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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
(Eleventh session, Geneva, 13-15 October 2004)
(Item 3 of the provisional agenda)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**
(Geneva, 8 June 2004)

Prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairman

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Zaal Lomtadze (Georgia), and attended by Ms. Narin Panariti (Albania), Ms. Helena Čizkova (Czech Republic), Mr. Jon Kahn (Sweden), Mr. Jürg Schneider (Switzerland) and Ms. Lynette Poulton (United States of America).
2. The Bureau adopted its agenda as prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairman.

II. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 59TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

3. Mr. Kaj Bärlund, Director of the UNECE Environment and Human Settlements Division, informed the Bureau of the decisions taken by the Commission at its 59th session (24-26 February 2004) that were of relevance to the Committee, focusing more specifically on the forthcoming reform of UNECE.
4. A comprehensive report on the state of UNECE was being commissioned with the aim of developing recommendations to determine what changes to the role, mandate and functions of UNECE might be necessary in the light of the changes in the European institutional architecture, in order to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in the new context. The Group of Experts on the Programme of Work had drafted terms of reference for a consultant. At its ad hoc meeting in May, however, the Commission had not yet come to a decision on the appointment of a consultant nor on the financing of the activities. Another ad hoc meeting was scheduled for 2 July to that end. Once appointed, the consultant would start assessing the present work of

UNECE, including through consultations and interviews within the secretariat and the principal subsidiary bodies. A report is expected to be ready by December 2004, for submission to the Commission at its next annual session in February 2005.

III. OUTCOME OF THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

5. Mr. Bärlund reported on the outcome of the Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development (Geneva, 15-16 January 2004) and the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (New York, 14-30 April 2004).

6. The Chair of the Regional Implementation Forum, Ms. Margaret Becket (United Kingdom), Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, had presented her Chair's summary at the regional session organized within the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. During the ensuing discussions, representatives from the other regions had made statements indicating a particular role for UNECE in the global context in terms of providing good practices that they could use. They were looking, in particular, for experience with legal instruments, environmental performance reviews as well as political processes such as "Environment for Europe".

7. The Bureau appreciated the efforts made by the UNECE secretariat to organize the Regional Implementation Forum and welcomed its outcome. The Bureau also felt that the organization of regional implementation meetings should be continued and be organized well in advance of the sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

8. To further improve the organization and logistics of any future meetings and strive for a more interactive and dynamic dialogue, it was recommended to focus the discussions on two or three specific and pragmatic issues, allow only short interventions, possibly with slide presentations, followed by questions.

9. To facilitate the preparations at the national level and to ensure broad and active participation by all the relevant sectors, it was considered important that the overall coordinating responsibility for the process should be at the highest level, i.e. with the Prime Ministers. Similarly, within UNECE, the main responsibility for the regional preparations should continue to be with the Executive Secretary.

10. In the global context, the situation of the countries in transition of the UNECE region had not been at the centre of attention, and their challenges were often superseded by those of the developing countries. It was, therefore, vital to pursue work to tackle their problems at the regional level as well as to clearly single them out in the Chair's summary of the regional preparatory meetings for presentation at the global forums.

11. The Bureau agreed to put the item, together with the Committee's role in the process, forward for discussion by the Committee at its eleventh session.

IV. DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT POLICY

12. The Bureau discussed the provisional agenda for the eleventh session of the Committee prepared by the secretariat. The agenda was approved with slight amendments, involving namely the order of the items: those requiring decisions by the Committee would be discussed before those that were presented for information only. The secretariat was invited to finalize the draft agenda accordingly and to amend the programme of work to reflect the same order of priority between the items.

13. The Bureau also suggested that the so-called Kiev table should illustrate how the actions stemming from the Kiev Declaration were reflected in the work programme of the Committee.

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMITTEE'S PROGRAMME OF WORK (2003-2005)

14. The Bureau discussed the implementation of the Committee's programme of work, focusing in particular on the items set out in sections A to E below.

A. Environmental performance reviews

15. The secretariat provided information on the environmental performance reviews (EPRs) of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tajikistan as well as on the voluntary, interim reports of reviewed countries on the implementation of EPRs, which would be presented for discussion at the eleventh session of the Committee.

16. The Bureau also discussed the possible composition of the renewed Expert Group on the basis of the proposals put forward by the secretariat. The delegates from Sweden, the United States and the Czech Republic expressed their willingness to propose a candidate for the Group. It was agreed that further consultations would take place to finalize the list of candidates, to be submitted to the Committee for approval.

B. Education for sustainable development

17. Mr. Jon Kahn informed the Bureau of the preparations of the draft strategy on education for sustainable development, which would be discussed by the Task Force at its second meeting in July 2004. Information was also provided on other related activities within the region.

18. The Committee will be invited to endorse the draft strategy and provide guidance on the programme for the joint High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries, tentatively scheduled for February 2005 for the adoption of the strategy.

C. Environment Strategy for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA)

19. Mr. Bärlund informed the Bureau of the outcome of the meeting convened by the Task Force for the Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe (EAP Task

Force) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to support the implementation of the EECCA Environment Strategy (Paris, April 2004). The contributing organizations, UNECE, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the Regional Environmental Centres (RECs), were reported to have taken steps to coordinate their activities to help meet the Strategy's objectives.

20. The Chairman, Mr. Lomtadze, informed the Bureau of the preparations for the "Kiev+1" ministerial meeting to be held in Georgia in October 2004. A second preparatory meeting was scheduled to take place in the Republic of Moldova in September. He considered the Environment Strategy to be one of the most useful tools for improving environmental standards in the subregion. He also hoped that it would have a stabilizing effect within the environmental sector in the midst of the frequent governmental changes. He further stressed that the EECCA countries should indicate the extent to which they were able to contribute their own resources to its implementation.

21. The engagement of the countries in the subregion as well as the support by international organizations were crucial for the successful implementation of the Strategy. Increased coordination with other related activities and programmes was also essential in order to avoid overlaps, for example as regards the various reporting and monitoring requirements.

22. The Committee was invited to further discuss the EECCA Strategy at its eleventh session, including the ways in which it could best support its implementation through the activities in its work programme (e.g. EPRs, environmental monitoring and the environmental conventions).

D. Communication strategy

23. The secretariat presented a draft outline for a communication strategy prepared with the support of a consultant. In addition to raising awareness and the profile of the "Environment for Europe" process by highlighting its achievements and encouraging communication among stakeholders, the strategy was meant to provide further opportunities for fund-raising for the implementation activities under the process. On the basis of the comments provided on the draft by the Committee at its eleventh session, the strategy was expected to be finalized and submitted for adoption by the Committee in 2005.

24. The Bureau encouraged the secretariat to involve the stakeholders in the drafting of the strategy and to make use of the already existing communication strategies to the extent possible.

25. The Bureau invited the Committee to provide feedback on the strategy at its eleventh session.

E. UNECE multilateral environmental agreements: meeting of the Bureaux of the Committee and of the governing bodies of the conventions

26. The Bureau considered the outcome of and the follow-up to its informal consultation with the representatives of the governing bodies of the UNECE environmental conventions, which had taken place the previous day, on 7 June 2004.

27. Overall, the consultation had been useful. The openness of the discussions on the challenges and problems faced by the different conventions in the implementation activities could foster cooperation between the conventions' governing bodies. In order to maximize the benefit from next year's discussions on financing, the Bureau agreed to ask the conventions' governing bodies to provide in writing a list of concrete ongoing and foreseen capacity-building activities to promote implementation.

28. The Committee had a role in encouraging further commitment from the countries to implementing the conventions. Countries from other regions also benefitted from the good practices and the knowledge of the UNECE region by applying the principles of the conventions even without necessarily becoming Parties to them.

VI. PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

29. Ms. Helena Čizkova informed the Bureau about the final preparations for the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Budapest on 23-25 June 2004. The secretariat provided information on its involvement in the Conference, including a statement by the Acting Deputy Executive Secretary, Mr. Patrice Robineau, a ministerial panel on the implementation of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), side events on the Protocols on Strategic Environmental Assessment and on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, an informal consultation on the Protocol on Water and Health preceding the Conference meeting as well as an exhibition stand.

30. The Bureau agreed that its Chairman would make a statement at the Budapest Conference during the discussions on the future of the "Environment and Health" process and make reference to the outcome of the Kiev Conference and the Committee's role in monitoring the implementation of the Kiev decisions.

31. The Bureau also discussed the new candidates to represent the environment sector in the European Environment and Health Committee to be elected by the Committee at its eleventh session.

VII. ACTIVITIES OF THE UNECE REGIONAL ADVISER

32. Mr. Bo Libert, the UNECE Regional Adviser for the environment, informed the Bureau about his activities in relation to the Committee's programme of work, including work with the conventions' governing bodies and with the EPRs. Reference was made to a number of projects to build capacity in EECCA in the areas of water and energy as well as air quality. Cooperation

with OSCE on a number of activities had proven very productive. It was held that the Balkan region and the Caucasus needed to be paid more attention.

**VIII. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES WITH ECONOMIES IN
TRANSITION AND COUNTRIES' CONTRIBUTIONS
TO THE UNECE TRUST FUNDS**

33. The secretariat reported on the current status of the Trust Fund for supporting the participation of the representatives from the countries in transition in the meetings of the Committee (TFACT). This year the balance of the Trust Fund covered the costs of the eligible participants for the eleventh session of the Committee, but a continuous replenishment of the Trust Fund was needed in view of forthcoming meetings.

34. Updated financial criteria would be submitted for the consideration of the Committee at its eleventh session.

IX. NEXT MEETING

35. The Bureau decided to hold its next meeting on 13 October 2004 at 8 a.m.