

# **Economic Commission for Europe**

## **Committee on Environmental Policy**

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### **Cross-sectoral activities: environment and security**

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## **United Nations Economic Commission for Europe activities in the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative**

### **Note by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) was launched in 2003 at the Fifth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Kyev, Ukraine, to strengthen national capacities, regional coordination mechanisms and international cooperation for addressing environment and security risks in the South Caucasus, Central Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

The present paper provides a brief overview of the Initiative, as well as a summary of UNECE ongoing activities carried out under ENVSEC.

The Committee on Environmental Policy may wish to consider the information provided.

## **I. The Environment and Security Initiative**

1. Shared natural resources, including transboundary waters, arable land, pastures and forests, open pathways for enhanced cooperation and confidence building. Environmental problems ignore political boundaries and call for cooperation among countries including Parties to the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) in order to sustainably manage limited natural resources. Joint environmental monitoring programmes, international river basin management, dam safety initiatives and environmental impact assessments are some examples of how environmental initiatives can increase dialogue and strengthen cooperation.

2. The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) is a partnership that supports the development of cooperation and confidence building through concrete projects that develop capacity across the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region. Established in 2003, ENVSEC provides a platform for international dialogue and neighbourly cooperation on assessing and addressing environmental challenges. The partnership consists of five international agencies: the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNECE and the Regional Environment Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC-CEE).

3. All ENVSEC projects are agreed among the partners, in cooperation with the concerned ENVSEC National Focal Points in each of the beneficiary countries representing Ministries of Environment and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and in consultation with national experts and non-governmental organizations. Key elements in the project selection include: identifying hotspots for rising tensions over environmental resources; strengthening policies, awareness and participation; building capacities and frameworks to prevent and address environmental threats; supporting coordination and concrete actions at country and regional level; providing solutions for safe environment and sustainable development; and mobilizing financial support and technical expertise for environmental clean-up and remediation.

4. Representatives from each of the ENVSEC partners make up the ENVSEC Management Board, which has a rotating Chair and a joint Secretariat, to administer projects and their assessment. In 2017, REC is serving as Chair of the Initiative. The ENVSEC Secretariat consists of the Coordinating Unit that is hosted by UNEP (Geneva), representatives of each partner organization and Regional Desk Officers (RDO) for each of four sub-regions (the South Caucasus, Central Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe).

5. ENVSEC supports the development of regional programmes to respond to regional priorities identified in a consultative process with national counterparts. The regional programmes which comprise of a number of individual projects, contribute to the overall ENVSEC goal.

6. Through implementation of the regional programmes, ENVSEC encourages its stakeholders to coordinate and participate actively in the achievement of national objectives according to regional contexts and priorities. This approach allows donors to support one or several ENVSEC programmes or distinct projects, in line with their own priorities and special interests. ENVSEC regional programmes serve as mechanisms for creating and sharing knowledge and experiences on a multi-country and multi-stakeholder basis.

7. The ENVSEC Secretariat works closely together to coordinate activities, report periodically on progress made and share experience for an optimal functioning of the Initiative across the different regions. Key results achieved by the ENVSEC partners over the past few years include:

(a) Improved monitoring, information exchange and cooperation in several transboundary river basins;

(b) Strengthened legal, institutional and administrative capacity to carry out environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment for managing security challenges of transboundary nature;

(c) Enhanced stakeholders' dialogue and access to information in relation to projects with transboundary environmental impacts;

(d) Remediation solutions for hazardous mining sites and the elimination of hazardous chemicals such as obsolete pesticides and rocket fuel as well as strengthened capacity of national authorities to prevent the illegal transboundary movement of hazardous wastes;

(e) Strengthened regional coordination and capacities for radioactive waste management (e.g. uranium) and affected site rehabilitation;

(f) Improved policies and regulations on environmental challenges such as dam failures, illegal logging and wildfires;

- (g) Increased regional coordination on adaptation to the impacts of climate change in particular in transboundary basins;
- (h) Increased awareness and participation of civil society in decision making at local level; and
- (i) Strengthened capacities in the area of industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response.

## II. The Environment and Security Initiative: regional overview

8. In 2016 ENVSEC continued to work in the countries of South Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia in line with the work plan as agreed by the partner organizations and governments. Project activities have been implemented through the three main programmes of ENVSEC: the partnership with Finland under the Wider Europe Initiative (WEI) (Phase II), the partnership with Austria and Finland in South Eastern Europe, and the ENVSEC partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and with the European Union in the fields of climate change and uranium legacy sites.



## III. Multilateral environmental agreements and the Environment and Security Initiative

9. MEAs administered by UNECE are an important pillar of ENVSEC's activities and provide a value-added to the partnership. ENVSEC supports the implementation of several MEAs and enables UNECE to implement activities on the ground, in cooperation with ENVSEC partners. A list of ENVSEC projects involving UNECE is found in the annex to this paper.

10. The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) is an important legal and intergovernmental framework for cooperation on transboundary freshwaters, requiring Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impact, use transboundary waters in a reasonable and equitable way and ensure their sustainable management. ENVSEC projects play a prominent role in the Convention's programme of work. There are several examples of projects supporting the development of transboundary cooperation in specific basins (Drin, Kura, Dniester, Aral Sea basin). Most of the Convention's pilot projects on water and adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins are funded and implemented under ENVSEC, for example on the Dniester, Neman and Chu-Talas.

11. The Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA) provide legal obligations and institutional frameworks for addressing environmental and health risks of economic activities and for improving transboundary cooperation. Pilots and capacity building projects implemented with ENVSEC partners contribute to effective national and regional application of these instruments. Examples include legislative reviews on strategic environmental assessment of Belarus with regard to the implementation of the Protocol on SEA to the Espoo Convention, and post project-analysis of the exploitation of the Khotislavskoye quarry conducted in Belarus and Ukraine in 2013–2016.

12. The Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) promotes active international cooperation between countries, before, during and after an industrial accident. The Assistance Programme of the Industrial Accidents Convention benefits from cooperation with ENVSEC partners in sub-regions such as Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. For instance, in Belarus, risks from oil and gas pipelines have been assessed using standard UNECE/Industrial Accidents Convention tools and checklists, starting in 2015. And country stakeholders have been trained to improve their understanding of the risks and preparedness to accidents, with particular emphasis on the cross-border dimension.

13. The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and its Protocol on Pollutants Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) promote effective engagement of the public in decision-making, providing a comprehensive framework for Governments to ensure transparent and accountable governance and democracy in environmental matters. Cooperation with ENVSEC reinforces countries' capacities for implementation of both instruments. In the framework of ENVSEC, OSCE is engaged in a broad programme to establish and strengthen Aarhus Centres in regions where ENVSEC is active. Significant progress has been made in strengthening capacity of institutions and integrating the Aarhus Convention into national legislation in Belarus in 2013-2016.

#### **IV. The Environment and Security Initiative: challenges and priorities**

14. Challenges and priorities for the future development of ENVSEC include:

(a) Further developing cooperation and synergies between ENVSEC partners;  
and

(b) Improving financial sustainability and broadening of the donor base. Current main donors are Austria, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and the European Union. The ENVSEC portfolio presently includes 150 projects with a budget of about US\$ 60 million. A number of new projects under the ENVSEC thematic focus areas have been developed and fundraising is presently on-going.

15. In 2015 ENVSEC developed two strategic initiatives:
- (a) High-level policy dialogue to connect ENVSEC to relevant policy making institutions in the Pan-European region, and identify common areas of intervention; and
  - (b) Geneva Science-Policy Platform on Environment and Security (GSPP), a forum to serve as a network supplying knowledge and technical expertise for new approaches in confronting emerging environmental and security challenges.
16. ENVSEC partners organized a side event on the margins of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016) to address the prospects for ENVSEC’s contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The programme of the side event is available on the Conference website at <http://efebatumi.com/uploads/other/0/640.pdf> .

## **Annex**

### **List of selected ENVSEC projects with the involvement of or linked to the UNECE MEAs**

#### **I. ENVSEC projects under the Water Convention**

1. ENVSEC projects under the Water Convention in cooperation with other agencies include:

(a) Capacity building for cooperation on dam safety in Central Asia (Phase III), (the main activities are now implemented outside the ENVSEC framework);

(b) Ratification of the Water Convention in Georgia and development of an agreement on the management of transboundary watercourses shared by Georgia and Azerbaijan (on-going support towards the final negotiation and signature of the bilateral agreement);

(c) A project on the Drin River, shared by Albania, Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo (United Nations administered territory under the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244) and Montenegro aiming to improve transboundary cooperation in the basin (completed in 2014, this project is followed up by a project funded by the Global Environmental Facility);

(d) Pilot projects on water and adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins:

(i) Testing of the Guidance document developed under the Water Convention - Climate change adaptation and transboundary flood risk management in the Sava River Basin (completed in 2013);

(ii) Reducing vulnerability to extreme floods and climate change in the Dniester River basin (Dniester III Flood and Climate); followed by the project "Climate change and security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus - climate change adaptation in the Dniester basin" ( due to end in 2017);

(iii) Adaptation to climate change in the Chu-Talas river basin (completed in 2015);

(iv) River basin management and adaptation to climate change in the Neman river basin (completed in 2015);

(v) Dniester component of the European Union Instrument for Stability and Austrian Development Agency funded project "Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus", which focuses on climate change adaptation in the Dniester basin (due to end in 2017).

2. Future planned project (without confirmed funding) include:

(a) Project on river basin management and adaptation to climate change in the Neman River Basin (phase II); and

(b) Support for the Management of Transboundary Watercourses shared by Georgia and Azerbaijan.

## **II. ENVSEC projects under the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA**

3. ENVSEC projects under the Espoo Convention in cooperation with other agencies include:

(a) Development of capacities for application of the Espoo Convention in Eastern Europe (Belarus) with participation of Lithuania (completed in 2011);

(b) Training and capacity development for reaching EU standards and multilateral Conventions; monitoring, pollution prevention and control, EIA and permitting, etc. (in South-Eastern Europe, led by REC CEE, with involvement of the Espoo Convention Secretariat, completed);

(d) Strengthening implementation of the Espoo Convention in Azerbaijan (completed in 2013);

(e) Pilot project in Belarus and Ukraine on post-project analysis of environmental impact in a transboundary context and technical advice and training on strategic environmental assessment in Belarus (implemented with UNEP and UNDP; completed in 2014).

4. Future planned project (without confirmed funding) include:

(a) A joint capacity building project with the UNECE Aarhus Convention to promote SEA, transboundary environmental impact assessment and public participation in Caucasus is in the pipeline (the project document was approved by the ENVSEC Management Board in late 2014).

## **III. ENVSEC projects under the Industrial Accidents Convention**

5. ENVSEC projects under the Industrial Accidents Convention include:

(a) Capacity-building workshop to enhance development and evaluation of safety reports in Croatia (October 2013);

(b) National training session on safety management systems as part of safety reports in Serbia (November 2013);

(c) Capacity building workshop on preparation and evaluation of safety reports in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (February 2014);

(d) Comparative analysis of the hazard and crisis management legislation, policy and institutions in the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine, completed in 2014);

(e) Capacity building workshop on the implementation of the Convention in Montenegro (Podgorica, May 2014);

(f) Environmental safety of oil and gas pipelines in Belarus (implemented in cooperation with UNEP and UNDP; completed in 2016).

6. Future planned project (without confirmed funding) include:

(a) Strengthening industrial safety and transboundary cooperation in Eastern Europe (approved by the ENVSEC Management Board in November 2014);

(b) Support to Georgia for accession to the Convention on Industrial Accidents and strengthen Convention's implementation in the South Caucasus.

#### **IV. ENVSEC projects under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs**

7. ENVSEC projects under the Aarhus Convention in cooperation with other agencies include:

(a) 60 Aarhus Centres in 14 countries are being established and supported by OSCE (ongoing);

(b) Strengthening the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and promoting its Protocol on PRTRs in Belarus (completed in 2016);

(c) Strengthening access to justice in environmental matters in South-Eastern Europe (completed in 2014).

8. Future planned project (without confirmed funding) include:

(a) Strengthening Public Participation in Decisions on the Deliberate Release into the Environment and the Placing on the Market of Genetically Modified Organisms in the selected countries of the South Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

(b) Strengthening the Role of the Aarhus Centres in Addressing Environmental Challenges in Eastern Europe.

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