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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON  
THE PROTECTION AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY  
WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES**

Fourth meeting  
Bonn (Germany), 20–22 November 2006  
Item 10 (b) of the provisional agenda

**THE ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY INITIATIVE**

Note by the secretariat

1. There is a growing understanding that environmental degradation, inequitable access to natural resources and transboundary movement of hazardous materials increase the probability of conflict and thereby pose a risk to human and even national security. For example, transboundary pollution often negatively affects the relations between neighbouring states sharing a resource base. Also, health risks and involuntary migration due to factors such as water scarcity, inequitable access to land resources, and uncontrolled stocks of obsolete pesticides and other forms of hazardous waste have been identified as threats to stability and peace.
2. Ongoing disputes and disagreements over the management of natural resources shared by two or more states can deepen divides and lead to hostilities. However, common problems regarding the use of natural resources may also bring people together in a positive manner. Communities and nations can build confidence in each other through joint efforts to improve the state and management of natural resources. Environmental cooperation can thereby act as an important tool for preventing conflicts and promoting peace between communities.
3. The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC, [www.envsec.org](http://www.envsec.org)) was designed to increase knowledge and improve understanding and management of environmental and security

risks. ENVSEC recognizes that the best path to addressing environmental and security concerns is through international dialogue and neighbourly cooperation.

4. ENVSEC was launched in 2003 and includes five full partners:
  - The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
  - The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
  - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
  - The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
  - The Regional Environment Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) supports ENVSEC as an associate member via its Security Through Science programme.

5. ENVSEC is governed by a Management Board composed of representatives from the partner organizations. An Advisory Board comprised of donors, recipient countries and other stakeholders provides scientific and policy advice. Activities are coordinated by a secretariat consisting of a Coordination Unit and an Administrative Unit.

6. It is important to note that the five partners complement each other in several ways, for example, by having different national authorities as counterparts. While UNEP and UNECE mainly work with ministries of environment and with water authorities, OSCE has direct links with foreign offices and UNDP with authorities responsible for economy and development.

### **The ENVSEC portfolio of projects**

7. The work of ENVSEC is a two-stage process. First, assessments of environment and security risks are carried out through a multi-stakeholder process involving policymakers, environmental experts and representatives of civil society in a political dialogue. Then specific practical projects are designed to address the identified concerns and promote cooperation. These projects are funded by the partners and by voluntary contributions from donors. As of September 2006, ENVSEC had initiated or implemented some 50 projects in four subregions.

8. In Central Asia, ENVSEC mostly focuses on the Ferghana valley, which straddles Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Abandoned Soviet-era uranium mines and pesticide dumps threaten this highly fertile region of 10 million people. With the support of the Government of Italy, UNEP is analysing environmental and health risks at four industrial hot spots. In cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), NATO's Security Through Science programme is helping local partners to conduct in-depth assessments of uranium and other mines. Moreover, a number of projects focus on the shared water resources in the region to improve their integrated management.

9. In South-Eastern Europe, ENVSEC is supporting efforts to minimize heavy industrial pollution and the damage it can cause to political relations in the still-fragile Balkan region. It is also promoting more sustainable practices and policies in the mining and agriculture sectors.

10. Human security and the natural environment in the Southern Caucasus are under pressure due to recent conflicts in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Kura-Araks river basin provides

freshwater for the three neighbours, and a cooperative management scheme for this shared resource is urgently needed.

11. ENVSEC's work in Eastern Europe has so far focused on initial assessments of environmental risks. These assessments have been carried out in consultation with national counterparts in Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. ENVSEC is also supporting the cleanup of chemical dumps in the Republic of Moldova and the creation of monitoring systems on the Dniester and Prut rivers.

### **ENVSEC and the UNECE Water Convention**

12. Development of transboundary water management is a cornerstone of ENVSEC activities, and several of the UNECE activities in the area of transboundary waters are managed as a part of ENVSEC or in close collaboration with ENVSEC partners. Two examples are the Dniester River projects and the second phase of CAREWIB, the development of the Central Asian Regional Water Information Base (see document ECE/MP.WAT/2006/10).

13. This is a beginning, and in the longer term ENVSEC is expected to open up significant opportunities to establish projects under the Convention's workplan supporting the Convention's implementation. UNECE will continue to promote such activities in the cooperation with ENVSEC. At the same time, countries in the regions where ENVSEC is active should promote the development of projects to address problems related to their shared water resources. Also, donors should consider linking proposed ENVSEC activities to the implementation of the Water Convention. In this context, ministries of environment and water should consider opportunities to attract funds for fostering transboundary water cooperation from other government institutions (e.g. ministries of foreign affairs, and of economic cooperation and development).