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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

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PROGRAMME OF WORK

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2010–2011

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Committee on Environmental Policy decided to consider the programme of work for 2010–2011 at its sixteenth session (ECE/CEP/S/152, para. 21). Following this decision, the secretariat prepared a draft programme of work for 2010–2011 presented in this document. The Committee is expected to consider and adopt the programme of work for 2010–2011. When considering it, the Committee may wish to take into account the relevant discussions under other agenda items taking place during the session.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee on Environmental Policy's activities are guided by the goals set out in the document on future strategic directions for the environment adopted in 2003 (CEP/2004/2) and by the workplan on reform for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) adopted in 2005 (E/ECE/1434/Rev.1). In 2007, UNECE adopted the revised terms of reference for the Committee (E/ECE/1447/Add.1). The reform plan of the "Environment for Europe" (EfE) process, adopted by the Committee and subsequently endorsed by the Commission, mandated the Committee to act as the convening body for the preparatory processes for the EfE Ministerial Conferences. Furthermore, the Committee was mandated to convene a mid-term review to assess progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the EfE Conferences and to provide renewed impetus to the process (ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, and corr.1).

2. Specific activities in the draft programme of work for 2010–2011 relate to the following main processes and strategic goals:

(a) **Goal 1: Contributing to the "Environment for Europe" process.** Programme activity 1, the Seventh Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe";

(b) **Goal 2: Improving environmental governance.** Programme activities 2 and 3, the Environmental Performance Reviews and environmental monitoring and assessment;

(c) **Goal 3: Improving the effectiveness of international legal instruments.** Programme activity 4.1, the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements;

(d) **Goal 4: Integrating environmental concerns into sectoral policies.** Programme activity 4.2, environment and security; and programme activity 4.3, promoting environmental partnerships with the private sector;

(e) **Goal 5: Contributing to regional implementation of the environmental pillar of sustainable development.** Programme activities 5, 6, 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3: sustainable development in the region; integration of environmental and sectoral policies; education for sustainable development; transport, health and environment; and environment and health.

SUBPROGRAMME 01 – ENVIRONMENT

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 1

THE SEVENTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE "ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE"

3. Following the invitation made by the ministers at the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007), the Committee on Environmental Policy, in consultation with EfE partners, developed a plan for the EfE process' reform through a series of dedicated meetings. The EfE reform plan was adopted by the Committee and endorsed by the Economic Commission for Europe in January and April 2009, respectively. Preparations for the Seventh EfE Ministerial Conference will take place in accordance with the plan, which stipulates, inter alia, that the Committee will act as the convening body for the preparatory processes for the EfE Ministerial Conferences. The next Conference is scheduled to be held in 2011 in Astana.

Work accomplished

4. The Committee's Extended Bureau held a brainstorming meeting on 19 May 2009 to consider possibilities for preparing a pan-European state-of-the-environment assessment report (<http://www.unece.org/env/cep/ExtBureau19May09.html>). The meeting strongly supported the preparation of such a report by the European Environment Agency (EEA) in cooperation with relevant partners, in particular with the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment given the representation of Governments in the Working Group. A follow-up meeting was organized by EEA on 3 July, the main outcome of which was the proposal by EEA to produce an "assessment of the assessment reports" for the Seventh EfE Ministerial Conference in Astana. The report will be some 50 pages and will contain: (a) an assessment of assessments relevant to the pan-European environment priority issues, based on their scientific credibility, policy relevance, legitimacy and usefulness, as well as an analysis of gaps, needs and priorities; (b) evaluation of progress vis-à-vis targets, conventions and agreed actions; and (c) a proposal for a framework and options to build a Regular Assessment Process, including potential costs, based on relevant risk assessment processes and practices, partnerships and programmes.

Work to be undertaken

5. The Committee will, at its sixteenth session, discuss modalities for the preparation of the Seventh EfE Ministerial Conference in Astana on the basis of the reform plan. Furthermore, the Committee will decide on not more than two themes for the Conference agenda and will consider the EEA proposal regarding the pan-European assessment report. During the biennium 2010–2011, the Committee and its Bureau will work, in cooperation with the EfE partners, on preparing the Conference, including its substantive content and format. Within the preparatory process, the Committee will develop a communication plan for promoting the EfE process and the Seventh Ministerial Conference. Information and materials related to the preparatory work for the Conference will be made available online (<http://www.unece.org/env/cep/welcome.html> and <http://www.unece.org/env/efe/welcome.html>).

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 2

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

6. The Environmental Performance Review (EPR) programme is continuing its second cycle of reviews on the basis of the recommendations adopted by the Fifth EfE Ministerial Conference (Kiev, 2003) and by the Committee. The second reviews focus on the particular environmental concerns of the reviewed countries, with an emphasis on integration (sustainable development), implementation and financing. Ministers at the Sixth EfE Ministerial Conference in Belgrade invited reviewed countries to implement the recommendations of their country reviews in accordance with their needs and priorities.

7. At its fifteenth session, the Committee decided that interim reporting regarding the implementation of the recommendations by reviewed countries should be compulsory between two consecutive reviews, and should become a regular part of the EPR procedure.

Work accomplished

8. Nine countries have been reviewed during the second cycle, including the most recent ones: Ukraine (2007), Serbia (2007), Montenegro (2007) and Kazakhstan (2008). The Expert Group on Environmental Performance continued to support and offer advice on the preparation and conduct of the EPRs. It also carried out detailed expert reviews prior to the Committee's peer reviews and reported back to the Committee. The draft EPR report of Kyrgyzstan was examined by the Expert Group (26 January 2009) and peer-reviewed by the Committee (28 January 2009). The work on the second reviews of Uzbekistan and Georgia has started.

9. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) expressed its interest in developing a programme in its region similar to the UNECE EPR programme. Preliminary discussions with ESCWA about transferring knowledge and expertise related to EPRs have been held, and strong interest was expressed by the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lebanon in undertaking an EPR of the country as a pilot project in the ESCWA region.

Work to be undertaken

10. The work will be continued on the second reviews of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia and Azerbaijan, as follows:

(a) Kyrgyzstan: the launch event will take place in autumn 2009.

(b) Uzbekistan: the draft report will be examined by the Expert Group (19 October 2009) and peer-reviewed by the Committee (20 October 2009). The launch event is foreseen for 2010.

(c) Georgia: the expert mission is planned for September/October 2009 and the report will be submitted for peer review at the Committee's next regular session (October 2010). The launch event is foreseen for 2011.

(d) Azerbaijan: The pre-mission is planned for November 2009 and the expert mission for April 2010. The report will be submitted for peer review at the Committee's next regular session (October 2010). The launch event is foreseen for 2011.

11. Several candidate countries are negotiating with the secretariat regarding their second EPR. At least two of them will be reviewed in the biennium 2010–2011. Assistance will be provided to ESCWA with respect to carrying out the EPRs on the modalities to be agreed upon. More information about the EPR programme can be found online (<http://www.unece.org/env/epr/welcome.htm>).

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 3

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

12. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment will help countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE) to strengthen their environmental information and observation capacities. The Working Group will focus its efforts on the areas emphasized by the ministers in Belgrade, in particular (a) indicator-

based assessment, (b) environmental monitoring and reporting by enterprises, and (c) support for the environmental assessment report for the next EfE Ministerial Conference.

Work accomplished

13. At its tenth session (Geneva, 3–4 September 2009), the Working Group: (a) discussed the outcomes of the special sessions of the Committee on Environmental Policy that were of concern to the Working Group; (b) considered a proposal by EEA regarding the preparation of the assessment report for the next EfE Conference; (c) discussed implementation by Montenegro, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine of the recommendations on environmental monitoring and assessment in the second EPRs of those countries, (d) discussed draft guidelines for developing national strategies to use air-quality monitoring as an environmental policy tool; (e) reviewed selected countries' experiences with establishing supporting frameworks for corporate environmental reporting; and (f) considered approaches to ecosystem-based assessments. The Working Group also organized a round table on the latest developments in environmental monitoring and assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2009/2).

14. A Joint Intersectoral Task Force on Environmental Indicators was established in the framework for cooperation with the Conference of European Statisticians on methodological issues of environmental indicators, with the main objective of training country state-of-the-environment experts and statisticians in using the Indicator Guidelines endorsed by the Fifth EfE Ministerial Conference. The Joint Task Force held its first meeting from 31 August to 2 September 2009.

Work to be undertaken

15. On the basis of its renewed mandate and the main directions of work on environmental monitoring and assessment agreed by the Committee, the Working Group will focus on improving environmental observations, data collection and reporting capacities in EECCA, the Russian Federation and interested SEE countries, in particular by: (a) helping to develop national strategies for the use of air-quality monitoring as an environmental policy tool; (b) providing countries with practical guidance for the effective implementation of recommendations on monitoring and information management in the EPRs; (c) training monitoring experts and statisticians in indicator production; (d) developing practical guidance on model enterprise monitoring programmes and corporate environmental reports; and (e) contributing to the environmental assessment report for the next EfE Ministerial Conference. More information about UNECE work on environmental monitoring and assessment can be found online (<http://www.unece.org/env/europe/monitoring/index.html>).

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 4

BUILDING CAPACITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

4.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

16. Since the 1970s, five regional environmental conventions and 12 protocols have been negotiated and adopted in the framework of UNECE. Responsibility for implementation activities lies with the governing bodies.

17. All the UNECE protocols have entered into force except for the three adopted at the Fifth EfE Ministerial Conference in Kiev, namely the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Protocol on Civil Liability and Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs). Following its ratification by France, the Protocol on PRTRs is set to enter into force on 8 October 2009.

Work accomplished

18. At the Sixth EfE Ministerial Conference in Belgrade, the ministers recognized the important role that multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) have played in addressing environmental problems in the region. At the same time, the ministers noted with concern that major challenges remain regarding ratification and implementation of MEAs, and that the beneficial effects of these instruments are not being fully achieved. The ministers called for an enhancement of policies and measures to implement and comply with the MEAs, and encouraged additional efforts to improve the MEAs' effectiveness, coherence and integration into other sectors.

19. The Committee provides a forum in which all government representatives, including the governing bodies of the conventions, can share their experiences with promoting and assessing implementation of these regional environmental instruments as well as identify means for improving compliance with them. Furthermore, the Committee supports, as appropriate, the implementation of the conventions and their protocols.

20. Closer cooperation between the Committee's Bureau and the governing bodies of the MEAs is taking place through informal joint meetings. The EfE reform plan stipulates, among the priorities for the EfE process, the streamlining and enhancement of the implementation by Governments of the commitments they have made to existing UNECE MEAs (ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, paras. 7 (b) and 11 (a)(vi)). Following up on this provision, the representatives of the MEAs' governing bodies participated in the brainstorming meeting of the Committee's Extended Bureau on 19 May 2009 to discuss their possible inputs to preparations for the Seventh EfE Ministerial Conference. They agreed to provide summaries and (preliminary) findings of recent and upcoming assessment reports, with a view to supporting the process of selecting themes for the Conference agenda.

Work to be undertaken

21. It is envisaged that representatives of the governing bodies will play an active role in preparations for the next EfE Ministerial Conference. It is also foreseen that informal meetings between the Bureaux of the Committee and the governing bodies of the conventions will be held when necessary.

4.2 ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY

22. The Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative, a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe and UNECE, builds on the combined strengths and field presence of the lead organizations to perform three key functions: (a) assessment and monitoring of linkages between environment and security; (b) capacity-building and institutional development; and (c) integration of environmental

and security concerns and priorities into international and national policymaking. One component of the ENVSEC activities is to strengthen implementation of the UNECE regional environmental conventions.

Work accomplished

23. To date, assessments of environmental and security risks have been completed for the subregions of Central Asia, Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and the Eastern Caspian. Based on the assessments, ENVSEC has developed and implemented specific work programmes aimed at reducing tensions and solving the problems identified (see www.envsec.org).

Work to be undertaken

24. UNECE will continue to collaborate within the ENVSEC framework, in particular through projects supporting implementation of UNECE regional conventions. Examples of ongoing and planned projects with UNECE involvement are: (a) pilot implementation in Central Asia of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context; (b) a regional cooperation project on dam safety in Central Asia; (c) support for the development of water cooperation in the Kura-Aras river basin; and (d) developing cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine with respect to the Dniester River.

25. As Chairman of ENVSEC, in 2009 UNECE is pursuing the following objectives: (a) establishing a new management structure for ENVSEC and renewing the Memorandum of Understanding between the partners; (b) reviewing the vision and strategy of ENVSEC; (c) further enhancing the visibility of ENVSEC; (d) developing ENVSEC work on climate change adaptation; and (e) improving fund-raising. A key activity in 2009 is the elaboration of the three-year work programme (January 2010–December 2012).

4.3 PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

26. The Committee, recognizing the importance of strengthening the engagement of the private sector in the environmental activities of UNECE, has initiated and sustained discussions on ways to attract private-sector interest in the Committee's work and the EfE process, and on how such partnerships could address environmental and sustainable development objectives. The ministers in Belgrade agreed that the EfE process should engage all stakeholders, including the private sector, to strengthen the work in partnership.

Work accomplished

27. Building on the conclusions of the informal meeting of the Committee's Bureau with representatives of the private sector held during the meeting of the Extended Bureau (24 June 2008), together with its existing experience with working with the private sector, the Committee convened a round-table discussion (13 October 2008) on promoting environmental and sustainable development objectives. The event was attended by representatives of private-sector companies and umbrella associations. It contributed to strengthening the interest of the private sector in the Committee's work and the EfE process. The round table also identified possible ways to forge successful partnerships between the public and the private sectors in member States, as well as to

improve these partnerships' quality so that they might better serve the interests of the broader community.

Work to be undertaken

28. Following the October round table, the Committee decided that creation of a long-term mechanism for communication and cooperation with the private sector was a priority. To this end, the Committee gave the Bureau an extended mandate to take the necessary steps in this direction, including continuing to involve private sector representatives in its work, e.g. through the EPR programme and the environmental monitoring activities. Representatives of the private sector would also be invited to participate in the preparation of the next EfE Ministerial Conference. In this context, specific mechanisms for attracting high-level participation by the private sector in the Conference would need to be developed.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 5

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNECE REGION

29. Building on Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development invited the regional commissions to consider organizing regional implementation meetings within the framework of the two-year implementation cycles of the Commission.

Work accomplished

30. Three regional implementation meetings had been organized thus far. The third UNECE regional implementation meeting on sustainable development was held in January 2008 in Geneva. It reviewed the region's progress vis-à-vis implementing commitments made at the World Summit regarding the following thematic clusters: agriculture, rural development, land management, drought and desertification, and Africa. It evaluated the progress achieved, obstacles and constraints remaining in these areas. The meeting also discussed linkages between thematic priorities and cross-cutting issues, e.g. sustainable production and consumption patterns, education for sustainable development and finance. The outcome of the discussions, reflected in the Chairman's summary, was presented at the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (New York, 5–16 May 2008). This contributed a UNECE regional perspective to the global debate. Moreover, in cooperation with the Commission secretariat and the other regional commissions, the UNECE secretariat organized an interactive discussion during the session. The discussion focused on region-specific barriers and constraints as well as lessons learned and good practices. UNECE also participated in the regional discussions at the Commission's seventeenth session in May 2009.

Work to be undertaken

31. In preparation for the Commission's eighteenth session (New York, May 2010), the organization of the fourth UNECE regional implementation meeting on sustainable development, scheduled to be held on 1 and 2 December 2009 in Geneva, is under way. The meeting is expected to review the region's achievements as well as to consider challenges, lessons learned and the way forward in the area of sustainable transport, chemicals and waste management, mining and the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns. The meeting

will also consider linkages to cross-cutting issues such as education for sustainable development. Information and materials for the meeting are being posted online (http://www.unece.org/env/SustainableDevelopment/4Session/RIM_4.Dec2009.htm).

32. Subject to decision by the Commission at its spring 2011 session, a fifth UNECE regional implementation meeting on sustainable development might be organized at the end of 2011 or beginning of 2012 in preparation for the Commission's twentieth session (New York, May 2012). This twentieth session is scheduled to be the review session of the fifth implementation cycle, focusing on forests, biodiversity, biotechnology, tourism and mountains. Alternatively, there might be need for a regional preparatory meeting if the United Nations General Assembly decides to hold a summit on sustainable development in 2012 on the twentieth anniversary of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 6

INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SECTORAL POLICIES

33. Integrating environmental concerns into the activities of other sectors, whether economic or social, is one of the key challenges to effective implementation of environmentally sound sustainable development principles. Since the Rio Conference in 1992, actions and programmes in the UNECE region have worked towards these goals, but significant efforts are still needed through a wide range of policy, legal, institutional and financial measures and incentives.

34. The Committee on Environmental Policy has established cross-sectoral linkages, activities and cooperation with other UNECE committees (e.g. Transport, Housing and Land Management), with the UNECE conventions' governing bodies, and with other international organizations such as the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO-EURO). UNECE environmental cross-sectoral programmes should be further encouraged to ensure effective support for national and regional initiatives. This would accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production, thus promoting sustainable social and economic development.

6.1 EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

35. At the Fifth Efe Ministerial Conference in Kiev, the ministers agreed on the preparation of a strategy for education for sustainable development (ESD) and invited UNECE to work with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other relevant actors on a regional ESD strategy. The High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries (Vilnius, 17–18 March 2005) adopted the UNECE Strategy for ESD and established a Steering Committee on ESD to oversee the Strategy's implementation and to review its progress.

Work accomplished

36. The Steering Committee has held four meetings thus far (December 2005, December 2006, March/April 2008 and February 2009). These have seen major outcomes such as the adoption of the workplans for 2005–2007 and for 2008–2010 (phases I and II, respectively), the decision to hold a joint high-level segment on ESD during the Sixth Efe Ministerial Conference in Belgrade and the establishment of an Expert Group on Competences in ESD. A number of activities have been carried out: (a) subregional workshops on ESD; (b) the establishment of a comprehensive reporting

mechanism; and (c) a collection of good practices in ESD. Most countries are showing commitments to establishing the necessary policies and institutional structures to implement the Strategy and to developing competences in ESD as well as the necessary tools and materials to support the implementation process. A Joint Statement on ESD was adopted at the Sixth Efe Ministerial Conference that expressed a commitment to further implementation of the Strategy through the second and third implementation phases and beyond 2015. The mandate of the Steering Committee to oversee the regional implementation of the Strategy was extended until 2015. An Expert Group on Competences in ESD was recently established with the tasks of preparing (a) general recommendations for policymakers and (b) a range of core competences in ESD for educators.

Work to be undertaken

37. In accordance with the workplan for phase II (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/5), the focus of ongoing activities is on coordination, development of competences, capacity-building and the sharing of experience to support ESD in the region. In the biennium 2010–2011, the activities will include development by the recently established expert group of a set of competences in ESD, the sharing of good practices (with focus on addressing sustainable consumption, production and transportation through ESD in the context of climate change), awareness-raising and the review of implementation. Priority areas for this phase continue to relate to the development and implementation of national ESD action plans and the development of ESD competences, in particular those required by educators. In 2010, the first mandatory review of implementation of the Strategy will be carried out on the basis of national implementation reports to be prepared by the Member States. The next meeting of the Steering Committee will be held in March 2010; the Bureau has provisionally scheduled its meeting for November 2009. Information and materials on the UNECE ESD-related work are available on the website (<http://www.unece.org/env/esd/welcome.htm>).

6.2 TRANSPORT, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

38. The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) was established in 2002 under the joint auspices of UNECE (Environment and Transport Divisions) and WHO-EURO. The objectives of THE PEP are to promote policy integration and sustainable transport development, notably in urban areas, through the sharing of best practice, capacity-building and awareness-raising. The programme focuses on activities to assist Member States in implementing the Amsterdam Declaration adopted by the Third High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (22–23 January 2009), with a particular focus on sustainable urban transport solutions in the Russian Federation and in EECCA and SEE countries. The agreed new priority goals for the Programme are: (a) sustainable economic development through investment in the environment and health-friendly transport; (b) sustainable mobility and the promotion of a more efficient transport system; (c) reduced emissions of transport-related greenhouse gases, air pollutants and noise; and (d) promotion of policies and actions conducive to healthy and safe modes of transport.

Work accomplished

39. The Third High-level Meeting was hosted by the Netherlands under the theme, “Making THE Link: Transport Choices for our Health, Environment and Prosperity”. Government representatives adopted the Amsterdam Declaration, intended to reinvigorate THE PEP and to contribute to sustainable and healthy living, in particular in cities across the pan-European region.

40. A workshop on sustainable and healthy urban transport was organized in October 2008 in cooperation with the Ministries of Transport, Health and Environment of the Republic of Moldova and the National Scientific and Applied Centre for Preventative Medicine, with support from Switzerland. The workshop highlighted specific urban transport challenges in EECCA and SEE and provided inputs to the High-level Meeting.

Work to be undertaken

41. The Amsterdam Declaration adopted a new workplan for THE PEP (2009–2014). At its seventh session (22–23 October 2009), the Steering Committee of THE PEP will consider concrete projects and discuss funding options to support THE PEP activities in the coming five years. Three implementation mechanisms support achievement of the Amsterdam goals: (a) THE PEP *estaffete* (relay race), designed to diffuse best practice in sustainable urban transport across the region; (b) the national transport, health and environment action plans (NTHEAPs); and (c) THE PEP Partnership, whose goal is to build capacity and assist Member States in developing these plans. The Committee will develop a communication strategy to enhance the visibility of THE PEP.

42. In order to launch the *estaffete*, a workshop on safe and healthy walking and cycling in urban areas is being organized (Pruhonice, Czech Republic, 24–25 September 2009). Drawing on good practices, the workshop will encourage policymakers in the three sectors to develop targeted strategies and concrete measures that support pedestrian and cycle-friendly cities. The programme covers planning, financing, infrastructure development and regulations to support walking and cycling as viable and attractive modes of urban mobility.

43. A second workshop is planned as a follow-up *estaffete* on “institutional conditions for policy integration in transport, health and environment”. It will be held in Skopje in late 2009 or early 2010. Information and materials on THE PEP-related work are available online (<http://www.unece.org/thepep/en/welcome.htm>).

6.3 ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

44. The Ministerial Conferences on Environment and Health of WHO-EURO have been organized since 1989. Building on 20 years of environment and health action in Europe and on countries’ commitment to strengthen health systems, the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health will set the European agenda with regard to emerging environmental health challenges for years to come. Ministers of health and of the environment and other stakeholders come together to strive for consensus and make political commitments to promote a safe and healthy environment. They have entrusted the European Environment and Health Committee with the tasks of following up on their decisions and serving as a steering committee for the preparation of the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Parma, Italy, 10–12 March 2010).

Work accomplished

45. The Committee on Environmental Policy elected five members (Austria, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands and Uzbekistan) to represent the environment sector on the European Environment and Health Committee for the period up to the next Ministerial Conference in 2010. High-level preparatory meetings, organized back-to-back with the European Environment and Health Committee, were held in March 2008 in Milan, Italy; in October 2008 in Madrid; and in April 2009 in Bonn, Germany. To ensure that Member States have the opportunity to exchange views about and provide inputs to the Parma Conference declaration, a drafting group has been established to meet on a regular basis. The outcome of its work is reflected in a draft declaration and will be presented for comments by Member States by 15 September.

Work to be undertaken

46. The environment and health preparatory process leading up to the Conference will continue to focus on children as well as address other environmental health issues of increasing concern such as climate change. Cross-cutting issues with a focus on children's environmental health will also be on the agenda of the upcoming event (<http://www.euro.who.int/parma2010>). Comments on the draft declaration will be included in a revised version by the WHO secretariat.
