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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

UNECE Steering Committee on
Education for Sustainable Development

Third meeting
Geneva, 6–7 March 2008
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**ACTIVITIES OF THE BUREAU OF THE UNECE STEERING COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Addendum

Report of the fifth meeting of the Bureau¹

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. At its first meeting (13–14 December 2005), the UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) elected its Bureau and entrusted it with various substantive tasks. The Bureau serves as an intermediate implementing body between the Steering Committee meetings and reports on its work to the Steering Committee. The Bureau held its fifth meeting in Geneva on 7 December 2007, and its next meeting is scheduled to take place in back-to-back with the Steering Committee's third meeting (6–7 March 2008 in Geneva). The fifth meeting of the Bureau focused on preparing the third meeting of the Steering Committee, including its format and substantive content.

¹ This document was submitted on the above date for technical reasons.

2. The following members of the Bureau participated in its fifth meeting: Mr. Michel Ricard (France), Ms. Manana Ratiani (Georgia), Mr. Andreas Karamanos (Greece), Mr. Paolo Soprano (Italy), Ms. Jyldyz Duishenova (Kyrgyzstan), and Mr. Jan Peter Stromsheim (for Ms. Astrid Sandås, Norway).

3. Participating as an observer was Mr. Jiri Dlouhy (European ECO-Forum).

4. Mr. Karamanos chaired the meeting.

5. The documents for the Bureau meeting are available on the UNECE website (<http://www.unece.org/env/esd/SC.Bureau.htm>).

I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

6. The Chairperson opened the meeting and the Bureau adopted the agenda for the meeting as set out in Working Paper No. SC-ESD/BUREAU-5/2007/1.

II. EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT-RELATED OUTCOMES OF THE BELGRADE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

7. Ms. Monika Linn, Secretary to the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007), informed the Bureau about the major outcomes of the Belgrade Ministerial Conference in general and about those relevant to ESD in particular. The Belgrade Ministerial Conference was attended by more than 1,000 official delegates – including 60 Ministers, Deputy Ministers and State Secretaries, 16 of whom came from the education sector – as well as approximately 2,000 observers and other participants. Ministers and high-level officials from 51 UNECE member States and the European Commission discussed progress achieved in the implementation of environmental policy since the Kiev Ministerial Conference in 2003, capacity-building and partnerships, and the future of the “Environment for Europe” (EfE) process. The success of the joint session on ESD – one of the highlights of the Belgrade Ministerial Conference – indicated the overwhelming support among the participating actors for furthering the Strategy on ESD in practice. The Ministers of Education and of the Environment adopted by acclamation a joint Statement on ESD² voicing their commitment to the further implementation of the Strategy, as well as the extension of the Steering Committee’s mandate to oversee the regional implementation of the Strategy on ESD until 2015. The main outcomes of the Belgrade Conference were reflected in the Ministerial Declaration³ and the Chair’s Summary⁴ of the Conference. One of these was the continuation of the EfE process as an

² Statement on ESD by the Ministers of Education and of the Environment of the UNECE region adopted at the Joint Session on ESD (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/4/Add.1).

³ Declaration “Building Bridges to the Future” by the Ministers of the UNECE region (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/8).

⁴ Chair’s Summary of the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/9).

important and unique partnership of UNECE member States, United Nations agencies represented in the region, other intergovernmental organizations, regional environmental centres, and non-governmental organizations and other major groups. Furthermore, participants at the Belgrade Conference decided that the EfE process should undergo a reform to ensure that it remained relevant and valuable, and to strengthen its effectiveness as a mechanism for improving environmental quality and the lives of people across the UNECE region.

8. The Chairperson gave an overview of the joint session on ESD. He referred to the ESD-related provisions of the Ministerial Declaration and the Chair's Summary of the Conference. The Ministerial Declaration welcomed the efforts of all Governments to meet the objectives of the United Nations Decade on ESD (UN DESD) as well as the Joint Statement on ESD adopted by the joint session, and urged countries to further strengthen efforts to implement the UNECE Strategy on ESD. The importance of the ESD process as a prerequisite and framework for capacity-building initiatives and multi-stakeholder partnership in the region was also stressed in the Declaration. The Chair's Summary included a comprehensive overview of the discussion at and outcomes of the session. The Chairperson highlighted the key conclusions concerning the future focus of implementation: (a) further strengthening the initial measures in the move to ESD; (b) developing ESD competencies, teaching tools and materials and improving their content; (c) enhancing efforts regarding the conceptual transition from environmental to ESD education; and (d) promoting ESD through capacity-building and dissemination of good practices.

9. The Bureau reflected on the major ESD-related outcomes of the Belgrade Ministerial Conference and acknowledged that the ESD session was a highlight of the Conference and an important milestone in the implementation of UN DESD. It recommended that future activities include the more direct involvement of youth. The Bureau also recommended that more synergies be explored regarding the ongoing regional and international processes on sustainable development, e.g. promoting ESD at the third Regional Implementation Meeting on Sustainable Development (28–29 January 2008, Geneva). Delegations should include ESD in their statements at the Regional Implementation Meeting and ensure that ESD was reflected in the key outcome documents, for instance in the report and the Chair's Summary.

III. PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE THIRD MEETING OF THE UNECE STEERING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

10. The Chairperson introduced the document with the draft provisional agenda for the third meeting of the Steering Committee (Working Paper No. SC-ESD/BUREAU-5/2007/2). Following the extension of the mandate of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD made at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference, the third meeting of the Steering Committee was scheduled to take place in Geneva on 6 and 7 March 2008. The Chairperson stressed that the two key issues to be considered by the Steering Committee were the work plan of implementation for phase II and the issue of competence in ESD in the education sector. In this context, the Chairperson presented a proposal for a panel discussion on competence in ESD to be held during the Steering Committee meeting.

11. The Bureau considered the draft document and approved it with some revisions to be made in the final document prepared for the Steering Committee.

12. Regarding the proposed panel discussion, the Bureau welcomed the proposal and adopted the proposed content and format with certain revisions, namely that it should (a) focus on the questions “What to teach?”, “Where to teach?” and “How to teach?”; and (b) invite two representatives of youth – a pupil from the secondary education level and a student from the higher education level. Concerning the proposed duration of the panel discussion, the Bureau suggested that, depending on the final number of panellists, the allocated time might be prolonged by half an hour so as to allow sufficient time for an interactive discussion with interventions from the floor. The Bureau decided to invite Steering Committee members and observers to submit to the secretariat possible candidates for panellists by 1 February 2008. Furthermore, the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, mandated the Chairperson to select the panellists in their personal capacities, so as to ensure a comprehensive, meaningful and interactive discussion.

13. Regarding the proposed document to facilitate the panel discussion, the Bureau decided to establish a small group of experts to prepare the document with support from the secretariat. Experts would be nominated by interested Bureau members by 24 December 2007. Thereafter, the secretariat would send the experts a first draft of the document for their active contributions and comments, as well as relevant background documents for reference.

14. The Bureau considered the Steering Committee meeting’s agenda item 9 (Election of officers) and suggested that the Steering Committee consider the option of (re-)electing its officers to serve during the entire implementation phase II (2008–2010) so as to ensure continuity and efficiency in their work. The secretariat would invite the Steering Committee to submit candidatures by 11 February 2008.

IV. DOCUMENTS FOR THE THIRD MEETING OF THE UNECE STEERING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

15. The Chairperson provided an overview of the documents for the upcoming meeting of the Steering Committee, focusing on the draft Work Plan of Implementation for Phase II of the Strategy on ESD. The secretariat presented this draft document (Working Paper No. SC-ESD/BUREAU-5/2007/3).

16. The Bureau considered the draft document and approved it with some revisions to be made in the final document submitted to the Steering Committee. Concerning the enhancement of coordination among countries, the Bureau stressed the importance of using the Steering Committee meetings as a multi-stakeholder forum to share information on ESD activities, experience and good practices, with a view to supporting and carrying out, inter alia, bilateral and multilateral activities, case studies, twinning projects, and workshops at the subregional, regional and national levels. Particular emphasis was given to sharing experience with respect to developing a National Action Plan on ESD between those countries having such a plan in place and those that are preparing one. Concerning other needs and challenges in implementing ESD,

the Bureau noted the lack of financial resources for supporting the training of ESD trainers and building competence in ESD, as well as for research in the field of ESD. Ways to use and promote traditional and indigenous knowledge needed to be explored, as these could make a valuable contribution to mitigating environmental concerns, e.g. combating desertification. Special consideration should be given the development of electronic tools to promote ESD among youth. The Bureau also underlined the important role advertising plays in modern society and the need to raise awareness among those working in this sector, through informal and lifelong learning, to ensure that advertisements reflected the principles of sustainable development.

17. The Bureau noted that documents for the Steering Committee would be prepared and/or revised in the light of its discussions and recommendations.

V. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PHASE II OF THE STRATEGY ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

18. The Bureau considered the status of the resources available for ESD activities and discussed the estimated financial requirements for the proposed activities for implementation of phase II of the Strategy on ESD. It acknowledged that the current resources were not sufficient to carry out all proposed activities during 2008, and that additional efforts should be made by Governments to provide resources, both financial and in-kind, to support the implementation of the Strategy.

VI. SCHEDULE OF THE FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BUREAU

19. The Bureau considered the schedule of its next meetings. It proposed that the newly elected Bureau meet during the afternoon of 7 March 2008, back-to-back with the third meeting of the Steering Committee.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

20. The representative of Italy informed the Bureau about the ongoing ESD-related activities at the national level.

VII. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

21. The Chairperson thanked the Bureau for its constructive and efficient work, and closed the meeting.
