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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring
(Second session, 28 February-1 March 2002)

REPORT ON THE MEETING

1. The second session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring was held in Geneva on 28 February-1 March 2002.
2. The meeting was attended by delegations from: Armenia; Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; Finland; Georgia; Germany; Hungary; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Monaco; Republic of Moldova; Romania; Russian Federation; Spain; Tajikistan; Ukraine; United States of America; Uzbekistan; and Yugoslavia.
3. It was attended by representatives of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC)/Institute for Environment and Sustainability and the European Environment Agency (EEA).
4. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Meteorological Synthesizing Centre – East (MSC-E) and the Chemical Coordinating Centre (CCC) of the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP), the European ECOForum and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) also attended.
5. Mr. Yu. Tsaturov (Russian Federation) chaired the meeting.
6. The Working Group adopted the agenda of its second session and the report of its first session as contained in documents CEP/AC.10/2002/1 and CEP/AC.10/2001/2, respectively.

I. DEVELOPMENT OF THE KIEV ASSESSMENT REPORT

7. A representative of EEA introduced the corrections to the list of contents of the Kiev assessment report (CEP/AC.10/2001/5/Corr.1) and circulated the English version of the final list. The Working Group took note of this information.

8. The representative of EEA informed the Working Party about the data collection procedure for the Kiev report (CEP/AC.10/2002/4) and introduced questionnaires for country data on soil, waste and water (CEP/AC.10/2002/4/Add. 1 to 3). He indicated, in particular, that completed questionnaires should be returned to EEA by the Balkan countries that are non-EEA members by the end of May 2002 and by the newly independent States (NIS) by the end of August 2002 at the latest. He also presented a preliminary analysis, in the form of completed indicator data sheets, of the countries that were covered by its networks. The Russian version of the data collection guidelines prepared by EEA and a note by the United Nations Statistics Division on its Questionnaire 2001 on Environment Statistics were circulated among the participants.

9. During the ensuing discussion participants raised a number of issues concerning the report's preparation. These related, in particular, to: the time periods to be covered by the Kiev report, the level of detail in the assessments, financial support requirements for data collection and interpretation at the country level, the use of data from relevant progress reports for the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (South Africa), the role of the Working Group in discussing the draft Kiev report, the involvement of NGOs and other major groups in the discussion of the report and dissemination of its findings in UNECE subregions, and the practicalities of making the report user-friendly. The delegation of the United States of America stressed that an approach should be found to cover North America in the state-of-the-environment reporting to the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conferences.

10. The Working Group:

(a) Took note of the information provided and invited EEA to take the comments made during the discussion into account when developing further the Kiev Assessment;

(b) Took note of the intention of EEA to discuss with the United States Environmental Protection Agency at their upcoming regular joint meeting possibilities for North American involvement in the state-of-the-environment reporting for the "Environment for Europe" process;

(c) Invited delegations from the countries concerned to facilitate the submission of completed questionnaires to EEA by the respective deadlines;

(d) Decided to consider at its third session on 28-30 August 2002 the preliminary findings of the Kiev Assessment, some early chapters, a synthesis paper on EEA member countries and a preliminary analysis of NIS;

(e) Decided to convene a special session, with the participation of EEA national focal points, on 28-29 November 2002 in Geneva to consider the draft findings, summary and available chapters of the Kiev Assessment;

(f) Decided to consider at its fourth session, tentatively scheduled for

26-28 February 2003, the lessons learnt from the preparation of the Kiev Assessment, particularly those relating to gaps and weaknesses in environmental monitoring in NIS, indicators, national state-of-the-environment reporting, and data management, including the use of modern information technologies.

11. The Working Group discussed the indicators of the Kiev report (CEP/AC.10/2002/3), their use in national environmental reporting, especially in NIS, and their relationships with sustainable development indicators. In the light of the discussions held, it invited EEA, jointly with the UNECE secretariat, to derive from the Kiev indicators a core set of indicators that might be recommended for use in national state-of-the-environment reporting, for consideration by the Working Group at its next session.

II. ROUND TABLE ON PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING IN NIS

12. A round-table discussion was organized on Problems and Prospects of Environmental Monitoring in NIS with the participation of: Mr. F. Cadarso (Spain), Mr. I. Dairov (CAREC), Mr. T. Iversen (Denmark), Mr. P. Heinonen (Finland), Ms. S. Outochkina (Belarus) and Mrs. N. Sharashidze (Georgia) as panellists. The debate focused on a draft strategy for updating and developing the State system of pollution monitoring in Georgia (CEP/AC.10/2002/5), a report on the development of the national environmental monitoring system in Belarus (CEP/AC.10/2002/12) and a review of environmental monitoring activities in Central Asia (CEP/AC.10/2002/11).

13. During the ensuing discussion participants supported the efforts of the countries under review to improve national environmental monitoring and information systems despite sometimes severe resource constraints. Several delegations presented their own country experience in modernizing monitoring and information systems to make these more cost efficient, more closely coordinated with all partners concerned, adaptable to new environmental challenges, and meeting better the requirements of decision makers and the information needs of the general public. Various proposals were made to Belarus, Georgia and the Central Asian States on how to cope effectively with existing gaps and weaknesses.

14. In the light of the discussions held, the Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the draft strategy for updating and developing the State system of pollution monitoring in Georgia and took note with appreciation of the reports on Belarus and Central Asia;

(b) Thanked the representatives of Belarus, Georgia and CAREC for their presentations and all speakers for their contributions to the debate;

(c) Agreed on a series of recommendations to Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as annexed to this report;

(d) Welcomed the readiness of the delegations of the Russian Federation and Ukraine

to prepare country reports on approaches to improving environmental monitoring, for consideration by the Working Group at its next session.

III. AIR POLLUTION MONITORING

15. On behalf of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution the head of EMEP/MSC-E introduced his paper on air pollution monitoring in NIS and some other countries in transition, and the participation of these countries in international monitoring networks (CEP/AC.10/2002/6). In addition, the head of EMEP/CCC briefed the Working Group on its activities, stressed the importance of improving and expanding the monitoring and observation network for air pollution in NIS, and expressed the readiness of the Centre to provide interested NIS with advice on establishing monitoring stations, including instrumentation, data quality, storage and intercalibration.

16. NIS delegations participating in the discussion expressed the interest of their Governments in obtaining external expert advice and technical assistance on issues such as: methodologies for air pollution inventories; emission modelling; measurement techniques for persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals and some other pollutants; training of experts; and siting of transboundary monitoring stations. The representative of CAREC expressed the interest of his organization to serve as coordinating and training centre for Central Asian countries on air pollution monitoring provided that donor support was made available.

17. The Working Group:

- (a) Took note of the information provided under this agenda item;
- (b) Invited the Executive Body for the Convention to prepare, through its EMEP Steering Body and centres, possible proposals for a short-term (two- to three-year long) programme, to be implemented jointly with the Working Group, on capacity building in NIS for air pollution monitoring, taking into account, in particular:
 - (i) Data collection priorities under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and its protocols;
 - (ii) NIS needs for air pollution monitoring systems that would provide data and information to local, national and international decision-makers;
 - (iii) Opportunities for establishing an institutional structure, supported by the necessary resources, with the participation of experts from NIS and interested Western countries as well as representatives of EMEP centres.

IV. MONITORING OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

18. A representative of UNEP/Chemicals reported on progress made in its networking on chemicals monitoring and on the role and the involvement of UNECE countries in this project (CEP/AC.10/2002/7).

19. The Working Group thanked UNEP/Chemicals for the information provided and invited it to keep it informed about further developments.

V. WASTE DATA AND CLASSIFICATIONS

20. The representative of EEA introduced sets of indicators developed by this institution to help individual countries to monitor progress in waste prevention, waste management and material flows, and to provide comparable information at the pan-European level (CEP/AC.10/2002/8).

21. The Working Group recommended Governments of countries that were not covered by EEA networks to consider using these sets of indicators in their national practices.

VI. NEW TACIS MONITORING PROJECT

22. In the absence of a delegation from the European Commission (EC), the representative of EEA informed the Working Group about progress made in the preparation of a Tacis project on "Strengthening environmental information and observation capacity in NIS". He referred to the upcoming conclusion of a grant agreement between EC and EEA on the project implementation and expressed confidence that the funds (Euro 1.5-million) would be transferred to EEA in April-May 2002. Four major activities would be subject to financing over the period up to the end of 2003: the Kiev report preparation, strengthening national contact points in NIS, supporting and extending the Working Group's work programme, and overarching activities. UNECE was expected to be responsible for the implementation of a substantive part of the project.

23. The Working Group expressed deep concern over delays in launching this project, which was crucial for its activities, and thanked EEA for providing assurances that the project would start soon.

VII. TOOLS AND GUIDELINES

24. Mr. V. Shershakov (Russian Federation), Chair of the Task Force on Tools and Guidelines, informed the Working Group on the outcome of the Workshop on Information Technologies for Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (Obninsk near Moscow, 7-9 February 2002), and on the Task Force's plans. A report on the Workshop was circulated (CEP/AC.10/2002/13).

25. The Working Group:

- (a) Took note of the information provided and welcomed the Workshop's results;
- (b) Agreed with the Workshop's proposal to consider, at its next session, the feasibility of developing guidelines on improving national state-of-the-environment reporting, including the use of indicator sets and modern information technologies, and on better use of these reports for environmental policy- and decision-making;
- (c) Stressed the need for more workshops to reach out to a greater number of NIS experts;
- (d) Invited the Chair of the Task Force to inform the Working Group, at its third session, about further progress made.

VIII. REMOTE SENSING

26. A representative of the EC Joint Research Centre introduced a discussion paper on the role and contribution of remotely sensed information to monitoring and reporting on environmental problems across Europe (CEP/AC.10/2002/9).

27. During the ensuing discussion, the participants referred, in particular, to: areas where remote sensing might supplement ground-based environmental information, the costs of remote sensing information, the tools and expertise required to use this information, the practical use of remote sensing in national state-of-the-environment reporting, and possibilities for countries that were not members of the European Union (EU) to participate in its Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) initiative.

28. The Working Group:

(a) Thanked the EC Joint Research Centre for the information provided and the presentation made;

(b) Invited the Centre to develop proposals on how remote sensing could contribute possibly in terms of particular indicators) to pan-European state-of-the-environment reporting, in general, and to the Kiev Assessment, in particular, for consideration by the Working Group at its third session.

IX. ACTIVITIES IN OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORUMS

29. The secretariat presented a note on international environmental monitoring databases in the UNECE region (CEP/AC.10/2002/10).

30. A representative of the UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment made a presentation on the preparation of the third Global Environment Outlook (GEO-3) report, including its coverage of the UNECE region.

31. The Working Group:

(a) Took note of the information provided;

(b) Invited relevant international organizations and convention secretariats to complete the questionnaire as annexed to CEP/AC.10/2002/10 and to submit it to the UNECE secretariat by 30 April 2002, at the latest;

(c) Invited the secretariat to compile, subsequently, an inventory of major international environmental databases to facilitate the consideration by the Working Group, at its third session, of possible measures to improve country coverage in existing environmental databases and to make data contained therein more easily accessible.

Annex

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO BELARUS, GEORGIA, KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN,
TAJIKISTAN, TURKMENISTAN AND UZBEKISTAN ON IMPROVING NATIONAL
ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS**

Having discussed environmental monitoring and information in Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan at its second session (28 February-1 March 2002, Geneva), the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring recommends that the central public authorities that are responsible for environmental monitoring and information in these countries should consider taking the following measures:

Monitoring priorities

1. Establish priorities for environmental monitoring activities on the basis of data collection and reporting requirements established in national laws and regulations, environmental action plans and programmes, and requirements emanating from international commitments. Set monitoring priorities with the central administrations concerned and make these priorities available to all in a document and, if possible, electronically;

Institutional framework

2. Clarify the legal framework, particularly provisions concerning the responsibilities of individual administrations with regard to environmental monitoring and information;
3. Establish or improve a workable institutional structure for inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination as well as a network of experts responsible for specific monitoring and information activities;
4. Delegate authority to specialized institutions and regional and local authorities for relevant monitoring and information activities. Provide regional and local authorities with advice and support;

Funding

5. As monitoring is by definition a continuous activity, give particular attention to the continuity of financing of core activities and develop a mix of funding sources and mechanisms, including external financial support, when necessary;
6. Ensure that major polluters regularly monitor their emissions and waste flows, and that central, regional or local public authorities periodically check compliance with emission standards and other environmental regulations. Share the costs of

environmental monitoring at the local level with polluters, to the extent possible;

Harmonization, integration and modelling

7. Harmonize definitions, classifications and monitoring protocols with international standards, starting with those established under applicable international environmental agreements;
8. Promote, step by step, integrated data collection covering quality, quantity, biodiversity and ecosystem aspects;
9. Make use of modelling, where appropriate, to reduce information gathering as such and reduce environmental pollution monitoring costs;

Periodic reviews

10. Promote a continuous dialogue between policy makers and those who design and implement monitoring systems. Regularly review environmental monitoring systems based on the assessment of their benefits in supporting decision-making, the prioritization of new information needs, and the economic evaluation of their costs;

Information and reporting

11. Progressively (resources permitting) make greater use of computer networks to facilitate environmental information flows within and between institutions, to promote the use of common databases and software at all levels of government, and to facilitate access to information;
12. Improve information quality, giving priority to the development of sets of environmental indicators, using international experience, particularly indicators for measuring progress in environmental performance with respect to national objectives and international commitments;
13. Improve reporting of environmental information to decision makers, the scientific community and the general public. Focus on compact, easy-to-read products such as booklets presenting key environmental data, indicator reports and thematic leaflets or brochures produced at regular intervals, and make them available on the Internet;

Specific recommendations concerning the national monitoring strategy

14. Supplement the national monitoring strategy with an action plan with concrete measures and set a realistic (for two-three years) time schedule for their implementation;
15. Make a specialized institution under the Ministry of the Environment responsible for

core monitoring activities under the strategy. Such an institution should work in cooperation and coordination with all other administrations, research institutes and NGOs, collecting and processing environmental data;

16. Focus monitoring activities initially on a limited number of major pollutants and major pollution sources using the inventory of pollution sources as a basis. Aim at establishing a minimal network of stationary sampling sites to monitor discharges from these sources into air and of bodies water;
17. Design measures to improve the monitoring of the marine environment taking into account the requirements of the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution;
18. Develop practical approaches to extending monitoring activities, step by step and within the time frame of the national strategy, to soil, waste, biodiversity and other environmental areas;
19. Make every effort to attract external financial support, both at bilateral and multilateral levels, for the implementation of the national monitoring strategy.