

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
21 October 2013

English Only

Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Environmental Policy****Nineteenth session**

Geneva, 22–25 October 2013

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

The Eighth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference**Proposed framework for preparing the Eighth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The “Environment for Europe” (EfE) Reform Plan stipulates that EfE ministerial conferences should be held every four to five years (ECE/CEP/S/152 and Corr.1, annex I, para. 13 (a)). The Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy recommended that the Committee consider holding the next ministerial conference in 2016.

The present document was prepared following a request by the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy (ECE/CEP/2013/22, para. 40) with a view to facilitating the discussion by CEP on the next ministerial conference.

I. Introduction

1. The “Environment for Europe” (EfE) Reform Plan stipulates that EfE conferences should be held every four to five years (ECE/CEP/S/152 and Corr.1, annex I, para. 13 (a)). The Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) recommended that CEP consider holding the next ministerial conference in 2016, given that the mid-term review was being held in 2013, and that its results should be taken into account in preparing the next conference.
2. The CEP Bureau acknowledged that the host country for the next conference had yet to be identified and that the exact date would need to be agreed with the host country. Also, the participation of the host country was crucial in the discussion of the substance of the next conference.
3. At the request of the CEP Bureau, the secretariat prepared a document containing the requirements for hosting an EfE ministerial conference based on experience from previous conferences (ECE/CEP/2013/16). Following the suggestion of the CEP Bureau, the secretariat circulated this document by e-mail to CEP on 6 September 2013, inviting countries to express their interest in hosting the next conference.
4. Concerning the substance of the next conference, the Bureau asked the secretariat to prepare a short document, not limited in scope, to facilitate the discussion by CEP. The Bureau further specified that an overview of progress in development of the the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) should be included in the document (ECE/CEP/2013/22, para. 40).
5. The present document has been prepared in accordance with the CEP Bureau’s request. It contains information on the initial reaction of the member States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the proposals for the themes and format of the next EfE conference, gathered in a survey, and is meant to better facilitate further discussions on this issue. The survey was carried out by the secretariat following a request by CEP at its eighteenth session to organize consultations (in the form of a survey) with ECE member States and NGOs on promoting the objectives and priorities of the EfE process. The positions of individual member States are explained in the comments to their responses; these can be found in the “Compilation of comments included in the responses to the survey on the promotion of the ‘Environment for Europe’ process and the outcomes of its ministerial conferences” (Information paper No. 13¹ for the present session).

II. Possible options for the framework of the Eighth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference based on the results of the survey

6. The survey of member States provided an opportunity to collect information on the member States’ initial positions on thematic priorities as follows:²
 - (a) On the open proposal for a **first thematic priority** (an “established” theme of importance to the entire region, e.g., the Astana Conference addressed the established theme of sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems) the secretariat received the following proposals:

¹ <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/cep/CEP-19/CEP-19EfESurveyResponses.IP.13.e.pdf>.

² Responses from some member States contained no position on or indication of thematic priorities for various reasons.

<i>General theme</i>	<i>Exact proposal</i>
Biodiversity	Biodiversity (Slovenia)
Climate change	Climate change — impacts and actions (Finland) Adaptation to climate change (Israel)
Disaster risk reduction	Emergency preparedness and risk reduction (Belarus)
Education for sustainable development (ESD)	Education for sustainable development (Croatia)
Forests	Sustainable management of forest resources (Friends of Siberian Forests)
Monitoring / indicators	Indicators and monitoring of the environment (Belarus)
Nutrients	Nutrient management (Union “Mountain Club ‘Zhabagly-Manas’” from Kazakhstan)
Green economy	Sustainable transport in cities and green economy (Czech Republic)
Sustainable development	Monitoring of commitments to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20 Conference) by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) (France) Contribution of regional processes like EfE and of Regional Commissions to the post-2015 Development Agenda and to the new institutional framework for sustainable development after Rio+20 (Greece) Making the link between health, environment and prosperity (Czech Republic)
Wastes	Wastes (Belarus) Waste management and air quality (Republic of Moldova)
Water	Sustainable use of hydropower (Austria) Applying integrated approaches to the management of water resources (Georgia) Increasing the effectiveness of the transboundary water agreements in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and/or the environment as a stakeholder in transboundary water management (International Environmental Association of River Keepers (Eco-TIRAS))

(b) Regarding the options provided for a **second thematic priority** (an “emerging” theme of importance to the entire region, e.g., the Astana Conference addressed the emerging theme of greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development) the secretariat received the following responses:

- (i) The theme “Enhancing the work on greening the economy and the mainstreaming of environmental concerns into the economic development” had a strongly positive response;³
- (ii) The theme “Promoting sustainable consumption and production” received a strongly positive response;⁴
- (iii) The theme “Greening the International Financial Institutions’ policies” had an overall positive response;⁵
- (iv) The theme “Resilience and change” gained an overall positive response;⁶
- (v) The proposal on organizing a high-level segment on assessing the progress in establishing a regular process of environmental assessment and developing the SEIS across the region gained overall positive response but with substantial opposition;⁷
- (vi) The proposal on organizing a high-level segment on the ECE multilateral environmental agreements received an overall positive response, but with substantial opposition;⁸ the sub-theme for the segment, on the “Role of public participation in effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements had an overall positive response, with the majority having no strong position;⁹
- (vii) The proposal on the “Need to develop new structures or frameworks to address emerging themes, such as green economy, giving the ongoing crisis that affected all countries in the ECE region” gained a mixed response;¹⁰
- (viii) The theme “Greening the economies” had two options for sub-themes, as follows:

³ Strongly agree: 18 (Austria (AT), Croatia (HR), Georgia (GE), Greece (GR), Hungary (HU), Italy (IL), Kazakhstan (KZ), Kyrgyzstan (KG), Monaco (MC), Poland (PL), Republic of Moldova (MD), Romania (RO), Slovakia (SK), Slovenia (SI), Sweden (SE), Switzerland (CH), Ukraine (UA), United States of America (US)); somewhat agree: 7 (Belarus (BY), Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Finland (FI), France (FR), Germany (DE), Norway (NO)); somewhat disagree: 0; strongly disagree: 1 (Czech Republic (CZ)).

⁴ Strongly agree: 17 (BE, CH, CZ, FR, GE, GR, HR, IL, KZ, KG, MC, MD, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK); somewhat agree: 7 (AT, BY, DE, FI, HU, NO, UA); somewhat disagree: 2 (BG, US); strongly disagree: 0.

⁵ Strongly agree: 9 (CH, FI, GE, KG, KZ, RO, SE, SI, UA); somewhat agree: 12 (AT, BY, CZ, HR, FR, GR, HU, IL, MC, MD, NO, SK); somewhat disagree: 4 (BE, BG, DE, PL); strongly disagree: 1 (US).

⁶ Strongly agree: 10 (BY, CH, GE, HU, IL, KZ, MC, NO, PL, RO); somewhat agree: 12 (AT, BE, DE, FR, GR, HR, KG, MD, SE, SI, SK, US); somewhat disagree: 4 (BG, CZ, FI, UA); strongly disagree: 0.

⁷ Strongly agree: 10 (BE, BG, BY, GE, HU, IL, MD, SE, SK, US); somewhat agree: 9 (AT, FI, FR, HR, IT, KG, NO, PL, RO); somewhat disagree: 7 (CH, CZ, GR, MC, Netherlands (NL), SI, UA); strongly disagree: 1 (DE).

⁸ Strongly agree: 11 (AT, BE, BG, FI, FR, GE, KG, NO, RO, SE, CH); somewhat agree: 8 (BY, GR, HR, HU, IL, IT, SI, UA); somewhat disagree: 6 (CZ, DE, MC, MD, PL, SK); strongly disagree: 2 (NL, US).

⁹ Strongly agree: 7 (AT, BE, BG, GE, HU, NO, RO); somewhat agree: 14 (BY, CZ, FI, FR, GR, HR, IL, IT, KG, MC, PL, SE, SI, UA); somewhat disagree: 5 (CH, MD, NL, SK, US); strongly disagree: 0.

¹⁰ Strongly agree: 8 (FR, GE, HU, KZ, MD, NO, RO, SI); somewhat agree: 6 (AT, BE, FI, GR, KG, SE); somewhat disagree: 8 (BY, CZ, DE, IL, IT, MC, PL, SK); strongly disagree: 4 (BG, CH, HR, NL).

a. “Elaboration of subregional road maps” (e.g., European Union (EU), countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia) had a mixed response;¹¹

b. “Elaboration/harmonization of regional eco-standards for products and production processes” gained an overall positive response, but with substantial opposition;¹²

(ix) The theme “Strengthening implementation of ESD”¹³ had three options for sub-themes as follows:

a. “Mainstreaming ESD into technical and vocational training to meet future labour market demand” received a strongly positive response, with some opposition;¹⁴

b. “Mainstreaming ESD into teachers/educators’ training” had a strongly positive response, but with some opposition;¹⁵

c. “Implementing an ESD school plan in every school” (i.e., addressing campus management, curricula and community interaction) had an overall positive response, but with some opposition;¹⁶

(x) The theme “Strengthening environmental considerations in other social and economic sectors” gained an overall positive response.¹⁷

7. On the format of the Eighth EfE Ministerial Conference, there seems to be an overall agreement that plenary sessions must be supplemented with parallel events, which should be as interactive as possible. Member States generally support an interactive format with parallel round tables — some citing the positive experience at the Astana Ministerial Conference — but also call for some innovations.

8. On the proposal for an “Interactive format for the Conference” (for a more productive ministerial participation) the two proposed options received the following responses:

¹¹ Strongly agree: 6 (AT, BY, FR, KZ, MD, RO); somewhat agree: 9 (BE, FI, GR, HR, HU, IL, KG, NO, SI); somewhat disagree: 9 (BG, CH, CZ, DE, GE, MC, NL, PL, SK); strongly disagree: 2 (SE, US).

¹² Strongly agree: 9 (AT, HR, HU, IL, KZ, MC, MD, RO, SE); somewhat agree: 7 (BE, BY, FR, GE, KG, NO, PL); somewhat disagree: 6 (BG, CZ, FI, GR, NL, SK); strongly disagree: 3 (CH, DE, US).

¹³ On this theme the following decision of the ECE Steering Committee on ESD should be taken into consideration: “the Committee agreed that a high-level segment of education and environment ministries should be held at the next ... EfE ... Ministerial Conference. To that end, the secretariat should take all necessary steps to inform ... CEP ... and its Bureau about the wish of the Steering Committee to hold such a segment. A formal presentation should be held at the next CEP meeting in October 2013. It was underscored that education and environment ministries needed to be informed as early as possible about the high-level ESD segment.” (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2013/2, para. 38.)

¹⁴ Strongly agree: 17 (AT, BG, CZ, DE, GE, GR, HR, HU, IL, KZ, MC, MD, PL, RO, SE, SI, UA); somewhat agree: 4 (CH, FI, FR, SK); somewhat disagree: 3 (BY, NL, NO); Strongly disagree: 1 (US).

¹⁵ Strongly agree: 20 (AT, BG, CZ, DE, FR, GE, GR, HR, HU, IL, KG, KZ, MC, MD, PL, RO, SE, SI, SK, UA); somewhat agree: 3 (BY, CH, FI); somewhat disagree: 2 (NL, NO); strongly disagree: 1 (US).

¹⁶ Strongly agree: 12 (AT, BG, GE, GR, IL, HR, KZ, MC, PL, RO, SI, UA); somewhat agree: 6 (CH, CZ, FI, FR, HU, SK); somewhat disagree: 5 (BY, DE, MD, NL, NO); strongly disagree: 1 (US).

¹⁷ Strongly agree: 12 (AT, BE, CZ, GE, HU, IL, KZ, MD, PL, RO, SI, UA); somewhat agree: 10 (BG, BY, DE, FI, FR, GR, HR, KG, MC, SE); somewhat disagree: 3 (CH, SK, US); strongly disagree: 0.

- (a) Holding parallel thematic round tables won overwhelming support with no opposition;¹⁸
- (b) Interactive discussions, e.g. similar to the British Broadcasting Company's show, "Question Time", won strong support with little opposition.¹⁹

¹⁸ Strongly agree: 20 (AT, BE, BG, BY, CH, DE, FI, GE, GR, HU, IL, KG, KZ, MC, MD, SE, SI, SK, UA, US); somewhat agree: 5 (CZ, FR, HR, PL, RO); somewhat disagree: 0; strongly disagree: 0.

¹⁹ Strongly agree: 11 (AT, BG, CH, GE, GR, HU, IT, KG, KZ, RO, SE); somewhat agree: 7 (BE, BY, CZ, DE, FI, FR, PL); somewhat disagree: 3 (MC, MD, SI); strongly disagree: 0.