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FIRST MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS SANTIAGO, CHILE, 13-14 JANUARY 2011



Ján Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, will take part in the first meeting of the year of the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions, which will be hosted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, Chile, from 13-14 January 2011.

Amongst the various topics on the agenda, a panel discussion will address "the rising importance of regions in global governance for development". The

importance of the regional dimension of development is increasingly recognized as critical as was brought sharply into focus over the past few years as the world struggled to come to grips with the effects of the financial, food, and energy crises, in addition to the climate change challenges. Through the broadening of various regional integration processes and the many forms of intra-regional cooperation, many of the key policy actions and policy dialogues to address the impact of the crises were initiated at the regional and subregional levels. Much of this was done by regional organizations and groupings which have evolved as important players in determining the development agenda at all levels.

Within the United Nations system, regional cooperation is also recognized as essential for promoting region-wide awareness of the United Nations global values, norms, standards and commitments in the development field and for ensuring their effective implementation at the country level. At a time when the regional development architecture is evolving rapidly,

the Executive Secretaries will discuss how the United Nations system as a whole could develop a clear regional strategy for development. This strategic framework would feed into the policy frameworks and initiatives at the regional and subregional level and take into account the rising assertiveness of regional and sub-regional actors.

The other key item under discussion will be the preparations for the Rio+20 (the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development) process. A comprehensive regional calendar of meetings leading up to the Rio+20 Conference in 2012 has been prepared and shared among all the Regional Commissions (<http://www.un.org/regionalcommissions/rio20calendar.pdf>).

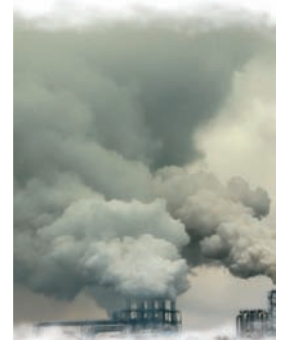
In Santiago, the Executive Secretaries will review the progress made in working together to ensure a strong and coherent regional contribution to the Rio+20 process. They will consider the development of a joint conceptual understanding on green economy which could address, inter alia, the relationship between public policies and markets to advance towards lower carbon economies, and the linkages to the recent climate change agreements. The green economy concept could support a paradigm shift in the economic development concept by explicitly analyzing and having economic decision makers establish the links between economic policy, social cohesion and its environmental performance, from a developmental perspective.

Other points on the agenda will also include:

- the Regional Commissions as regional hubs for Knowledge Management: how to best share the experience of the Economic Commission for Africa
- Exchange of views on the participation of Regional Commissions in the preparatory process for the next G-20 Summit. □

FIRST MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE PRTR PROTOCOL GENEVA, 14 JANUARY 2011

The first meeting of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR Protocol) to the Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters (Aarhus Convention) will be held on Friday, 14 January 2011 at Palais des Nations.



The Bureau, under the chairmanship of Michel Amand (Belgium), will consider a wide range of subjects derived from the decisions taken by Parties at their first session held in Geneva on 20-22 April 2010.

Special attention will be given to strengthening international cooperation for capacity building activities, since the implementation of the Protocol requires specific expertise and technical support that can be offered by different partner organizations. In order to understand better the needs of countries, a survey will be carried out to assess the necessity for a technical assistance mechanism.

The Bureau will also share the latest developments regarding new substances included under different international instruments related to PRTRs. Finally, it will consider ways of promoting the Protocol, including through thematic events organized back to back with the following upcoming international meetings: fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (29 June to 1 July 2011, Chisinau) and 7th "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference (21-23 September 2011, Astana). □

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr-bureau.htm>
 or contact the secretariat at:
public.participation@unece.org.

The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) is the first legally binding international instrument on such registers, which are inventories of pollution from industrial sites and other sources. Its objective is "to enhance public access to information through the establishment of coherent, nationwide pollutant release and transfer registers."

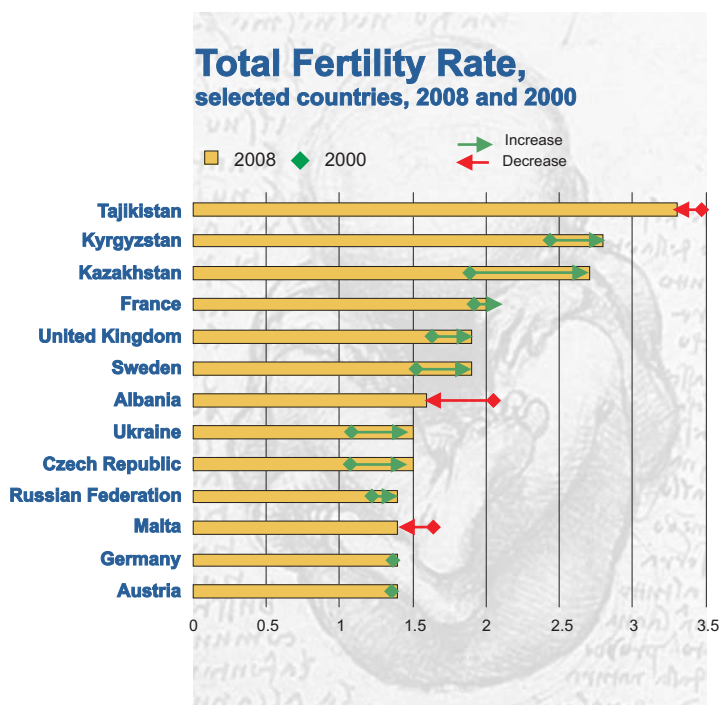
Although regulating information on pollution, rather than pollution directly, the Protocol is expected to exert a significant downward pressure on levels of pollution, as no company will want to be identified as being among the biggest polluters.

The Protocol is an 'open' global treaty, which means it is open to all members States of the United Nations, irrespective of the fact that they have or not ratified the Aarhus Convention or are UNECE member States. A special International PRTR Coordinating Group has been set up to foster synergies among different partner organizations.

The Protocol became international law binding its Parties on 8 October 2009. Thirty-six member States and the European Community signed the Protocol and as of 12 January 2011, the Protocol counts 27 Parties.

FACTS AND FIGURES

MOST UNECE COUNTRIES HAVE LOW FERTILITY RATE



Note: The latest figures for the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom are from 2007 and for Tajikistan from 2006.

Definition: Total fertility rate is defined as the average number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the age-specific fertility rates of a given year.

Only 11 countries of the UNECE region had fertility rate at the replacement level (2.1 births per woman) or higher in 2008. The vast majority - 42 countries - had lower fertility rates. Among those, 16 countries demonstrated very low fertility with less than 1.5 births per woman, according to the data of 2008 (the latest data available).

This is one of the major characteristics of the evolution of the population in the UNECE region in the last years. Countries with very low fertility rates are located in Southern and Eastern Europe, while the region's highest fertility rates are found in Central Asia.

In Europe, relatively high rates are found in Northern Europe and low rates in Eastern European countries, albeit some increase there since 2000. Among Western European countries, France is standing out with a relatively high total fertility rate of 2.0.

Compared to 2000, total fertility rates have not changed much. The only countries with major increases were Kazakhstan (+0.9), Kyrgyzstan, Sweden, Ukraine and the Czech Republic (+0.4). Albania (-0.4), Malta (-0.3), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (-0.4) and Turkmenistan (-0.3) experienced a significant decrease in fertility rate.

Persisting low fertility accelerates the pace of population ageing and may lead to a decrease of population in a given country. At the same time, very high fertility rates may pose challenges to sustainable development and economic growth. □

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