

SPECA

Executive Secretary visits Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan



Sven Alkalaj with Kyrgyzstan Prime Minister Jantoro Satybaldyev

The Executive Secretary visited the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan from 18 to 23 June. During his visit to Kyrgyzstan, he held a series of bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Jantoro Satybaldyev, as well as with the Ministers of the Economy, Foreign Affairs, Transport and Communication, the Director of the State Agency for Environmental Protection, the Director of the State Registry and the First Deputy Director of the National Statistics Committee.

The Executive Secretary and the Kyrgyz Prime Minister discussed prospects of strengthening cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and the United Nations and concrete areas for further assistance.



Sven Alkalaj meeting with President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon

In Tajikistan, the Executive Secretary was received by President Emomali Rahmon, and held bilateral meetings with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Melioration and Water Resources, Economic Development and Trade, the Deputy Minister of Energy and the Chairman of the Committee on Environment. The Executive Secretary and the President discussed a wide range of issues including the broadening of collaboration between Tajikistan and the United Nations, and further strengthening the UN Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). The two sides also discussed the preparations for the international conference on water cooperation to be held in Tajikistan in August.

On 20 June in Dushanbe, the Executive Secretary delivered a keynote statement at the session of the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development, composed of the Ministers of Environment Protection of the five Central Asian countries. Consequently, the participants agreed to work with UNECE on the institutional and legal strengthening of the Commission.

Several specific issues were discussed and resolved during the visit. For example, both countries volunteered to become pilots during the implementation of a United Nations Development Account project on forests. In both countries, the Executive Secretary met the Resident Coordinators and the UN country teams to discuss cooperation with UNECE. Exchanges also touched upon the outcomes of national consultations on the post 2015 development agenda.

En route from Bishkek to Dushanbe, the Executive Secretary visited the Joint UNECE-ESCAP SPECA Regional Office in Almaty. In Tajikistan, he visited the Nurek Hydropower Station, which provided an opportunity to discuss water resources management and dam safety. □

UNECE

UNECE signs Memorandum of Understanding with the Eurasian Economic Commission



Viktor Khristenko, Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) and Sven Alkalaj, UNECE Executive Secretary, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two organizations in Geneva on 26 June. EEC is the supranational governing body of the Customs Union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia.

The Memorandum aims at strengthening cooperation between the Parties on areas such as customs administration, technical regulations, trade, macroeconomic policy, transport and logistics.

In the area of transport, the two organizations plan to undertake joint studies, workshops and conferences in the framework of the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages (EATL) and to promote border crossing facilitation and implementation monitoring of the Harmonization Convention. Another key area for cooperation would be to raise awareness on road safety management in the framework of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.

In the area of trade, there is already long standing cooperation supported by the UNECE's Regional Adviser on Trade Facilitation, focusing on building Single Windows which will be further strengthened under the Memorandum, e.g. through the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guideline.

Viktor Khristenko said: "Cooperation with UNECE is very important for EEC since UNECE produces and collects best national and international practices in a number of areas. Its knowledge and experience are highly estimated, as we intend to base our legislation on the best international practices. This is the reason why we need this dialogue with UNECE".

He also mentioned that the Eurasian Economic Commission has supranational competencies in many areas such as tariff and non-tariff regulation, technical regulation, etc. The presidents of the three member States have set very ambitious goals to EEC. "By 2015 we want the Eurasian Union to start functioning" - he said.

Sven Alkalaj reconfirmed UNECE's strong wish in working together with the Eurasian Economic Commission. Earlier bilateral cooperation between UNECE's divisions and EEC has already proved to be beneficial for the two organizations and the MoU is an excellent basis for further developing the cooperation.

Mr Alkalaj said that the details of concrete joint activities will be negotiated between the Eurasian Economic Commission and UNECE's substantive divisions and confirmed in an exchange of letters. □

Statistics

Conference of European Statisticians endorses recommendations to assist countries in measuring sustainable development

On 12 June, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) held under the auspices of UNECE in Geneva, endorsed a set of recommendations for a framework to measure sustainable development and associated sets of indicators.

This framework is a key step towards harmonising the various approaches and indicators already used by countries and international organisations to measure sustainable development. It is expected to contribute to the UN processes for setting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and defining a post-2015 development agenda.

The Report was developed by a Task Force set up jointly by UNECE, the Statistical Office of the European Commission (Eurostat) and the OECD. It takes into account various initiatives undertaken by the United Nations, Eurostat and the OECD, as well as by individual countries, and provides analyses of current measurement frameworks.

Conceptual background

The proposed framework builds on the definition of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report (1987), prepared by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development: "Sustainable development is a development which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

In keeping with the Brundtland Report, it also argues that sustainable development is essentially about distributional justice, in both time and space. This means that the distribution of well-being between the present and future generations, as well as differences in well-being between countries are key parameters.

Analytical framework

Conceptually, the classification builds on three dimensions of human well-being:

- human well-being of the present generation in one particular country ('here and now')
- well-being of future generations ('later')
- well-being of people living in other countries ('elsewhere')

Twenty themes covering the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development that should be measured are also identified: subjective well-being, consumption and income, nutrition, health, housing, education, leisure, physical safety, trust, institutions, energy resources, non-energy resources, land and ecosystems, water, air quality, climate, labour, physical capital, knowledge capital, and financial capital. Population has been added as a context indicator.

Indicators

The framework proposes three sets of indicators:

- a large set of 60 indicators to provide information about the dimensions of well-being in the 'here and now', 'later' and 'elsewhere'. Several of the indicators relate to distributional issues.
- a large set of 90 indicators selected on a thematic basis which adds indicators highlighting areas where policy action may be taken to reverse negative (or sustain positive) trends. For instance, under the theme 'Education', the policy-relevant indicator includes 'the percentage of early school leavers'
- a small set of 24 indicators, to ease communication with policymakers and the general public and ensure a common basis for international comparison. The data needed to produce the indicators in this set are already available today.

The selection of themes and indicators is based on an analysis of the sustainable development themes and indicators currently used in several national and international datasets.



The availability of data for the selected indicators for 46 countries (EU and OECD member countries and Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China, and South Africa) in international databases was also analysed. Most suggested indicators are already produced by national statistical offices and collected by international and supranational organizations such as the United Nations, the OECD and Eurostat.

The framework does not propose a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather presents a flexible tool that can respond to a variety of needs. Once the SDGs have been established, the suggested indicators could be aligned with the Goals. In addition, although the proposed sustainability themes are universal, there is room for selecting country-specific indicators.

Way forward

The Report identifies a number of measurement issues that will need to be addressed in the future. In particular, more work needs to be done on measuring the international aspects of sustainable development (i.e. the impact of countries on each other) and constructing better indicators in the areas of human, social, financial and natural capital (including better measures of their distribution). Data on time use can be used to measure those non-market activities which are relevant to sustainable development.

In the post Rio+20 policy context, the framework is expected to inform the selection of SDGs and to lead to greater harmonisation of national and international sets of sustainable development indicators. The work of the Task Force also links to on-going policy initiatives on the development agenda post-2015. □

The framework is available at:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2013/SD_framework_and_indicators_final.pdf.

Town Hall Meeting



Executive Secretary holds town hall meeting

On 25 June 2013, Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj held his fourth town hall meeting to brief staff on four main issues:

1. Follow-up on the outcome of the UNECE review

- The merger of the Economic Cooperation and Integration Division and the Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division will take place on 1 September 2013. The Director will propose the new name for the Division and any change to the names of the sections.
- The D1 post resulting from this merger will be affected to the function of Chef de Cabinet in the Office of the Executive Secretary.
- The redeployment of one P4 from the Trade and Sustainable Land Management Division to the Transport Division will come into effect on 1 January 2014. The date for the redeployment of one P2 will be agreed upon by the Directors concerned at a later stage
- No changes are deemed necessary in the current structure and resources of the gender and population activities.

2. Average recruitment time has been reduced over the past 12 months thanks to the commitment of all the parties involved in recruitment processes. Continued efforts will be needed to reduce it even further.

3. ACABQ hearings

On 3 June, the Executive Secretary presented UNECE's proposed programme budget for 2014-2015, which includes a 5 per cent cut to the programme support component requested by the Secretary-General and the abolishment of 3 professional posts and 4 general staff posts, in response to the request from member States contained in General Assembly resolution 67/248. Members of ACABQ showed appreciation for UNECE's work. ACABQ, an expert body, will now make recommendations to the Fifth Committee, an intergovernmental body which deals with finance and budgetary issues in the General Assembly. The General Assembly will decide on the budget proposal at its plenary meeting at the end of December 2013.

4. Flexible working arrangements

The Executive Secretary confirmed willingness to implement flexible working arrangements at UNECE and invited staff representatives and directors to share experience in this field. Positive examples from UNOG, UNCTAD and UNECE's Environment Division were presented. Trust between staff and managers as well as accountability are two key conditions for success. □



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