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The Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe"
Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007

"Building Bridges to the Future"

Preparatory Process / Conference Proceedings

Introduction

The bridges of Belgrade

The "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference, hosted by Serbia in Belgrade in October 2007 on the theme "Building Bridges to the Future", was the largest high-level international political meeting held in the country for many years.

The Belgrade Ministerial Conference was the sixth in the "Environment for Europe" process and it was particularly rich in substance, with contributions from a great number of partners. The preparation for the Conference started two years before the Ministerial Conference which gave time for thorough preparatory work, including the negotiations of a declaration and the preparation of major documents. Further information about the ***preparatory process*** and negotiations of the draft Ministerial Declaration can be found here.

Ministers and high-level officials from 51 UNECE member States and the European Commission, international organisations, NGOs and other stakeholders discussed progress achieved in the implementation of environmental policies since the Kiev Conference in 2003, capacity building and partnerships as well as the future of the "Environment for Europe" process. As a whole the Conference attracted more than 1,000 official delegates - including 60 Ministers, Deputy Ministers and State Secretaries, with 16 coming from the education sector - and around 2,000 observers and other participants. The list of participants is available here.

More than 60 side-events were arranged by different stakeholders during the two-and-a-half days of the Conference.

Discussions at the Belgrade Conference

The agenda of the Belgrade Conference included subjects of both Pan- European and sub-regional importance. Discussions held at the Conference focused on such topics as assessment and implementation (i.e. state of the environment, monitoring and assessment, implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, environmental performance reviews), education for sustainable development, biodiversity, capacity-building in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, and South-East European countries, international competitiveness, partnerships to support the implementation of environmental policies and programmes, and the future of the process. The Conference proceedings contaning a short summary of each session, Conference documents as well as the key note speeches and interventions made are now available on-line. A full ***list of documents*** submitted to the Belgrade Conference may be found here.

The Ministers committed to further environmental improvements in countries of the UNECE region. They recognized the important value of the EfE process as a unique pan-European forum for tackling environmental challenges, and promoting broad horizontal environmental cooperation, as a pillar of sustainable development in the region.

The Ministers also underlined the importance of a more focused and needs-driven EfE process, reflecting the changing political and socio- economic landscape, and agreed to reform the EfE process with a view to ensure that it remains fully aligned with the needs of the region.

Major outcomes of the Belgrade Conference

The **Ministerial Declaration** (En, Fr, Ru) adopted by acclamation reflects main political commitments taken by the Ministers and Heads of delegation.

For the first time in the history of the "Environment for Europe" process, the results of the discussions of the Ministers were reflected in a **Chair's Summary** (En, Fr, Ru).

The ***Report*** of the Belgrade Conference (En, Fr, Ru) provides a factual overview of the Conference sessions.

Special features of the Belgrade Conference

Workshop for journalists

To raise the awareness of journalists from the UNECE region on the issues addressed by the Belgrade Conference and enhance their capacity to report on the key environmental issues and decisions adopted at the Conference, on 9 October - back to back with the Conference,- the UNECE organized a workshop for journalists. The agenda of the workshop covered such issues as the state of the environment in the UNECE region, environment and security, multilateral environmental agreements and EPRs, education for sustainable development, sustainable consumption and production, biodiversity, energy efficiency etc.

In total, more than 80 journalists from the UNECE region (including 24 from the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia as well as Sounth-Eastern Europe, supported by the UNECE) attended the workshop. Presentations for the workshop were prepared by the UNECE secretariat, in cooperation with the other United Nations agencies and international organizations.

Carbon neutrality

The Belgrade conference was a carbon neutral event. The calculations of the greenhouse gas emissions produced by the Conference were run by the Carbon Neutral Company (CNC). The funds were provided by the Presidency of the European Union (Portugal). The greenhouse gas emissions produced by the Conference were offset through methane capture and renewable energy technology projects which was certified by the CNC.

IISD reporting

In order to ensure a greater visibility of the Belgrade Conference reporting services of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) were contracted. The high-quality daily reports, including the final report, were produced with support of the UNECE secretariat and are available online at http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/efeb/.

EfE newsletters

In the framework of the Communication Plan for the Belgrade Ministerial Conference (ECE/CEP/AC.11/2006/13) prepared according to the request of the Committee on Environmental Policy, the newsletter dedicated to the EfE process and the preparation for the Conference was issued. The newsletter (#1, #2, #3, #4) provided information on the history of the EfE process, main activities conducted in the framework of the preparatory process, schedule of the forthcoming meetings and major deadlines, as well as practical information for delegates.