 1-2 December, to conclude negotiations on the establishment of a Specialist Centre for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) infrastructure in Baku. This Specialist Centre, which will be affiliated to the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence in Geneva, will aim at identifying international PPP best practice models in ICT and act as an international repository for PPP projects in the ICT sector.

This cooperation will be formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNECE and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology of Azerbaijan, to be signed on the occasion of the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2014.

In Baku, the Executive Secretary visited BakuTel 2013, the largest International Telecommunications and Information Technologies Exhibition in the Caucasus, with President Ilham Aliyev. He held bilateral meetings with the President and with Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Ali Abbasov Minister of Communications and Information Technology of the Republic of Azerbaijan. □



SPECA

Afghanistan elected chair of SPECA for 2014

The United Nations Special Programme for Central Asia (SPECA) concluded its annual "SPECA Week" from 19 to 22 November, in Almaty, with the eighth session of its Governing Council. Events during the SPECA Week focused on the environment, climate change and water resources management as well as regional aspects of Rio+20 and the post 2015 development agenda.

In his opening statement UNECE Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj pointed out that "project implementation in the SPECA framework has increased several-fold but this increase in activities could not keep pace with the growth of demand."

The Governing Council adopted a decision on further strengthening SPECA, which will promote the ownership of the Programme by its participating countries, enhance its governance and its capacity for project implementation. The Executive Secretary, reporting on the outcomes of his high-level consultations in the capitals of the majority of countries participating in SPECA emphasized that "the reactions of top-level decision-makers of these countries [to the proposal to strengthen SPECA] were positive and supportive, reconfirming the importance of the Programme."

The Governing Council adopted Terms of Reference for SPECA, which complemented those of the six SPECA Project Working Groups. These Terms of Reference establish clear, unified objectives, procedures and decision-making rules for the Programme as a whole.

The Governing Council also approved a report on the work carried out by the six SPECA Project Working Groups in 2013. It expressed satisfaction with the broad scope of activities and the stability of extra-budgetary funding received by SPECA projects. The Governing Council adopted the SPECA Work Plan for 2014-2015. The Work Plan contains nearly 50 projects, with half of the USD 10 million in extra-budgetary funding that is required for project implementation already guaranteed.

The Governing Council elected Afghanistan as the Chairing Country of SPECA for 2014. In a gesture of solidarity, Turkmenistan offered comprehensive support to the Afghan Chairmanship. Afghanistan, as the Chairing Country of SPECA, will oversee work in the SPECA framework in 2014 in key areas of regional economic and environmental cooperation. The Representative of Afghanistan expressed his gratitude to the countries participating in SPECA for their support to and solidarity with his country in the crucial transition year of 2014.

Countries participating in SPECA are: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Programme is supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. □



Third UNECE workshop on Green-House Gas emissions mitigation in transport in Addis Ababa

After Santiago and Bangkok, UNECE organized its third workshop on greenhouse gas emissions mitigation in transport in Addis Ababa from 31 October-2 November, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The workshop focused on the ForFITS model developed by UNECE under a UNDA project to assess CO₂ emissions emitted in the transport sector and evaluate potential mitigation policies.

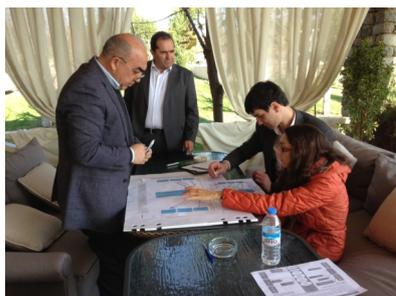
Participants from several countries such as Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Senegal presented actions that are being implemented at national level to reduce CO₂ emissions from the transport sector. For the time being, the African continent represents a small share of global emissions. However, as many countries experience sustained economic growth and witness the emergence of a middle class, the number of private vehicles is expected to grow exponentially in several countries in the coming years. ECA and UNECE therefore highlighted the need to integrate CO₂ emissions targets in policy options at an early stage.

One session was dedicated to running the model with data from Ethiopia. Some 15 technical experts from the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of the Environment, teachers and researchers from several Ethiopian Universities acquired hands-on experience in using ForFITS to project transport activity, energy use and CO₂ emissions. Policy options such as new fuel taxation schemes and structural changes in passenger transport systems were also simulated to evaluate their impact on the baseline scenario.

Representatives from several countries expressed interest in ForFITS and their wish to organise training sessions in their countries to learn more about the model. □

For more information, please visit:

http://www.unece.org/trans/theme_forfits.html.



UNECE launches pilot intersectoral study to improve water management in the Alazani/Ganikh River Basin

UNECE organized a workshop in Kachreti, Georgia, from 25 to 27 November 2013 to develop the understanding of the intersectoral and transboundary aspects of managing the resources of the Alazani/Ganikh River Basin shared by Azerbaijan and Georgia. The workshop gathered representatives of the relevant ministries and other stakeholders from both countries with a view to applying an intersectoral approach to water management, taking into account the interrelations between water, land use — agriculture in particular — the energy sector and ecosystems in the basin.

Meeting rising water demands without compromising sustainability is an emerging challenge in the context of population growth and under the pressure of climate change impacts. It is therefore crucial to better understand the complex interlinkages between water, food, energy and ecosystems in river basins — the so-called water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus — in order to strengthen synergies and policy coherence in the management of these different resources.

So far little has been done to develop systematic approaches for transboundary basins to jointly identify the important intersectoral impacts and benefits as a basis for defining actions towards more sustainable resource management. UNECE, in cooperation with partners, is responding by developing a highly participatory nexus methodology to this end.

At the Alazani/Ganikh Basin workshop the participants noted that climate change was likely to increase flooding events as well as scarcity of water in the basin; so, assessing how best to cooperate between countries and sectors in managing water resources was crucial. In doing so, participants recognized the decisive importance to avoid deforestation. They also concluded that improving water infrastructure, including for irrigation and treatment, would be a helpful step in reducing pressure on natural resources and improve local economy.

Taking the results of the workshop into account, the nexus assessment for the basin will be further developed during spring 2014 and will be available in September 2014 for consultation. A set of basins in the pan-European region, Africa and Asia will be assessed using the same methodology by mid-2015.

The Kachreti workshop was co-organized by UNECE, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded project "Reducing Transboundary Degradation in the Kura Aras River Basin" and the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia. □

For more information, please visit:

http://www.unece.org/env/water/alazani_ganyh_pilot_project_2013.html.

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