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**Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements:
strengthening synergies and capacity-building activities**

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IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

**STRENGTHENING IMPLEMENTATION AND RATIFICATION OF ECE
MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND ENHANCING
CROSS-BORDER INTERACTION IN CENTRAL ASIA: PROJECT PROPOSAL**

Note by the secretariat

Recipient countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

ECE and non-ECE member neighbouring countries to be involved in the project:
Russian Federation, Afghanistan, China, Iran and Mongolia.

Cooperating partners: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Global Environment Facility (GEF), European Union (EU), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC), International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) Organizations.

Duration of the project: 4 years.

Objective of the project: To contribute to strengthened environmental governance and performance in the countries of Central Asia and to increased transboundary environmental cooperation among them.

Expected results of the project:

- (a) Enhanced understanding and political acceptance of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) among high-level policy-makers in the countries of Central Asia;
- (b) Increased implementation of ECE MEAs by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; and
- (c) Strengthened cross-border interaction between Central Asian ECE member countries and between them and the countries neighbouring them.

Background

1. The necessity to protect our health and the environment from adverse effects of economic activities or other phenomena and the need to facilitate informed and participatory environmental decision-making and access to justice were among the reasons for the international community to establish a set of appropriate environmental norms and standards. Among these norms and standards, five environmental conventions and a number of protocols to these agreements were negotiated by ECE member States. ECE has proven to be a unique and successful pan-European forum for the negotiation of multilateral environmental agreements and the promotion of their implementation. The current ECE MEA framework comprises:

- (a) Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution;
 - Protocol on Long-term Financing of the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe;
 - Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants;
 - Protocol on Heavy Metals;
 - Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone;
- (b) Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context;
 - Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment;
- (c) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes;
 - Protocol on Water and Health;
- (d) Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents; and
- (e) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus);
 - Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

The geographical and substantive scopes of the ECE MEAs are interrelated and the implementation of one convention and/or protocol is often facilitated and strengthened by the implementation of others. Thus there is a natural need for further efforts to create synergies in the implementation of these agreements and to share best experience, as underlined in various instances such as in the Declaration of the Belgrade “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/8).

The status of implementation and ratification of the above MEAs is very uneven across the ECE region. While the countries of Central and Western Europe are advanced in implementing them, the countries with economies in transition, and in particular the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as some countries of South-Eastern Europe, are experiencing more difficulties. The national and international legal and institutional frameworks in these countries, as well as the management practices, are weak and often not enforced.

Many dedicated individuals, groups and offices at different levels are working and making an effort towards their countries being able to implement the agreements and to comply with their provisions. These efforts need to be supported by higher-level policy-makers and politicians within the countries, but they also require needs-driven assistance from the

international community (see among others the document “Implementation of the UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements” – ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/12).

ECE is already engaged in various projects supporting its member States in the implementation of the respective MEAs, as called for, among others, by the 2005 ECE reform. Important results and experience from these activities are taken into account in the development of a more systematic and ambitious approach to support the countries in Central Asia.

This subregional project, which is focused on Central Asia, could be the first part of a wider assistance programme for ECE member countries with economies in transition. Similar projects could be initiated for the countries of the Caucasus, Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe based on the experience and lessons learned from this first project.

Challenges to be addressed within the project

The application of international environmental law and in particular the implementation, ratification and compliance with ECE MEAs by the countries of Central Asia is low. Among the key reasons are:

- (a) Lack of understanding and political acceptance of the ECE MEAs, their obligations, potential impacts, costs and benefits, and of the key steps to secure implementation, ratification and compliance with them, among politicians and senior officials within Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Environmental Protection and other line ministries;
- (b) Insufficient capacity to apply the MEAs in practice at the national and local levels (legal and institutional frameworks, appropriate human capacities and financial resources); and
- (c) Weak cross-border interaction among countries in Central Asia and their neighbours, a key factor in the implementation of most of the ECE MEAs which have an important transboundary dimension.

Description of the project

The present project is designed to address the above challenges and to raise the necessary understanding and political acceptance of the ECE MEAs among the countries of Central Asia. By achieving this, the project is also expected to contribute to the increased political willingness within these countries to address the environmental issues covered by the ECE Conventions. Furthermore, the project will support the efforts of the countries of Central Asia to strengthen cross-border interaction between them and hopefully between them and their non-ECE neighbouring countries.

The project will be carried out through the implementation of the following categories of activities. The details of these activities are contained in the logical framework in Annex I to this proposal.

- (a) Activities aimed at raising the understanding and political acceptance of ECE MEAs

The project puts emphasis on a new effort to increase the knowledge about the ECE MEAs, which will result in enhanced understanding and thus political acceptance of these agreements among high-level policy-makers in countries of Central Asia. ECE, with its

convening power, is well positioned to initiate awareness-raising events/campaigns. A key subregional event is foreseen with the participation of the recipient countries, neighbouring countries, cooperating partners and donors. Follow-up events leading to better understanding and political acceptance of the ECE MEAs in individual countries could take place on demand.

(b) Activities aimed at the development of national legal and institutional frameworks and building appropriate human capacities

ECE, hosting the secretariats of all its environmental agreements within one Division, has a unique possibility to offer a programme of integrated capacity-building activities addressing common challenges faced by countries of Central Asia when applying the ECE MEAs in practice.

The project gives prominence to this new integrated approach to “institutional” capacity-building which will allow for: (i) carrying out capacity-building activities in a more efficient manner; (ii) applying good practices and experience gathered so far under the different conventions; and (iii) improving the didactic side of delivered training. This streamlined approach is also expected to foster an integrated approach among the concerned authorities of the countries in Central Asia and to promote synergy between them.

This project also aims at promoting further development of cooperative approaches between two or more ECE MEAs in meeting the demands of the countries of Central Asia for “scientific” and/or “technical” capacity-building.

In order to avoid duplication, the project will take into account and build on the “technical” capacity-building activities, which have successfully been developed and are being implemented under each of the five MEAs, e.g., the National Policy Dialogues within the EU Water Initiative or the “Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Water Resources Management in Central Asia” programme financed by the Government of Germany through the *Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* (GTZ) in the framework of the Berlin Water Process (Water Convention); the Assistance Programme for countries with economies in transition (Industrial Accidents Convention); the Assistance Project to enhance the capacities of Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation to implement the most recent protocols under the Air Pollution Convention; capacity-building activities under the auspices of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making within the Aarhus Convention; and the subregional cooperation and capacity-building activity in the EIA Convention workplan.

(c) Activities in support of strengthening cross-border interaction

Finally, ECE, with its proven record of successfully promoting transboundary cooperation, is best placed to facilitate cross-border cooperation between the countries of Central Asia and, in cooperation with partners, to assist them in enhancing their interactions with countries neighbouring the subregion.

Resources

A dedicated capacity-building team, comprising two professional staff members and a project assistant, will be created within the EHLM Division. This team will be responsible for the implementation of the activities planned under this project in close cooperation with the secretariats of the ECE MEAs. It will also support the secretariats in conducting their on-going individual “technical” capacity-building activities.

The project would also include the work done by the MEA secretariats constituting a solid in-kind contribution from the ECE.

Project budget

A provisional project budget is included in Annex II to this proposal.

Annex I Logical framework for the Project

Expected result (a): Enhanced understanding and political acceptance of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements among high-level policy-makers in the countries of Central Asia			
Activities aimed at raising the understanding and political acceptance of ECE MEAs	Actions	Measurable indicators of success	Assumptions
1. National missions (to prepare the high-level subregional meeting on ECE MEAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missions of senior EHLM staff to recipient countries to ensure high-level political support and participation in the subregional meeting • Preliminary discussions on current status of ECE MEA implementation and ratification in Central Asia and future challenges 	Support and commitment to participate in the project and the subregional meeting	Political circumstances and invitation from recipient countries
2. High-level subregional meeting on ECE MEAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare programme • Identify professional facilitator • Prepare presentations on the environmental work of the ECE, in particular ECE MEAs, and its relevance for the countries of Central Asia • Make available relevant information on ECE MEAs • Identify venue • Invite appropriate participants from recipient and neighbouring countries and cooperating partners as well as donors • Prepare meeting report including recommendations on how to continue the project 	<p>Attendance of all recipient countries, their neighbours and cooperating partners</p> <p>Readiness of recipient countries to commit to implement ECE MEAs</p>	<p>Political willingness and support expressed by authorities of Central Asian countries</p> <p>Interest expressed by neighbouring countries and cooperating partners</p>
3. Relevant information on ECE MEAs (in Russian): (a) Updated Russian versions of ECE MEA websites; (b) Booklet: "Overview of ECE MEAs - the difference they make"; (c) Leaflets: Specific information on each ECE MEA; (d) Quarterly ECE MEA Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft content and/or compile information • Provide translation • Publish and disseminate and/or make available online 	Recipient countries kept informed, positive feedback	

Expected result (b): Increased implementation of ECE MEAs by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan			
(i) Activities aimed to enhance the “institutional” capacities of the countries of Central Asia (integrated approach between all or several MEAs)	Actions	Measurable indicators of success	Assumptions
1. National missions to countries in Central Asia as a follow up to the high-level subregional meeting on ECE MEAs ¹ , as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, in cooperation with each recipient country, the relevant national and local stakeholders Facilitate discussion between stakeholders in order to identify specific needs for assistance Plan for capacity-building and advisory services with stakeholders 	A plan of capacity-building activities and advisory services is drawn up	Willingness of recipient countries at the policy-making and local levels
2. “Institutional” capacity-building workshops/training sessions and advisory services, as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare programme Identify methods and relevant expertise Identify venue and provide organizational support Identify appropriate participants Provide professional training in areas identified by the recipient countries Provide expertise/guidance/ advice on how to implement conclusions and recommendations from the above capacity-building events Provide assistance and guidelines related to the implementation of ECE MEAs 	<p>Development of conclusions and recommendations on the need to develop or adjust legal and institutional frameworks</p> <p>Number of capacity-building events/participants trained and positive feedback</p> <p>Application of knowledge or guidance in practice by participants</p>	<p>Active participation of representatives of recipient countries in the activities</p> <p>Readiness of recipient countries to introduce necessary changes in legal and institutional frameworks</p>
(ii) Activities² related to enhancing “scientific” and/or “technical” capacities of the countries of Central Asia (cooperative approach between two or more MEAs)	Actions	Measurable indicators of success	Assumptions
1. “Technical” capacity-building workshops/training sessions and advisory services, as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify needs and opportunities for joint “technical” capacity-building activities Remaining actions as in section (i) above 	As in (i) above	As in (i) above

¹ These missions will also be used to prepare the subregional meeting/workshop on how to support cooperation between the countries of Central Asia and their neighbouring countries.

² Some examples of joint “technical” capacity-building activities are given in Annex III to this proposal.

Expected result (c): Strengthened cross-border interaction between Central Asian ECE member countries and between them and the countries neighbouring them			
Activities in support of strengthening cross-border interaction	Actions	Measurable indicators of success	Assumptions
1. Subregional meeting/workshop on how to support interaction between the countries of Central Asia and their neighbouring countries (including cooperating partners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and invite all relevant partners • Identify venue • Ensure the presence of national and local authorities of neighbouring countries • Provide information and examples of why such interaction should be enhanced 	<p>Participation of recipient, neighbouring countries and cooperating partners</p> <p>Conclusions and recommendations on how to strengthen subregional cooperation</p>	<p>Willingness of recipient and neighbouring countries</p> <p>Support of cooperating partners</p>
2. Bilateral/multilateral meetings on transboundary issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate bilateral/multilateral meetings between recipient countries to discuss potential areas of cooperation in relation to the transboundary nature of the ECE MEA's • Facilitate and provide advice on how to draw up cooperative agreements, where possible and appropriate 	<p>Countries in discussion on transboundary issues and, if possible, ready to institutionalize cooperation</p>	<p>Political willingness</p> <p>Support of cooperating partners</p>

Annex II
Project provisional budget
(in United States dollars)

1.	Activity A1 – National missions (to prepare the high-level subregional meeting on ECE MEAs)	105,000
2.	Activity A2 – High-level subregional meeting on ECE MEAs	180,000
3.	Activity A3 – Relevant information on ECE MEAs	100,000
4.	Activity B (i) 1 – National missions to countries in Central Asia as a follow up to the high-level subregional meeting on ECE MEAs	45,000
5.	Activity B (i) 2 – “Institutional” capacity-building workshops/training sessions and advisory services (5 events x 40,000)	200,000
6.	Activity B (ii) 3 – “Technical” capacity-building workshops/training sessions and advisory services (10 events x 60,000)	600,000
7.	Activity C1 – Subregional meeting/workshop on how to support cooperation between the countries of Central Asia and their neighbouring countries	150,000
8.	Activity C2 – Bilateral/multilateral meetings on transboundary issues (5 meetings x 30,000)	150,000
9.	Staff (two professionals and a programme assistant); advisory services; consultants	1 975,000
10.	Preparation of final report including project evaluation	25,000
Total staff and activities		3 530,000
	13% UNOG overhead costs	458,900
Total project provisional budget		3 988,900

Annex III

Examples of potential joint “technical” capacity-building activities

MEAs	Objective	Activities
Aarhus Convention – SEA Protocol – Protocol on Water and Health	To strengthen capacity of relevant national authorities and stakeholders to implement the Aarhus Convention, the SEA Protocol and the Protocol on Water and Health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of guidance on public participation in decision-making and implementation on matters related to water and health 2. Pilot project on strategic environmental assessment of a programme or plan related to water and health (focus on public participation)
Water Convention – Industrial Accidents Convention	To improve emergency response capacities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of guidance on contingency planning for the response to industrial accidents with impacts on transboundary waters 2. Pilot project to identify the challenges to implementation of the Protocol on Civil Liability by selected countries with economies in transition
Protocol on Water and Health – Aarhus Convention	To strengthen public participation in the implementation of the Protocol	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organization of a training session on public participation in setting targets and implementing the Protocol 2. Development of recommendations for involving the public in consultations and decision-making under the Protocol
Water Convention – Protocol on Water and Health	To enhance cooperation and institutional capacity between environmental and health authorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organization of training to adjust institutional structures and to enable relevant authorities to apply the Convention and the Protocol 2. Organization of specific capacity-building events on local challenges in implementing the Convention and the Protocol
Air Pollution Convention – Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR)	To enhance cooperation and institutional capacity in emissions reporting in accordance with the requirements of EMEP and PRTR	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organization of a workshop to promote the harmonization of national reporting of emissions 2. Provision of technical assistance for accurate emissions reporting
