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**ACHIEVING THE INTERNATIONALLY AGREED GOALS,
INCLUDING THOSE CONTAINED IN THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION,
AS WELL AS IMPLEMENTING THE OUTCOMES OF THE MAJOR
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS**

Note by the Executive Secretary *

Purpose

The purpose of the paper is to review the way that the UNECE work directions and related activities contribute to the achievement, within the region, of the development goals which have been agreed upon by the international community on the occasion of major United Nations conferences and summits.

Outline

The paper first makes a brief review of the involvement of the UNECE in the follow up to United Nations global conferences whose themes are directly related to its mandated areas of activities. Secondly, it addresses the special case of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), analysing the extent to which the regional dimension is at stake for their achievement. Thirdly, it provides a brief overview of the present and potential degree of achievement of the MDGs. Subsequently, it reviews the linkages between the UNECE activities and a number of major internationally agreed goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration: poverty reduction, sustainable development, trade, and ICT for development.

* Late submission due to clearance delays.

I. FOLLOW-UP TO UN GLOBAL CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS

A. World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August 2002)

1. The follow-up to the WSSD is addressed under Item 4 of the provisional agenda (document E/ECE/1421).

B. Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, May 2002) and Regional Ministerial Conference on Ageing (Berlin, September 2002)

2. The *Regional Implementation Strategy for the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* calls for “**the promotion of the follow-up to the Berlin Conference through regional cooperation**”. In line with this direction, the UNECE secretariat is undertaking actions aimed at facilitating information exchange within the region on issues and policies related to ageing. Under the provisions of a Memorandum of Understanding between the UNECE secretariat and the Government of the Republic of Austria, the secretariat is being assisted in this work by the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, a Vienna-based research institute affiliated with the United Nations.

3. A workshop entitled “Sustainable Ageing Societies: Indicators for Effective Policy-Making” was organized in April 2004 in Madrid, Spain, in collaboration with the European Centre and the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The attending experts identified appropriate indicators and indices that could guide policy makers and other stakeholders in Europe and North America in their work towards fulfilling the Regional Implementation Strategy commitments that address the economic aspects of ageing (specifically commitments 1, 3, 4 and 5).

4. Building a network of national focal points on ageing is underway. This activity is coordinated with a similar effort by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. A survey of the national follow-up to the Ministerial Conference on Ageing (Madrid 2002) is being conducted. A short questionnaire on this was sent out in October 2004, seeking to collect information on activities undertaken in UNECE member States as a follow-up to the Berlin Conference.

5. A regular input into the global follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing is provided by working closely with the division within the Department for Social and Economic Affairs which is entrusted with facilitating the global follow-up.

C. International Conference on Financing for Development, ICFfD, (Monterrey, Mexico, March 2002)

6. One of the provisions of the Monterrey consensus is to “**promote the role of the regional commissions and the regional development banks in supporting policy dialogue among countries at the regional level on macroeconomic, financial, trade and development issues.**” (A/CONF.198/11, paragraph 64)

7. Since the Conference and in line with this provision, the UNECE has mainly focused on the leading action targets highlighted by the conference and related to the mobilization of domestic financial resources for development. According to the Monterrey document, among the key goals in this specific area are “to ensure the necessary internal conditions for mobilizing

domestic savings, both public and private, sustaining adequate levels of productive investment and increasing human capacity". Furthermore, the Monterrey document emphasizes the need for an effective and efficient system of mobilizing and managing public resources while securing fiscal sustainability; the vital role of investment in basic economic and social infrastructure; the need to strengthen and develop the domestic financial sector; the role of governance in public and private finance. It also highlights the critical importance of reinforcing national efforts in capacity building in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the areas related to public and private finance.

8. Over the years, the Economic Survey of Europe has devoted substantial attention to the issues related to the Monterrey process. The Economic Survey of Europe 2001, No. 1 addressed the topics "Domestic savings in the transition economies" and "Economic growth and FDI in the transition economies". The Economic Survey of Europe 2003, No. 1 discussed the issue "Corporate governance in the UNECE region". The Economic Survey of Europe 2004, No. 1 explored the topic "Tax reforms in the EU acceding countries".

9. In December 2001, the UNECE organized a Regional Expert Meeting on the topic "Enhancing the Benefits of FDI and Improving the Flow of Corporate Finance to Transition Economies". The meeting concluded that the various aspects of foreign capital – influencing growth, macroeconomic stability, the balance of payments, etc. – suggests the need for a broad strategy to manage capital inflows, carefully balancing the needs of growth against the various risks, especially as economies become more open.

10. The 2005 UNECE Spring Seminar continues the international policy discussion in this area with the topic "Financing for Development in the UNECE Region – Promoting growth in low-income transition economies". Major issues to be discussed are factors that affect strategies for development and growth; economic integration and trade; and financial management and sustainable growth in resource-rich economies. Immediately thereafter, the annual session of the Commission will start with a high-level policy segment, one of its items being devoted to the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development (ICFfD).

D. Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995)

11. The Beijing Platform for Action and the agreed conclusions of the UNECE Meeting for Beijing +5 lead the work of the UNECE in the area of gender equality. A number of gender-related activities have been developed within this framework, focusing on mainstreaming gender into economic policies and thereby assisting member countries to reverse the negative trend in women's economic position. This includes forums and meetings on women's entrepreneurship, the development of gender statistics and the creation of a website in this area, as well as analytical work and policy dialogue. Concerning the latter activities, the Economic Survey of Europe regularly reviews trends on women in the labour market and, in January 2004, a Regional Symposium on mainstreaming gender into economic policies was organized. The Symposium gathered together representatives of gender machineries and line ministries (Economy, Finance, Labour and Social Affairs) from 35 UNECE member States in Eastern and Central Europe, CIS Countries as well as Western Europe and North America. It concluded that policies supporting women's employability, engendering budgets, access to assets and financing, pensions and social reforms are crucial for promoting gender equality throughout the region and that in addition, they have measurable impact on economic growth, security and social cohesion.

12. The UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 10-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action took place in Geneva in December 2004. It was the third milestone related to the Beijing process in the UNECE region, coming after the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Beijing Conference (Vienna, November 1994), and the Preparatory Meeting for Beijing +5 (Geneva, January 2000). The UNECE Meeting gathered together some 600 participants representing governments and civil society from 53 member countries, with the support of other international organizations active on gender issues in the region, namely the Council of Europe, the European Commission, UNDP, UNIFEM and OSCE. This ten year review focused on three areas of concern covered by the Platform for Action and of particularly high relevance for the UNECE region: women in the economy; institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality; and trafficking of women in the context of migratory movements. For each of these themes, the meeting identified good practices, remaining challenges and areas for further action; it also highlighted emerging issues since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action. The outcome of the meeting took the form of chairpersons' conclusions which will constitute the contribution of the UNECE region to the 10-year review at the global level, expected to take place at a high-level session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in March 2005 in New York.

E. International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994)

13. The UNECE and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) co-organized, in cooperation with the Government of Switzerland, the European Population Forum 2004 (12-14 January 2004, Geneva). The Forum was a high-level expert meeting, attended by about 360 experts representing governments, NGOs, academic and research institutes from 47 UNECE member States, and included also the participation of UN and non-UN international organizations. It was held within the context of the decennial review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The theme of the Forum was "Population Challenges and Policy Responses". Among other things, it considered newly emerging population changes, examined the challenges that they pose, and identified policy responses to them. In particular, the Forum addressed the implications of low fertility, the health inequalities in the UNECE region, the implications of migration, as well as the need to promote policy consistency, partnership and knowledge in the population field. In this context, the Forum examined the implementation of the ICPD-related regional and global agreements and, related to this review, the chairperson's *Summary of Deliberations* pointed out that "there is a strong commitment to the ICPD Programme of Action throughout the UNECE region". A publication containing selected contributions to the Forum is being prepared and will be published under the title "The New Demographic Regime: Population Challenges and Policy Responses in Europe and North America".

II. THE REGIONAL DIMENSION OF THE MDGs

14. It is recognised that Goal 8 of the MDGs (Partnership for development) is by essence of an international nature (global, inter-regional or intra-regional). It has been argued that the other MDGs (Goals 1 to 7) should be addressed at the national level. While there is no doubt about the primary responsibility of national actors (public, private, civil society) for achieving these goals, it also has to be recognised that the regional and subregional context has an impact on these achievements in many aspects.

15. The overall macroeconomic context and the interdependencies among economies within a region or subregion can have a substantial impact on the achievement of the MDGs; this is particularly true in the case of financial crises and periods of economic recession as they develop contagion effects and affect the objective of poverty reduction (Goal 1) as well as other social goals to a degree depending on the vulnerability of countries to external shocks. Such a combination of conjunctural problems in a global/regional context with structural problems in a national context needs to be studied in an MDG perspective. Some activities have been initiated by the UNECE in this direction, as highlighted in Part III.A below. Further work through analyses and exchange of policy experiences could be envisaged in the UNECE region, particular in CIS and South-Eastern Europe countries, possibly through joint undertakings of the UNECE with other organizations such as UNDP which has a presence and knowledge at the national level.

16. Some transboundary issues may also have a significant impact on the achievements of MDGs: the development of **transport networks in landlocked countries** and poor regions is an important factor of poverty reduction (Goal 1) through the creation of new markets and income generating activities; the **shared and integrated management of international rivers, basins and lakes** contributes to environmental sustainability (Goal 7) through safe access to water and preservation of natural resources; **preventing and mitigating the transboundary effects of air and water pollution** is decisive for health preservation and a sound management of natural resources; the **rational use of energy through appropriate pricing and energy networks** goes also beyond national borders and is similarly related to the goal of environmental sustainability. The UNECE is substantially involved in all these areas as demonstrated in Part III. B below, and therefore contributes to the creation of a regional enabling environment for achieving several of the MDGs.

17. The regional level offers an opportunity to exchange national experiences and engage in a policy dialogue on relevant issues like: the relationship between growth, equity and poverty reduction; the conditions for the sustainability of poverty reduction; the links between economic policies and the "social MDGs"; the combination of reforms in "universal" social protection schemes with specific anti-poverty programmes; the policies addressing inequalities (redistribution of assets, tax policies and social transfers on one side, increased employment and property rights for the poor on the other). These key issues are relevant to all countries of the world but they must be addressed in different ways, depending on the initial conditions of development and the institutional history of countries, as well as on their subregional and regional context. Having an analytical capacity and providing a neutral platform for policy debate, the UNECE plays a role in addressing these issues, taking into account the commonality of objectives and the variety of situations. The UNECE Spring Seminar on competitiveness and the seminar on income disparities and the MDGs are examples of such an approach.

18. Finally, efforts to create a European Economic Space in a Wider Europe perspective is outlining new dimensions to cooperation in the region, which may impact on the MDGs. The strategy being that the free movement of goods, services, capital, and also people will promote trade and sustained economic growth with positive social benefits provided that regional integration policies and national policies are consistently developed.

III. ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN THE UNECE REGION

19. *Overview:* The degree of achievement of the MDGs varies greatly among regions and within each of them. In the UNECE region, the focus is to be placed on CIS countries and South-East European countries. Around half of them are expected to miss at least one of the MDGs, especially among those MDGs which relate to poverty, child mortality, maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS. As to the goal of environmental sustainability, the situation of most of these countries represents also a considerable challenge, particularly in the areas of water supply and sanitation, loss of environmental resources and energy use.

20. The World Bank has made an analysis of the present situation and the prospects for achieving the MDGs, focusing on low and lower middle income countries of the UNECE region, namely those of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Firstly, it notices that in most of these countries, the very cold climate means that spending on heating, winter clothing and food is higher than in other regions. Given this extra spending, the World Bank feels that the first Goal (halving the number of people living on less than \$1 per day) should be adjusted to \$2 per day. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, this would change the number of people living in poverty from 5% (living on \$1 per day) to 19.5% (living on \$2 per day). Similarly the goal of halting HIV/AIDS was developed with Africa in mind where the epidemic is already well advanced, while in several CIS countries, HIV/AIDS is in the process of spreading rapidly from high-risk groups to the general population. Given this difference in the specificities of the epidemic, there is a need, in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, to introduce indicators which take into account not only the current situation but also the population at risk and the speed of the contagion. These considerations raise the issue of the need to adapt at least some of the MDGs to regional or subregional circumstances.

21. The interdependencies among the goals, the transboundary nature of several of them (e.g. environment and HIV/AIDS), and the specific situation of CIS countries and countries from South-East Europe demonstrate that a regional and subregional approach is needed, both in terms of policy dialogue and technical assistance support. It is therefore all the more advisable that the competencies of UNDP Offices and those of the regional organizations active in this part of the region, including the UNECE, are coordinated in order to maximize the chances of having all MDG targets reached by the concerned countries of the region by the fixed year.

22. Finally, indicators are crucial for monitoring progress in achieving the MDGs. Further work is much needed in this area, mainly for developing methodologies related to the MDG indicators and for ensuring the collection of data as well as their reliability. The UNECE is already engaged in this process, in cooperation with DESA/UNSD and UNDP.

A. Poverty

23. Poverty reduction was one of the three overarching themes of the World Social Summit in Copenhagen (1995). It is also an essential component of the Millennium Declaration, further taken up in Goal 1 of the MDGs. Poverty reduction calls for a process of sustained growth combined with specific policies. The UNECE brings its support to a number of these factors of poverty reduction. In particular, it develops activities related to policies, norms and standards aiming at building up an economic environment conducive to growth, trade development and

employment. It also has specific activities in the field of social housing and key physical infrastructure for low income and landlocked countries.

24. *Poverty reduction policies.* A study focusing on poverty in Eastern Europe and the CIS was published in the Economic Survey of Europe 2004, No.1. In October 2003, UNECE organized a seminar on income disparity and poverty reduction in the region. The findings of different papers presented at the seminar showed that income disparity was widespread and that the most worrying trends in terms of poverty can be observed in countries of South East Europe and CIS countries which are marked by high unemployment, falling real income, degradation of the health situation, rising child malnutrition, growing threat of HIV/AIDS, deteriorating educational status and sharp decline in the scope and level of social protection schemes. The seminar concluded that, in order to face this situation, there is a need to develop a policy mix guided by a balanced and gradual approach to economic and social reforms in order to improve the efficiency of the economy while containing the social costs of the transition process. This approach is directly related to challenges concerning the European social model and its modernization.

25. In its report to be submitted to the ten-year review of the World Social Summit (Copenhagen +10), the UNECE noted that the incidence of poverty has apparently remained high in the seven low-income countries in the region. The share of people living on less than US\$ 1 per day is alarmingly high in Armenia (12%), Tajikistan (12%), Uzbekistan (19%) and the Republic of Moldova (22%). The share of the population living in poverty on \$4.30 PPP/day in these countries is in a range between 55 per cent and 95 per cent. The report proposes some policy directions for addressing the issues of poverty, employment and social cohesion in these countries and the region as a whole.

26. *Poverty reduction and social cohesion in human settlements.* Policy makers have begun to acknowledge that there is a need for a renewed and increased role of government in helping the poor and vulnerable to meet their housing needs. In this context countries have asked for an enhanced sharing of experience in housing policies and practices as well as for improved policy guidance. In response to this request, the UNECE Committee on Human Settlements has prepared guidelines on social housing aimed at providing policy makers with such guidance. The guidelines address the institutional, legal and economic frameworks for social housing as well as experience with social housing design, and analyse the role of social housing policies for society at large. In particular they aim at extending encompassing and well-researched information on the different instruments available for the financing and provision of social housing.

27. *Employment and poverty.* In order to support a climate conducive to job creation, the UNECE has a wide range of activities supporting entrepreneurship in the region. In addition, in CIS countries, the restructuring of former state companies, particularly in single industry towns and areas, raises major employment problems. In order to address them, the UNECE in cooperation with the ILO organized a regional forum on “social aspects and financing of industrial restructuring” in November 2003 in Moscow. The forum discussed the issues of socially responsible restructuring, including the ways and means of maintaining employment and alleviating the hardships of laid-off workers during its course. A similar event was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in November 2004 and is expected to facilitate the preparation of recommendations to government bodies dealing with industrial restructuring and issues of territorial development.

28. *Transport and poverty.* The development of an effective infrastructure has a profound effect on economic development in the region as a whole by reducing transport- and transactions costs. To that end active transboundary transport networks have been developed and the UNECE is instrumental in supporting such infrastructure development in a Wider Europe. The implementation of international instruments, norms and conventions by UNECE member countries has contributed significantly to developing international trade and transport and, thereby, to fostering integration and development of European countries. Furthermore, the implementation of these UNECE legal instruments and recommendations provides efficient transport solutions for landlocked and transit countries which are otherwise constrained by high transport costs and non-tariff barriers. One of the emphases of the UNECE work in this respect is the development of the euro-Asian links which allow landlocked countries and the poverty-hit parts of these countries to extend economic and trade activities. For example, in a joint project with UNESCAP, UNECE government representatives from 16 countries in the Euro-Asian region agreed on the main road and rail transport routes connecting Europe and Asia to be considered for priority development. Such activity supports the close relationship which exists between the objective of poverty reduction (Goal 1) and that addressing "the needs of landlocked countries" (Goal 8, target 14).

29. *Trade and Poverty.* The work of the UNECE in trade infrastructure is also linked to Goal 1 as trade is essentially seen as a tool for development. The focus is not, therefore, on the development of international trade for its own sake but rather on the development of international trade in the context of its potential to promote economic growth in all countries and subregions, and hence the eradication of poverty. As a specific example, the UNECE work on quality standards for agricultural produce proves to be critical to the development of agricultural trade in the region and thus to the reduction of rural poverty. Several capacity building workshops have been held in the transition countries. Most recently, at the request of the Moldovan government, the UNECE organized such a capacity building workshop in Chisinau (April 2004). This workshop gave an opportunity to public and private sector representatives, together with local and international experts, to discuss at length the current obstacles and available solutions for the development of international trade in Moldovan agricultural products. This represented an important step in dealing with poverty issues in the Republic of Moldova, one of the least developed countries in the UNECE region, since agriculture remains a major contributor to the growth of its national GDP.

B. Sustainable development

30. The UNECE activities in the field of sustainable development are governed by three major documents – Agenda 21, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), and the Millennium Declaration. In particular, the WSSD Plan of Implementation mandates the regional commissions to **“support for development, enhancement and implementation of agreed regional sustainable development strategies and action plans, reflecting national and regional priorities”** (paragraph 159) and also to **“promote...sustainable development in their work”, “facilitate and strengthen the exchange of experience”, “assist in the mobilization of technical and financial assistance”, “promote multi stakeholder participation and encourage partnership to support the implementation of Agenda 21”** (paragraph 60).

31. *Environment for Europe process.* The UNECE has initiated and developed regional environmental policies for more than 25 years and in the latest major regional policy initiative

the UNECE was entrusted with the “Environment for Europe” process. The Ministerial Declaration (Kiev, 2003) underlined the importance of the EfE process as a tool to promote environmental protection and sustainable development in the region. The Declaration stressed the need for intensified cooperation, the introduction of ecological aspects in the process of transition of economies in central and eastern Europe; the promotion of environmental considerations by financial and economic assistance; assistance to improve environment-related health conditions; and finally that each country shall bear responsibility for global environmental problems.

32. The process would serve as the framework to improve coordination of national and international efforts in Europe, though focusing on central and Eastern Europe to improve their environmental management and over-all environmental performance. The potential of the UNECE regional environmental Conventions and Protocols as tools in this regard will be highlighted. The Environment for Europe-process is therefore an important driving force for the whole UNECE region and, in particular, for developing further work in the poorest parts of the region.

33. *Environmental Performance Reviews.* Goal 7 of the Millennium Declaration calls on Member States “**to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources**”. The Environmental Performance Reviews conducted within the framework of the UNECE constitute a tool for this purpose as they review all the major sectors of activities in a given country (agriculture, energy, industry, agriculture, transport, etc.) against environmental and sustainable development criteria. Recommendations are drawn from these comprehensive reviews by country and subsequently monitoring and supporting activities are carried out.

34. *Air quality management.* The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development is particularly explicit in its recommendations on “Protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development” (Chapter IV). Air pollution is covered under paragraph 39 which recommends “**enhance cooperation at the international, regional and national levels to reduce air pollution, including transboundary air pollution, acid deposition and ozone depletion...**”. Air emissions of many pollutants are decreasing in most countries of the UNECE region, much due to the collaborative work under the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) and its Protocols. In the EECCA region the decrease of pollution is caused by the decline in economic output and primary energy demand. The stationary sources that contribute most to the volume of air pollution emissions are in the energy and heat generation sector, the mining industry, the metals industry (both ferrous and non-ferrous) and the chemicals industry, including refineries. The mobile sources are, however, rapidly growing in number and so are their emissions. The vehicle fleet, both public and private, is ageing on average. As a result the share of mobile sources in total national emissions of PM, NO_x, VOCs and CO has been systematically increasing. To support Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) countries in establishing a cost-effective air quality control strategy, the UNECE is supporting the development of efficient air quality management in Central Asia.

35. *Water management:* The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development gives a strong mandate to support countries with economies in transition to “**monitor and assess the quality of water resources**”(paragraph 27) and further, to “**improve water resource management**” (paragraph 28).

36. Until the 1990s, the environmental and health effects of water pollution, unsafe sources of water supply, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene were underestimated, mainly due to the non-availability of environmental data reports from Eastern Europe. Recent studies show that 31 per cent of Europe's population live in areas of high water stress, and overexploitation of resources for drinking water and irrigation is causing serious environmental problems. Floods have become one of the most costly "water-quantity" problems. Estimates from the mid-1990s have also shown that 120 million people (1 person in 7 of Europe's population, including Central Asia) – among them such vulnerable groups as the young and the elderly – do not have access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. Recent studies have estimated the burden of disease related to water and health at 5.3 per cent of all deaths, and 3.5 per cent of all DALYs in children of 0-14 years of age in the European part of the region. (One DALY – Disability- Adjusted Life Year – represents a lost year of healthy life.)

37. To implement target 10 of Goal 7 in the Millennium Declaration, to **"halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation"** and to develop Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Efficiency Plans by 2005 (commitment of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), specific actions are being undertaken under the 1992 UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the Environmental Strategy for EECCA. As transboundary water resources play a significant role in the whole region with more than 150 major transboundary rivers, over 100 transboundary groundwater aquifers and around 30 international lakes, these actions ensure that waters are used in reasonable and equitable way. To enhance water productivity, the challenge is to implement specific measures of demand management and rational use of water as well as to protect water-related ecosystems, such as forests and wetlands, which are an important source of water supply.

38. For the achievement Goal 7, target 10 on **"safe drinking water"**, the ratification and full implementation of the provisions of the UNECE-WHO/EURO Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes is crucial in addition to the implementation of the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE), which calls for improving access to safe and affordable water and adequate sanitation to all children.

39. *Sustainable Energy.* The UNECE Sustainable Energy Sub-programme is fully consistent with the United Nations Millennium Declaration with respect to policies and measures corresponding to the **"needs of ... economies in transition"** (paragraph 5); with respect to **"the current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption"** (paragraph 6) of natural resources; with respect to providing assistance on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and **"reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases"** (paragraph 23). Some of these objectives are taken up and specified in Goal 7 (sustainable development), particularly indicator No. 27 on **"Energy use per capita"**. In response to these provisions and goals, the Sustainable Energy sub-programme of the UNECE seeks to facilitate a transition to a more sustainable energy future and introduce renewable energy sources to reduce environmental impacts resulting from the production, transport and use of energy. During 2004, the Energy Efficiency 21 Project launched a new phase of its work for the development of practical methods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the local level in Eastern Europe in order to implement the global UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and aspects of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. The United Nations Foundation has accorded a significant new

grant to the UNECE for “Financing Energy Efficiency Investments for Climate Change Mitigation” in UNECE economies in transition.

40. In the context of post-EU enlargement, the Sustainable Energy sub-programme also promotes the integration of energy restructuring, legal, regulatory and energy pricing reforms, as well as of the social dimension into energy policy making. In 2003 the Committee on Sustainable Energy and the Committee on Environmental Policy issued Guidelines for Reforming Energy Prices (ECE/ENERGY/54) designed to assist member States in reviewing the environmental consequences of their energy pricing policies and subsidies to introduce selected reforms. The Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Coal in Sustainable Development launched a new technical assistance project on Coal Mine Methane in Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS with extra-budgetary support from the US Environment Protection Agency and the United Nations Foundation. The Ad Hoc Group continues to address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of coal in the countries in transition.

41. *Sustainable management of forests.* The Millennium Declaration paragraph 23 reads, “To intensify our collective efforts for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests” The UNECE Timber Committee has oriented its whole programme to furthering the achievement of this forest goal. In particular, the strategic review of the sub-programme, completed in October 2004, reaffirmed the “promotion of sustainable forest management in the region” (equivalent to the MD commitment) as the over-riding objective of the sub-programme. To this end, the sub-programme works with partners at the regional (Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe – MCPFE) and global levels (FAO, UN Forum on Forests). All five work areas of the Timber Committee’s programme (markets and statistics, forest resource assessment, long term outlook studies, social and cultural aspects, and policy and cross-sectoral issues) are oriented to achieving this goal in the areas of comparative advantage, notably monitoring and analysis of trends and policies and provision of a policy forum.

42. The subprogramme makes a specific contribution in the field of monitoring sustainable forest management: one of the MDG indicators is forest cover (area of forest as % of total land area): this information, provided at the global level by FAO, is collected and validated in Europe and the CIS by the sub-programme, following global guidelines, themselves largely based on UNECE region work. At the regional level, a set of regional indicators of sustainable forest management has been drawn up by UNECE, with MCPFE; UNECE takes a leading role in collecting and providing the information to successive ministerial conferences.

C. International trade

43. The Monterrey consensus, the Millennium Declaration and MDG 8, Target 12, call for building “an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system”. In this area, the UNECE focuses on technical harmonization and standardization which provide for a common basis for trade in goods and services in the region. Its activities focus on defining simple, transparent and effective procedures and solutions for international trade and includes the only international standard for trade data interchange UN/EDIFACT. These efforts are supportive of the overall goal to achieve further cooperation and integration within the European region in order to develop a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood for economic and trade relationships.

44. In addition to this work for the region as a whole and its extension to other regions of the world, an important emphasis is placed on the support to low-income transition economies through capacity building activities. In particular, tools for implementation of trade facilitation procedures by these economies as well as by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are developed through a project known as UNeDocs (UN electronic Documents). This provides a bridge between traditional and electronic trading methods based on standardized “documents”.

45. Further, long-term effects on sustained and expanded trade can only be achieved when an open and liberal trade policy is combined with trade and transport facilitation measures. This means that there is a compelling need for an open liberal trading environment with functioning institutions and good trading conditions, which trade facilitation measures can help to create. To that end the UNECE is committed to working with the World Trade Organization (WTO) to implement the Doha Development Agenda. In 2002, WTO co-sponsored the UNECE International Forum on Trade Facilitation and subsequently UNECE officials have contributed to the regional WTO Ministerial Trade Conferences in Tbilisi and Zagreb, and to capacity-building workshops in South-East Europe.

D. Information and communication technology

46. The World Summit on the Information Society and the Millennium Declaration call for the reduction of the digital divide. This is taken up by MDG 8, Target 18, which aims at ensuring “that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies... are available to all”.

47. To remain competitive, developed economies and economies in transition alike must rise to the challenge of exploiting ICT to transform their societies into knowledge-based economies. The UNECE has integrated this concern in its activities (see also document E/ECE/1422 on E-strategy). In particular, the UNECE has conducted e-assessment in 16 member States. These assessment as well as the countries’ e-readiness carried out by the World Bank show a growing digital divide at both the UNECE and the global levels, particularly between developed and developing countries.

48. The UNECE region is affected more than others by the “digital divide” because it includes many of the most digitally advanced countries as well as countries in Central Asia with some of the lowest levels of ICT development in the world. UNECE focuses on helping economies in transition to develop a knowledge-based economy by narrowing gaps and divides between the advanced and less advanced economies in areas which are crucial to the development of the knowledge-based economy. Along this line, the UNECE co-organized an event involving countries of Central Asia, the “Bishkek Conference on Information Society and Regional Cooperation in Information and Communication Technologies for Development”(November 2004). In the concluding document the participants committed themselves to giving highest priority to the development of the information society and, in particular, to strengthen ICT infrastructure, to ensure affordable access to ICT services and to promote applications such as e-government, e-health, e-education, e-business and e-tourism.

49. Overall, the work of the UNECE in this area is to assist in legal, regulatory and standardization matters; provide transition economies with an information, meeting and advisory platform; and facilitate new business processes and applications for information technologies. UNECE also seeks to foster linkages between stakeholders, including governments, civil society,

the business community and non-governmental organizations, with a view to furthering the transition process and promoting economic growth.

50. UNECE cooperates with other organizations to develop methodologies for monitoring the Information Society. In addition, UNECE is examining new transport technologies known as Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and introducing provisions on these new technologies into relevant UNECE Agreements and Conventions to make transport more efficient, safer and more environmentally friendly. Finally, the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) actively promotes goals beneficial to all. Legislative proposals to implement this Convention were recently adopted by the European Commission.
