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Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy

Report by the Chair

Report by the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy

I. Achievements over the past twelve months

Advancing environmental governance in the region

1. In the reporting period, the Environment subprogramme under the general governance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) and the other governing and subsidiary bodies under the Environment subprogramme, continued to work on improving environmental governance and transboundary cooperation, and contributing to sustainable development in the region.

Greener, Cleaner, Smarter!

2. The 8th Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference¹ took place in Batumi, Georgia, from 8 to 10 June 2016. The Conference addressed two themes: “Greening the economy in the pan-European region”; and ‘Improving air quality for a better environment and human health’. In addition, a ministerial segment on education for sustainable development (ESD) was organized during the Conference.

3. The key outcomes of the Conference include: the Batumi Ministerial Declaration; the Pan-European Strategic Framework on Greening the Economy and its Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E); the Batumi Action on Cleaner Air (BACA); the Batumi Ministerial Statement on ESD and the Framework for the future implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD.

4. Six months after UNECE ministers from 44 countries renewed their commitments on a number of environmental issues in the region, delegates at the 22nd session of CEP, held in Geneva from 25 to 27 January 2017, discussed progress on the implementation of those commitments.

5. CEP expressed its gratitude to Georgia for its warm hospitality and congratulated its members and observers on the successful and memorable Batumi Conference. Highlighting good practices in the implementation of the two Batumi Initiatives —BACA and BIG-E— many countries shared their experiences, including at a dedicated side event organized jointly by Switzerland, UNECE, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Green Growth Knowledge Platform. BACA and BIG-E also help countries to achieve the relevant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets.

6. Germany, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland and Uzbekistan shared valuable experience in implementing their BIG-E commitments. Belarus, Georgia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Sweden and the Pistoletto Foundation shared their good practices in implementing their BIG-E commitments during the side event. Today, 115 voluntary commitments are made to BIG-E by 25 countries and 12 organizations, and 88 voluntary commitments are made to BACA by 29 countries and 3 organizations. The initiatives remain open for new and additional commitments and stakeholders to join by submitting actions to improve air quality and to green the economy.

¹ Information and materials for the Conference are available on the UNECE website (www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environment-for-europe/efe-conferences/batumiconference/welcome).

7. During the CEP session delegates also discussed the implementation of the SDGs. Belarus, Czechia and Kazakhstan shared their experience and practical ways for delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the SDGs. Following the positive response from delegates, the Committee decided to continue such exchange of experience and good practice, as well as to discuss its role in advancing the 2030 Agenda at future meetings.

8. To monitor progress towards the SDGs comprehensive data is needed. Ministers in Batumi therefore established a target of 2021 for making the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) fully functional across the pan-European region. To enable that target to be reached, CEP adopted the mandate with terms of reference for the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, responsible, among others, for assisting in the establishment of national systems in line with SEIS and enhancing capacity-building with regard to specific challenges in environmental monitoring and assessment in the region.²

9. The third environmental performance reviews (EPRs) of Belarus and Georgia were published and launched in 2016 in Minsk and Batumi, respectively. At its 22nd session, CEP adopted the recommendations of the third EPRs of Bulgaria and Tajikistan. It took note of ongoing reviews in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, preparations by Kazakhstan for its third EPR, a request from Romania for a third EPR and an expression of interest by Ukraine to undergo a review. CEP was also informed of Mongolia's request to undergo an EPR carried out by UNECE — the second time UNECE has received an invitation from a country outside the region to do so — which will be organized in close cooperation with ESCAP. To support the achievement of SDGs and to monitor progress in doing so, future EPRs will integrate relevant SDGs in the assessment process. The role of EPRs as a peer learning mechanism was confirmed during an innovative peer learning discussion on countries' cooperation with the international community.

10. Chairs and other representatives of UNECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) discussed with the CEP members and observers about efforts made thus far under each MEA to define its role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, recognizing the importance of transparency, including easy access to information, and underlining that cooperation at the national and international levels between relevant sectors, including effective engagement of stakeholders, is key to the coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

11. Delegates welcomed developments in a number of cross-sectoral activities, such as ESD; transport, health and environment; environment and health; and green building and forestry. The CEP invited countries and organizations to promote the relevant work of UNECE at the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. Gender perspectives into environmental activities will continue to be mainstreamed.

12. The CEP expressed appreciation to countries and organizations supporting financially and in-kind activities carried out under the UNECE Environment subprogramme. At the same time, the Committee expressed concern about the difficulties arising from the fact that Umoja is not fully operational. Due to this fact, the secretariat has not been able to report on the extrabudgetary funds in the Environment subprogramme, thereby jeopardising fundraising efforts and future voluntary contributions.

² See the annex to the summary of the outcomes of the 22nd session of CEP and decisions taken (www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/cep/CEP-22/CEP-22decisions.edited.e.pdf)

UNECE multilateral environmental agreements – highlights

13. An overview of selected 2016 highlights related to the UNECE MEAs is presented below:

(a) The “Towards Cleaner Air - Scientific Assessment Report 2016” under the *Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention)* shows that coordinated action under the Air Convention during the last 30 years has significantly improved air quality in North America and Europe.³ As a result of capacity-building activities under the Air Convention, all Parties in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe reported their emissions for the first time in 2016;

(b) With the operationalization of the amendment opening the *Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)* to countries outside the UNECE region, as of 1 March 2016 all United Nations Member States can join the treaty.⁴ More than 60 countries outside the region participated in meetings under the Convention and several countries started the accession process. National and regional workshops for countries outside the UNECE region were organized in 2016, in cooperation with partners, including United Nations Regional Commissions. Work on financing adaptation to climate change, and more generally transboundary water cooperation, was initiated in cooperation with international financing institutions (the World Bank, the European Investment Bank and the African Development Bank). Within the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus, assessments continued in a number of transboundary basins, together with the exchange of experience at the global level, including at a global workshop held under the auspices of the Convention;

(c) The 4th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the *Protocol on Water and Health* (Geneva, 14–16 November 2016) reaffirmed the importance of the Protocol to operationalize the achievement of the SDGs, in particular SDG6 and SDG3, in the national and regional contexts by promoting integration of policies, a holistic and preventive approach to water, sanitation and health and a focus on sustainable water management and equity issues. The adopted new programme of work will increase attention to issues of safe sanitation and wastewater reuse, resilience to climate change, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools and health care facilities. Eight new publications were launched at the meeting.⁵

(d) Parties to the *Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention)*, in a joint UNECE-OECD seminar, examined how the work of UNECE and OECD on industrial and chemical accidents prevention, preparedness and response can contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the priority actions set out in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Parties were unable to reach a consensus on a proposed amendment of the Convention that would have strengthened its provisions on public participation and opened it to countries outside the UNECE region.⁶ They did agree to prepare guidance on fire-water retention to avoid another Sandoz accident.⁷ Also, a Checklist for contingency

³ www.unece.org/?id=42880

⁴ www.unece.org/env/water/mop7

⁵ www.unece.org/index.php?id=41707

⁶ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=41526#/>

⁷ www.unece.org/info/media/presscurrent-press-h/environment/2017/unece-prepares-guidance-on-fire-water-retention-to-avoid-another-sandoz-accident/doc

planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters was launched under the Industrial Accidents and Water Conventions;⁸

(e) Several activities were undertaken to further the effective implementation of the *Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention)* within and beyond the UNECE region, including collaboration with the five Central Asian countries for updating sub-regional implementation guidelines; a workshop with China and East Asian countries for the global application of the Convention funded by European Investment Bank;⁹ the development of good practice recommendations for the application of the Convention to nuclear energy-related activities and the work of the Implementation Committee on a record number of compliance cases, in particular in the field of nuclear energy;¹⁰

(f) The provision of extensive legislative assistance, training and guidance material (videos¹¹ and a brochure¹²); and implementation of pilot projects in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, has significantly advanced the legislative reforms in these countries and promoted the awareness of the benefits of strategic environmental assessment in accordance with the Espoo Convention's *Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA)* in view of the transition to green economy of these countries;¹³

(g) *Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)* helps to address a number of challenges, not least the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In 2016, the work on access to environmental information focused on widening access to such information in the Digital Age, through electronic information tools and allowing its re-use whenever possible free of charge.¹⁴ Promotion of public participation in decision-making was dedicated to energy-related planning¹⁵ and to a wide range of activities related to sustainable development.¹⁶ The work on promoting public participation and transparency in biosafety at the global level continued in cooperation with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The principal aim of this synergy was to build capacity of authorities to engage the public effectively in decision-making on GMOs matter.¹⁷ Furthering transparency in international decision-making on climate, sustainable development and on finance remained one of the priority areas in 2016;¹⁸

(h) The Aarhus Convention's *Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs)* offers solutions for strengthening human rights and transparency on hazardous substances and helps to achieve the SDGs by improving data collecting and reporting on emissions into the soil, the water and the air.¹⁹ In 2016, this objective was pursued, inter alia, through workshops aiming to help Parties and interested

⁸ www.unece.org/?id=44290

⁹ www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2016/EIA/WG/WG_6_ece.mp.eia.wg.2.2016.4.as_submitted_advance_copy.pdf

¹⁰ www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/environmental-assessment/meetings-and-events.html#/0/0/0/28089/19940

¹¹ www.unece.org/env/eia/sea_protocol

¹² www.unece.org/index.php?id=42853

¹³ www.unece.org/env/eia/about/eap_green

¹⁴ www.unece.org/index.php?id=41961

¹⁵ www.unece.org/index.php?id=41356

¹⁶ www.unece.org/index.php?id=42573

¹⁷ www.unece.org/index.php?id=42179

¹⁸ www.unece.org/index.php?id=41956

¹⁹ www.unece.org/index.php?id=42177

non-Parties create the appropriate institutional and legal frameworks, develop the list of substances and enterprises, and manage data and its dissemination.²⁰

(i) Demand-driven advisory services were provided to countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, including on sustainable use of transboundary natural resources; on promoting accession to the Protocol on Water and Health; on promoting SEA; and on strengthening implementation of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs.

II. Major activities planned for 2017 and beyond

14. The Environment subprogramme will continue its work to support countries to enhance their environmental governance and transboundary cooperation as well as strengthen implementation of the UNECE regional environmental commitments and advance sustainable development in the region. An overview of planned activities is contained in the work programme for 2016-2017 of the Environment subprogramme (ECE/CEP/2015/4). The 23rd session of CEP will be organized in Geneva from 14 to 17 November 2017.

15. The follow-up on the outcomes of the Batumi Conference will include promoting the two Batumi initiatives — BACA and BIG-E — to attract more actions and stakeholders to enhance the practical value of the initiatives and their contribution to relevant SDGs. A survey will be conducted jointly by UNECE and the United Nations Environment Programme to map undertakings in the area of green economy by organizations active in the region, with a view to advance the implementation of the Strategic Framework and BIG-E. The purpose of the survey is to facilitate policy coherence, inter-agency coordination and the identification of existing gaps in activities of regional players, and to detect opportunities for joint work. Also, a survey will be carried out to assess the organization and conduct of the Batumi Conference with a view to improve further the organization of the next Conference.

16. The work on environmental monitoring and assessment will continue to support countries in enhancing their environmental observation and information capacity, including advancing the development of SEIS across the UNECE region, preparing indicator-based state-of-the-environment assessment reports and working on developing the concept of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment serving as a network of networks in the area of environmental monitoring and assessment.

17. The third EPRs of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EPR of Mongolia (in cooperation with ESCAP), will be prepared and peer reviewed in November 2017. The preparatory mission for the third EPR of Kazakhstan will be carried out in September 2017. The two EPRs, the recommendations of which were adopted by CEP at its 22nd session, i.e. the third EPRs of Bulgaria and Tajikistan, will be published in 2017.

18. The UNECE Strategy for ESD will be focusing on the follow-up to the outcomes of the Batumi segment on ESD, including on organizing its work in accordance with the Batumi Framework for the future implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD.

19. Activities under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) will continue to follow-up on the outcomes of the Fourth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Paris, April 2014), including working on the implementation of a new Goal 5 on integration of transport, health and environment

²⁰ www.unece.org/index.php?id=43077

objectives into urban and spatial planning policies, introduced at that meeting. Further, the organization of THE PEP Relay Race workshops will continue.

20. The UNECE MEAs will continue their work focusing on improving the implementation and compliance by Parties. Meetings of the governing bodies under five MEAs will be organized in 2017, namely, the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on SEA (June 2017); the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs (September 2017); and the session of the Executive Body for the Air Convention (December 2017). Also, activities will continue to promote MEAs and advise countries beyond the region, as relevant.

21. A potential constraint for the efficient and smooth implementation of the CEP programme of work is the unpredictability of incoming funding, in particular for those activities that rely solely or to a great extent on voluntary contributions.

III. Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the Committee

22. At its 21st session in October 2015, CEP renewed the mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment for one year. CEP requested the secretariat to submit the renewed mandate to the UNECE Executive Committee for approval, and also to prepare for the Committee's 22nd session an updated proposal for the terms of reference for the Working Group (ECE/CEP/2015/2, paras. 91-92). At its meeting in Geneva on 10 May 2016, the Executive Committee approved the renewed mandate of the Working Group (ECE/EX/2016/L.11).

23. In that regard, CEP requested that the updated proposal for the terms of reference should take into account the outcomes of the Batumi Conference and further consultations with CEP members and observers on possible additional activities to be carried out by the Working Group, including to report on activities pursued to increase cooperation with the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators with a view to enhancing the coordination of activities and streamlining and reinforcing the work on environmental monitoring and assessment. Accordingly, the revised terms of reference have been prepared by the secretariat with the Working Group's support and in consultation with the UNECE Statistical Division for the consideration by CEP with a view to renewing the mandate with revised terms of reference of the Working Group and subsequently submitting them to the Executive Committee for approval.

24. At its 22nd session, CEP adopted the mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group for 2017-2021 and requested the secretariat to submit the renewed mandate with terms of reference to the UNECE Executive Committee for approval. In that regard, CEP invited UNECE member States and relevant organizations to participate actively in the activities and meetings of the Working Group. In addition, CEP asked the Working Group to take into account the financial and human resources available in developing its yearly detailed plans of activities, and to develop a more detailed outline of activities leading up to 2021.

25. The renewed mandate with terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, as contained in document ECE/EX/2017/L.2, are submitted to the UNECE Executive Committee for approval.

IV. Follow-up to the 2015 session of the Economic Commission for Europe

26. UNECE in its High-level statement on the post-2015 development agenda and expected sustainable development goals in the UNECE region (Annex IV, E/2015/37-E/ECE/1472), recognized that it is “ideally placed to continue to make a strong contribution to sustainable development”, *inter alia*, by “strengthening the sustainable management of ecosystems and natural resources, by managing and developing its five multilateral environmental conventions and twelve protocols, including on air pollution, transboundary water protection and use, industrial accidents, environmental impact assessment and public access to information”. The Commission also highlighted that the “ECE environmental performance reviews are a valuable and well recognized monitoring mechanism. This experience can contribute toward an effective framework for monitoring and accountability”.

27. In accordance with earlier Commission Decision A(65), the Environment subprogramme, CEP and its related subsidiary bodies, as well as other governing and subsidiary bodies under the subprogramme, aim to continue working within current mandates in an efficient way, producing concrete results that have a clear value-added for the region and beyond and that attract extrabudgetary funding. In line with its objective, the Environment subprogramme emphasizes a country needs-based approach and focuses on developing the capacity of Caucasian, Central Asian and Eastern and South-Eastern European countries in environmental policy and management, including for the effective implementation of environmental legislation.

28. Concerning resources for the Environment subprogramme, Commission Decision A (65) stipulated that, in allocating regular budget resources, full account should be taken of the increasing number of instruments administered by the subprogramme and the Environment Division so that they could continue, without a reduction in their resources and capacities, to do their work and service all the subsidiary bodies in an efficient way in the future, while fully recognizing the obligation of UNECE to service the MEAs. It should be noted, however, that in December 2015, the General Assembly decided to cut one general service post from the Environment subprogramme, which had impacted programme support and resulted in increased need for extrabudgetary resources for programme support in order to ensure the same programme delivery.

V. Intersectoral activities: new activities and/or progress in existing intersectoral activities

Breaking down silos – cross-sectoral cooperation

29. The Environment subprogramme is supporting the cross-sectoral work under the UNECE Strategy for ESD, the Pan-European Programme on Transport, Health and Environment (THE PEP), the Protocol on Water and Health and the EPR Programme. Under the Water Convention the work is on-going on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus. Under the Industrial Accidents Convention, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA new work has begun on land-use planning and industrial safety. Under the EfE process together with the United Nations Environment Programme, OECD and other partners, the Environment subprogramme is supporting the implementation of the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy. Furthermore, the subprogramme is also actively participating in the activities under the European Environment and Health Process and Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC). It also follows the developments in the area of green building and greening the forestry sector.

30. Highlights of the progress achieved under each of the above are as follows:

(a) The *UNECE Strategy for ESD* is the regional implementation pillar of the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014), as well as of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, acknowledged by the United Nations General Assembly as the follow-up to the Decade in its resolution 69/211. In 2016, the work under the Strategy focused on organizing the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries within the framework of the Batumi Ministerial Conference. At the meeting, ministers and heads of delegation considered progress in implementing the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2005 to 2015 and adopted the framework for the future implementation of the Strategy and the Batumi Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development, a joint commitment of member States to continue national implementation of the Strategy for achieving sustainable development in the region.²¹ At its 22nd session, CEP took note of the information provided and welcomed the progress of work under the UNECE Strategy for ESD, while noting with concern the difficult situation with regard to mobilizing voluntary contributions sufficient to enable the continuation of the regional intergovernmental platform and other activities to share experience and good practice with a view to advancing ESD across the region;

(b) Led jointly by the UNECE Environment and Sustainable Transport Divisions and the WHO's Regional Office for Europe, *THE PEP* is a unique policy framework to encourage national Governments and municipal authorities to consider health and environmental impacts in transport policy and planning. In 2016, the work under THE PEP focused on follow up to the outcomes of the Fourth High-level meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Paris, April 2014), including the implementation of a new fifth goal “to integrate transport, health and environmental objectives into urban and spatial planning policies”, which was also translated in a new partnership. The Partnership on cycling promotion is continuing its work towards the preparation of a pan-European Master Plan for Cycling Promotion as well as of related policies in the UNECE member States. THE PEP Academy — a new implementation mechanism, linking science, policy and practice and building on experience already gained — is starting to build up its content. THE PEP Relay Race workshops took place in the Russian Federation in Petrozavodsk (May 2016) and Vladivostok (October 2016) and in Austria in Vienna (July 2016). Also, on the margins of the meetings of the Steering Committee on Transport, Health and Environment thematic symposia are being organized, most recently in November 2016 focussing on contributing to economic development and stimulating job creation through investment in environment and health-friendly transport. At its 22nd session, CEP took note of information provided and welcomed the progress of work under THE PEP, and invited interested members to consider joining the Bureau of the Steering Committee of THE PEP;

(c) The work under the *Protocol on Water and Health* requires the health, environment and water communities to strengthen their cooperation to improve human health and environmental outcomes. Recent work under the Protocol has also promoted cooperation and integration of policies with other sector: for instance the work on WASH in schools reaches out to the education sector;

(d) Environmental mainstreaming in priority sectors is among key focus areas of the third cycle of *EPRs*. EPRs increasingly include chapters on the integration of environmental issues in energy, forestry, housing, transport, health, industry and other

²¹ These documents are made available on the Conference website, under agenda item 3 under main documents and information documents (www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environment-for-europe/efe-conferences/batumi-conference/documents-and-materials).

sectors. At its 22nd session, CEP expressed its appreciation of the close cooperation of the UNECE Sustainable Energy, Forests, Land and Housing, Statistics and Sustainable Transport Divisions with the EPR Programme, as these divisions provide their expertise at various stages of the EPR process. The celebration of 20 years of successful implementation of the EPR Programme at the Batumi Conference, which brought together 45 countries and 12 international organizations that have been involved in the EPRs throughout the last two decades, underlined the remarkable cooperative spirit and intersectoral nature of the Programme;

(e) The work on the assessment of the *water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus* in selected transboundary water basins brought together the Water Convention, the Sustainable Energy subprogramme and other partners. In that regard, the partners are carrying out inter-sectoral assessments of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in a number of transboundary basins, in line with the integrated approach of the 2030 Agenda. The first results were published in the report “Reconciling Resource Uses in Transboundary Basins: Assessment of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus” prepared under the Water Convention in 2013-2015, which showcases the way the innovative water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach can drive transboundary water cooperation and environmental protection by building synergies between the water, energy and food security sectors;

(f) Bodies under the Industrial Accidents Convention, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA worked together in 2016 to hold a joint workshop and draft guidance on *land-use planning, the siting of hazardous activities and related safety aspects*. Work in this area is expected to continue in 2017-2018;

(g) *Greening the economy* — understood as an approach to foster economic progress while ensuring environmental sustainability and social equity — is considered to be a promising avenue towards sustainable development. For this reason, the United Nations and its Member States are working towards embracing green economy approaches, including within the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Many activities carried out by UNECE support countries in their efforts to green their economies. Such activities are being implemented in all UNECE subprogrammes and include both sectoral and cross-cutting issues. Their implementation is done in cooperation among relevant UNECE subprogrammes and in partnership with other organizations that are involved in greening the economy in the region. An overview of UNECE activities in support of a green economy is presented on the UNECE website, including a Green Economy Tool Box. However, due to resource constraints, the information provided in the Tool Box was last updated in 2013. Given that the environment dimension is an integral part of a green economy, many activities carried out under the UNECE Environment subprogramme are helping countries to transition to a green economy. For instance, each of the UNECE MEAs has activities promoting, fostering and enabling putting into practice a green economy approach. Also, the cross-sectoral activities, such as THE PEP and ESD contribute to advancing the green economy approach. Review and assessment activities, such as EPRs and Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (including the establishment of SEIS across pan-European region) help countries to assess the progress in greening their economies. Greening the economy is also promoted under the EfE process (1991-present), to which the UNECE provides the secretariat. Specifically, at the Astana Conference in 2011 and the Batumi Conference in 2016, ministers considered greening the economy as one of the two main themes. The work on green economy under the EfE process is carried out jointly by the UNECE and United Nations Environment Programme in close cooperation with the United Nations organizations participating in the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and OECD and EEA. Main outcomes from Batumi related to green economy include:

- (i) Endorsement by ministers of the voluntary Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy — a tool supporting countries' efforts in transitioning to green economy and, at the same time, contributing to the implementation of the SDGs — that was developed and adopted by the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy, with support from UNECE and the United Nations Environment Programme and in consultation with other partner organizations. The Strategic Framework is expected to serve environment ministers in initiating and sustaining discussions on the green economy transition in their national Governments and, ultimately, in creating an interministerial policy process to bring forward such an agenda involving key constituencies, including the public at large and the private sector;
 - (ii) Launching the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) that consists of voluntary commitments to operationalize the Strategic Framework until 2030, and encouraging countries and other stakeholders to implement commitments under the BIG-E in order to facilitate the transition to a green economy, and to report on progress thereon to CEP in accordance with the Strategic Framework. Also, promoting the BIG-E through existing knowledge-sharing platforms, such as the Green Growth Knowledge Platform. At present, 115 commitments were submitted by 25 countries and 12 organizations. BIG-E remains open for more stakeholders to join;
 - (iii) Commending the good cooperation between UNECE and the United Nations Environment Programme, and inviting the two organizations, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, to support countries in their efforts to green their economies and achieve sustainable development.
- (h) At its 22nd session, CEP took note of the information provided on, and welcomed the developments under, the *European Environment and Health Process* with regard to the preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference (Ostrava, Czechia, 13-15 June 2017), and invited countries and organizations to participate in the upcoming Ostrava Conference. Following up on a proposal made by the European Environment and Health Task Force, CEP asked the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau to assess the implications of establishing a joint secretariat between UNECE and WHO for servicing the European Environment and Health Process and to prepare a short information note for the Committee's consideration at its next session. Furthermore, CEP decided to postpone the appointment of ministers from the environment sector to the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board to the next session of the Committee, pending the outcomes of the Ostrava Conference concerning the European Environment and Health Process's future institutional framework.
- (i) Through the *ENVSEC*, which includes five partner agencies²², UNECE works to promote cooperation between neighbouring countries on the management of natural resources in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. At its 22nd session, CEP took note of the information provided with regard to the Environment and Security Initiative and the technical assistance provided to the member States within its framework.
 - (j) Concerning green building, at its 22nd session, CEP took note of the activities of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management and the UNECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry, in particular the progress of work on energy efficiency

²² ENVSEC partner organizations include United Nations Environment Programme, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNECE and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe.

in buildings and the forestry sector in the green economy, and welcomed a closer cooperation with these Committees.

VI. Technical cooperation activities

31. Technical cooperation activities in the Environment subprogramme include activities carried out by the UNECE Regional Adviser on Environment as well as a number of other activities undertaken under MEAs and policy programmes.

32. The Regional Adviser develops, raises funds for and implements technical cooperation activities and provides policy advice in close collaboration with the secretariats of the UNECE MEAs. The work aims at improving management of shared natural resources, as well as strengthening cooperation on common environmental problems in the countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

33. The project work undertaken by the Regional Adviser in 2016 continued to focus on the development of transboundary water cooperation, including in support of European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management. In Central Asia, regional cooperation on water management, dam safety and water quality was the focus.

34. Technical cooperation projects were implemented in more than 15 countries in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.²³

VII. Cooperation with other organizations

35. The Environment subprogramme is working with a number of organizations in and outside the United Nations system with the aim of combining efforts, ensuring mutual benefits and avoiding overlap and duplication. Cooperation takes place through ICT tools, internal coordination meetings and the organization of joint events, as well as involving relevant partner organizations in various activities.

36. In particular, the EfE process provides a political platform that brings together relevant²⁴ organizations active in the region and contributes to forging efficient cooperation. Also, the inclusive work of the UNECE MEAs attracts participation of many stakeholders that are active in respective areas in the region and globally. In 2016, CEP welcomed the fruitful cooperation between UNECE, EEA, OECD, United Nations Environment Programme, WHO and other partners in developing documents for the Batumi Ministerial Conference.

37. Among the many organizations involved in the work of CEP and of other governing bodies under the Environment subprogramme, the following should be mentioned:

United Nations Regional Commissions

36. The Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, in cooperation with ECA, organized a capacity development workshop in Morocco to promote the use of the Convention and its Protocol in the Mediterranean sub-region. The UNECE Water Convention is cooperating with the other regional commissions, in particular ECLAC and

²³ See also the annex to the information paper No. 4/Rev.1 that provides a list of selected ENVSEC projects with the involvement of or linked to the UNECE MEAs (www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/cep/CEP-22/CEP-22ENVSEC.IP.4.rev.1.e.pdf).

²⁴ Depending on the themes of the EfE Conferences various organizations join the process.

ESCPA. The Aarhus secretariat is providing continuous advisory support to ECLAC, notably assisting in the development of a regional instrument on environmental rights in the ECLAC region and cooperates on the establishment of PRTRs. UNECE has also continued its joint efforts with ESCAP to promote the cooperation on transboundary air pollution in North-East Asia as part of Air Convention's outreach activities, and has started cooperation with ESCAP in the preparation of the EPR of Mongolia.

United Nations Environment Programme

39. The Environment subprogramme has long-standing cooperation with United Nations Environment Programme through many joint activities and partnerships. In this regard, informal meetings between the UNECE secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme are organized, when necessary, with a view to coordinate actions and explore the possibility of joining efforts for carrying out relevant activities in fulfilling their respective mandates given by the member States.

40. The work of UNECE and United Nations Environment Programme is complementary, and thus far there has been efficient cooperation between the two organizations: UNECE provides the regional political platform, expert and intergovernmental bodies and policy expertise, as well as a growing global reach; the United Nations Environment Programme brings its global policy leadership, specific technical expertise and country and regional policy and programmatic engagement. Such a symbiosis enables the two organizations to address in an effective way the existing and emerging environmental concerns across the UNECE region.

41. United Nations Environment Programme is a key partner in the EfE process and participates actively in the preparatory process, in the Ministerial Conferences and in the follow-up activities. In particular, UNECE and United Nations Environment Programme work jointly on the issue of greening the economy in the region, as a follow up on the outcomes of the Batumi and Astana Conferences and the Rio+20 Conference. One key achievement of the joint work is the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy that was adopted by CEP in February 2016 and endorsed by the Batumi Conference. At its 22nd session, CEP welcomed the information provided by the United Nations Environment Programme about developments in preparing the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and invited countries and organizations to promote the work of UNECE related to the themes of the third session of United Nations Environment Assembly at that body's next session, including, *inter alia*, the UNECE MEAs (the Water Convention and the Air Convention) and recent initiatives launched under the EfE process, namely, the Astana Water Action (AWA), BACA, and BIG-E. Furthermore, CEP invited the United Nations Environment Programme to continue informing the Committee about the preparations for the third session of United Nations Environment Assembly, in particular at the Committee's next session.

42. In the area of environmental monitoring and assessment, ministers in Batumi Conference noted the value of United Nations Environment Programme Live and the Group on Earth Observations as global knowledge-sharing platforms. Furthermore, ministers welcomed the launch of the European regional assessment of the Global Environment Outlook, as the regular pan-European environmental assessment.

43. Since 2009, United Nations Environment Programme has actively engaged in the UNECE EPR Programme and is expected to continue providing its expertise for future EPRs, including through the Joint United Nations Environment Programme/OCHA Environment Unit. In 2016, following the request by the CEP, the UNECE secretariat in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme developed for the Batumi Conference the review of lessons learned in implementation of EPR recommendations,

which also analysed the impact of the implementation of EPR recommendations on the national policies and the state of the environment in the countries reviewed.

44. The United Nations Environment Programme is participating in the implementation of THE PEP, including in the preparation of joint studies and the membership in one of the partnerships, and the UNECE Strategy for ESD. With regard to the latter, the United Nations Environment Programme and the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD in particular cooperate in the follow up to the United Nations Environment Programme Tbilisi+35Conference on ESD.

45. The United Nations Environment Programme is also actively contributing to the implementation of many UNECE MEAs. The secretariat of the Aarhus Convention cooperates closely with the United Nations Environment Programme on global promotion of Principle 10, of the transparent international decision-making and of PRTRs. Since 2013, the secretariat of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA has promoted greening the economies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in partnership with United Nations Environment Programme, OECD and UNIDO, with funding from European Union's Greening the Economies in Eastern Neighbourhood (EaP-GREEN) Programme (see also para 58 below).

46. As regards the Air Convention, there is an ongoing active exchange of information between the Convention and relevant United Nations Environment Programme MEAs and subregional initiatives, including the East Asia Acid Deposition Network (EANET) and the Air Quality resolution of the first meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly. Also, the UNECE secretariat has initiated a tripartite interagency process with the United Nations Environment Programme and WHO on issues of air quality which has led to improved coordination and exchange of information between the three organizations. Furthermore, UNECE joined the Climate and Clean air Coalition (CCAC) in 2015 and has actively engaged with CCAC on air quality issues in 2016, and it joined a number of organizations, including the United Nations Environment Programme in efforts to reduce nitrogen pollution.²⁵

47. Furthermore, UNECE and the United Nations Environment Programme have an efficient cooperation within the ENVSEC Initiative, the coordination unit to which is provided by the United Nations Environment Programme. Both organizations are actively engaged in the European Environment and Health Process, and in particular in European Environment and Health Ministerial Board and the European Environment and Health Task Force, established by decision of the Parma Environment and Health Conference (2010).

World Health Organization (WHO)

48. UNECE and WHO/Europe will continue to jointly provide secretariat services for the Protocol on Water and Health and THE PEP. WHO/Europe also leads the Air Convention's Task Force on Health (please also refer to para 46 above). The UNECE Environment subprogramme is also actively working with WHO/Europe in the European Environment and Health Process, the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme and the EPR Programme. For instance, CEP appoints the four members from the environment sector to European Environment and Health Ministerial Board, which consists of four ministers of the environment along with four ministers of health.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

²⁵ www.unece.org/info/media/news/environment/2015/unece-joins-international-initiative-to-reduce-nitrogen-pollution/unece-joins-international-initiative-to-reduce-nitrogen-pollution

49. The UNECE Strategy for ESD is implemented in close cooperation with UNESCO, the lead agency for the Global Action Programme, as a key partner in the Partnership Network for its implementation, including the joint activities carried out in the framework of the first priority action area on advancing policy. UNESCO participates in the work of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD and its Bureau, as well as in the work of expert groups. Furthermore, UNESCO contributes its expertise in transboundary groundwaters to a close cooperation with the Water Convention. Moreover, UNECE and UNESCO are the custodian agencies for SDG indicator 6.5.2 which will further strengthen the cooperation and joint work of the two organizations.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

50. UNDP country offices are a main partner in the EPR Programme as they are actively involved in the country missions for the reviews. Also, UNDP is supporting organization of activities on the national level – e.g. an ESD capacity development workshop in Belarus in 2016. UNDP is supporting the implementation of the UNECE MEAs and other environmental policy instruments. UNECE and UNDP also cooperate within the EfE process, especially for providing logistical support in organizing the EfE Ministerial Conferences, the ENVSEC partnership as well as in transboundary water projects funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF).

United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD)

51. UNSD has been actively cooperating with the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators by providing methodological support and funds for country expert travel to the meetings. Cooperation with the UNSD will increase in the future in relation to the work on the monitoring and reporting of SDG indicator 6.5.2 for which UNECE will act as custodian agency, together with UNESCO.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

52. Under the coordination of the UNECE, UNDESA) and the other Regional Commissions are working in partnership on follow up to the Rio+20 Conference and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Other partners, including European Union (European Commission and European Environment Agency (EEA)), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); Regional Environmental Centres (RECs), European ECO Forum

53. UNECE has a long-standing fruitful cooperation with EEA both at the policy and technical levels in a number of areas, such as: (a) the EfE process; (b) the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme; (c) the EPR Programme; and (d) the UNECE MEAs, and in particular: (i) Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs; (ii) Air Convention and its Protocols; and (iii) Water Convention. At present, the cooperation focuses on the establishment of a regular environmental assessment and reporting process in the UNECE region, including the establishment of SEIS across the pan-European region by 2021.

54. Other important partners outside the United Nations system are OECD (for the EPRs, the Protocol on PRTRs, the EfE process and in conjunction with the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI)), OSCE (for the ENVSEC Initiative and related projects under the UNECE MEAs), the European Commission and the RECs. Also, in 2016, UNECE was admitted as a member to the Bureau of the GREEN Action Programme Task Force (formerly known as the Environmental Action Programme (EAP) Task Force). Trilateral meetings are held between the OECD, UNECE and the United Nations Environment Programme to coordinate activities related to greening the economy and other activities, such as those relevant to the UNECE MEAs work.

55. The European ECO Forum and its members are active partners in the work of CEP, MEAs, ESD, THE PEP and in the EfE process.

56. The Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health are cooperating, among others, with UN-Water, WHO and its Regional Office for Europe, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, GEF, UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNESCO, international river basins commissions, such as the Rhine, Danube, Okacom, Niger commissions, the International Network of Basin Organizations, OSCE, OECD, the RECs, the Global Water Partnership, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), UNFCCC, the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation, the African Network of Basin Organizations, the Economic Communities of Central African and West African States, the Southern African Development Community, the League of Arab States' Centre of Arab Water Security, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development, the African Development Bank, the Stockholm International Water Institute, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), Women Engage for a Common Future, the World Bank, WWF, Green Cross International, the European Federation of National Associations of Water and Wastewater Services, the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition, UN-Habitat, the International Water Association, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

57. The Air Convention continues its close cooperation with the European Union including in the implementation of capacity building activities in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the Convention regularly cooperates, among others, with the Arctic Council and WMO.

58. Under the EaP GREEN programme mentioned above, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA support the implementation of strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment of national development activities and work together with the following international organizations providing comprehensive support to achieve the programme's objectives: (i) OECD serves as coordinator of the programme, and support the implementation of market-based approaches to promote green growth and the reform of environmentally-harmful subsidies, the greening of banks and small- and medium-sized enterprises, and the adoption of green growth indicators; (ii) the United Nations Environment Programme contributes to mainstreaming sustainable production and consumption in national policies through strategic policy setting, as well as through work on sustainable public procurement and organic agriculture; and (iii) UNIDO assists the private sector actors in adopting cleaner production and resource efficiency.

59. The secretariat of the Aarhus Convention continuously pursues a close cooperation with a number of partner organizations. Furthermore, it continued servicing a region-wide inter-agency capacity-building coordination mechanism for the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and a global international coordinating Group for the Protocol. In particular it cooperates with the following partners: OSCE, EEA, OECD, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNFCCC, IPCC, WHO, ANCCLI, ECLAC, UN DESA, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, UNDP, European ECO Forum and the relevant bodies of the UN Human Rights Council. Also, the effective cooperation with OECD, UNITAR and United Nations Environment Programme/GEF under the PRTR Protocol should be highlighted.

60. In 2016, UNECE was admitted as an observer to the Inter-State Council on Industrial Safety under Commonwealth of Independent States. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has worked with UNECE on chemical safety and industrial accident prevention and has joined an inter-agency coordination group on

industrial accidents, established by UNECE in the context of the Convention, and which includes also OECD, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNISDR, WHO and the Joint United Nations Environment Programme/OCHA Environment Unit.
