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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Seventh session
Geneva, 27–29 November 2006

REPORT OF THE MEETING

1. The seventh session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment was held in Geneva on 27–29 November 2006.
2. The meeting was attended by delegations from Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Poland, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
3. Representatives of the European Environment Agency (EEA) attended the meeting.
4. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP-Uzbekistan), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) attended, as did civil society organization representatives from the Volgograd-Ecopress Information Centre (Russian Federation) and the Kazakhstan Business Council for Sustainable Development (Kazakhstan) and business and industry representatives from AES Ust-Kamenogorsk CHP (Kazakhstan), JSC “Caustic” (Russian Federation), Karachaganak Petroleum Operating (Kazakhstan) and KazTransOil (Kazakhstan).
5. Mr. Kaj Bärlund, Director of the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division of UNECE, made an opening statement. He welcomed the participation of experts from governments, EEA, international organizations, NGOs and business and industry. He said that

the meeting had an important role in the preparatory process of the Belgrade Conference, as it would not only conduct an in-depth review of the draft report on pan-European environmental assessment (Belgrade Assessment) but also prepare other contributions on monitoring and assessment to the Belgrade Conference, namely the three sets of guidelines for environmental monitoring and reporting. He highlighted the need for long-term cooperation between public authorities and the private sector to ensure an effective system of environmental monitoring and reporting. He invited participants to consider the future work of the Working Group and come up with proposals, as its mandate would expire in 2007.

6. Mr. Yuri Tsaturov (Russian Federation) chaired the meeting.

I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

7. The Working Group adopted the agenda as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/11.

II. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE SIXTH SESSION

8. The Working Group adopted the report for its sixth session as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/2.

III. OFFICERS OF THE WORKING GROUP

9. The Working Group took note of the view of the Committee on Environmental Policy, expressed at its thirteenth session that there seemed to be no need to change the leadership of the Working Group before the Belgrade Conference. It also took note of the document on the proposed composition and functions of the Working Group's Bureau (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/13) and agreed to postpone consideration of this document until the discussion of the Working Group's future mandate. It elected Ms. Irina Atamuradova (Turkmenistan) and Mr. David Stanners (EEA) Vice-Chairpersons of the Working Group.

IV. SUPPORT TO THE FOURTH PAN-EUROPEAN REPORT

A. Draft Belgrade Assessment report

10. The representatives of EEA informed the meeting about the ongoing consultation process for the draft Belgrade Assessment, which had been available for comments since early October 2006 via the new online review tool (<http://belgrade-consultation.ewindows.eu.org>). The Working Group was also informed of the outcomes of the consultation meeting held in November 2006, where NGOs and Regional Environmental Centres (RECs) had shared their views on the draft report. The Working Group was invited to comment on the outcomes of the consultation meeting as well as the cross-cutting issues of the draft report and its individual chapters.

11. During the ensuing discussion, a number of issues were raised and commented on which were either of a general nature or applicable to all chapters, as follows:

(i) Data

12. A number of issues were raised regarding data, including its availability, quality, reliability and comparability. Lack of data was identified as a problem in the preparation of all chapters of the draft report. EEA would appreciate receiving more data from countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE) to fill in the gaps. While EEA confirmed the use of official data in the report, the Working Group requested EEA to carefully check the data and their sources, ensuring that the data used were from official sources and that the sources were clearly indicated. If the figures were based on estimates, assessments or projections by international organizations, this should be clearly shown. In the case of data from published scientific literature, it was important to fully reference such information. In view of the diversity among the EECCA countries, aggregated data on the whole subregion could in several cases be misleading, and presentation of data by country wherever applicable was requested.

(ii) Case studies

13. EEA invited countries to provide it with additional data for boxes and case studies to help illuminate important issues and to update the information in the current draft in order to better reflect the changes since the Kiev Conference.

(iii) Subregional coverage

14. It was proposed that the SEE countries receive as much coverage in the report as the EECCA countries.

(iv) Length and availability of the final report

15. The Belgrade Assessment was expected to be shorter than the Kiev Assessment – approximately 250 pages long. The final report would be published in June 2007 in English and Russian. The online review tool would be used as an additional distribution channel.

(v) Deadline for comments

16. The deadline for comments and inputs remained 3 December 2006. In order to get the best available data, the EEA would accept, on specific country requests, additional substantive inputs from countries until mid-January.

(vi) List of contacts

17. The list of contact persons for each chapter would be circulated to all Working Group members to facilitate bilateral discussion and clarification of important country-specific issues.

(vii) Russian translation

18. The Working Group appreciated EEA's efforts to make the Russian version available. However, the quality of the Russian translation of several chapters was questioned. EEA assured the meeting that the final report would be of high quality in both Russian and English.

B. Review of individual draft report chapters

19. Responsible EEA experts introduced individual report sections, focusing on the structure, key messages and questions for consideration and comments. In addition to the common problems listed above, specific comments on each chapter/subchapter were shared at the meeting.

(i) Sustainable consumption and production and waste management

20. During the discussion, experts made comments and proposals relating, *inter alia*, to assessment of progress in sustainable consumption and production policies; additional available data; the problem of accumulated waste (including toxic and radioactive waste) in EECCA countries (as an addition to the problem of currently generated waste); overestimates of waste volumes in some EECCA countries by communal services because of their corporate self-interest; international trade and its impacts on the environment; and a need for a compensation system for environmental damages caused by international trade. The fact that the European Union had a bigger ecological footprint than EECCA countries should be highlighted, experts agreed. The Environment and Security Initiative could provide more information on accumulated waste in Central Asia. The information on waste which had been presented by EECCA experts at the three UNEP workshops (see para.43) should be referenced.

(ii) Energy

21. During the discussion, experts made comments and proposals relating, *inter alia*, to energy and poverty; data sources; further expansion of the discussion on nuclear energy in the section, including related risks and storage of nuclear waste; energy-related air pollution and transboundary air pollution; increased consumption of local energy sources in the EECCA countries; insufficient information on particulate matter (PM) emissions from the energy sector; use of the 2005 statistics received from the International Energy Agency (IEA); the need to further examine the issue of energy efficiency, to include a comparison between the most modern technologies and the current technologies applied in different parts of the region, and to provide good examples of energy mixes from the perspective of sustainability; and the obsolescence of the Green Investment Scheme. It was clarified that the IEA assessments of EECCA were used for this section for the sake of consistency.

(iii) Climate change

22. During the discussion, experts made comments and proposals relating, *inter alia*, to the Green Investment Scheme; climate change and its impact on agriculture and permafrost in the Russian Federation; the need to focus more on adapting economic sector development to the requirements of climate change abatement; subregional specifics of climate change and their implications; incorrect country data; the need for clear references to scientific literature; the use of IPCC¹ assessments and reports; the presentation of the ratification status of the Kyoto Protocol; and the need to highlight the experience of Armenia and/or Moldova in using Kyoto

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

mechanisms, the recent TACIS project on implementation of Kyoto commitments, and the decisions made at the second meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol in Nairobi.

(iv) Nature and biodiversity

23. The presentation of the chapter highlighted the focus on the Kiev Resolution on Biodiversity and the 2010 target. During the discussion, experts made comments and proposals relating, *inter alia*, to the need for references to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes; and the need for more attention to issues such as international trade and endangered species, invasive alien species, and linkages between energy and biodiversity.

(v) Agriculture

24. During the discussion, experts made comments and proposals relating, *inter alia*, to irrigation rehabilitation and water logging; transboundary aspects of water in agriculture; the impact of agriculture on groundwater quality; and the impact of genetically modified organisms on agriculture.

(vi) Environment and health

25. During the discussion, experts made comments and proposals relating, *inter alia*, to environmental problems that upcoming oil and gas drilling would create in the Caspian Sea area; consequences of the Chernobyl accident and use of the latest report of the Chernobyl Forum; transboundary impacts of nuclear contamination; risk prevention issues; the need to highlight the issue of noise pollution; overuse of the Aral Sea's water; radon pollution from mining waste; and the health impacts of foreign military installations and the space industry in Kazakhstan. Experts pointed out that the report should cover not only the impact of natural disasters on health but also their impact on the environment.

(vii) Chemicals

26. During the discussion, experts made comments and proposals relating in particular to the need for balanced attention to persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals; the need for a broader perspective on chemicals (as opposed to a focus on the chemical industry); the urgent problem of disposing of plastic packaging, and possible solutions; the national programme on chemicals in Belarus; and the Russian Federation's chemical weapons destruction programme. Experts questioned the statement that mercury pollution was the responsibility of EECCA countries alone. They also questioned the appropriateness of referring to the adverse environmental impact of the planned construction of a gas pipeline along the Baltic Sea bed.

(viii) Transport

27. During the discussion, experts made comments and proposals relating in particular to the need to reflect recent progress on transport-related issues in specific countries in the report; the need to expand coverage of the Balkan countries; and new vehicle standards adopted in some countries. It was proposed that road safety be covered not in this section but in the section on human health.

(ix) Air quality

28. During the discussion, experts made comments and proposals relating, *inter alia*, to PM_{2.5} as one of the most urgent problems; highlighting the message that gaseous pollutants must be reduced in order to reduce PM; diffuse sources of pollution; household and transport pollution as a priority; the need to eliminate old heavily polluting cars; the use of conclusions drawn in the UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews of EECCA countries; national air pollution abatement strategies in EECCA; and equal coverage of the SEE countries. A number of countries questioned the statement regarding insufficient monitoring and significant data gaps in EECCA countries and requested more realistic wording in the draft. The approach to treating EU and EECCA pollution as separate aspects of European pollution was questioned, as the whole region faced common problems that required common solutions. It was suggested that the chapter should be revised to identify problems common to all countries and those specific to groups of countries. Regarding the questions about data and their sources, EEA confirmed that WHO and other sources would be contacted for data verification.

(x) Water

29. During the discussion, experts questioned the statement in the chapter that the level of water quality monitoring in many EECCA countries had declined in recent years. The corresponding paragraph should be deleted or revised to reflect the actual improvement of the situation. The statement on the quality of water supply and sanitation services in EECCA and SEE countries was also questioned. The figures reflected in various diagrams needed further checking, and references should be clearly indicated. There was a request to add Ukraine to the list of water-stressed countries in the region. With regard to the pollution of large rivers in the EECCA region, it would be necessary to point out which parts of the rivers were polluted, as some rivers were transboundary ones. Experts also mentioned that the use of different names for the SEE subregion caused confusion and that the nomenclature should be made consistent.

(xi) Soil

30. In the presentation, attention was drawn to the question of how to best present this issue, as soil was connected with other topics in the report, particularly agriculture, chemicals and water. Data availability was of particular concern for the chapter, and additional quantitative and recent data would be appreciated. The Working Group was informed that a comprehensive EEA report on soil was under preparation. Therefore, the treatment of the soil issue in the Belgrade report would be brief and focused. In the ensuing discussion, experts emphasized the fundamental role of soil in maintaining socio-economic and ecological systems. Figures on radioactive soil pollution and soil degradation needed further checking, and the countries concerned offered to provide correct data.

(xii) Marine and coastal environment

31. During the discussion, experts made comments and proposals relating, *inter alia*, to coverage of the Sea of Azov; the limited data coverage of the Mediterranean Sea; the high relevance of this issue to coastal countries; and the use of correct and accurate terminology. The Caspian Environment Programme and the Secretariat of the Convention for the Protection of the

Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) could be contacted for additional data. The issue of how to avoid overlapping was also raised, in particular regarding the coverage of climate change.

C. Coordination with related assessments and data collection

32. The OECD representative made a presentation on assessing progress in achieving objective 6.1 of the EECCA Environment Strategy, environmental monitoring and information management. Despite the actions taken by the EECCA countries, the state of monitoring and information management in the region remained critical. He shared the results of the EECCA questionnaire as well as views and concerns expressed by international experts. The Working Group was invited to comment on these messages as well as the main barriers to and priorities for improving monitoring and information management in EECCA.

33. The representative of EEA reported on the progress made, in partnership with other organizations, in the preparation of various products for the Belgrade Conference. Cooperation was occurring with the UN Statistical Division (statistical questionnaire), OECD (EECCA Strategy Progress Assessment Report), UNDP (Western Balkans Regional Environmental Report), UNEP (Global Environment Outlook 4) and UNECE (education for sustainable development). Great efforts had been made to enhance synergy and to ensure coherence among the various assessment reports for the Conference.

D. Progress made under specific activities supporting the preparation of the Belgrade report

34. The TACIS project coordinator from EEA made a presentation on the implementation of various activities under the three components of the project – water, air and climate change – and improvements in environmental information and reporting. He presented the preliminary findings regarding needs assessment for water quality monitoring for EECCA countries. The final report would be available in April 2007 and would be discussed at the next session of the Working Group. He appreciated the cooperation between project partners and EECCA countries, which enabled the efficient implementation of project activities. The ensuing discussion touched on issues such as the methodology used for the water monitoring needs assessment and the results of the country visits.

V. OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT TO THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE

35. The UNECE secretariat made a presentation on how the documents being prepared by the Working Group would fit into the agenda of and the discussions at the Belgrade Conference (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/15). The Executive Committee at its fifth meeting on 14–15 February 2007 would make a decision regarding the inclusion of the guidelines and policy recommendations being prepared by the Working Group in category I documents for the Conference.

A. Guidelines for the application of environmental indicators and for indicator-based environmental reporting

36. The delegation of Ukraine reported on the organization and major results of the workshop held in Donetsk from 31 October to 2 November 2006, particularly on the preparation of guidelines for (a) the application of environmental indicators in EECCA and (b) the preparation of indicator-based assessment reports on the environment. The Working Group expressed gratitude to Ukraine for hosting the event.

37. The UNECE consultant updated the Working Group on the progress and major changes made since the previous session of the WGEMA in the revision of the draft guidelines for the application of environmental indicators in EECCA. He also made a presentation on the draft guidelines on indicator-based environmental reporting, highlighting the key components of such reports and the issues to be covered under each component.

38. The Working Group conducted an in-depth review of the two draft sets of guidelines and made a number of proposals and technical comments regarding possible additions and further revisions. The proposals included, *inter alia*,

- Adding two indicators under climate change: temperature and precipitation;
- Adding “emission per unit of output” under the air quality indicator to reflect material intensity in a more explicit manner;
- Using absolute volumes when considering levels of pollution; and
- Deleting the indicator on road traffic accidents and mortality and injury rates.

39. During the discussion, it was highlighted that the guidelines on indicator-based environmental reporting promoted a new approach and a new structure for national environmental reports, with a stronger focus and policy orientation. It was pointed out that the two sets of guidelines were closely linked and were dynamic and living documents which could be updated to reflect changing situations and national needs. Taking into account the comments made at the meeting, the Working Group agreed on the texts of the two guidelines with amendments.

40. For the organization of similar activities in the future, the Working Group agreed to use task forces composed of country-designated experts.

41. The Working Group also reviewed and discussed the draft recommendations on the adaptation of national systems for environmental monitoring, data collection and environmental reporting for the application of environmental indicators in EECCA, which had been prepared by the workshop in Donetsk. In particular, it was proposed that certain paragraphs be reordered to show priorities; that the title of the document be revised; and that specific paragraphs be reworded.

42. The Working Group approved the revised text of the recommendations for submission to the Belgrade Conference, through the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Ad Hoc Working Group of Senior Officials, for endorsement.

43. The representative of UNEP reported on the three training workshops organized in EECCA countries to discuss the draft UNECE guidelines on environmental indicators and to help prepare an indicator compendium for the Belgrade Conference. The first draft would be prepared between January and March 2007 and the online consultation with EECCA countries would be held in April 2007.

B. Guidelines for environmental monitoring and reporting by enterprises

44. The delegation of Poland reported on the organization and results of the Workshop on Environmental Monitoring and Reporting by Enterprises, held in Debe (Poland) on 4–6 September 2006 to revise the draft guidelines for environmental monitoring and reporting by enterprises (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/14). The Working Group thanked Poland for hosting the event. The UNECE secretariat presented the main changes made in the guidelines by the workshop (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/4/Rev.1).

45. Delegations emphasized the importance of this document for enterprises and state environment authorities, as it provided an instrument for effectively managing enterprise environmental data and aiding environmental policy- and decision-making. Regarding the issue of whether enterprises should monitor environmental impact or environmental quality, it was agreed that it was more realistic to expect enterprises to monitor environmental quality. A number of technical and editorial comments were made to the Russian version of the guidelines and submitted to the secretariat in writing at the session. It was pointed out that consistency between these guidelines and those on indicators and reporting should be ensured. It was also proposed that detail guidance be developed on environmental monitoring programmes for key polluting industries in EECCA².

46. The Working Group approved the guidelines with the understanding that the secretariat would incorporate into the text any comments and submitted written proposals for amendments and would circulate the revised Russian version among Working Group members for quick checking by EECCA delegations to meet the deadline for the submission of documents to the Executive Committee.

C. MODERNIZATION OF AIR-QUALITY MONITORING NETWORKS IN EASTERN EUROPE, CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

47. The delegation of Belarus offered to host a workshop on modernization of air monitoring strategies and networks that would span three to four days during the first week of April 2007. Participants were expected to include 26 experts from the EECCA countries and 14 from other

² The companies that had attended the session met on 30 November 2006 at the second meeting of the Enterprise Consultative Board of the Working Group. They discussed possibilities for participating in and supporting the Working Group's ongoing and possible follow-up activities. Karachaganak Petroleum Operating offered to explore opportunities to provide funding for the air monitoring workshop of 2007, and JSC "Caustic" expressed its readiness to support a study regarding the feasibility of developing environmental monitoring guidelines for the chemical industry. KazTransOil is considering supporting the development of environmental monitoring guidelines for the exploration, extraction and transportation of oil and gas in the Caspian Sea area.

countries. The host country had earmarked funding to cover the costs of accommodation, meals and local transportation for EECCA experts as well as logistics and meeting rooms.

48. The Working Group expressed its appreciation to Belarus for hosting the event and proposed issues for consideration in the preparation of the workshop programme, such as the need to identify users of monitoring data; coordination with other sectors in using the information obtained from monitoring; adaptation of monitoring networks; the contribution of enterprises to air quality monitoring; different levels of technical capacity in EECCA countries and needs for technical upgrading of monitoring networks; and linkages and synergies between various initiatives on air quality monitoring.

D. PREPARATION OF THE REPORT ON THE WORKING GROUP'S ACTIVITIES IN 2005–2007

49. The Working Group discussed the modalities for the preparation of the report to the Committee on Environmental Policy on the implementation of its work programme for 2005–2007 and possible proposals for the extension and revision of its mandate. It was emphasized that efforts should be made jointly by the members of the Working Group, its Bureau and the secretariat. It was agreed that the secretariat would circulate a questionnaire. All members of the Working Group would be invited to provide feedback by 1 February 2007. The Bureau would prepare a report on the basis of country inputs to the questionnaire and the factual information on the Working Group's activities to be compiled by the secretariat. The draft report would be submitted for consideration at the eighth session of the Working Group in June 2007.

50. The meeting documentation, including informal papers and presentations, is available on the Working Group's website <http://www.unece.org/env/europe/monitoring>.