

## SPECA

### Kazakhstan to chair UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia in 2013



The 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) concluded on 28 November 2012 in Bangkok. The Governing Council, the top decision making body of the Programme, elected Kazakhstan as chair-country for one year. It takes the succession of Turkmenistan, which chaired SPECA for the period 2010-2012.

At the meeting, Jawed Ludin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, expressed his country's strong support for SPECA and offered to chair the Programme in 2013-2014. A side event of the Governing Council was devoted to assessing progress in the implementation of decisions of the Fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan in the SPECA framework. The Representative of Afghanistan as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan, Ján Kubiš, and the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Central Asia, Miroslav Jeněa, expressed support to the development and implementation in the SPECA framework of projects facilitating regional economic cooperation between Afghanistan and Central Asian countries. This would be particularly important to consolidate Afghanistan's "transformation decade" starting in 2014. The meeting called upon multilateral and bilateral donors to provide increased funding to such projects.



In his opening remarks at the Governing Council Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNECE Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj underlined the importance of a thorough discussion of regional aspects of the post 2015 development agenda and implementation of the Rio+20 priorities in the SPECA framework, as recommended by the Economic Forum.

The Governing Council also took note with appreciation of the Proposals on strengthening SPECA presented by UNECE and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It welcomed the offer by their Executive Secretaries, Sven Alkalaj and Noeleen Heyzer, to undertake consultations in the capitals of SPECA member countries on these Proposals in the course of 2013, with a view to present these to the next session of the Governing Council that will be hosted by Kazakhstan in the last quarter of 2013.

The Governing Council was preceded by the 2012 SPECA Economic Forum under the title "Strengthening Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Central Asia by Sharing the Asian Experience" held on 27 and 28 November 2012. The session allowed participants to reflect on the relevance of the experience of various Asian and Eurasian economic cooperation and integration organizations for Central Asia. □

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/speca/welcome.html>  
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## Water Convention

### Parties to Water Convention agree on historic step towards worldwide transboundary water cooperation



The Meeting of the Parties (MoP) to the UNECE Water Convention adopted several decisions and a new programme of work that mark a crucial turning point in the globalization of the Convention. Some 330 participants, representing Parties and non-Parties from the UNECE region and beyond, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations attended the sixth session of the MoP, which was held from 28 to 30 November 2012 in Rome.

## A unanimous desire to enable accession to the Convention for all UN Member States

In his opening message, Mr. Ban Ki-moon welcomed the forthcoming global opening of the Convention: "Your experience and the lessons you have learned will be invaluable. I encourage countries outside the UNECE region to join the Convention and contribute to its further development." Iraq and Tunisia expressed their interest in joining the Convention as soon as possible.



Parties adopted a decision on simplifying the procedure for the accession of non-UNECE countries to the Convention. Any future request for accession by any member of the United Nations will be considered as approved by the MoP, once the amendments to articles 25 and 26 to the Convention enter into force for all the Parties that adopted them in 2003. With this decision, it is expected that non-UNECE countries will be able to accede to the Water Convention as of the end of 2013.

## Establishment of an Implementation Committee

The Implementation Committee for the Convention was established. It will render practical case-tailored assistance to prevent water-related disputes and support Parties in their efforts to implement the Convention. Its nine members were elected by consensus to serve in a personal capacity. They represent a good mix and balance of competences to accomplish the Committee's tasks and include a number of outstanding lawyers and water management experts.

## A new programme of work to further strengthen water cooperation

Parties adopted the new programme of work for 2013-2015. Work on support to implementation and accession, NPDs and adaption to climate change in transboundary basins will remain the cornerstones of the work under the Convention. In addition, in order to answer to today's challenges, new areas of work were included such as quantifying the benefits of transboundary cooperation, a thematic assessment on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus and activities related to the opening of the Water Convention. Two decisions on cooperation with global partners— with GEF and UNESCO— were adopted, which will reinforce the implementation of the Water Convention.

## Signature of the Dniester Treaty between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine

During the meeting, the signing ceremony of the new bilateral Treaty between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Cooperation in the Field of Protection and Sustainable Development of the Dniester River Basin took place.

## Italy: new Chair of the Bureau

Italy was elected Chair of the Bureau. Massimo Cozzone, Senior Officer at the Department for Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Energy from the Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, succeeds Sibylle Vermont of Switzerland as Chair. □



For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.unece.org/env/water/mop6.html>.

## Aarhus Convention



## Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs focus on assistance to countries and on global promotion of the Protocol

The second meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was held at the United Nations in Geneva from 20 to 21 November 2012. The meeting, attended by around 60 delegates from Governments, non-governmental and international organizations, focused, among others, on global promotion of the Protocol and strengthening countries' capacities in establishing pollutant release and transfer register (PRTR) systems.

At the meeting, an expert from the Ministry of Environmental Protection of China expressed interest in collaborating with Parties to the Protocol on establishing a PRTR system for the country, and Parties mandated the secretariat and the Bureau to follow up on possible advisory support to China. Delegates applauded significant progress achieved by Chile and its PRTR system, used by over 10,000 facilities, which was presented by a

representative of the Ministry of Environment of the country. Participants also welcomed the positive experience of other countries in Latin America and Central America in establishing PRTR systems and thanked Spain and the United Nations Institute on Training and Research for promoting the Protocol in that region.

Furthermore, the Working Group expressed its appreciation to the Republic of Moldova for the political leadership it had provided to the promotion of the PRTR Protocol at the side events during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference). To further the Protocol's global promotion, the Working Group agreed on a format for a joint global round table on PRTRs to take place in Geneva on 19 November 2013 under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and UNECE.

Another highlight of the meeting was "PRTR speed dating", an informal thematic bilateral session specifically designed to match countries' needs with available technical assistance from countries with developed PRTR systems. The positive outcomes from the session included the provision of free open-source PRTR database software, assistance with setting up a PRTR and advice on release measurement and estimation methodologies for countries that are in the process of establishing PRTR registers, in particular in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and in South-East Europe. Thematic surveys carried out by the secretariat were used to help in matching, as they provide significant data and useful background information for assistance and show the specific technical needs and remaining problems related to pollutant monitoring and releases in countries.

Delegates also debated a proposal on promoting the Protocol in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia put forward by Belarus, and mandated Belarus and Armenia to hold further consultations with national focal points from those countries and to report to the Working Group at its next meeting in 2013.

In addition, the Working Group started preparations for the second session of the Protocol's Meeting of the Parties, to take place in 2014 in the Netherlands at the invitation of the Dutch Government. Parties agreed on the procedures with regard to preparing a work programme for 2014–2017 and a strategic plan for 2015–2020, but failed to reach consensus on future financial arrangements under the Protocol and specifically whether the scheme of contributions to support the work programme should remain voluntary for the next intersessional period. □

For further information, please visit:  
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## THE PEP

### Green and healthy urban mobility: moving in the right direction

Transport and mobility are critical to economic activity and our daily life. If we consider all its ramifications, transport-related activity can account for up to 20% of gross domestic product.

But transport also affects our health and our environment through congestion, air pollution, greenhouse gas and noise emissions and road accidents. And most of these are exacerbated in urban agglomerations. Countries therefore need to find innovative policy responses to minimize the negative impact of transport.

On 14 November, policymakers and technical experts from the transport, environment and health sectors examined these issues in depth at THE PEP 2012 Symposium "Green and Health-friendly Mobility for Sustainable Urban Life".

During the Symposium, panelists explored the many challenges arising in today's urban centres, with a view towards the city of the future, one that supports green growth, low emissions and encourages healthy lifestyles through, e.g. eco-driving, e-mobility and active (non-motorized) transport such as walking and cycling.

#### Moving into its second decade

The Symposium preceded the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary session of Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP). The discussions



at the Symposium will provide input to the 4<sup>th</sup> High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment, to be held in April 2014 in Paris, hosted by the Government of France.

This High-level Meeting aims to attract ministers from all three sectors, and it aims to underline the importance of an integrated policy approach towards sustainable urban mobility to set a renewed agenda for transport, health and environment in the UNECE region.



While the challenges of congestion, noise, air pollution, GHG emissions and road-traffic injuries have not disappeared, the second decade of THE PEP will seek to create a new vision for urban living. It will reflect evolving trends such as:

- changing demographics (aging populations, in-migration to cities);
- environmental change due to the expected increase in extreme weather;
- accessibility (e.g. for persons with reduced mobility, vulnerable populations such as the elderly and the poor);
- the new focus on urban planning and design and the built environment (e.g. more dense and compact cities of mixed zoning to limit commute time);
- social and employment policies to encourage active mobility (e.g. incentives for flexitime, shower facilities and bike racks at work);
- standards for signs and signals for safe cycle and pedestrian traffic. □

For more information, please visit:  
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## Energy

### Conference in Almaty spells out need for foreign direct investment and public-private partnerships in advanced fossil fuel technologies

On 14-15 November 2012 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, UNECE held a conference on "Attracting foreign investment in advanced fossil fuel technologies". The event brought together over 100 experts. They included high-level government officials from nine countries—Afghanistan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan—as well as representatives of investment and development banks and providers of advanced fossil fuel technologies. Mr. Bakhytzhhan Jaxaliev, Vice-Minister from the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies opened the conference.

One of the first discussions centred on the role that fossil fuels would play in a green economy, in a post-Rio+20 world. Participants agreed that coal and other fossil fuels would inevitably continue to play a role in the energy mix. And increasingly so, particularly in China and India.

However, introducing advanced and more efficient electricity technologies required a level of investment above what was available internally, and foreign direct investment would therefore have a critical role to play. The conference also discussed ways to strengthen public-private partnerships in cleaner electricity production as one of the principal avenues for inflow of foreign capital and for technology transfer.

The UNECE representatives presented the findings of a study dealing with the investment frameworks. The study established benchmarks against which the electricity-generation regulatory frameworks and the investment climate in the participating countries could be measured. Participants also learned about concrete investment opportunities in cleaner electricity production and related technologies. Over a dozen investment projects were presented and discussed with the audience.

The conference was the final output of a project implemented jointly by UNECE, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). □

See more about the project at:  
[http://www.unece.org/energy/se/docs/unda\\_sed/unda\\_sp1.html](http://www.unece.org/energy/se/docs/unda_sed/unda_sp1.html).

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