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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Eighth session

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Reporting to the Committee on Environmental Policy

REPORTING TO THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

**ELEMENTS FOR THE WORKING GROUP'S REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF ITS MANDATE**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This note was prepared in accordance with a decision taken by the Working Group at its seventh session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/12, para. 49). It summarizes the activities that the Working Group implemented between 2004 and early 2007 and the extrabudgetary support that was provided or pledged to the Working Group. The addendum (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2007/3/Add.1) to this note summarizes country replies to the questionnaire that the secretariat circulated among Working Group members from countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia at the request of the Working Group. The Working Group is expected to comment on the note and the addendum and to decide on the final report to be submitted to the Committee.

INTRODUCTION

1. According to its revised mandate (ECE/CEP/116, para. 30 and annex I) and the workplan (CEP/AC.10/2005/2, annex) adopted by the Committee on Environmental Policy, at its twelfth session (ECE/CEP/127, para. 26), the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment focused on contributing to the fourth assessment report on the state of the environment for the sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Belgrade and on strengthening environmental information and observation capacities in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). The activities that the Working Group implemented from 2004 to early 2007 were supported by financial contributions from the Governments of Austria, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, as well as from the European Environment Agency (EC/Tacis funds) and the private sector. Countries that hosted workshops (Poland and Ukraine) or offered to do so (Belarus) respectively provided or pledged contributions in kind. A statement of expenditures is annexed to this note.

2. The Working Group held three meetings in 2005–2006. The number of UNECE countries represented at the meetings varied from 20 to 27. Other participants included representatives of the European Environment Agency (EEA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the World Health Organization (WHO) European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH), the EMEP Chemical Coordinating Centre, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), civil society organizations and the private sector. Four workshops were organized: in Poland, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. One Working Group meeting and one workshop (in Belarus) are planned for 2007. An overview of the main results of the meetings held follows.

I. SUPPORT TO THE FOURTH ASSESSMENT REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

3. The Working Group considered the initial approach by EEA to the preparation of the assessment report for the Belgrade Conference (Belgrade assessment), its proposed table of contents and the time frame for the preparations. It then considered progress in the preparation of the assessment report and an extended outline of the report. Members of the Working Group from EECCA had facilitated data collection for the report by designating experts for a series of three workshops that EEA and UNEP organized jointly in autumn 2006 to discuss selected environmental indicators.

4. The Working Group, at its sessions, considered progress made in other international environmental assessments and data collection activities of relevance to the Belgrade assessment report, such as the Fourth Global Environment Outlook of UNEP; the development of a pan-European environment and health information system by WHO/Europe; the Questionnaire on Environment Statistics of UNSD and UNEP; an assessment report on progress in the implementation of the EECCA Environment Strategy by the Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme for Eastern and Central Europe, Caucasus and Central

Asia; and the second OECD Environmental Outlook. The Working Group explored synergies between various reports and provided comments.

5. The Working Group, at its seventh session in November 2006, discussed cross-cutting issues of the draft report, including data availability, quality, reliability and comparability; subregional coverage; case studies; and the quality of the Russian translation. Responsible EEA experts introduced individual report sections, focusing on the structure, key messages and questions for consideration and comments. The Working Group made specific comments on each chapter/subchapter. Comments were reflected in the meeting report (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/12).

II. ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS AND ASSESSMENTS

6. A workshop on the application of environmental indicators was organized, in cooperation with the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) Moldova, in July 2004 in Chisinau. Most participants were experts on environmental indicators from ministries of environment (or attended on their behalf) and representatives of statistical services working in the field of environmental statistics in EECCA countries. The workshop discussed the concept of and approach to the development of guidelines for the application of environmental indicators in EECCA and reviewed the draft descriptions of each indicator intended for inclusion. It demonstrated that substantial further work and discussions were needed before the guidelines could be submitted to the Committee on Environmental Policy for adoption (for details see CEP/AC.10/2005/4).

7. The resulting draft guidelines reviewed by the Working Group in June 2006 covered indicators that were classified by EECCA countries as top-priority from the viewpoint of both national and international requirements; as understandable to the public; and as supported, to the extent possible, by international methodological guidance. Presence on other international indicator lists was an important additional selection criterion. The Working Group decided to review the draft guidelines in detail at a workshop in Donetsk (Ukraine).

8. This workshop, held in autumn 2006 with the active participation of environmental experts and statisticians from EECCA countries, EEA and UNEP, presented its results to the Working Group at the latter's special session in November 2006. The Working Group agreed on the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, the Guidelines for the Preparation of Indicator-based Environment Assessment Reports and the Recommendations to Governments of East European, Caucasian and Central Asian Countries for the Application of Environmental Indicators and the Preparation of Indicator-based Environment Assessment Reports (ECE/CEP/2007/8), and submitted them to the Committee on Environmental Policy for adoption.

9. Owing to the lack of extrabudgetary resources, the Working Group was not able to provide assistance to individual countries to set up institutional mechanisms and build national capacities for periodic state-of-the-environment reporting. These elements of the workplan were not implemented.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND REPORTING BY ENTERPRISES

10. The preparation of pan-European environmental assessments, data collection for country environmental performance reviews and reporting under multilateral environmental agreements reconfirmed that substantial improvements in environmental monitoring and data collection are needed in EECCA, especially in such areas as air emissions, water discharges and waste management. To help EECCA countries resolve existing problems with enterprise environmental monitoring and reporting, the Working Group reviewed the experience gained in UNECE subregions in establishing effective regulations and economic incentives as well as in the application of innovative information tools for database management and online reporting to facilitate environmental data flow from enterprises to environmental authorities.

11. A roundtable and a panel discussion were organized at the Working Group sessions to enable representatives of OECD and EECCA countries to share experiences with enterprise self-monitoring and environmental reporting and to discuss possible actions by public authorities at various levels as well as by companies, international organizations and civil society associations. Representatives from environment ministries, subnational authorities, business and industry, and civil society associations presented case studies demonstrating effective approaches, including legal requirements, institutional arrangements, and guidelines and reporting indicators, to facilitating environmental data reporting by enterprises as well as enterprises' use of good practices in developing effective self-monitoring systems.

12. The Workshop on Environmental Monitoring and Reporting by Enterprises was held in September 2006 in Debe (Poland) (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/14). The workshop provided another forum for experts from national and subnational governmental bodies responsible for environmental monitoring and/or compliance, statistical agencies and other government institutions, companies and non-governmental organizations to exchange experience gained in subregions of UNECE, primarily in countries of EECCA, in taking legal, normative, institutional, financial and technical measures to improve environmental monitoring and reporting by enterprises. The workshop resulted in draft guidelines for strengthening environmental monitoring and reporting by enterprises.

13. The Working Group, at its seventh session, discussed and agreed on revised Guidelines for Strengthening Environmental Monitoring and Reporting by Enterprises. It submitted the Guidelines to the Committee on Environmental Policy for adoption (ECE/CEP/2007/9).

14. Several chemical, oil, gas and electricity production companies from EECCA that participated in the Working Group's meetings agreed to establish an enterprise consultative board at the Working Group to help promote enterprise initiatives on environmental monitoring and reporting. The consultative board is open for participation by other interested companies. It will initiate activities supporting the workplan of the Working Group, and interested companies will cover related costs. As a first step, and in response to the interest expressed by some delegations in the Working Group in a follow-up to the Guidelines for Strengthening Environmental Monitoring and Reporting by Enterprises, a lead company on the consultative board provided financial support for a study regarding the feasibility of developing environmental monitoring guidelines for the chemical industry. The Working Group will consider the results of the study at its session in June 2007.

IV. ADAPTATION OF MONITORING NETWORKS TO INTERNATIONAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

15. To implement the part of its mandate relating to the appraisal of national environmental monitoring requirements and the enhancement of the international comparability of environmental information, the Working Group, at its sixth session, discussed the adaptation of air-quality monitoring networks in EECCA (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2006/3). The assessment covered air-quality monitoring networks, including monitoring densities, the parameters measured, the reliability of measurements and analysis, air-quality standards, data management and reporting, and programmes and plans for network modernization. The EECCA situation was compared with the requirements of relevant multilateral environmental agreements; guidelines, standards and manuals developed by international organizations; and approaches to and experiences in developing air-quality monitoring in the European Union and the United States.

16. During the discussion, delegations from EECCA countries addressed the issues of the insufficiency of network densities in urban areas; difficulties with the introduction of automated measurements and the creation of background and transboundary stations; progress in extending the range of measured parameters and harmonizing national maximum allowable concentrations with international air-quality standards and guidelines (or plans developed for doing so); and the development of programmes to modernize and upgrade existing networks financed from both domestic and external sources. General concern was expressed regarding the lack of links between the current measurement programmes and policy- and decision-making on air-pollution abatement. The need was stressed to prepare a strategic document to help EECCA countries revise their air-monitoring programmes by integrating monitoring regulations with policy target setting and making measurement programmes an instrument for monitoring progress in achieving policy targets.

17. As a follow-up, the Working Group decided to organize a workshop in Belarus in 2007 on interaction between air-quality monitoring and air-protection strategies in EECCA. The main purpose of the workshop will be to prepare a strategic document to help EECCA countries revising their air-monitoring programmes by making monitoring a practical tool for policy target setting, pollution abatement strategies and measurement of progress in achieving policy targets and of the effectiveness of abatement measures. The Bureau of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and EEA agreed to cooperate with the Working Group in the endeavour.

V. ELECTRONIC NETWORKING AND DATABASES

18. The Working Group organized a workshop on electronic databases for environmental reporting in May 2004 near Moscow. Documentation is available on the Web, at: http://www.unece.org/env/europe/monitoring/TandG_en.html.

19. The workshop reviewed the current application of telecommunication technologies in EECCA environment ministries, including the availability of personal computers and intranet systems, access to e-mail and the Internet, and the development of official environmental

websites, as means to support and promote environmental reporting. It also reviewed the situation in EECCA concerning the publication of national state-of-the-environment reports and other periodic publications on the environment.

20. The workshop proposed that EECCA countries should develop an EcoReporting electronic system on the Working Group's website. EcoReporting would follow the general approach of the EEA ReportNet system and cover 15 subject areas, including the state and protection of the environment; environmental pollution; atmospheric air; climate change; biodiversity; forests; fisheries; land resources and soils; water; the marine environment; waste; environmental health; emergencies; environment statistics; and sustainable development. The national reporting component would include periodic (regular and ad hoc) national environmental publications such as state-of-the-environment reports, environmental compendiums and bulletins, environmental programmes and action programmes, and reviews of their implementation. The international component would initially cover 30 multilateral environmental legal instruments, organizations and programmes.

21. EcoReporting was launched in early 2005 (<http://unece.unog.ch/enhs/EcoReport/>). The database contains records of 54 national publications and 106 records of country submissions to international bodies. The section on national reports consists mainly of state-of-the-environment reports. The majority of other records refer to health and environment reports, biodiversity strategies and action plans, and environmental statistics bulletins. The international part of EcoReporting includes links to EECCA reports to the governing bodies of the conventions on climate change, biodiversity, desertification and hazardous wastes, as well as to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. National administrators in EECCA were expected to take ownership of this database and start entering new material into relevant parts of EcoReporting. This type of follow-up has not been achieved, however.

22. A review of the EcoReporting activity appears in document CEP/AC.10/2005/3.

Annex**EXTRABUDGETARY SUPPORT TO THE WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT IN 2004–2007****Summary of expenditures as of 31 December 2006**
(in rounded US dollars)

Item	Description	Expenditures in 2004–2006	Planned expenditures in 2007*	Total expenditures in 2004–2007
		(a)	(b)	(a) + (b)
I.1	Trust Fund on Environmental Monitoring			
I.1.1	<i>Consultants' fees and travel</i>	48,800	20,400	69,200
I.1.2	<i>Official travel of staff</i>	11,900	6,000	17,900
I.1.3	<i>Travel of experts (WGEMA and workshops)</i>	119,000	35,700	154,700
I.1.4	<i>Subcontracts (workshops)</i>	86,000	25,200	111,200
I.1.5	<i>Expendable equipment</i>	4,100	0	4,100
I.1.6	<i>Non-expendable equipment</i>	2,500	0	2,500
I.1.7	<i>Net total (I.1.1 + I.1.2 + I.1.3 + I.1.4 + I.1.5 + I.1.6)</i>	272,300	87,300	359,600
I.1.8	<i>Programme support costs</i>	29,000	9,700	38,700
I.1.9	<i>Total for the Trust Fund (I.1.7 + I.1.8)**</i>	301,300	97,000	398,300
I.2	<i>In-kind expenditures by workshops' host countries***</i>	35,000	15,000	50,000
I.3	<i>TOTAL EXPENDITURES (I.1 + I.2)</i>	336,300	112,000	448,300

* Including some expenditures obligated in 2006.

** From contributions and pledges as follows: € 19,000 from Austria, € 59,000 from the Netherlands, € 20,000 from Norway, € 30,000 from Spain, CHF 15,000 from Switzerland, £ 45,000 from the United Kingdom, € 110,000 from EEA (EC/Tacis) and US\$ 15,000 from Nikochim.

*** Combined expenditures of Belarus, Poland and Ukraine (assessment).