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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
Sixty-sixth session  
(Geneva, 19-21 September 2005)  
(Item 2 of the provisional agenda)

WORKING PARTY ON LAND ADMINISTRATION  
Fourth session  
(Geneva, 21-22 November 2005)

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE SIXTIETH SESSION OF  
THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

Note by the secretariat

### **Introduction**

1. The sixtieth session of the Commission was held in Geneva from 22 to 25 February 2005 (E/2005/37; E/ECE1431). This note provides an overview of the main outcomes and decisions of the session that are relevant to the Committee on Human Settlements and its Working Party on Land Administration.

The following major topics and issues were examined and discussed:

- (a) Sustainable development in the UNECE region;
- (b) UNECE cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE);
- (c) The UNECE reform;
- (d) Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 and matters relating to the planning and evaluation processes of the programme of work;
- (e) Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits;
- (f) Major policy issues of the UNECE and their impact on the UNECE programme of work;
- (g) The work of the UNECE: achievements, constraints and perspectives;
- (h) Technical cooperation activities of the UNECE.

### **Sustainable development in the UNECE region**

2. The Commission examined major policy options for water, sanitation and human settlements in the UNECE region, taking into account the outcome of the Regional Implementation Meeting in January 2004, the conclusions of the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in April 2004 and the challenges identified by the Parties to the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, and by the Committee on Human Settlements.

3. The Commission stressed that, despite the progress achieved, there was a need for action-oriented local and national measures as well as regional cooperation to speed up efforts to meet the internationally agreed development goals and the commitments of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, particularly in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and some South-East European (SEE) countries.

4. The Commission agreed to the proposal that a Chairperson's summary be presented as UNECE's contribution to the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the Commission on Sustainable Development to be held in New York from 28 February to 4 March 2005. It further agreed that the summary would be based on the background document E/ECE/1421 «Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region» and on the discussion at the Annual Session.

5. The Commission decided to organize the second UNECE Regional Implementation Forum in preparation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 14). It also agreed to seek the necessary complementary extrabudgetary funds for the regional preparations for CSD 14.

6. Comments: The secretariat will inform the Committee on the future steps in organizing the Regional Implementation Forum.

### **The UNECE reform**

#### Comprehensive report on the state of the UNECE

7. The team of external evaluators selected to undertake a comprehensive report on the state of the UNECE was introduced to the Commission. The team, consisting of Mr. Pekka Haavisto (former Minister for Environment and Development of Finland), Mr. Karl Paschke (former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for internal oversight), Ms. Johanna Bernstein (international lawyer with expertise in international environmental law) and Mr. Tapio Wallenius (expert on public sector administration), informed the Commission of the scope of the evaluation and the methodology to be used. The comprehensive report will provide an analysis of the role, mandate and functions of the UNECE in the light of the changed European institutional landscape and produce recommendations to determine any possible and necessary changes. The methodology consists of an initial desk-study phase, followed by visits to capitals in selected UNECE Member countries, and gathering of views through a questionnaire to UNECE governments, international organizations and other stakeholders. The team expects to deliver a first draft of the report by mid-June and the final report by the end of June 2005.

8. The Commission was informed that the comprehensive review was not a budget cutting exercise but a timely opportunity to refocus and ensure the best use of available resources and expertise of UNECE, taking into account the work of other organizations also active in the region, and the value added that the UNECE could provide. Member States requested the secretariat to make any necessary modifications to the 2006-2007 programme of work to take into account the outcome of the comprehensive review.

9. At the beginning of March 2005, the evaluation team sent out the questionnaire to countries and relevant international organizations to gather views on the work of the UNECE. The questionnaire addresses general questions regarding the role, functions, governance and management of the UNECE, as well as detailed questions related to the sectoral areas of UNECE work, including human settlements.

10. Comments: The Committee will be informed about the report of the review team and possible conclusions by Member Governments.

#### Towards an E-strategy for the UNECE

11. During the discussion on this topic, the delegations acknowledged the usefulness of the information and communications technologies (ICT) as a means of increasing the efficiency of UNECE activities and enhancing the secretariat capacity to serve and communicate with member States, other partners and the general public. The secretariat

was urged to post on the UNECE website all documents available in the three working languages (English, French and Russian).

12. The Commission encouraged its Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) to further strengthen their efforts to develop and use appropriate e-applications in a cost-efficient manner and agreed to evaluate progress that had been made at the sixty-first Annual Session.

**Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 and matters relating to the programme of work planning and evaluation processes**

13. The Commission was informed on the state of the UNECE's programme budget submission for the 2006-2007 biennium and on actions taken to implement the recommendations of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW) regarding the programme budget narratives.

14. The Commission underlined the need to ensure that the outcome of the forthcoming UNECE comprehensive review be taken into account in the programme of work for 2006-2007.

15. The Commission was informed that the 2006-2007 budget submission was still awaiting the final approval of the General Assembly and reiterated the importance of the full implementation of the recommendations on the Programme Budget Narratives (E/ECE/1430/Add.1). It also adopted the recommendations of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW) concerning programme planning processes. (E/ECE/1423/Add.1).

16. Comments. Implementing the recommendations of the GEPW concerning programme planning processes will require action from the Committee. In accordance with these recommendations, the Committee needs to discuss and provide its input to the draft biennial programme plan for 2008-2009 as contained in documents CRP 1. The biennial programme plan 2008-2009 sets out the subprogramme's objective, strategy, expected accomplishments and related indicators of achievements. It will provide a strategic framework for the activities of the Subprogramme on Human Settlements in 2008-2009.

**Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits**

17. In September 2005, the General Assembly will meet at the level of Heads of States for a review of the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration. As part of the preparatory process for this Summit, the theme of the high-level segment of the substantive session of ECOSOC in June 2005 will be: «Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits». Like the other regional commissions, the UNECE is providing a regional contribution to this process.

18. Member States underlined the importance of the internationally agreed development goals in the UNECE region and support was expressed for the activities of the UNECE that contribute to the achievement of these goals at the subregional and regional levels.

19. Also covered under this agenda item was the promotion of gender equality. The Commission expressed its view that the UNECE should continue to mainstream gender into its work, as well as continuing to serve as a platform for the exchange of good practices.

20. Comments: The Committee may wish to discuss its contribution to the Millennium development goals and the gender issue during its in-depth discussion this year.

### **Major policy issues of the UNECE and their impact on the UNECE programme of work**

21. The Commission noted with appreciation the analysis of the Executive Secretary in respect of UNECE challenges at the global and regional level. It highlighted the need to address aspects of issues such as globalization, transition and environmental policies within the scope of UNECE's mandate. Furthermore, the Commission reconfirmed that the setting of priorities of the Commission rests with the Member States and that the overall objective within the UNECE remains the promotion of stability and prosperity across the UNECE region.

### **The work of the UNECE: achievements, constraints and perspectives**

22. The Chairpersons of PSBs presented their major achievements and future programme of activities, underlying the difficulty of carrying out their tasks with the budgetary constraints facing the secretariat.

23. In responding to the resource constraints, the Commission asked the Executive Secretary to work with Member States to ensure that the distribution of resources reflects the priorities set by the Commission.

24. The Commission thanked the Chairpersons of the UNECE's Principal Subsidiary Bodies for their work and presentations. It urged the secretariat, PSBs and all Member States to continue to improve both horizontal and vertical communication.

### **Technical cooperation activities of the ECE**

25. The Commission:

- i) reiterated the importance of the UNECE's technical cooperation activities, which should be demand-driven and result oriented and stressed the need to increase assistance to low-income countries in a targeted and systematic manner;
- ii) encourages the development of joint technical cooperation projects in cooperation with other organizations; and
- iii) recognized UNECE's potential in delivering technical assistance in those areas where it has expertise and comparative advantages, and encouraged donor organization to better utilize this potential in their development aid efforts.