

Executive Secretary



From left to right: Nikolay Pomoshchnikov, Head of the ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia, Nurlan Kapparov, Minister of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Virginia Cram-Martos, Director of the Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division of the UNECE, Sven Alkalaj, UNECE Executive Secretary

UNECE participates in VI Astana Economic Forum

The Executive Secretary led the UNECE delegation that actively participated in a series of events at the VI Astana Economic Forum from 22-24 May.

UNECE and the International Trade Centre co-organized a panel discussion on "Addressing non-tariff barriers to trade: From business concern to policy action", which discussed the findings of the ITC-UNECE study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to trade in Kazakhstan. The Executive Secretary delivered the opening statement at this event, as well as at sessions on "Developing transport infrastructure and Trans-Caspian routes for access to world markets", "Challenges and opportunities for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific" and "Industrial revolution – the transition to green economy". He was also one of the speakers at the "Dialogue of Leaders: Ensuring Economic Growth", which concluded the Forum.

Bilateral meetings

During the Forum, the Executive Secretary held a series of bilateral meetings with Kazakh officials, including President Nursultan Nazarbayev, and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Transport and Communication, Environmental Protection, and Economy and Budget Planning, to discuss means to reinforce the cooperation between UNECE and Kazakhstan. In his various remarks at the Forum, the Executive Secretary stressed the progress made by Kazakhstan in recent years. He said that UNECE programmes have helped the country reduce its dependence on energy and commodity exports through economic diversification and a "green" development model.

He noted the huge development potential of Central Asia, located strategically between economic powerhouses such as China, the Russian Federation and the European Union, which can be tapped through regional cooperation. He said that UNECE's support to the development and operation of Euro-Asian transport corridors or electronic corridors for trade and customs data is helping the whole region become a key transport hub.

Finally, he recalled that UNECE's environmental conventions provide a solid legal basis for strengthening cooperation on environmental issues and the management of shared water resources, which constitute some of the region's most serious long-term challenges.

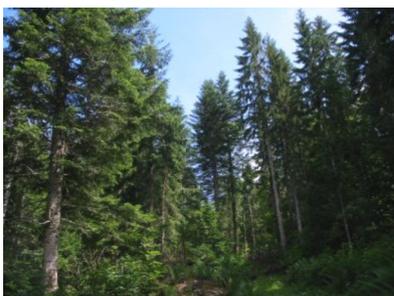
MoU with the Eurasian Economic Community

At the Forum, Sven Alkalaj signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNECE, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC).

This new MoU builds on the strong cooperation developed by the three organizations between 2007 and 2012 under a previous tripartite MoU. □

Watch the [photo gallery](#) and read the [statements](#).

Forests



Tapping into the Russian Federation's bioenergy potential

Russia has more than a fifth of the world's forests, which makes it the largest forest country in the world. However, the considerable potential of Russian forests is underutilized and Russia's share of the global trade in forest products is less than four percent.

Referring to ongoing consultations on a revised forest policy for the Russian Federation, Mr Vladimir Lebedev, Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environment and Head of the Federal Forestry Agency of the Russian Federation, stated that "Russian forest management practices need to be modernized. We need to attract foreign technologies, invest in domestic research and development, and promote the ecologically sustainable and responsible use of forests."

He was speaking at the 3rd International Scientific Conference on "Innovations and Technologies in Forestry", which included a UNECE/FAO workshop on "Forest products and technologies for the future", and was attended by over 270 participants from 27 countries. The workshop was held in St. Petersburg at the Forestry Research Institute on 22 and 23 May 2013, thanks to the generous support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal

Participants discussed key policies and technologies that could support the modernization of the forest sector in order to maximize its potential as an important source of timber and respond to the growing demand for sustainable forest bioenergy. Delegates from Belarus and Central Asia highlighted the different contexts and potentials for growth in the bioenergy sector in their countries. They called for more public and private investment along the wood energy value chain, with an emphasis on feedstock mobilization. Investments in bioenergy supply need to be complemented by awareness-raising in order to inform stakeholders of the opportunities linked with bioenergy and develop market opportunities.

This workshop highlighted how the developing bio-based economy in the CIS region can help to fulfill the objectives of the UNECE/FAO Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/timber/meetings/20130617/ECE_TIM_S_2013_3_Action_Plan1.pdf. □

For further information, please contact David Ellul at: david.ellul@unece.org.

EPR

Environmental Performance Review of Romania shows waste management and wastewater treatment remain top priorities

Access to clean water and improved sanitation and waste management remain some of the most pressing environmental challenges facing Romania according to the second Environmental Performance Review of Romania published today. The Review, performed by UNECE, takes stock of progress made by the country in the management of its environment since the country was first reviewed in 2001.

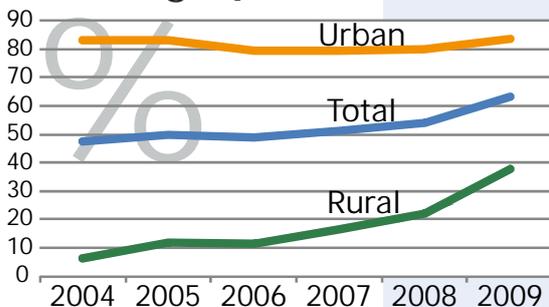
Water management is one of the key issues for Romania. A positive trend has been a dramatic decrease in the demand for water, from 20 billion cubic metres (m³) in 1990 to 7.7 billion m³ in 2011. This is owing, among others, to the installation of water meters, increased water prices and the use of modern technology in industry, but also as a decline in water needs for agriculture. On the other hand, demand is expected to double by 2020 to reach 15 billion m³, according to a survey by the National Institute of Hydrology and Water Management, pointing at rising demand in the industrial sector and for livestock, as well as for irrigation.

Access to wastewater collection is still a key priority, with only some 57 per cent of the population connected to wastewater collection systems. In rural areas, which are home to approximately 45 per cent of the population, this proportion plunges to just 4 per cent, which means that rural wastewater management remains the major challenge for the coming years.

As a riparian country of the Danube River, its delta and the Black Sea, the healthy status of these major water resources is also a future concern for Romania. Currently, these waters receive pollutants from diffuse agricultural sources, especially from chemical fertilizer use, along with inadequate operation of wastewater treatment plants. The future economic development in the Danube River Basin region will only increase pollution from agriculture, industry and settlements and will produce a risk of failure to attain environmental objectives unless effective measures are taken.



Municipal waste collection coverage, per cent



Source: National Environmental Protection Agency, 2011.

In particular, pressures from land use on natural habitats have reached unprecedented levels in some sectors of the Romanian coastal zone of the Black Sea. A special problem is the coastal erosion that affects some 57 per cent of the length of the coastline, and which is mainly due to the reduction in the amount of silt carried by the Danube River as a consequence of the implementation of hydraulic works over the entire basin.

With regard to industrial waste, positive trends have been witnessed: shutting down some Romanian mines and modernizing others that have remained in operation has led to significant changes in industrial waste generation. The generation of non-hazardous waste from mining has decreased by half and hazardous waste from mining has decreased by 95 per cent.

Other good news is the volume of recycled secondary raw materials, which is growing fast, reflecting large investments in waste recycling infrastructure.

Also, coverage of rural areas by waste collection systems has increased considerably from less than 10 per cent in 2004 to 38 per cent in 2009. However, there is a need for further improvements in this area. Waste separation and recycling infrastructure are not yet sufficiently developed: less than 3 per cent of collected municipal solid waste throughout the country is recycled.

The Review concludes with a set of 39 recommendations to the Government to improve management of its environment, to better integrate the goals of sustainable development into sectoral policies, to promote greater accountability to the public and to strengthen cooperation with the international community. The recommendations were approved by the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. □

The Review is available online at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=32615>.
For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/env/epr>.

Population

Identifying the way forward in implementing the Vienna Declaration

The Bureau of the Working Group on Ageing, during its fifth meeting held on 21-22 May 2013 in Belgrade, discussed elements of its next programme of work for 2014-2017, geared to the third implementation cycle of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in the region. In the new work programme flagship activities such as the preparation of Policy Briefs with good practice examples and Road Maps on Mainstreaming Ageing will be retained and strengthened. During the meeting, Bureau members engaged in a substantive discussion about Abuse of Older Persons, thus contributing to a Policy Brief on the same topic to be launched later this year.

Results of a self-evaluation exercise on Road Maps showed the great appreciation that member States have for this instrument. With the experience of two previously developed Road Maps this element is now ready to be taken to another level, further streamlining the implementation process. In addition, the enhancement of capacities in monitoring MIPAA/RIS is likely to be among the priorities of the next programme of work, using the recently developed Active Ageing Index. The index, currently available for the 27 EU Member States, is ready to be piloted in a number of additional countries. Final decisions about the programme of work will be taken by the Working Group on Ageing during its next meeting in November 2013, where a new Bureau will also be elected. □

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

Water

Self-assessment tool to help guide state policies in equitable access to water and sanitation

Today nearly 110 million people in the pan-European region still lack access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, which makes them vulnerable to water-related diseases.

On 15-16 May, in Paris, experts from the UNECE region participated in the second meeting of the Expert Group working on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health. The Protocol, adopted in 2005, is the first international agreement in the pan-European region which provides a framework for the practical implementation of the human right to water and sanitation.

The first phase of the work on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol resulted in the launch of the document "No one left behind: good practices to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation" in March 2012 at the 6th World Water Forum. The second phase allowed for the development of a self-evaluation tool that will enable the countries of the Pan-European region to assess and monitor their progress in achieving equitable access to water and sanitation. The tool, which takes the form of a scorecard, focuses on specific questions and selected indicators in order to assess three key dimensions of equitable access to water and sanitation: geographical disparities, the specific barriers faced by vulnerable and marginalized groups and affordability problems, as well as the governance framework to deliver equitable access.

In France, the testing of the scorecard was conducted in the Greater Paris Urban area, led by the city of Paris in cooperation with its operator, Eau de Paris, and the two main unions for water and sanitation. The results have revealed that the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups have been mainly addressed. For example, some 400 public toilets, 20 shower baths and nearly 1,200 water points are available in Paris for the homeless. In addition, specific funds have been created to help low-income people pay their water bills and a non-disconnection from the network policy has been adopted. However, the outcomes of the testing exercise pointed out that some data is not available about some specific marginalized groups and that some progress can still be made. Similar pilot testing was carried out in Portugal and in Ukraine at the national level. □

For more information on the Protocol please visit the website: http://www.unece.org/env/water/2nd_expert_group_eqaccessscorecard.html.

Not an official record - For information only

