



Action in partnership

European Environment and Health Committee

25 January 2002

Minutes of the fifth meeting 19-21 November 2001, Istanbul

Major actions/decisions

1. The EEHC agreed that “The Future for our Children” within the broader context of sustainable development should be the overall theme of the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health to be held in Budapest in 2004.
2. The EEHC agreed to a special meeting of the Budapest Working Group, to which WHO Member States, as well as the rest of the EEHC, would be invited. This meeting, which will take place on 18-19 April 2002 in Lucca, Italy, will focus on developing the specific topics of the Budapest Conference.
3. The next meeting of the EEHC will take place on 13-14 June 2002 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

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1. Introduction

The meeting was opened by Heinz Schreiber, Co-chair, with a minute of silence in memory of Alan Pinter, Vice-chairman of the EEHC, who passed away unexpectedly on 29 September. On behalf of Turkey, Sefer Aycan, Under-secretary, Ministry of Health, welcomed participants to Istanbul, underlining his support for environment and health issues and making particular mention of tourism, environment and health. Didem Evcı summarized the Turkish National Environment and Health Action Programme that had been approved by the Government and outlined its main points.

The meeting welcomed the following alternate members from the European Commission: for DG SANCO, Marc Seguinot, and for DG Environment, Véronique Angot. The following representatives replaced members: from Hungary - Gyula Dura replacing Alan Pinter; United Kingdom - Gareth Jones replacing Liam Donaldson; EEA - David Stanners replacing Domingo Jimenez-Beltran; and WHO - Roberto Bertollini replacing Marc Danzon.

Advisers to EEHC members also attended, as well as presenters of progress reports. In addition, Anna Golubovska-Onisimova, Chair of the Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials for the Kiev Conference, and Hugo von Meijenfeldt, Chair of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP), participated by special invitation. The list of participants is given in Annex 1: the full names of member acronyms used in these minutes are also given there.

The provisional agenda and programme were approved, as were the minutes of the fourth meeting.

2. Reports by members on relevant environment and health activities

a) UNECE: The Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) agreed that the question of interlinkages between the ECE multilateral agreements should be a regular agenda item to enable governments to share experiences in implementing and promoting legal instruments to improve compliance. Following a roundtable in June 2001 of the governing bodies of the five ECE environmental conventions, an in-depth analysis on linkages between the Aarhus Convention and other ECE environmental conventions and protocols will be done. A review of good practice in public participation in international fora will also be carried out, which could lead to guidelines on this area for the Fourth “Environment for Europe” Conference in Kiev in 2003.

This year Environment Performance Reviews of Estonia, Romania and

Uzbekistan were completed. A chapter on health is usually included in each of these studies, prepared in collaboration with WHO. The CEP mandated its Bureau to explore merging the Environment for Europe process with the Environment and Health process.

UNECE

The joint ad hoc working group on water and industrial accidents, established under the Water and Industrial Accidents Conventions, met in Berlin to discuss an inventory of safety guidelines and previous transboundary accidents, as well as to assist with specific needs in river basins in the region, using projects in Germany, Moldova and Ukraine as a basis. They will also facilitate the exchange of information at local levels. Also underway are guidelines on handling hazardous substances, and on compliance and enforcement. This work will also be ready for the Kiev Conference in 2003. A meeting to draw up a legally binding instrument on civil liability for water-related industrial accidents will be held later in November.

The Aarhus Convention entered into force in 30 October 2001 after speedy ratification. A task force on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) has been set up to consider GMO labelling, related information issues and strengthening public participation in decision-making. This work will be reflected either as an amendment to the Convention or as guidelines; this issue will be discussed at the first meeting of the Parties.

b) ICFTU: At its annual meeting on environment and health, ICFTU members focused particularly on the recent chemical plant accident in France which underlined the continuing need for inspection, not only certification. They welcomed the WTO judgement on asbestos and welcomed the POPs Convention (www.pops.int). In Norway a group is looking at the idea that safety representatives should extend their brief from health and safety to include environment in the workplace.

c) United Kingdom: In October 2001 the Government co-hosted with WHO headquarters an event on risk, looking at risk management approaches in public health, using case studies such as BSE and CJD.

d) ISDE: A Primer of Environment and Health has been developed with WHO support, which provides links into a wealth of organizations and resources. This is a living document, and contributions and comments are very welcome. (www.isde.org)

EEHC
members

e) WHO: The radiation emergency response and public health programme based in Helsinki will be merged with those in WHO headquarters effective 1 January 2002. However, during the next year there will be some capacity in the Bonn Office to deal with this area. A task force and steering group on bio-terrorism has been set up based in Copenhagen, primarily to strengthen the evidence base. WHO Regional Committee for Europe in Madrid in September 2001 passed a resolution about the input of the health sector into the sustainable development agenda, asking the EEHC to ensure that the agenda of the Budapest Conference takes into account the decisions taken at the World Summit on Sustainable

Development (WSSD, Rio+10) in Johannesburg in September 2002.

f) ICLEI: An 18-month self-assessment project among local authorities on their implementation of Agenda 21 has just been completed. The results, analysis and case studies have been made into a two-volume report (see www.iclei.org/europe/lasala/index.htm). This work underpinned a policy statement and local authority message for the WSSD (see www.iclei.org/rioplusten). A project in Germany has developed instruments to help local authorities to track hidden subsidies for car use: an English summary will soon be available (see www.iclei.org/europe/english/summary-english.htm). More information available on ICLEI activities on www.iclei.org.

g) EEA: By mid-2002 the EEA will have 31 member countries: 11 new countries will make financial contributions starting from Jan 2002; two more are waiting for ratification; and Poland and Turkey will join in the next six months. The EEA is currently looking at streamlining monitoring and reporting systems, and a high-level seminar is to be held on 27 November 2001: OECD, UNECE, UNEP and WHO are invited to work on this issue together with the EEA. This activity is called for in the 6th Environment Action Plan, and the EEHC is invited to take part. The WHO/EEA monograph on children's health and environment will be launched in spring 2002. Environment and health indicators will be tackled, involving collaboration with WHO as well as other relevant organizations.

The regular indicator-based report Environmental Signals 2001 was published and will in future be associated with the EU Synthesis Report. In September the annual report on transport and environment, TERM 2001, was also issued. The EEA is looking at ways to improve the indicators in this area to include health. Following the Cardiff European Council 1998 (Cardiff Summit) on sector integration, they are working with the relevant Directorates Generals on sector indicator reports on agriculture, energy, tourism and fisheries. The EEA is preparing a pan-European environmental assessment for the Kiev Conference. Indicator fact-sheets are currently being circulated for review. There is a working group with UNECE on environmental monitoring.

A report on the precautionary principle, "Late Lessons from Early Warnings", containing pertinent lessons for the future, will be published in early 2002.

The EEA pointed out that of the list of structural indicators published by the EC in October, health does not appear at all in the top 36, despite the Lisbon, Gothenberg and Cardiff processes which should encourage cross-sectoral awareness. Only disability-free life expectancy is included in the list. The Communication on structural indicators, adopted by the European Commission, is available under the reference number COM 2001(61).

h) EC

The 1999 programme on pollution-related disease, which funded 22 projects (5.2 million euros) that reflected the need to understand better the link between

pollution and health, will be superseded by a new public health programme, and its work on networks and data will be incorporated. With a budget of 360 million euros over 6 years, the programme will focus on large-scale projects and will be organized in three strands: improving information and knowledge; enhancing capacity to respond rapidly to health threats from both communicable and non-communicable diseases; and addressing health determinants. This last category relates to lifestyle and socioeconomic factors as well as the environment. The objectives of environment and health activities will be to develop guidelines, control and develop environment-related health risks, and develop community health policies for the environment; it is likely that transport policies will figure here. Environment and health will also be included within the rapid alert system and the information strand.

On electromagnetic fields (EMF), a 14 November report on new risks of childhood leukaemia will lead to an updated opinion from the Scientific Steering Committee. The EC is developing a risk management strategy on EMF and is playing a greater role on this subject; on 30 November a conference will be held in Luxemburg on regulatory frameworks for EMF.

A Communication of the Commission on environment and health is being elaborated. This communication elaborates a strategy to reduce the impact of the environment on human health, giving special emphasis to children. It is expected to be adopted by the Commission at the end of 2002 and will then be presented to the Council and the European Parliament.

Priority areas for the EC are a precautionary approach to radio frequency fields; the development of indoor air quality policies, prevention of asthma and allergy, and cardiovascular disease; and a better legal basis for the improvement of public health and the development of a Community Environment and Health Strategy.

i) Turkey: With support of the ministry of health, a survey in Ankara found that poor quality houses have better quality air, and good quality houses have poor air because of the lack of ventilation. Turkey also emphasized that an action plan on tourism, health and environment was needed for those countries in which tourism was an important economic factor and distributed a proposal on that.

j) Ireland: Drew attention to the plethora of information available and the need for a clearinghouse to sift out the information on environment and health. Further support was expressed for Turkey's interest in tourism, and this was backed up by Austria. It was agreed that mapping policy development and sharing information is better than duplicating expertise in house.

k) Italy: Neil Manning reported on the rapid environment and health risk assessment project (REHRA) for the Danube, which is funded by the Italian Ministry for the Environment. The methodology is complete, with the environmental data simplified. The results of the Bulgarian tests will be presented in Sofia in December 2001. In Hungary, a training workshop on REHRA methodology was conducted at the National Institute of Environmental

Health in Budapest, the methodology documents and software are being translated, and a site visit is planned in March 2002 with results expected in May 2002 when risk management workshops will be held. Possible future developments include REHRA in the Mediterranean and extending the project to Romania, looking at long-term consequences, continuous pollution sources and developing a strategic risk index.

Bjørn Erikson thanked the Italian government for their cooperation which made it possible to include trade union participation in the pilot project in Romania. This included meetings with ICFTU representatives and trade unions at the plant level and the use of the environment questionnaire to workers and trade unionists in the plants. He regarded the experience as very positive and hoped it would be possible to build on the experience gained. He expressed the need to follow this up in the other REHRA pilot projects in Hungary and other countries.

3. Implementation of the London Conference decisions – progress reports.

a) HESME (EEHC5/1a): Bogulaw Baranski reported on progress of health, and environment and safety management in enterprises (HESME), which focused on the development of criteria and indicators of good practice, and guidance on evaluation of workplace health: some 30 countries are interested in the programme (Presentation on www.eehc.dk).

Cagatay Güler added support for HESME, remarking on the need to collaborate with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and with different ministries at country level, to improve training programmes, and to develop good case studies at local level. The Ministry of Health distributed a proposal on this topic.

b) Children, environment and health (EEHC5/1b): Ondine Von Ehrenstein reported that a project on intervention on environmental tobacco smoke and children is underway in Latvia and Poland, in conjunction with the WHO headquarters Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI) and the Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health (NMH) cluster. She also reported that the conference entitled “Children's Environmental Health II: A Global Forum for Action”, held in Washington, DC in September, had agreed a declaration (www.cich.ca/postglobal.htm). In addition, the programme will collaborate closely with the EC injury programme and developing indicators. (Presentation on www.eehc.dk)

c) Global change and health (EEHC5/1c): Bettina Menne reported on the setting up of the EU-funded project on climate change and adaptation strategies for human health, and the recent meeting held in Orvieto, Italy, on the combined effects of stratospheric ozone depletion and climate change on human health. Guidelines for assessment of health effects are in preparation with UNEP, WMO and Health Canada, and a literature review on globalization, environment and health has been completed. Workshops are being prepared on phrenology,

asthma and allergies; on climate change, extreme weather events and preventive measures; and health scenarios. A WHO book on climate change is being prepared, as is a review on health impacts of energy policies, and in April 2002 the first framework on adaptation will be available. The 2002 World Health Report will include a chapter on climate change as a risk factor. There is also joint work with the EEA on indicators. (Presentation www.eehc.dk)

David Stanners welcomed the use of scenarios, noting that indicators only tell us what the situation was. Increasingly, “nowcasting” (estimating the situation now) is used, as well as forecasting. The EEA has a draft chapter on scenarios in the Geo report, looking at four different scenarios with the outlook to 2032. OECD and UNEP are also involved with this kind of work.

d) Transport, environment and health (EEHC5/1d) Francesca Raccioppi informed that the Steering Group on implementation of the Charter of Transport, Environment and Health met in Malta in October 2001 and agreed to continue with their activities and meetings at least until the second high-level meeting on transport, environment and health in Geneva, 5 July 2002. At that meeting decisions will be taken on how to rationalize the work carried out by WHO and UNECE under the framework of the London and Vienna conferences, respectively, and on the possibility to start negotiating a framework convention on transport, environment and health. The Charter Steering Group decided that the focus in the coming period would be on the following activities: a clearinghouse on transport, environment and health; guidelines for public participation, awareness and information on transport decision-making being led by the United Kingdom; activities to raise awareness and increase the Charter implementation at the local level; Austria’s initiative on thematic workshops on health impact assessment and economic evaluation of transport and land-use decisions (in cooperation with France, Switzerland and Sweden); and research. A joint WHO/ECE tripartite expert group will hold a meeting on 26-27 November 2001 that will focus on the identification of priority areas and activities for joint work at the pan-European level, as well as on legal and policy issues related to the development of new international instruments, such as a framework convention.

The EEHC agreed to support the efforts to encourage further participation of the health sector in Charter implementation and to endorse the two requests made by the Steering Group on the continuation and dissemination of work on Charter implementation.

e) NEHAPs: Ivan Ivanov reported on the progress achieved so far in NEHAP implementation. WHO/EURO is finalizing a two-year project in support of NEHAP implementation in five countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia). This project provided evidence on how WHO can assist countries, and the report will be available in late January 2002. Twenty-six countries have received assistance on NEHAPs from WHO, and tools and guidelines have been developed for implementing the plans. It will be useful for Budapest 2004 to look at evaluation of NEHAPs – what was the impact on countries, what worked and what did not work, and what progress has been been.

A request was made of the EEHC to support the setting up of a steering committee to guide the valuation process and provide advice. (See details in presentation www.eehc.dk)

Anna Golubovska-Onisimova noted that Ecoforum, the NGO coalition group associated with the Environment for Europe process, had suggested a conference on NEHAPs in order to increase support for implementation. Kia Regner noted that the NEHAPs had lost momentum in some places, that local action is very important, and that they should be on the Budapest Conference agenda. Gareth Jones confirmed that the NEHAP developed in the United Kingdom in the early 1990s was a very useful first step that had led to a sustainable development strategy. Andrei Isac noted that Moldova is also working on a similar strategy and that interministerial collaboration for NEHAPs was very useful in this. However, he further noted that the CIS will need financial support to implement their NEHAPs. Wolfgang Teubner also supported the NEHAP programme and its relevance to Agenda 21.

The EEHC welcomed the continued support of WHO for NEHAP implementation but recognized that the process must be country driven. It supported the establishment of a NEHAP Steering Committee to carry the implementation process forward and requested WHO to report back at the next EEHC on country support for this approach, as well as terms of reference, possible membership and a plan of action.

f) Water, sanitation and health: Hiroko Takasawa reported that five countries have now ratified the Protocol on Water and Health – Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Romania, Russian Federation and Slovakia. The requisite number of ratifications (16) for the Protocol to come into force is expected by the end of 2003.

Under the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health, four working groups have been set up: water management; legal and administrative aspects; monitoring and assessment; and water and health. Under them a number of meetings took place. In September 2001 the water management working group held a workshop in the Netherlands on public participation in water management; in October 2001 the UNECE held a workshop and simulation exercise on industrial safety and water protection in Hungary; a workshop was held in Bratislava on links between the Water Convention and the EC Water Framework Directive; the first meeting of the joint ad hoc expert group on water and industrial accidents took place in Berlin; and a workshop was held in Bonn on assessing the evidence base and developing a reporting scheme for water-related diseases. In November 2001 two workshops were held back to back in Budapest: one organized by WHO/EURO on health risks in aquifer recharge, and the other organized by UNECE on protection of groundwaters as a source of drinking-water. In late November 2001 a workshop on water related disease surveillance will take place in Budapest. An online questionnaire on water and health is in place, and the joint WHO/UNECE booklet on the Protocol is online and about to be printed. (More details in presentation www.eehc.dk)

WHO/EURO

Christina von Schweinichen highlighted the conclusions of the above workshop on source protection which stressed new approaches to protecting groundwater, including prevention of contamination through land-use planning, risk assessment and risk management as a framework for protection schemes, and the concept of balanced protection – the shorter the travel time of pollutants, the stricter the restriction should be.

The EC pointed out that ratification by the European Community is expected in early 2002.

Regarding action by member countries present at the EEHC, Italy expects to ratify by mid 2002, Bulgaria is on a similar timetable and the Ukraine hopes to ratify by the end of 2002.

H. Schreiber pointed out that water will be on the agenda of the WSSD.

g) Research on environment and health: Elaine Price reported on progress made since the last EEHC when WHO was requested to initiate action to revive the environment and health research issue from the London Conference. The European Science Foundation and DG Research have confirmed their intention to participate in the ESF/EC/WHO Liaison Group on Environment and Health Research, with the first meeting to be held on 17 December in Brussels. UNEP has also been invited to participate. In addition, the Danish Environment and Health Research Council of the Ministry of Health has confirmed its willingness to take the lead in implementing a review of the issue and to prepare a conference on environment and health research prior to the Budapest Conference.

4. Other progress reports

a) Communications (EEHC5/2a) : Viv Taylor Gee pointed out the importance of communication in ensuring that the cross-sectoral players in environment and health can find out what is going on. There is a wealth of information, but we all suffer from information overload and there needs to be some sort of selection, hence the current communication strategy. As the Budapest Conference comes closer, the need to bring the key issues to the attention of the public will become more pressing. The website of the EEHC is developing, as is the European Bulletin on Environment and Health. However, funds have still not been forthcoming to implement the strategy in full.

In general discussion, members agreed on the importance of communication - internally, to the many stakeholders and to the public.

b) Housing, environment and health (EEHC5/2b): Xavier Bonnefoy reported that indicators are being developed. Member States do not always know their housing stock or know what is needed to improve living conditions. In addition, renovation, which can be very costly, too often does not include health

considerations. Two particular issues dominate – excess deaths due to cold or heat and the immediate environment, which includes stairs, waste-chute, cellars, that in the countries of central and eastern Europe is exempt from regulation and often in an appalling state. Other issues include domestic accidents (in the UK as high as road deaths); special groups such as those discharged from hospital; sleep disturbance from noise; poor indoor air quality; and pests.

Discussion underlined the importance of this topic in a number of countries.

5. Linking relevant international environment and health processes

a) WSSD: Hugo von Meijenfeldt reported on the Regional Ministerial Meeting for the WSSD held in September 2001 which produced a Ministerial Statement for the WSSD (details on www.unece.org/env under WSSD). Poverty is higher up the agenda than hitherto and there is recognition that although the sustainability process is driven by environment, input is also needed from the economic and social sectors. The issue of environment and health will most certainly feature on the agenda. Issues that relate to health are air quality, water supply, food safety, the use of chemicals and global warming, as well as to those health issues directly related to poverty such as HIV, malaria and tuberculosis. Possible overriding themes could be environmental security (e.g. flooding) and poverty. The Ministerial Statement specifically mentions environment and health in paragraphs 4 and 40. Jan Pronck, Dutch Minister of Environment, has been appointed special envoy for Kofi Annan to the WSSD and is likely to emphasize concern for health/poverty.

Discussion underlined the relatively low profile of health in the WSSD process. Although sustainable development has traditionally been driven by the environment sector, the relevance of health was becoming increasingly important. Efforts should be made to involve the health sector more fully.

b) Environment for Europe process: H. von Meijenfeldt also reported that the eighth session of the CEP, held in September 2001, had touched upon the issue of bringing the Environment and Health process and Environment for Europe process closer together. The CEP decided that its Bureau should further consider the possibility of bringing these processes together and perhaps even to merge them.

Anna Golubovska-Onisomova, reported on the September 2001 meeting of the Ad-hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials for the “Environment for Europe” Kiev 2003 conference. The overarching theme of the Kiev Conference is to be “integration of the environment into sectoral policies”, a theme very key to Agenda 21 and to the last Environment for Europe conference. Six major integration issues are to be covered by the Conference agenda – (1) strategic environment assessment; (2) integrated land-use planning (which will include guidelines on urban transport management); (3) improving compliance with international obligations; (4) information for integrated decision-making; (5)

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strengthening industry's responsibility and involvement; and (6) public awareness and participation.

Several legally binding and soft law instruments are in preparation for the Kiev Conference:

- Protocol to the Espoo Convention on Strategic Environment Assessment
- PRTR Protocol to the Aarhus Convention
- A joint protocol on civil liability for transboundary damage caused by hazardous activities to the UNECE Water and Industrial Accidents Conventions
- Possible legally binding instrument on the Carpathian Mountains
- Guidelines on strengthening compliance and enforcement
- Guidelines on public participation in international decision-making on environmental matters
- Third assessment report on the state of the European environment
- Charter or guidelines on environmental education.

There was a special interest in the environmental problems of the NIS, and a special conference of the NIS environment ministers is to be held in January 2002, from which a regional strategy is expected to emerge. She noted that health was mentioned several times during the discussion, and the issue came up of possible merging of the two processes. More information is on www.unece.org/env.

The EEHC supported further exploration of how the Environment and Health process and Environment for Europe process could be brought closer together. It was noted that progress had been made since the Environment for Europe Conference in Aarhus in 1998, at which health was not at all considered. For the Kiev Conference, health was included in several agenda items - the SEA Protocol, the environmental performance reviews, and possible instrument on transport, environment and health - and might also play a role in the agenda item on environmental education. In addition, a suggestion was made that the Kiev Conference might have an agenda item on bringing the two processes together, which could be further elaborated at the Budapest Conference.

There was also an initial discussion on looking beyond the Kiev and Budapest conferences towards a regional sustainable development strategy, perhaps in connection with a top-level intergovernmental meeting. In this respect, R. Bertollini suggested that the Budapest Conference could mark the successful culmination of a 15-year cycle of activities that brought together environment and health as well as mark the start of a broader initiative aimed at a pan-European approach to sustainable development. H. von Meijenfeldt also noted that the Environment for Europe process was also looking at the future.

6. Towards the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

E. Price outlined the history of the environment and health process, noting that very early in the process children were considered a key reason for tackling environment and health problems. The Budapest Conference has also to take into due regard the WSSD and the Environment for Europe Conference in Kiev in 2003. To ensure maximum collaboration and efficient use of resources in future, the question of merger between the Environment and Health process and the Environment for Europe process has been raised.

a) Questionnaires

Results of the country questionnaire (EEHC5/3b): E. Price reported back on the 39 questionnaires sent by Member States outlining their priorities for the Budapest Conference agenda. The issues continued from the London Conference that elicited the most interest are children and future generations; transport, environment and health; water and health; local activities and NEHAPs. New or emerging issues mentioned most often are food safety; health impact assessment; the precautionary principle; integration of health in other sectors; and sustainable management. There was also strong country support for harmonizing national reporting systems and developing environment and health indicators; rural health; noise; and impact of international decisions on national policies. For the overall theme of the conference there was strong support for “Safeguarding our future generations” and “local environment and health actions”.

Results of the civil society questionnaire: Gaudenz Silberschmidt reported on the 28 responses from NGOs and major groups, of which 23 were national and 5 international. The most supported overall theme was children, followed by globalization and local action. Of the London Conference follow-up topics, transport, environment and health, children’s health and environment, and water were the most popular. Potential new topics supported were, in order of ranking: chemicals; precautionary principle; poverty; agriculture; GMOs; food safety; improving the evidence base; and public participation.

Report on the newly independent states (NIS): A. Isac evaluated the responses of the NIS to the country questionnaire. There was strong support for an overall theme of future generations, or local level implementation. Among new issues, the most popular were food safety (up to 40% of the household budget is typically spent on food), water scarcity, poverty, the precautionary principle, housing and health, and agriculture.

Report of the Budapest Working Group: G. Dura reported on the first meeting of the Working Group, held the day before the EEHC meeting. A set of criteria for selecting the overall theme of the conference had been agreed. These were that the theme should: have political implications; result in firm commitments and be aimed at concrete action/intervention; be a pan-European priority; bring

added value to the environment and health agenda; and point the way towards future development. The criteria for selection of the topics should be that they fit within the theme; be priority issues; be policy/intervention oriented; and be feasible. Two possible themes that received the strongest support from countries were "safeguarding future generations" and "local environment and health action". In light of the criteria outlined above for the overall theme, as well as the fact that local actions cannot be suitably addressed at ministerial level, the Working Group had agreed to propose the overall theme on the lines of "The Future for our Children", for consideration by the EEHC. The Working Group had identified a long list of possible topics relevant to this theme, which the EEHC was invited to discuss.

Discussion: The EEHC agreed that the responses to the country and civil society questionnaires were very useful, but should not be seen as rigid constraints and that Budapest 2004 has to be able to bring added value to the issues it focuses on. The list of topics should be short, but the outcome should be strong.

The EEHC further agreed to the rationale of the Working Group regarding selection of the overall theme, also noting that children's health and environment represented a good cross-cutting and cross-sectoral issue under which a number of high-priority topics identified by the countries could comfortably fit. However, the EEHC also noted that the Conference theme should be viewed within the broader context of sustainable development as the driving force underpinning the Conference. The precise wording of the conference title would need further refinement but the initial wording was "The Future of Our Children"; a subtitle to reflect the concept of sustainable development would probably be needed.

Discussion on the specific topics broadly supported the following: health impact assessment; improving the evidence base for environment and health policies; water and health; transport, environment and health; housing and health; and NEHAPs. It was agreed that the outcomes of the Budapest Conference should be useful and specific. In this regard, Corrado Clini suggested an action plan on children's health and environment based on measurable targets for countries to achieve. It was suggested that WHO prepare a background paper for the Budapest Working Group identifying the key steps and key actions for taking the Conference theme forward. Such a paper was envisaged to include: reporting on progress made since the London Conference on the various topics; burden of disease caused by environmental factors; strengthening the policy-making base (health impact assessment, indicators/reporting, dealing with uncertainty; the way forward – climate/adaptation; transport, environment and health; integration of health into other sectors; and emerging issues – perhaps tourism, environment and health.

To assist in the selection and development of the specific topics, C. Clini offered to host a special "extended" meeting of the Budapest Working Group, to which all Member States, as well as the rest of the EEHC, would be invited. This offer was accepted by the EEHC; the meeting is scheduled for 18-19 April 2002 in

**Italy,
WHO/EURO**

Lucca, Italy. WHO will prepare a background paper identifying key steps and actions for the Budapest Conference to be used as the basis for discussion.

b) NGO involvement in Budapest 2004

G. Silbershmidt reported on consultations held with the European Health and Environment Network (eHEN). NGOs would like to be involved in topic preparation for the Conference; mount a parallel event such as the Healthy Planet Forum in London; organize a roundtable with ministers (as was done at the Aarhus Conference); participate in key speeches and panel discussions; and liaise over press work. These proposals were supported by the EEHC; details will have to be elaborated and discussed at a later stage. NGOs would further welcome youth involvement in the conference. The inclusion of youth themselves was supported by the EEHC and the experience of recent conferences (Regional Ministerial meeting of the WSSD in September, the WHO Conference on Alcohol and Youth) as well as other relevant organizations such as UNEP, should be taken into account.

The EEHC supported these proposals and invited their further development.

Funding was briefly discussed and EEHC members agreed to look further at this issue in terms of possible assistance (e.g. TACIS funding, World Bank).

Concern was expressed that business and industry were not playing a role.

7. Any other business

B. Bertollini proposed that a prize be set up in recognition of Dr Pintér's outstanding contribution to environment and health, perhaps to encourage young scientists. It was agreed that this be discussed with Hungary, who supported the proposal.

The next regular meeting of the EEHC will take place on 13-14 June 2002 in Sofia, at the kind invitation of the Government of Bulgaria.

ISDE

EC, World Bank

WBCSD

Hungary, WHO/EURO

Annex 1

List of Participants

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Annex 2

List of websites noted

In order of appearance in the text:

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www.isde.org

www.iclei.org

www.iclei.org/europe/lasala/index.htm).

www.iclei.org/rioplusten

www.iclei.org/europe/english/summary-english.htm).

www.eehc.dk

www.cich.ca/postglobal.htm

www.unece.org/env