

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

as adopted by the Committee on Environmental Policy on 22 April 2008

1. In the light of the decision of the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, October 2007), the Committee on Environmental Policy renews the mandate of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. The Working Group should help strengthening environmental information and observation capacity, including monitoring networks, in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Russian Federation as well as in interested countries of South-Eastern Europe to make monitoring and assessment an effective instrument in environmental policymaking, and to improve international environmental reporting.

2. The Working Group will promote the coordination of multilateral and bilateral efforts in the above areas, and in particular towards preparations for the Ministerial Conferences “Environment for Europe”. It should contribute:
 - (a) To the development of assessment reports on the state of the environment by the European Environment Agency (EEA);
 - (b) To an appraisal of monitoring and assessment requirements within the framework of the “Environment for Europe” process as well as national and international monitoring and assessment requirements, including obligations under the relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

3. The Working Group should promote implementation of recommendations and guidelines on environmental monitoring and assessment adopted by Ministerial Conferences “Environment for Europe”. It should use relevant results of the work of and cooperate with other international forums and networks, such as EEA, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the World Health Organization (WHO) European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH), relevant MEAs, especially those of UNECE, the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and give priority to the following specific areas:
 - (a) Modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks and information systems;
 - (b) Improvement of data collection, transfer and use;
 - (c) Enhancement of international comparability of environmental information;
 - (d) Promotion of the use of indicator-based mechanisms for periodic environmental assessments and evaluation of the effectiveness of environmental policies and decision-making;
 - (e) Improvement of environmental assessments, including ecosystem-based assessments, outlooks and reporting;
 - (f) The strengthening of environmental monitoring and reporting by enterprises.

4. Donors will be invited to provide support for the Working Group's activities.
5. The Working Group will be open to all UNECE member States and include EEA. In its operation it will be guided by the relevant procedures established by the UNECE Executive Committee.
6. Members of the Working Group are officials responsible in the UNECE countries for environmental monitoring and assessment. The Working Group will involve in its activities experts from statistical agencies, compliance control authorities and sanitary services, as well as representatives of major groups, especially business and industry, the scientific community and environmental citizens' organizations.
7. The UNECE secretariat will provide secretariat assistance and conference facilities to the Working Group at the United Nations Office at Geneva, in accordance with UNECE rules and practices.
8. The Committee on Environmental Policy will review the present terms of reference in two years after the adoption by the Committee of the Working Group's work programme..
