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FUTURE UNECE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT<sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> Prepared by the secretariat, in response to the Committee’s request (ECE/CEP/80, para. 26). The present paper takes into account the discussion of earlier versions (CEP/2002/2) that took place during the sessions of the Committee on Environmental Policy on 4 November 2002 and 18 February 2003, as well as during an informal meeting of the Bureaux of the Committee and of the governing bodies of the UNECE environmental conventions on 3 July 2003.

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### Introduction

1. With both the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” on the agenda, the 2002-2003 biennium offers an exceptional opportunity for the UNECE member States and their Committee on Environmental Policy to take stock and reflect on: the achievements of the UNECE environmental activities in the past five to ten years; the challenge of the principles of sustainable development to the Committee’s work and the strategic options for the future; and the cooperation between the Committee and the governing bodies of the conventions and other players in implementing these options.

2. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe established the Committee on Environmental Policy and adopted its terms of reference in 1994. During a decade of expanding work programmes, serviced by the UNECE Environment and Human Settlements Division, the way in which the Committee on Environmental Policy works has also changed. The Committee has engaged in regional and national policy dialogues, in particular through the peer reviews of environmental performance reviews. Most of the legally binding conventions and protocols, developed under the auspices of the Committee, came into force during the past decade. The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme’s Steering Committee has been set up. Together with the governing bodies of the UNECE conventions, the Committee on Environmental Policy now represents a unique and powerful consensus-based policy forum for discussing environmental issues and bringing forward regional priorities.

3. A paper on strategic directions for the environment is expected to help the Committee tackle the above and emerging issues. This paper clusters its main issues around three recurrent themes that also provide a link with the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (South Africa) (including the corresponding outcomes of the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development) and the decisions of the Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Kiev. These are: pan-European harmonization and governance; programmes and strategies; and cross-sectoral cooperation and integration. Furthermore, the paper puts forward suggestions for future work. It is envisaged that the paper will become a guide for the Committee on Environmental Policy for the five to ten years following its adoption to structure and continuously adapt its programme of work.

#### **I. REGION-WIDE HARMONIZATION AND GOVERNANCE**

4. Within the region several factors have played an important role in the coordination and harmonization of policy responses to environmental problems and the implementation of sustainable development.

##### **A. The “Environment for Europe” process**

5. The “Environment for Europe” process, launched at the 1991 Dobris ministerial meeting, has been a unique multilateral process, brings all countries in the region together on an equal footing. Two elements have become particularly important in the process: cooperation among major players and public participation. Through the series of environmental ministerial conferences since 1991, the “Environment for Europe” process has involved all countries of Europe, North America, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and initiated important policy decisions and priority actions. The trans-Atlantic and Eurasian dimensions of the process have proven to be crucial. The “Environment for Europe” process has created, or coordinated, a number of mechanisms for regional and subregional cooperation, such as the Environmental Action Programme (EAP) Task Force, the Project Preparation Committee (PPC), and the Regional

Environmental Centres (RECs). In particular, the process initiated the extension of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) programme of environmental performance reviews to countries in transition by the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. The periodic region-wide assessment reports on the state of the environment, published by the European Environment Agency (EEA), are another achievement of the process. The Third Pan-European Assessment Report included, with the assistance of UNECE, information on Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

6. The successes of the “Environment for Europe” process would not have been possible without the contributions from the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy and the conventions’ governing bodies. These include: the negotiation of numerous regional multilateral agreements (including the most recent ones on strategic environmental assessment; civil liability; pollutant release and transfer registers) and guidelines (e.g. on strengthening compliance with and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements in the ECE region); the preparation of regional assessment reports through the Environmental Performance Review (EPR) programme for countries in transition; the preparation of guidelines on environment and energy (on reforming energy pricing and subsidies); the preparation of elements for a strategy on environment and education; and the development of subregional strategies (e.g. on environment, water and security in Central Asia).

7. In their declaration at the Kiev Conference, the Environment Ministers invited UNECE through its Committee on Environmental Policy to monitor the implementation of the Kiev Declaration, to reflect the relevant commitments of the Kiev Declaration in its work programme, and to assist in assessing progress in the implementation of the environmental commitments of this region stemming from the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation, as well as the September 2001 UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

8. The Kiev Declaration stressed the need to develop a communication strategy to raise awareness of the “Environment for Europe” process among a wider audience of stakeholders and the general public. The Ministers invited UNECE through the Committee on Environmental Development to develop this strategy without delay. The dialogue taking place between

environmental and communication experts under the UNECE environmental conventions also confirms the urgency of developing a strategy.

B. Agenda 21 and follow-up to World Summit on Sustainable Development at the regional level

9. Building on Agenda 21, adopted at the Rio Conference, there has been during the past ten years an increasing commitment to the principles of sustainable development worldwide. In the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation a special emphasis was given to regional implementation, thus assigning an important role to the United Nations regional commissions and other institutions at the regional and subregional level. The UNECE region, with its economic potential and impact on the environment, has an important responsibility to follow up the World Summit's results.

10. The Commission on Sustainable Development, during its eleventh session, endorsed this approach, acknowledging the diversity and specificities of each region and the existence of a regional institutional architecture related to the three dimensions of sustainable development. The efficacy of this regional architecture – encompassing institutions that address financial, economic, social or environmental issues – was tested and proven during the preparatory work for the World Summit. Hence, the regional implementation enables the countries of the region to better and more specifically relate their priorities and modalities to the implementation process. The Commission on Sustainable Development invited the regional commissions to consider organizing regional implementation meetings, within the framework of two-year action-oriented “implementation cycles”. In this regional implementation process, the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy will play a key role in strengthening the environmental pillar of sustainable development, in collaboration with other regional and subregional organizations and bodies.

C. UNECE conventions and environmental policy

11. The UNECE conventions and their subsequent protocols laid the legal basis for improving the environment in the region. At the same time they were at the origin of many successful programmes contributing to their implementation and initiatives like capacity-building and subregional cooperation. The work leading to the adoption of the conventions and the ongoing work under the conventions form a highly dynamic policy development process. The Guidelines for Strengthening Compliance with and Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in the ECE Region (ECE/CEP/107) are an important tool, recognizing that each agreement is negotiated in a unique way and enjoys its own independent status. Important synergies can be derived from inter-linkages among the conventions regarding ratification, financing of implementation, compliance, public participation and access to information, information gathering and management, capacity-building, institutional aspects and outreach. Promoting synergies should not be a top-down administrative process, but demand-driven: inter-linkages and synergies should arise from common needs identified at the working level, both in the national and in the transboundary context.

12. Moreover, international environmental agreements, in particular the UNECE conventions, can play an important role in preventing conflict and promoting cooperation. Many conventions contain provisions for dispute settlement and for establishing cooperation mechanisms. Transboundary environmental projects can, moreover, help to rebuild confidence among different communities.

13. Despite the remarkable progress achieved so far, much effort on the part of the Committee on Environmental Policy and the governing bodies of the conventions is still needed in two major areas: facilitating compliance with and implementation of the instruments (in particular in certain subregions), and forging coherence by strengthening inter-linkages where demand-driven. The Committee could contribute to the work of the conventions in particular in the area of capacity-building as well as by enhancing coordination among the various bodies. Furthermore, the Committee can use its influence to promote the national implementation of the conventions through its delegates.

#### D. The European Union and its enlargement

14. The upcoming enlargement of the European Union (EU) will create new conditions region-wide. The enlargement has many dimensions, which represent not only a challenge but in the first place an opportunity for environmental gains for the EU, for its new member States and for the countries staying outside the EU. Twenty-five countries will soon be applying the same environmental policies, standards and rules, and many of the most environmentally active UNECE member countries will be part of the EU. On the other hand, countries that are not going to join the EU will need UNECE also in the future as a broad regional environmental policy context and platform for discussion and sharing experience. The strong commitment of the EU to the “Environment for Europe” process and other region-wide environmental cooperation was reaffirmed at the Kiev Conference.

15. EU legislation and UNECE conventions have much in common, in substance, in the way they have been negotiated and developed, and in the way they are being implemented. In many ways they interact and are mutually beneficial, which becomes visible in the application of EU legislation and UNECE conventions in the transboundary context. As an example, the basic principles of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Waters and International Lakes need to be implemented irrespective of EU borders. On the other hand, the EU Water Framework Directive may serve as a strong instrument for facilitating the implementation of the UNECE Convention even beyond the borders of the EU. The governing bodies of the conventions, together with the Committee, need to address the relationship between the UNECE conventions and EU legislation, in order to capitalize on the impact of the EU enlargement on the implementation of the conventions.

16. The Committee needs to take stock of, and monitor environmental responses to subregional changes, and in particular to EU enlargement, in all UNECE member States. UNECE needs to increasingly tailor its activities to the less well-off countries in transition, thus ensuring that disparities in environmental performance between subregions do not increase in the future. In the EPRs, UNECE is already taking into account the capacities of the reviewed countries to implement the recommendations to improve their environmental performance. By referring to a global political mandate within the United Nations and the concrete usefulness of its cooperation with other United Nations bodies, like the other regional commissions, UNECE can be more attractive also to EU members in the future. The acknowledged effort of UNECE to

include civil society fully into its environmental work is also a comparative advantage. A well-balanced and consistent continuation of this work must be envisaged.

17. In the environmental area, the most obvious implications of EU enlargement for UNECE will relate to the work of the Committee on Environmental Policy and the governing bodies of the UNECE environmental conventions. Since April 2003 the accession countries have participated fully in the EU coordination before UNECE meetings. The new EU member countries will have to allot many of the limited resources in their environmental administrations to coping explicitly with the EU requirements. The accession countries will have fewer resources available to actively participate, so the work of UNECE will face a new political environment. One of the crucial points concerns the ability of UNECE to attract broad and active participation, both with regard to the trans-Atlantic dimension and with regard to the non-acceding countries in transition. Even if the latter value their bilateral contacts with the EU, and some of them aspire to membership in the future, they still lack a multilateral forum other than UNECE to have an impact on events in the region. This means that fund-raising to support the participation in UNECE meetings by experts from these countries will become even more important.

18. The growing emphasis under the UNECE conventions on better implementation offers an additional dimension for open multilateral cooperation in the region, in particular at the subregional level. In international environmental legislation, the experience of good practices and problems of implementation come from the national level. UNECE can provide a useful forum for this, so that all countries in the region can benefit. Finally, as several UNECE conventions are open to global membership, the work under the conventions can increasingly take into account also developments outside the region.

#### E. Conclusions

19. In response to the rapidly changing environmental, economic and social challenges of the UNECE region, the Committee has shown efficient flexibility and focused result orientation while implementing its 1994 terms of reference. It should further strengthen its role in safeguarding the environmental pillar with regard to new policy challenges such as sustainable



development and security. Exercising this role can be seen as further implementation of its terms of reference.

20. The Committee has made vital contributions, in collaboration with partner organizations, to the “Environment for Europe” process. The Committee will continue to collaborate with all partner organizations in the “Environment for Europe” process and respect their independent responsibilities and contributions. The Committee is therefore ready, besides servicing the “Environment for Europe” process, to take up coordinating responsibility for certain new tasks within the continued “Environment for Europe” process, such as monitoring the outcome of the Kiev declaration and developing a communication strategy.

21. Recognizing that each agreement is negotiated in a unique way and enjoys its own independent status, the cooperation among the UNECE conventions’ governing bodies should continue in order to take stock of demand-driven inter-linkages and to create and use corresponding synergies. At regular intervals, for instance every two or three years, the bureaux of the Committee on Environmental Policy and the conventions’ governing bodies should discuss the strategic directions of their work to encourage the sharing of information and the dissemination of new ideas, also with a view to enhancing compliance and implementation of cross-cutting provisions locally and regionally. Similar exchanges with the secretariats of global conventions could also be beneficial.

22. The Committee can provide a forum to address regional responses to impacts, challenges and opportunities, created by EU enlargement, for various subregions and for the UNECE region as a whole. The governing bodies of the conventions, together with the Committee, need to address the relationship, both normative and practical, between the UNECE conventions and EU legislation, in order to capitalize on the impact of the EU enlargement on the implementation of the conventions. Success in providing a positive response will depend on the Committee’s ability to attract broad and active participation from all countries of the region including non-acceding countries in transition, and by strengthening the Trans-Atlantic dimension. One way to achieve this would be through effective participation in the design and implementation of sub-regional environmental partnerships, which would ensure that differences between sub-regions in environmental performance do not increase in the future.

23. The fund-raising activities shall be further strengthened to provide more sustainable extra-budgetary resources for the longer term, in particular for tailor-made activities and to ensure broader participation. The activities should address the funding of the CEP work programme, and of work on capacity building and implementation done jointly under the ECE conventions. The fund-raising process should involve working together with other institutions and aim to involve more donors.

## II. PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIES

### A. The Environmental Performance Review programme

24. One decade has passed since the Lucerne Ministerial Conference asked UNECE to undertake Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs) in the countries in transition. During these 10 years the UNECE EPR programme has generated continued demand from countries in transition for both initial and follow-up reviews. The Kiev Declaration welcomed the report “Environmental policy in transition: Lessons from 10 years of EPRs” and supported the implementation of its recommendations, noting that EPRs have been an important instrument for countries with economies in transition for sharing experience and to promote good environmental management in specific countries. The Kiev Declaration stressed that the EPR programme should continue to assist countries to assess progress, to promote policy dialogue through peer reviews, to help stimulate greater accountability and to offer tailor-made recommendations on how to reduce the overall pollution burden. The process of Environmental Performance Reviews should continue, whereby the first round of review should be completed and the second round proceed. Countries and organisations are encouraged to make broader use and support wider dissemination of the Reviews.

25. The second reviews should measure progress made in implementation using a relevant set of indicators. They should devote more attention to performance in implementation of the national policy targets and legislation, and of international commitments such as conventions. The second reviews should focus on priorities of the countries, including new concerns that have arisen, and examine in particular issues of financing. The second reviews should give greater

emphasis on the integration of the environment with other sectors. They should also assess the environmental issues in the context of democracy, justice and poverty eradication. The second Reviews should make maximum use of existing data and work in close cooperation with EEA and other organisations to maximise efficiency.

B. Monitoring and assessment

26. The UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring provided support to EEA on lessons learned from data collection for an indicator-based report on progress in environmental management in Europe, which focused on network strengthening, data availability and data processing. The report resulted in recommendations for improving the environmental monitoring capacities in Europe, and in particular to maintain the pan-European framework for cooperation on environmental reporting and information management; to ensure appropriate level of investment in basic monitoring infrastructure; to establish mechanisms for the provision of environmental information by countries, in particular in EECCA; to improve international comparability of environmental information; to ensure the submission by countries of environmental data to international organisations and governing bodies of conventions.

27. The Kiev Declaration invited organisations and institutions to join in implementing the above recommendations. The Ministers expressed support for the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring in its activities, particularly on strengthening environmental information and observation capacity in the twelve countries of EECCA. The Kiev Declaration recognised that further development of the regional cooperation framework provided by the Working Group is required, and invited donors to provide support. The monitoring work can make use of the rich experience collected under the ECE environmental conventions.

C. Sub-regional partnerships and strategies

28. Many of the region's environmental problems remain unsolved mainly owing to the difficult economic situation. Reconciling basic environmental and health concerns with severe social constraints looks very difficult for some countries in transition. It is therefore essential to closely monitor such disparities and their evolution, and to design measures to prevent

subregions drifting apart. Any further divergence might have undesirable repercussions for the environment and security.

29. Important initiatives for the environment and sustainable development have been taken or are under way. One example is the Environmental Strategy for Countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), initiated by environmental ministers of the countries. Another example is the Strategic Partnership on Water for Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup>. A third example is the Central Asian Initiative on Environment, Water and Security, initiated by Central Asian States. This initiative aims to strengthen cooperation to protect water basin ecosystems, use water rationally and improve governance to ensure this sub-region's sustainable development and its security.

30. All three initiatives have much in common, and have been welcomed and endorsed by the Kiev Ministerial Declaration. UNECE has contributed to the development of these initiatives in various ways, and in particular in the area of transboundary water management and protection. Experiences from the implementation elsewhere of the provisions of ECE environmental conventions, can help in a significant way to achieve goals set out by these initiatives. There is a need to elaborate the future interrelationships between these initiatives, and to define the specific responsibilities for their further development, coordination and evaluation, as well as for the development and servicing of corresponding work programmes. The work should include capacity building, legal assistance and support for the financing of activities.

31. Technical assistance – through workshops, pilot projects and advisory missions - by ECE to member States, in Central Asia, the Russian Federation, Southern Caucasus and South-Eastern Europe has also been a tool for responding to particular needs. These activities have taken place to help countries implement relevant policies and receive advisory services on particular issues for which they need expertise. This assistance is reported to the Committee on Environmental Policy and the governing bodies of the conventions. Technical assistance is provided

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<sup>2</sup> The “Strategic Partnership on Water for Sustainable Development” was launched at the WSSD in Johannesburg by the EU and the twelve countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia as part of the global “Water Initiative: Water for Life – Health, livelihoods, economic development and security” (abbreviated as EU Water Initiative, EUWI).

increasingly in cooperation with other regional commissions, and with other partners active in the sub-regions, to ensure that it is cost-efficient and uses all available synergies; meets the requests from member countries; and focuses on clearly stated objectives including the implementation of conventions.

D. Conclusions

32. The first round of EPRs will be completed and the second round shall proceed. The second reviews should focus more on issues of implementation and financing, and on priority issues of particular importance to countries. The reviews should assess how environmental issues could be viewed comprehensively and in an integrated manner with other sectors at all decision-making levels.

33. The future activities of the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring should give emphasis on strengthening environmental information and observation capacity, particularly in the twelve countries of EECCA. The EPR programme should support strengthening of monitoring work through country-based recommendations, in order to measure and assess real progress made in implementation using a relevant set of indicators. The monitoring work should make use of the rich experience collected under the ECE environmental conventions.

34. The Committee will aim at giving more cohesion to the sub-regions by providing an open and active forum for sub-regional debates on the environment. The Committee should stand ready to contribute to the further development, coordination and evaluation of the sub-regional partnerships and initiatives, in particular of the Environmental Strategy for the Countries of EECCA, and of the Central Asian Initiative on Environment, Water and Security. As some of the tasks relate to the implementation of the conventions, the work and experience under the ECE conventions will constitute a crucial input.

35. The work of the Regional Adviser shall be further linked to and integrated in the key priority areas of work on environment in the ECE, and the Committee should assess, in the context of overall technical assistance, the impact of the Regional Adviser's activities every other year. The close contacts of the Regional Adviser with the secretariats of the conventions

should continue. The Regional Adviser shall play a key role in contributing to the capacity-building component within the context of sub-regional partnerships and initiatives.

### **III. CROSS-SECTORAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION**

36. There is a consensus that significant efforts still need to be made to integrate environmental concerns into other sectors, both economic and social, through a wide range of policy, legal, institutional and financial measures and incentives. During the ten years since the Rio Conference, actions and programmes in the ECE region have moved towards that goal, but sustainable development is still in its infancy. The Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development reiterated the need to promote the integration of the three components of sustainable development into the work of the regional commissions in a balanced way. The Kiev Declaration underlined the importance of the shift towards sustainable production and consumption patterns and called for promotion of environmental policy integration with sectoral policies, including continued promotion of the internalisation of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments.

37. Experience in cross-sectoral cooperation shows how difficult it is to achieve results. The difficulties arise for a variety of reasons, such as the different professional cultures in individual sectors or the compartmentalized approaches in both the national administrations and international organizations. Cooperation between the different levels of government within the environmental sector also needs to be closer. Cross-sectoral cooperation projects have become important starting points and testing grounds for the responses to the widely accepted need to integrate environmental concerns into other sectoral policies. These projects offer opportunities both for achieving substantive goals and for replacing purely compartmentalized thinking by comprehensive and integral approaches.

38. Many of the most complex environmental problems are of a cross-sectoral nature. The concrete actions for improvement have to be taken jointly by the environmental parts of administrations, although cross-sectoral cooperation should also take place between different segments of environmental policy. The Committee has established cross-sectoral linkages, activities and cooperation with other ECE committees (e.g. human settlements, transport, and

sustainable energy), and between the Committee on Environmental Policy and the conventions' governing bodies, and also with other international organizations such as the World Health Organization. Hence, in addressing the cross-sectoral dimension, the Committee undertook initiatives both with regard to cross-sectoral projects and programmes, and by developing cross-sectoral legal instruments.

39. Examples of active role of ECE in launching cross-sectoral programmes and projects between different sectors are:

- Establishment of an ECE-WHO Transport, Environment and Health, Pan-European Programme, coordinated and implemented by a newly established tripartite Steering Committee; the Kiev Ministerial Declaration made a commitment to implement effectively this Programme.
- Establishment of a Task Force on Environment and Energy jointly with the Committee on Sustainable Energy; the joint work resulted in Guidelines on Reforming Energy Pricing and Subsidies. The Kiev Declaration endorsed these Guidelines and invited both Committees to examine the role of economic instruments in promoting the use of renewable energy.
- Joint ECE/Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) project "Rational and efficient use of water and energy resources in Central Asia" in the context of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA); this project greatly contributed to the development of the earlier mentioned Central Asian Initiative on Environment, Water and Security.

40. Examples of legal instruments – binding or non-binding - with cross-sectoral or cross-cutting character and impact, developed under the auspices of UNECE, are:

- The Protocol on Water and Health, jointly developed by ECE and the WHO Regional Office for Europe, and adopted at the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, London, June 1999, strengthens the cross-sectoral cooperation in ensuring adequate water quality for citizens.

- The Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Espoo Convention on Environmental Assessment in the Transboundary Context, adopted and signed during the Kiev Ministerial Conference, underlines the cross-sectoral approach.
- The Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters to the 1992 Conventions on the Protection and Use of transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents was also adopted and signed during the Kiev Conference.
- Public Participation is a cross-cutting and cross-sectoral issue enshrined in the Aarhus Convention, adopted during the EfE Ministerial Conference in 1998. The Protocol on PRTR to the Aarhus Convention, adopted and signed during the Kiev Conference, will provide an important mechanism for generating information on potentially polluting activities and bringing it into the public domain. It will increase corporate accountability in many sectors.
- The Guidelines for Strengthening Compliance with and Implementation of MEAs in the UNECE Region were endorsed as an important tool to strengthen compliance with and implementation of all ECE legal instruments.

C. New priority issues

41. Some policy areas that received attention in the recent report on the lessons learnt from ten years of UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews (CEP/2003/2) are not suitably addressed by the current ECE environmental cross-sectoral programmes, namely: agriculture, tourism and solid waste management (urban, rural, industrial). These problems are likely to increase and are not tackled effectively in the ECE region in a comprehensive way. All of them are related to unsustainable production and consumption patterns.

42. As a matter of fact, most of these not yet tackled issues are mentioned among the thematic clusters of the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the CSD. When organising the regional implementation meetings, as suggested by CSD-11, ECE will need to consider its role in new priority issues within the broader thematic clusters when progressing through the series of two-year action-oriented "Implementation Cycles".



43. Environmental education has been recognised by the Kiev Conference as a core component of education for sustainable development, and as a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development and good governance. The UNECE Ministers of Environment decided that it is important and timely to develop and finalise a UNECE strategy for education for sustainable development. They acknowledged that UNESCO is the lead agency and coordinator with regard to education for sustainable development at the global level, and they invited UNECE to work with UNESCO and Council of Europe on a regional strategy of education for sustainable development.

#### D. Conclusions

44. To be effective, cross-sectoral cooperation should take place at all relevant levels: governmental (involving ministries, and authorities at different levels) and that of stakeholders (representing various sectors and industrial branches). The Committee on Environmental Policy should promote cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination at the national level, while enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation within the UNECE. The achievements and challenges in the cross-sectoral work undertaken so far with the involvement of ECE shall be examined with a view to making it more effective. The successful activities, yielding significant added value, should be continued and strengthened by choosing most effective modalities and tailor-made organisational structures. In line with the Kiev Declaration, the implementation of legal instruments relevant for cross-sectoral integration should be strengthened, and their efficiency, effectiveness and coherence should be improved.

45. The social and economic dimensions of existing activities including those of a cross-sectoral nature can be strengthened only with strong commitment and engagement by member countries. When such is the case, the Committee is ready to promote and facilitate the interlinking of environment with the other dimensions of sustainable development at the national and sub-regional levels, preferably by integrating the additional dimensions into already existing programme activities. This could be done by providing policy guidance, and through technical assistance, in particular in the case of integrating environment into poverty reduction strategies.

46. The current ECE environmental cross-sectoral programmes do not address agriculture, tourism and solid waste management. The Committee shall not duplicate the work done by other bodies in these areas, but it should envisage to enhance outreach, presence or partnership in such programmes.

47. Cooperation with key partners inside and outside the region shall be enhanced to facilitate the implementation of relevant cross-cutting and cross-sectoral instruments and policies, and in particular of the outcomes of WSSD, CSD-11, and the Kiev Ministerial Conference. The relationship between the Committee on Environmental Policy and other bodies within UNECE and in the ECE region as a whole will need to be reinforced. Contacts with the other regional commissions should be more structured and the sharing of experience more substantive. They should focus, on a demand-driven basis, on the growing relevance of the ECE environmental conventions and programmes, like the one on Environmental Performance Reviews, for other regions. ECE can also contribute to the global governance by supporting common positions of the regional commissions on global issues. OSCE is a key partner in the field of environment and security, and this cooperation should be further improved.

48. The Committee on Environmental Policy shall actively contribute to the environmental pillar in defining, together with UNESCO and Council of Europe, a regional strategy of education for sustainable development. Shift to sustainable production and consumption patterns, and how to achieve it, should be an important part of such a strategy.

#### **IV. THE WAY FORWARD**

49. As has been emphasised throughout this document, the ECE environmental work is not done in a vacuum. The changing scene is providing new challenges and opportunities that have to be addressed carefully. The gaps and deficiencies in the activities have to be tackled using the experience and expertise that ECE has acquired over the years. The recent discussions by Committee on Environmental Policy revealed clearly that the Committee shall continue moving on the chosen track by further developing its core activities as reflected in its 1994 Terms of Reference.

50. The strategic choices emanating from the three recurrent themes discussed in the first three chapters of this document - pan-European harmonization and governance; programmes and strategies; and cross-sectoral cooperation and integration – can be summarised as the following five overarching strategic directions or goals:

**Goal 1:                   Contributing to the Environment for Europe process**

The Committee shall continue to collaborate with all partner organisations in the EfE process. In line with the outcomes of the Kiev Declaration, the Committee is invited to take up a number of new responsibilities for the coming years. The following tasks will contribute to achieve the above goal.

**Task 1.1: *Monitoring the outcomes of the Kiev Declaration.*** The Committee shall monitor the outcomes of the Kiev Declaration in consultation with other PSBs and in cooperation with other relevant organisations and institutions. It can be envisaged that the monitoring will induce a midterm assessment discussion at the CEP in 2005. An open-ended Preparatory Group shall convene to coordinate the preparations of the next conference, with the UNECE serving as secretariat.

**Task 1.2: *More cohesion to ECE sub-regions.*** The Committee will aim at enhancing cohesion to its sub-regions by providing an efficient and flexible forum for sub-regional debates and for exchange of experience on the environment. The Committee shall contribute to the further development, coordination and evaluation of the sub-regional partnerships and initiatives, in particular of the Environmental Strategy for the Countries of EECCA, and of the Central Asian Initiative on Environment, Water and Security. More emphasis will also be given to South-East Europe.

**Task 1.3: *Communication strategy for the Environment for Europe Process.*** The Committee shall develop, in consultation with other PSBs and in cooperation with the EAP Task Force and other relevant organisations and institutions, a communication strategy to raise awareness of the EfE process among a wider audience of stakeholders and the general public based on the

achievements of the process. The communication strategy should also aim at increasing the transparency of the Efe process itself. The needs and inputs of the ECE conventions with regard to communication should be taken into account.

## **Goal 2: Improving environmental governance**

Improving region-wide environmental governance has emerged as, and will continue to be one of the major substantive goals of the Committee. This could be achieved through: the process of EPRs; strengthening the environmental monitoring; and capacity building through advisory technical assistance.

**Task 2.1:** *Continue and focus the process of Environmental Performance Reviews.* The first round of reviews shall be completed and the second round proceed. The second reviews should focus more on issues of implementation and financing, and on priority issues of particular importance to countries. The reviews should assess how environmental issues could be viewed comprehensively and in an integrated manner with other sectors at all decision-making levels.

**Task 2.2:** *Strengthen environmental monitoring.* The future activities of the UNECE Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring should give emphasis on strengthening environmental information and observation capacity, particularly in the twelve countries of EECCA. The EPR programme should support strengthening of monitoring work through country-based recommendations, in order to measure and assess real progress made in implementation using a relevant set of indicators. The monitoring work should make use of the rich experience collected under the ECE environmental conventions.

**Task 2.3:** *Cooperation with key partners.* Cooperation with other key partners inside and outside the region shall be enhanced to facilitate the implementation of relevant cross-cutting and cross-sectoral instruments and policies, and in particular of the outcomes of WSSD, CSD-11, and the Kiev Ministerial Conference. The relationship between the Committee on Environmental Policy and other bodies within UNECE and in the ECE region as a whole will need to be reinforced. Contacts with the other regional commissions should be more structured and the sharing of experience more substantive. They should be focused, be based on concrete issues, as is the

growing relevance of the ECE environmental conventions for other regions. In this way, ECE can contribute to the global governance by supporting common positions on the global issues. The Committee may envisage cooperating more actively in the field of environment and security.

**Task 2.4:** *Role of the Regional Adviser.* The work of the Regional Adviser shall be further linked to and integrated in the key priority areas of work in the Division, and the Committee should assess, in the context of overall technical assistance, the impact of the Regional Adviser's activities every other year. The close contacts of the Regional Adviser with the secretariats of the conventions should continue. The Regional Adviser shall play a key role in contributing to the capacity-building component within the context of sub-regional partnerships and initiatives.

**Goal 3: Improving effectiveness of international legal instruments**

International legal instruments – conventions and protocols, as well as recommendations – have played a central role in the development and consolidation of environmental policy of the ECE. After a decade that yielded a significant number of such instruments, the main challenge now is to improve their effectiveness by promoting and facilitating their implementation at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. To achieve that, the following main tasks have to be achieved.

**Task 3.1:** *Promoting synergies and further cooperation between the ECE environmental conventions.* Recognising that each agreement is negotiated in a unique way and enjoys its own independent status, the cooperation among the ECE conventions' governing bodies should continue in order to take stock of demand-driven inter-linkages and to create and use, in a bottom-up way, corresponding synergies. At regular intervals, e.g. every two or three years, the bureaux of the Committee on Environmental Policy and the conventions' governing bodies should discuss the strategic directions of their work to encourage the sharing of information and the dissemination of new ideas, with the view of enhancing compliance and implementation of cross-cutting provisions at local and regional levels. Similar exchanges with the governing bodies of the global conventions would also be beneficial.

**Task 3.2:** *Harvesting positive impacts of EU enlargement.* The governing bodies of the conventions, together with the CEP, need to address the relationship between the ECE conventions and the EU legislation, in order to make positive use of the impact of the EU enlargement on the implementation of the conventions.

**Task 3.3:** *Facilitating sub-regional cooperation.* Experiences from the implementation elsewhere of the provisions of ECE environmental conventions, can help in a significant way to achieve goals set out by the sub-regional partnerships and initiatives, in particular of the Environmental Strategy for the Countries of EECCA, and of the Central Asian Initiative on Environment, Water and Security.

#### **Goal 4: Integrating environmental concerns into sectoral policies**

Integrating environmental concerns into sectoral policies has been a major aim of the Committee since its inception. Experience in cross-sectoral cooperation shows how difficult it is to achieve results. It can be achieved through tailor-made programmes and by developing and implementing legal instruments. The increased urgency to implement the principles of sustainable development puts an additional pressure to integrate environmental concerns into sectoral policies. The following tasks will serve to achieve the overarching goal.

**Task 4.1:** *Enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation.* To be effective, cross-sectoral cooperation should take place at all relevant levels: governmental, and that of stakeholders. The Committee on Environmental Policy should promote cross-sectoral cooperation at the national level. The achievements and challenges in the cross-sectoral work undertaken so far with the involvement of ECE shall be examined with a view to making it more effective. The successful activities, yielding significant added value, should be continued and strengthened. In line with the Kiev Declaration, the implementation of instruments relevant for cross-sectoral integration should be strengthened, and their efficiency, effectiveness and coherence should be improved. The current ECE environmental cross-sectoral programmes do not address agriculture, tourism and solid waste management. The Committee shall not duplicate the work done by other bodies in these areas, but it should envisage to enhance outreach, presence or partnership in such programmes.

**Task 4.2:** *Education for sustainable development.* The Committee on Environmental Policy shall actively contribute to the environmental pillar in defining, together with UNESCO and Council of Europe, a regional strategy of education for sustainable development.

**Goal 5:           Contributing to regional implementation of the environmental pillar of sustainable development**

Building on Agenda 21, and on the outcomes of WSSD in Johannesburg, the CSD invited the regional commissions to consider organising, within the framework of two-year action-oriented “Implementation Cycles”, regional implementation forums. In this regional implementation process, the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy will play, in collaboration with other regional and sub-regional organisations and bodies, a key role in strengthening the environmental pillar of sustainable development. Two tasks derive from this responsibility.

**Task 5.1:** *Assessing regional implementation of WSSD commitments.* The Committee shall assist Environment Ministers in assessing progress in the implementation of environmental commitments of this region emanating from the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation as well as the UNECE Regional Preparatory for WSSD. The results of this work should support the regional implementation meetings organised in preparation for the UNCSD meetings as recommended by the UNCSD in its 11<sup>th</sup> session.

**Task 5.2:** *Interlinking environmental work with social and economic dimensions.* The social and economic dimensions of existing activities including those of a cross-sectoral nature can be strengthened only with strong commitment and engagement by the member countries. The Committee should be ready to promote and facilitate the interlinking of environment with the other dimensions of sustainable development at the national and sub-regional levels, by providing policy guidance, and through technical assistance.

51. The 5 strategic goals, together with the corresponding tasks or tools, form a consistent, realistic strategy for the coming years. By implementing these goals, the Committee on Environmental Policy should ensure and strengthen synergies with key partners, and in particular with the governing bodies of the conventions and, when appropriate, with other committees within ECE, and encourage cooperation with other regional commissions, relevant United Nations bodies, other global, regional and sub-regional international organizations and with different partners in the governmental and private segments of society and the economy.