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Ad Hoc Working Group of Senior Officials
“Environment for Europe”

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Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**PROPOSAL ON THE SEGMENT ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT FOR THE SIXTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
“ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE”**

Submitted by the Bureau of the UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable
Development

Introduction

1. The Working Group of Senior Officials, the preparatory body for the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 10–12 October, 2007), at its first meeting agreed that the Conference would focus on implementation. Three major components within this context were identified: (a) assessment of the effectiveness of agreed commitments and tools; (b) analysis of problems with the implementation of existing commitments, and their root causes; and (c) presentation of success stories and good practices to be built on for further progress in capacity-building and in the implementation of existing commitments. Education for sustainable development (ESD) received strong support as a potential agenda item, but it was stressed that any proposal should be prepared in such a way as to warrant the attention of Ministers.

2. Pursuant to these outcomes, the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD at its first meeting (December 2005) discussed a possible proposal on ESD for the Conference. It suggested a general plenary session that would address cooperation on ESD between the environment and education sectors and regional cooperation for implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD. The session could be combined with a thematic panel discussion on ESD's role in solving emerging problems related to sustainable development. As background materials for the session, the following could be prepared: (a) a compilation of good practices; (b) pilot reporting by volunteering countries using the selected set of indicators; and (c) a first report giving an overview of implementation progress based on responses from countries. One of the issues for Ministers to decide could be strategic direction for the continuation of the process.
3. A draft proposal for the Conference could be already discussed by the Working Group of Senior Officials in June 2006, and the final input to the Conference should be ready by the beginning of April 2007.
4. The Committee mandated its Bureau to (a) follow up on these proposals, keeping in mind the time frame for the Conference preparations and the financial resources available to carry out these activities; (b) present these proposals to the Working Group of Senior Officials; and (c) report to the next meeting of the Steering Committee on the results.
5. The Bureau at its second meeting (on 23 February 2006 in Geneva) amended the initial proposal prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairperson and submitted it for consideration by the Executive Committee of the Working Group of Senior Officials at its second meeting on 24 February 2006.
6. The Chairperson of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD presented the proposal (SC-ESD/Bureau-2/2006/2 and Add.1) to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee discussed the paper and, while acknowledging the importance of ESD, expressed several concerns. The major concerns were (a) the time allocation for one agenda item vis-à-vis other possible items; and (b) the need for more extended cross-sectoral consultations at the national level before delegations were formed for the Conference. Some delegates proposed back-to-back meeting on ESD as an option. However, it was considered unlikely that Ministers would be present for an event that took place before or after the Conference itself. This might also prevent the "Environment for Europe" process from providing a platform for cross-sectoral cooperation. In addition, it could have some practical implications for the host country. It was agreed that the Working Group of Senior Officials would discuss the issue further.
7. This document is meant to facilitate the discussion by the Working Group of Senior Officials regarding a possible segment on ESD at the Conference.

I. Relevance to the Conference

8. Given that ESD is an effective tool for implementing sustainable development, the segment would make a substantial contribution to the overall purpose of the Conference, namely furthering the implementation of agreed goals and commitments. The high relevance of ESD to the Conference derives from the Kiev Declaration, the Kiev Statement on ESD and decisions of the Vilnius High-level Meeting. This applies to both aspects: considering ESD as a possible agenda item, and ensuring synergies between the organization of different high-level events. The ESD segment would be a good example of cross-sectoral cooperation between the environment and education sectors as well as with stakeholders. It would also show policy integration in practice, which is an essential prerequisite for sustainable development, and could serve as an example for other sectors. The segment would contribute to the assessment of the first phase of the implementation of the UN Decade of ESD in the UNECE region and would make it possible to demonstrate good practices across the region.

II. Organizational protocol

9. In accordance with the organizational procedures of the Conference, the segment would be open to participation by representatives of the 55 UNECE member States. To ensure equal representation of the education and environment sectors, the delegations would include representatives from these two sectors as well as other relevant sectors. Interested member States of the United Nations outside the UNECE region would also be permitted to participate. The expected level of participation is ministerial or equal to ministerial. Members of delegations should represent the consolidated positions of their national/state governments regarding the substance of the work of the segment and are therefore encouraged to hold consultations at the national/state level prior to the Conference.

10. Representatives of relevant stakeholders, including international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), business entities and academic institutions will be invited to participate as observers. The protocol for stakeholders' participation, as well as the size of delegations and registration procedures, would be in accordance with the organizational protocol of the Conference (see "Organizational Issues for the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (ECE/CEP/AC.11/2006/5).

III. Time, format and possible theme(s)

11. To take advantage of the participation of Ministers of Education in the opening ceremony of the Conference, it is proposed that the segment take place on the first day of the Conference. Based on experience from the previous "Environment for Europe" Conferences and the preliminary assessment of the organization of work of the Belgrade Conference, the time available for the formal session on ESD would be three hours maximum. The session would be combined with an informal panel discussion organized as a side event. In addition, there could be other ESD-related events, such as an exhibition of materials on ESD, presentations by youth representatives, and the like.

A. Formal plenary session.

12. The following two titles are proposed for further consideration by the Steering Committee: “Learning from Each Other: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward” or “A Learning Region: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward”.

13. The session would open with remarks by a Chairperson (one of the participating Ministers), followed by keynote addresses by the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson (5 minutes each; the first of these two individuals should represent one of the two sectors, and the second one should represent the other). Delegates would be invited to engage in interactive discussions from the floor (up to 3 minutes per intervention). They would be expected to discuss the main concerns relating to the implementation of ESD with a focus on achievements, challenges and future steps in terms of reaching the six objectives of the UNECE Strategy. Delegations would be provided with a guidance paper that would facilitate the preparation of their interventions for a well-structured discussion. Points for discussion would include:

- Support of ESD by policy, regulatory and operational frameworks (including cooperation between the environment and education sectors and other relevant sectors)
- Promotion of sustainable development through formal, non-formal and informal learning
- Building the competence of educators
- Ensuring the accessibility of tools and materials for ESD
- Promotion of research on and development of ESD
- Cooperation for the Strategy’s implementation (partnerships; regional and sub-regional; links with relevant initiatives in other regions and with global processes; needs of countries with economies in transition)

14. The Chairperson would summarize the discussion and present it in the form of a Chairperson’s summary. The summary would focus on particular obstacles encountered and major breakthroughs made in implementation. The summary would also highlight ways to improve the effectiveness of ESD implementation in the UNECE region and globally.

15. One of the issues for Ministers to decide would be the strategic direction for the continuation of the process after the Conference. A short statement on the matter could be adopted by the Environment and Education Ministers (for draft elements for the proposal, see annex II). Environment Ministers might also wish to address ESD in a declaration that might be adopted as an outcome of the Conference.

B. Informal panel discussion (side event)

16. A panel discussion on ESD's role in solving emerging problems related to sustainable development would be held during a lunch break prior to the formal session, so that the key outcomes of the informal panel could be communicated to the formal session. The allocated time would be two hours. To ensure a thematic link with the overall agenda of the Conference, it was suggested to consider ESD's role in solving problems related to sustainable development in a specific area addressed by the proposed agenda.

17. The panel discussion would touch upon experts' and stakeholders' views and practical experiences, and on major developments at the regional and global levels in relation to the issue. It could address experiences in the region; how these can contribute to the achievement of progress at the global level; and the question of whether there are priorities shared by all regions. Points for discussion could include:

- The roots of a problem (to be identified) and to what extent poor implementation of ESD is part of the root causes
- Whether political and social differences, including aspects of culture, justify a differentiated approach to the implementation of ESD
- Specific challenges for governments and stakeholders
- Possible frameworks for future partnerships and dialogue between stakeholders and different regions and at the global level
- Other issues as appropriate.

18. The format for the panel discussion would be: (a) a short opening statement by each of the panellists (up to five minutes); (b) comments, questions and reactions from the floor; (c) responses by the panellists; and (d) concluding remarks by the Chairperson-moderator.

19. Panellists would be requested to keep their opening statement to a maximum of five minutes, but would provide the secretariat with a longer version of the statements, in writing, for circulation to delegates prior to the meeting.

20. Participants would be invited to take part in the debate and to respond spontaneously to the points raised by the panelists as well as addressing other relevant issues. For reporting purposes, they would be invited to submit to the secretariat, prior to or during the meeting, a brief outline of their interventions. Interventions should not exceed three minutes.

21. It is proposed that the panel be composed of a chairperson-moderator (one of the participating Ministers; the number of participating Governments from that sub-region would be reduced accordingly) and panellists as follows: (a) three representatives of Governments, and (b) two representatives of stakeholders.

C. Indicative time frame

Formal plenary session	
15 min.	Opening by the chairperson of the session and keynote addresses by the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the session
2 h. 15 min.	Interventions from the floor
15 min.	Adoption of the statement
15 min.	Concluding remarks by the chairperson
<i>Total: 3 h.</i>	
Informal panel discussion (side event)	
30 min.	Opening statements by the chairperson-moderator and the panellists
1h. 20 min.	Interventions from the floor and responses by the panellists
10 min.	Concluding remarks by the chairperson-moderator
<i>Total: 2 h.</i>	

IV. Officers and panellists

22. The main criterion in proposing the chairpersons, vice-chairperson and the panellists representing Governments would be to ensure equitable geographical representation of the UNECE member States and balanced representation of the environment and education sectors. Other criteria include the commitment and activity shown by a country in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy, the potential to share good practices and/or the severity of problems faced by a particular country. The panel should ideally include articulate and stimulating speakers. It is suggested that chairpersons, vice-chairperson and the panellists representing Governments be identified through informal intergovernmental consultations. The Chairperson of the Steering Committee might wish to lead this process with the assistance of the secretariat. Stakeholders would be identified on the basis of their experience and active performance in ESD activities at the regional level, as well as the need to include stakeholders with different profiles and types of experience. The European ECO-Forum was requested to hold consultations and present its proposal, in consultation with the secretariat, regarding the panellists representing stakeholders.

23. A consolidated proposal on the officers and panellists would be communicated to the Bureau for its consideration. Based on the Bureau's recommendation, the final proposal would be submitted to the second meeting of the Steering Committee for its approval.

V. Documents**Input documents:**

- *Document for decision:* draft statement on the future of the process
- *Background materials:* a compilation of good practices; pilot reporting by volunteering countries using the selected set of indicators; and a first report with an overview of progress in implementation based on the responses from countries

Output documents:

- Adopted statement
- Chairperson's summary of the formal session
- Report of the formal session
- Summary of the key outcomes of the informal panel discussion

ANNEX I

TIME FRAME FOR THE PREPARATION OF POSSIBLE INPUT DOCUMENTS FOR THE SEGMENT ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Document for decision : A short draft statement (up to 2 pages) for possible adoption by Ministers addressing the strategic directions for the continuation of the process.

- February 2006: Key elements are discussed by the Bureau on the basis of the outline prepared by the secretariat.
- March 2006: A first draft is sent on behalf of the Bureau to the members of the Steering Committee for national consultations and comments.
- September 2006: A revised draft, based on the comments received, is submitted to the second meeting of the Steering Committee for its consideration.
- September–December 2006: Further comments by countries on the draft that was submitted to the Steering Committee.
- December 2006: The Steering Committee considers the draft statement and decides on a process for preparing a final version.
- April 2007: A final draft is completed for translation into official UNECE languages and reproduction for the Conference.

Financial implications: Funds for the travel of delegates from countries with economies in transition to the meetings of a possible drafting group. Alternatively, the Bureau may assume this responsibility.

Background materials

- (a) Compilation of good practices in ESD (jointly by UNECE and UNESCO)
- February 2006: A template prepared by the secretariat in cooperation with UNESCO is discussed by the Bureau.
 - March 2006: An invitation to complete the template is sent to the members of the Steering Committee.
 - October 2006: Deadline for receiving completed templates.

- November 2006 – April 2007: Preparation of the compilation (e.g. CD-ROM or print version).

Financial implications: Consultancy fee (translation, formatting and designing – to be confirmed)

(b) A first report giving an overview of implementation progress based on responses from countries

- September–October 2006: A questionnaire is prepared and sent by the secretariat to the members of the Steering Committee.
- October 2006 – December 2006: Responses from countries are submitted to the secretariat.
- January–March 2007: The report is prepared by an independent expert with the assistance of the secretariat.

Financial implications: Consultancy fee for the preparation of the report

(c) Pilot reporting by volunteering countries using the selected set of indicators

- September 2006: The selected set of indicators prepared by the Expert Group, together with the format for reporting, is sent to interested countries.
- April 2007: Reports are submitted to the secretariat for reproduction and dissemination.

ANNEX II

DRAFT ELEMENTS FOR A POSSIBLE STATEMENT ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BY THE MINISTERS OF EDUCATION AND OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE UNECE REGION

We, Ministers of Education and of the Environment from the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE),

Confirming our vision for the future, which is of a region that embraces common values of solidarity, equality and mutual respect between people, countries and generations,¹

Reaffirming the importance of education for sustainable development as a tool for capacity-building that enables people to make this vision a reality,

Celebrating the successful adoption and the start of the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, a practical instrument to promote sustainable development through education,

Emphasizing that close cooperation between the environment and education sectors as well as all other relevant sectors and stakeholders has contributed significantly to the successful start of the implementation of the Strategy,

Welcoming progress made so far in implementing education for sustainable development in our countries and the advances in regional and sub-regional cooperation in this area,

Recognizing that the implementation process is benefiting from the experience gained both within the region and globally and welcoming the fruitful cooperation between the UNECE and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the implementation process,

Acknowledging with satisfaction that our regional work on education for sustainable development furthers the implementation of the relevant outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development² and brings a substantive contribution to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development³ (UN Decade of ESD), led by UNESCO at the global level,

¹ UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (CEP/AC.13/2005/3/Rev.1), High-level meeting of Environment and Education Ministries, Vilnius 2005

² Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002

³ United Nations General Assembly resolution 57/254 of 20 December 2002

Welcoming ESD-related developments taking place within the European Union and at sub-regional levels, including in Central Asia and in the Mediterranean,

Supporting the streamlining of relevant initiatives and the strengthening of synergies among processes aimed at achieving ESD and sustainable development as well as between ESD-related activities taking place within the frameworks of the UN Decade of ESD, the UNECE Strategy for ESD and the UN Commission on Sustainable Development,

Acknowledging that education for sustainable development should consider diverse local, regional and national circumstances and encouraging the involvement of all stakeholders, including public authorities, the educational community, non-governmental organizations, business, youth and the media,

Recognizing that education for sustainable development is a complex and evolving concept and that its implementation could have both a short term-effect determined by favourable policies and a wider impact on society that can be seen only over a long period,

Taking into account concerns and needs expressed by the member States during the first phase of the implementation process and acknowledging that some countries, particularly countries with economies in transition, may need donor support to carry out relevant activities,

Strongly support the continuation of this challenging endeavor and confirm that the implementation of education for sustainable development should be well under way by 2010, as stated in the Strategy;

Agree that the further process should seek to build a broad political platform for regional and subregional cooperation and partnerships. It should particularly address those areas with urgent needs and aim at the participation of the countries of the region and beyond and be based on a set of common priorities and a long-term perspective;

Invite our Governments to take part in the further work on fostering national⁴ processes and ensure that appropriate resources are made available for this purpose;

Invite our Governments to monitor the implementation process using indicators developed by the Expert Group and report on national progress to UNECE. This would also serve as a report to UNESCO on the implementation of the UN Decade of ESD;

Invite UNECE to continue providing secretariat support to the further process in cooperation with all relevant international actors, thereby contributing to the UN Decade of ESD;

Decide to extend the mandate of the Steering Committee and request it to develop and start implementing, with the support of the UNECE, an assistance programme⁵ taking into account the needs expressed by the member States;

⁴ For countries with a federal governmental structure, all references to “national” apply to “state”, as appropriate.

Invite stakeholders as well as bilateral and multilateral donors to contribute to and support the implementation process; and

Decide that our future ministerial segments should be held on a regular basis every four or five years, at the “Environment for Europe” Conferences, as appropriate, providing a broad framework bringing together a wide range of stakeholders.

⁵ An assistance programme might cover various activities such as training, development of methodology, or advisory services. Its scope and content would be developed by the Steering Committee.