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Report of the Committee on Environmental Policy on its eighteenth session

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I. Introduction

1. The eighteenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) was held from 17 to 20 April 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland.

A. Attendance

2. The session was attended by delegations from 41 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE): Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uzbekistan.

3. From the United Nations system, representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) attended.

4. Representatives of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) were present.

5. Representatives of the European Commission, the European Union (EU) Permanent Delegation to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the European Environment Agency (EEA) also attended the meeting.

6. Representatives from the five Regional Environmental Centres also took part in the meeting: the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC); the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus; the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia; the Regional Environmental Centre for the Republic of Moldova; and the Regional Environmental Centre for the Russian Federation.

7. In addition, representatives of environmental civil society associations — European ECO Forum, Eco-Accord, the European Environmental Bureau, the Global Water Partnership for Caucasus and Central Asia and Zoï Environment Network — were in attendance.

B. Organizational matters

8. The session opened with a welcome address by the Director of the Environment Division of ECE, who briefed CEP about recent developments within the ECE secretariat and the Environment Division. One of the major ongoing activities was the 2012 review of the 2005 ECE Reform¹, which was being carried out with a view to drawing conclusions on the future work priorities of ECE.

9. The CEP Chair welcomed the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) participating in the CEP session. She informed participants about the CEP Bureau meeting that had been held in the morning on 17 April

¹ Available from http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/commission/2006/E_ECE_1434_%20Rev_1_e.pdf.

2012 (the main outcomes would be presented under the respective agenda items). The CEP session was to be a paperless event to the extent possible, and participants were encouraged to download the documents for the session in electronic format from the ECE website.²

C. Adoption of the agenda

10. The agenda (ECE/CEP/2012/1) was adopted, with the proposed time table in mind (information paper No.1/Rev.2).

D. Election of officers

11. CEP elected Ms. Elisabete Quintas da Silva (Portugal) as Chair. Mr. Michel Amand (Belgium), Ms. Nino Tkhilava (Georgia), Mr. Massimo Cozzone (Italy), Mr. Bulat Yessekin (Kazakhstan), Ms. Jelena Knezevic (Montenegro), Ms. Martine Rohn-Brossard (Switzerland), Mr. Vadym Pozharskiy (Ukraine) and Mr. John Michael Matuszak (United States) were elected as Vice-Chairs. CEP expressed its deepest appreciation to Mr. Adriaan Oudeman (Netherlands), who had stepped down from the CEP Bureau, and acknowledged his dedicated work for the past 20 years in ECE environmental activities.

II. Sustainable development in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

12. The Chair briefed the meeting on recent developments in preparing for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio de Janeiro, 20–22 June 2012) (Rio+20 Conference). Regarding the initiative of the representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE MEAs and of the CEP Chair to provide informal input to the Rio+20 Conference draft outcome document, most comments had been taken into account in the streamlined text (shown in blue in the document) by the co-Chairs of the Rio+20 Bureau.

13. The Principal Adviser of the ECE Executive Secretary, in her capacity as the ECE focal point for the Rio+20 Conference, presented the main outcomes of the ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Rio+20 Conference, which had taken place in Geneva on 1 and 2 December 2011. More information and outcome documents were available on the ECE website.³ One important input into the Conference was the regional inter-agency report “From Transition to Transformation: Sustainable and Inclusive Development in Europe and Central Asia”, the preparation of which had been coordinated by ECE.

14. CEP took note of the information provided regarding the preparations for the Rio+20 Conference and welcomed the informal input to the outcome draft prepared by the representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE MEAs and the CEP Chair. CEP invited its members to contact their national coordinators for Rio+20 and stress the importance of keeping the regional initiatives and perspectives, currently included in blue text, in the final Conference outcome document.

² <http://www.unece.org/env/cep/2012sessionapril.html>.

³ <http://www.unece.org/env/sustainabledevelopment/rpm2011/rpm2011.html>.

III. Follow-up to the Astana Ministerial Conference and preparation of the “Environment for Europe” mid-term review

15. CEP assessed the effectiveness of the Seventh “Environment for Europe” (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21–23 September 2011). Delegations highly appreciated the organization and the outcomes of the Conference, structured in a new format according to the EfE reform plan. The success of the Conference was attributed to its two main themes — sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems; and greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development — which were of importance for the entire region, its interactive format and its good outcomes, as well as its efficient preparatory process. CEP expressed its gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan for the excellent organization of the Conference.

16. Participants observed that the Astana Ministerial Conference had demonstrated once again that the EfE process provided a unique high-level platform for addressing environmental concerns across the region and should be continued. Delegations expressed the wish for the future EfE conferences to be prepared in the same manner, including an even higher interactivity during the conference. At the same time, some delegations observed that the biggest challenge for future conferences was to provide new structures or frameworks to address such emerging themes as green economy, given the ongoing economic crisis that affected all countries in the ECE region. Future conferences should also be better streamlined, in particular in terms of side events. Concerning identification of themes for the next conferences, delegates stressed the need to find the right balance between established and emerging themes, including enhancing the work related to green economy and the mainstreaming of environmental concerns into the economic development.

17. In accordance with the EfE reform plan, and following a decision by the Astana Ministerial Conference, CEP had to convene in 2013 a mid-term review to assess progress of the implementation of the outcomes of the Conference. The secretariat had prepared a document (ECE/CEP/2012/5) to facilitate the discussion regarding preparations for the mid-term review.

18. The representative of Kazakhstan informed the meeting about progress in developing the Green Bridge Partnership Programme. An expert group had been established under the auspices of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia to work on further developing the programme. The expert group was expected to establish a consolidated list of partnership projects with a view to presenting them at the Fifth Astana Economic Forum (Astana, 22–24 May 2012), as well as at other relevant events. Also, within the negotiations for the Rio+20 Conference, Kazakhstan, with support from several partners, proposed to include it in the Rio+20 outcome document.

19. The representative of EEA presented the draft outline on the establishment of a regular assessment and reporting process underpinned by the gradual development of a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS). The need to have a political oversight was emphasized, with a view to follow-up on and monitoring of SEIS development and implementation. For instance, a dedicated group composed of representatives from countries and relevant partners (similar to the Steering Group on Environmental Assessments established before the Astana Ministerial Conference) could be established and entrusted to develop SEIS.

20. The paper prepared by EEA contained an initial draft of various proposals for developing SEIS. CEP invited delegations to provide comments on the EEA paper by

30 April 2012 to the ECE secretariat (efe@unece.org) who would compile the comments and provide them to EEA.

21. The Chair (Switzerland) of the ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) briefed CEP about developments under the Astana Water Action since the Astana Ministerial Conference, and invited those countries and organizations that had not yet registered their water actions to actively engage in that initiative. The Water Convention stood ready to continue helping CEP to implement and review the Astana Water Action.

22. The representative of the Environmental Action Programme (EAP) Task Force informed the meeting about recent developments in the work of the Task Force, including: (a) a meeting of the Task Force in Chisinau in October 2011, where a work programme had been agreed; (b) the work on green growth, which was commencing with projects in Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Moldova; and (c) a workshop on environmental liability organized by Poland. The EAP Task Force's e-alerts, providing an overview of news and activities, were prepared and circulated regularly.

23. The representative of UNEP briefed the meeting about recent UNEP activities related to the two themes of the Astana Ministerial Conference. A draft report on payments for ecosystems services on Lake Sevan in Armenia was being finalized and preparations were being made to carry out a feasibility study for The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) in Georgia. A compilation of green economy case studies, a draft of which had been prepared for the Astana Conference, was planned to be released in time for the Rio+20 Conference.

24. Representatives of the Regional Environmental Centres for Central Asia, the Russian Federation and the Caucasus provided information on their joint activities with EEA regarding SEIS development, as well as on their activities related to promoting sustainable management of water and a green economy in the respective subregions, including sustainable management of transboundary waters, TEEBs and developing indicators for measuring a green economy.

25. CEP welcomed document ECE/CEP/2012/5, on Preparation of the Efe mid-term review, prepared by the secretariat and approved the proposed preparations for the mid-term review in 2013, including its scope, format and modalities, as presented in the document, including the following specific decisions and additional requests:

(a) Decided that the mid-term review be organized in autumn 2013, as part of CEP nineteenth session;

(b) Decided that the deadline for submitting the mid-term review reports (as specified below) to the secretariat would be 21 June 2013;

(c) Invited delegations to report on the progress achieved in the implementation of the Astana Water Action, using a template to be prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the CEP and the Water Convention Bureaux. On the basis of those reports the secretariat would prepare a review document;

(d) Invited the secretariat to prepare jointly with UNEP and other relevant Efe partners an overview on developments in the ECE region towards a green economy;

(e) Invited the delegation of Kazakhstan to prepare, in cooperation with its partners, a report on the development of the Green Bridge Partnership Programme;

(f) Invited the secretariat to report on progress made in the preparation for the third cycle of Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs);

(g) Invited EEA, together with its partners, to prepare an overview on progress made in establishing a regular process of environmental assessment and reporting, including the development of SEIS;

(h) Furthermore, invited EEA, together with its partners, to consider organizing a side event on SEIS on the margins of the mid-term review;

(i) Invited the secretariat of the Water Convention to report on steps taken and future plans related to the preparation of future assessments of transboundary waters and the envisaged cooperation with SEIS;⁴

(j) Invited the EAP Task Force to prepare a report on progress made in its activities, especially on water and greening the economy;

(k) Invited the Regional Environmental Centres to prepare jointly a report on their progress in promoting green economy and better environment governance;

(l) Invited the secretariat to prepare a summary report to demonstrate the work carried out by the secretariat to assist countries to ratify and implement ECE MEAs, as well as to assess obstacles to ratifying them;

(m) Invited the secretariat to organize consultations (in the format of a survey) with the ECE member States to collect information on how countries have been promoting objectives and priorities of the EfE process and strengthening implementation of the outcomes of the Astana Ministerial Conference, including through national policies and relevant partnerships;⁵

(n) Entrusted the secretariat, in consultation with the CEP Bureau and in cooperation with relevant EfE partners, to proceed with the preparations for the mid-term review.

IV. Environmental performance reviews

A. First Environmental Performance Review of Turkmenistan

26. The Secretary to the Expert Group on EPRs informed CEP that the Expert Group had reviewed Turkmenistan's environmental performance at its meeting of 13 to 15 March 2012 held in Ashgabat. It was the first review of Turkmenistan. The EPR recommendations were presented in information paper No. 8. Financial support for the EPR had been provided by the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland. Portugal and Switzerland had delegated experts for the EPR and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Turkmenistan had provided support in carrying it out.

27. The representative of Turkmenistan presented the current situation in his country in the environment sector. Issues related to environmental protection and to ecological safety were a high priority on the country's political agenda, and Turkmenistan was positively supporting international cooperation in those areas. National activities focused on issues related to climate change, sustainable use of natural resources, protection of water resources and combating desertification. One important initiative was the establishment of a United

⁴ It was suggested that this would be part of the regular environment assessment process supported by SEIS in collaboration with EEA. Such a proposal is pending consultation between EEA and the Bureau of the Water Convention, and the subsequent decision by the Bureau.

⁵ In accordance with the EfE reform plan (ECE/CEP/S/152, annex, paras. 16 and 18).

Nations Interregional Centre on Climate Change. Turkmenistan was interested in continuing to enhance its cooperation on environmental matters with ECE.

28. The two rapporteurs (Estonia and Switzerland) summarized the main findings and recommendations of the first EPR of Turkmenistan. In the ensuing discussion, participants posed questions to the delegation of Turkmenistan, providing some practical guidance on how to better implement the recommendations.

29. CEP concluded the peer review by adopting by acclamation the recommendations in the first EPR of Turkmenistan. It expressed appreciation to the Governments and organizations for their support, including providing experts and financial contributions, which had made Turkmenistan's first EPR possible.

B. Second Environmental Performance Review of Albania

30. The Secretary to the Expert Group on EPRs informed CEP that the Expert Group had reviewed Albania's environmental performance at its meeting of 3 and 4 April 2012 held in Geneva. It was Albania's second review. The EPR recommendations were presented in information paper No. 9. Financial support for the EPR had been provided by Germany. Germany, UNEP, WHO and EEA had delegated experts for the EPR and UNDP Albania had provided support in carrying it out.

31. The representative of Albania presented the progress achieved in his country since the first EPR in 2002. Some progress had been achieved, most notably in the approximation of the national environmental framework to EU legislation, including the development of a number of laws related to environmental protection. Progress had also been achieved in environmental monitoring and reporting, including the production of annual state-of-the-environment reports.

32. The rapporteur (Sweden) summarized the main findings and recommendations of the second EPR of Albania, as well as gave an overview of the main challenges facing the country. In the interactive follow-up discussion, participants provided some practical advice on the best ways to implement the EPR recommendations.

33. CEP concluded the peer review by adopting by acclamation the recommendations in the second EPR of Albania. It expressed appreciation to the Governments and organizations for their support, including providing experts and financial contributions, which had made it possible to carry out the second EPR of Albania.

C. Second Environmental Performance Review of Romania

34. The Secretary to the Expert Group on EPRs informed CEP that the Expert Group had reviewed Romania's environmental performance at its meeting of 4 and 5 April 2012 in Geneva. This was the second review of Romania. The EPR recommendations were presented in information paper No. 10. Financial support for the EPR had been provided by Germany. Germany, Italy and UNEP had delegated experts for the EPR. UNDP Romania had supported carrying out the EPR.

35. The representative of Romania presented the progress achieved in the country since the first EPR in 2001. The country had made good progress. In 2008, Romania had adopted a National Strategy on Sustainable Development (2008–2030) and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Coordination of the Integration of Environmental Protection into Sectoral Policies and Strategies at the National Level had been working on a comprehensive evaluation and revision of the Strategy. One major achievement to date was

the decoupling of country's economic growth (i.e., its gross domestic product (GDP)) from energy consumption.

36. The rapporteur (Netherlands) summarized the main findings and recommendations of the second EPR of Romania. Since Romania had become an EU member State in 2007, the second EPR did not focus on those areas which were covered by EU recommendations. In the ensuing discussion, participants commented on the main findings of the EPR, providing some practical guidance on how to better implement the EPR recommendations.

37. CEP concluded the peer review by adopting by acclamation the recommendations in the second EPR of Romania. It expressed appreciation to the Governments and organizations for their support, including providing experts and financial contributions, which had enabled the carrying out of the second EPR of Romania.

D. Environmental Performance Review Programme: overview of activities

38. The Secretary to the Expert Group on EPRs briefed CEP about recent activities carried out under the EPR Programme, including communication with EPR-eligible countries that had not undergone a second EPR, with a positive response from Croatia. EPR launch events had been organized in Georgia (June 2011), Bosnia and Herzegovina (December 2011), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (March 2012) and Uzbekistan (May 2012). A leaflet comprising EPR highlights had been produced for the second EPR of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It was planned to produce similar leaflets for the other countries that had recently been reviewed.

39. Preparations for the Morocco EPR were continuing. A preparatory mission undertaken from 27 February to 1 March 2012, with the support of Switzerland, had been successful; national authorities, including the Ministry for Energy, Mines, Water and Environment and other relevant ministries and institutions, as well as the North Africa Office of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the EU Delegation and UNDP Morocco, had shown a high level of interest in participating in the EPR. The mission reached an agreement on the EPR structure, the plan of the entire EPR process and the role of ECA in the EPR, as well as how best to transfer EPR know-how.⁶ One major remaining challenge was the lack of finances and experts to carry out the EPR.

40. A self-evaluation on the assessment of procedural steps for the preparation and conducting of EPRs had been conducted in 2011–2012 by the secretariat. Conclusions and recommendations derived from the self-evaluation were presented in information paper No. 3.

41. Work had commenced on preparing proposals for the detailed structure of the upcoming third cycle of EPRs, including developing the composition of its three parts and the key elements of the core chapters. The Republic of Moldova had indicated its readiness to undergo a third EPR and a preparatory mission for the third EPR had taken place in May 2012.

42. In the follow-up discussion, CEP considered the recent activities under the EPR Programme, including its urgent needs and possible solutions to enable the EPR Morocco to take place. UNEP and EEA informed CEP of their interest in supporting the EPR of

⁶ ECA proposed a number of activities with regard to the EPR, such as: to finance two experts from the ECA region; to twin some experts from the ECA region with experts from the ECE EPR team; to raise more financial support for the EPR; to consider establishing an expert group on EPRs in ECA; and possibilities for using the ECA Committee on Sustainable Development for the peer review and the adoption of EPR recommendations.

Morocco with expert advice and information materials. CEP invited countries to provide in-kind support (e.g., experts, associated experts), as well as financial support, to the EPR Programme, including to enable the first EPR of Morocco to be conducted in autumn 2012. Furthermore, it took note of the information provided regarding the third cycle of EPRs, as well as the results of the EPR Programme self-evaluation.

43. CEP highly appreciated the work of the Expert Group on EPRs and adopted a renewed mandate for the Expert Group for 2013–2014 (annex III), which would subsequently be submitted to the ECE Executive Committee for approval.

V. Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting

44. The Vice-Chair (Russian Federation) of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment reported to CEP on progress made during the period 2009–2011 (see ECE/CEP/2012/6, ECE/CEP/AC.10/2009/2, ECE/CEP/AC.10/2010/2 and ECE/CEP/AC.10/2011/2) and presented the proposed terms of reference for the period 2012–2014 for adoption (ECE/CEP/2012/6, annex).

45. The Chair (Belarus) of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators reported on progress made by the Joint Task Force during 2011 at its third and fourth sessions (see ECE/CEP-CES.GE.1/2011/2 and ECE/CEP-CES.GE.1/2011/4).

46. In the follow-up interventions, delegations highly valued the activities undertaken by the Working Group and the Joint Task Force, and underlined the importance that both bodies be actively involved in the SEIS development, especially the Working Group, given its valuable expertise in that regard.

47. The representative of WHO/Europe informed the meeting about activities to continue the implementation and further development of the Environment and Health Information System, which was comprised of 22 indicators, including those in the areas of exposure to environmental factors, environment-related health effects and policy actions. In addition to filling in the existing gaps (e.g., the monitoring of air quality (coarse particulate matter (PM₁₀) and ozone)) in cities in the Eastern part of the region) development of the system was focusing on producing indicators to capture the effects of climate change on health, as well as the existence of inequalities between and within countries concerning environmental exposures. Furthermore, new indicators were under development to better monitor progress towards the Parma targets.

48. CEP highly appreciated the work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and adopted the renewed mandate of the Working Group for 2012–2014, which would subsequently be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.

49. Furthermore, CEP highly appreciated the work of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators and adopted the renewed mandate of the Task Force for 2013–2014 (annex IV), which would subsequently be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.

VI. Multilateral environmental agreements: strengthening capacity for implementation and their application to support a green economy

50. The Chair (Netherlands) of the ECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) briefed CEP on the outcomes of the

two meetings between the representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE MEAs and CEP that were convened on his initiative on 22 November 2011 and 16 April 2012. With those meetings an informal process was initiated with a view to optimizing the ongoing cooperation between the MEAs and enhancing synergies in their activities. The meetings also coordinated the preparation of a joint input into the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference and considered a harmonized input into the process of review of the 2005 ECE Reform. Such meetings would be convened in the future upon demand.

51. The Chair of the Water Convention informed CEP about the upcoming sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP 6), to take place in Rome from 28 to 30 November 2012. MOP 6 would be a key event in the Convention's development, with Parties expected to adopt a new programme of work for 2013–2015 and to consider the future evolution of the Convention as a global instrument (pending the entry into force of amendments opening the Convention to countries outside ECE). MOP 6 would also establish an implementation committee of an advisory nature to oversee implementation of the Convention. In terms of green economy and water, activities under the National Policy Dialogues were particularly supportive of greening the economy, through mainstreaming of the environment into other sectors' policies. Also, the work on water adaptation for climate change contributed to greening the economy.

52. The Chair (Norway) of the Protocol on Water and Health to the Water Convention presented to the delegates key activities carried out under the Protocol, which was a rather new instrument with 25 Parties to date. Concerning supporting the process of greening the economy, work was ongoing on promoting equitable access to water and sanitation under the leadership of France, and on the integrated management of small-scale water supply and sanitation systems under the leadership of Germany. Also, several provisions of the Protocol promoted mainstreaming of environmental concerns into other relevant sectoral policies.

53. The Chair (United Kingdom) of the ECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Pollution Convention) briefed the meeting about recent developments under the Convention. The Convention and its Protocols had achieved considerable progress over the past 30 years. At present a major activity was the revision of the 1999 Gothenburg Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone, with the adoption of a number of amendments, including making it a unique instrument by bridging the gap between air pollution and climate change. The revised Protocol would contribute to a green economy by setting obligations for Parties to take cost-effective measures to reduce harmful emissions, promoting the introduction of new and clean technologies, bringing economic and health benefits and preventing the loss of biodiversity. The Long-term Strategy for the Convention, adopted in 2010, aimed at strengthening interregional cooperation and outreach activities on air pollution-related issues.

54. The Chair of the Industrial Accidents Convention informed participants about the recent and ongoing work to strengthen capacity for the implementation of the Convention. With the participation of industry, it had fostered the development and implementation of safe operation technologies and safety techniques or services to continuously improve prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents, and thereby contributed to greening the economy. The Convention had 40 Parties to date. The Assistance Programme established under the Convention continued to efficiently support countries' efforts to implement the Convention. To enhance efficiency even more, the Conference of the Parties had adopted a Strategic Approach, comprising a cyclic mechanism with a set of indicators and criteria, enabling a continuous analysis, monitoring and evaluation of the level of implementation. In that regard, a number of projects-based activities were ongoing in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe (SEE). In addition, new areas such as land-use planning around

hazardous industrial facilities and cost-effectiveness for major accident prevention were being addressed through workshops and trainings. Preparations were currently under way for the upcoming seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Stockholm from 14 to 16 November 2012.

55. The Vice-Chair (Poland) of the ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) presented to the Committee the recent activities related to capacity development and greening the economy under the Convention and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA). The Convention had 45 Parties and counted application to over 800 economic developments to date; the Protocol on SEA had entered into force in July 2010 and had 23 Parties. The Astana Ministerial Conference had recognized that strategic environmental assessment (SEA) was a unique and important instrument for planning and policymaking related to mainstreaming the environment into economic development. SEA — addressing high-level decision-making in plans and programmes — played an important role in a top-down framework that needed to be established to promote efficiently a green economy. Environmental impact assessment (EIA) — a proven means of assessing the alignment of planned activities with environmental policies at the project level when innovation and activities were developing bottom-up — efficiently complemented SEA, as a tool for greening the economy. Participation of ECE, in cooperation with OECD, UNEP and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in a large (€10 million) European Commission regional project on greening economies through sustainable consumption and production was under development.

56. The Chair (Belgium) of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters informed the meeting about recent developments under the Convention and its Protocol, which had entered into force in October 2009. To date, the Convention had 45 Parties and the Protocol 28. The MOP to the Convention, at its fourth session (Chisinau, June 2011), had called for action to reduce Parties' ecological footprint and to promote the social dimension of sustainable development, as well as advocating for a participatory approach to defining and implementing green economy programmes. Parties to the Protocol, at the first session of the MOP in April 2010, emphasized the work under the Protocol on capacity development. The Protocol on PRTRs was a key element in the process of greening the economy. The progress in its implementation at the national level could serve as a key indicator to measure the success in greening the economy. Moreover, the Protocol benefited industry and fostered eco-innovation, as well as served as a practical tool for the implementation of SEIS.

57. CEP took note of the information provided by the Chairs of the ECE MEAs and welcomed the work of the MEAs.

VII. Cross-sectoral activities

58. CEP was informed about recent developments under a number of ongoing cross-sectoral activities undertaken under the leadership of ECE, or in partnership with other organizations.

A. Education for sustainable development

59. The ECE secretariat informed CEP about progress in implementing the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development. The Strategy had entered its third

phase of implementation (2011–2015), which was focused on practical implementation. The Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, at its sixth meeting in April 2011, had considered the regional progress achieved during the second phase of implementation (2008–2010). The majority of countries had accomplished or were close to finalizing and putting in place policy, regulatory and operational frameworks that supported education for sustainable development (ESD). Serious efforts had been made to integrate ESD into formal education, resulting in a considerable coverage of ESD-related key themes, learning outcomes, methods and strategies. Also, the adoption of a whole-institution approach had advanced remarkably. The Steering Committee had also adopted the workplan for the third phase, including a number of practical activities with a view to shifting work priorities from policy to the practical level. In view of the upcoming Rio+20 Conference, the role of ESD in transitioning towards a green economy had been discussed extensively at a Committee round table, as well as at side events organized on the margins of the Astana Ministerial Conference and the Regional Preparatory Meeting.

60. The seventh meeting of the Steering Committee in March 2012 had considered a number of issues, such as enhancing the integration of ESD competences in teacher education, reorienting vocational education to support sustainable development and increasing the development of ESD school plans. Regarding implementation, focus had been put on increasing capacity-development activities at the subregional and national levels, including the development of relevant training concepts and materials to promote the ESD competencies, on further strengthening the cooperation between relevant national authorities and institutions and on enhancing cooperation between the formal and informal education sectors.

61. The ECE Strategy for ESD continued to be managed through voluntary contributions by member States, and a continuing flow of contributions was required to implement activities. Since October 2010, the work to implement the Strategy was supported by a Junior Professional Officer provided by the Government of Germany.

62. The Georgian Delegation informed the meeting about the upcoming Intergovernmental Conference “Tbilisi+35: Environmental Education for Sustainable Development”, to be organized in Tbilisi on 6 and 7 September 2012. More than 400 delegates were expected to participate in the Conference, including Heads of State, ministers of environment, delegates from international organizations and environmental education/ESD experts. Detailed information and materials were available on the Conference’s website.⁷

63. CEP took note of the information provided and welcomed the progress of work under the ECE Strategy for ESD.

B. Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme

64. The ECE secretariat presented an overview of recent development under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP). THE PEP activities were guided by the Amsterdam Declaration and its four priority goals — contributing to sustainable economic development through investment in environment- and health-friendly transport; managing sustainable mobility and promoting a more efficient transport system; reducing transport-related emissions; and promoting healthy and safe modes of transport — adopted by the Third High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment in 2009. The eighth and ninth sessions of THE PEP Steering Committee, in

⁷ <http://www.tbilisiplus35.ge/>.

December 2010 and November 2011, had focused on considering the progress in implementing THE PEP programme of work for 2009–2010 and had adopted the new programme of work for 2011–2012. Implementation activities included the organization of THE PEP “Staffette” (relay race), passing the “baton” of best practices in sustainable transport through THE PEP workshop series, from Prague (September 2009) to Skopje (June 2010), to Batumi, Georgia (September 2010), to Kyiv (June 2011) and to Moscow (June 2012).

65. THE PEP contributed to the Astana Ministerial Conference by organizing a side event and launching a brochure on job opportunities that contributed to healthy and environmentally sustainable transport. THE PEP Symposiums, which had been organized back to back to the last two sessions of the Steering Committee, had proven to be an efficient means to address the Amsterdam Goals; the first two Symposiums had focused on the first and second goals, respectively, while the two Symposiums to be organized in 2012 and 2013 would focus, respectively, on the third and fourth goals. THE PEP Steering Committee would hold its tenth session on 14 and 15 November 2012, where it would consider, among others, the preparation of the next THE PEP High-Level Meeting in Paris in 2014. Ongoing activities of THE PEP Clearinghouse, THE PEP Toolbox and THE PEP Partnership would continue to support the objectives of THE PEP and the four Amsterdam Goals.

66. CEP took note of the information provided and welcomed the progress of work under THE PEP.

C. Environment and security

67. The Director of the Environment Division gave an overview of recent developments under the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) (information paper No.2). The ENVSEC partner agencies⁸ assisted countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and SEE in drawing together the disciplines required for sustainable development, with a particular focus on environmental problems that created security risks. ECE MEAs were an important pillar of ENVSEC activities.

68. Recent activities implemented by ECE under ENVSEC included work on dam safety in Central Asia; activities regarding water and adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins of SEE, Eastern Europe and Central Asia; joint research on transboundary impacts in the Danube Delta; capacity development within the Industrial Accidents Convention’s Assistance Programme in SEE; and development of capacities for application of the Espoo Convention in Central Asia — all of which contributed to sustaining and advancing economic, environmental and social well-being. In terms of the development of a green economy, work done to support the implementation of the Espoo Convention, as well as establishing a basis for the equitable use of available water resources, were of particular importance.

69. CEP took note of and welcomed the information provided by ENVSEC.

D. European Environment and Health Process

70. The delegation of Romania presented progress in the work of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB), as included in information paper

⁸ ECE, UNEP, UNDP, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, REC and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). UNEP provides the secretariat for ENVSEC.

No. 5. The first EHMB (2011–2012) held two meetings thus far, in Paris in May 2011 and in Bonn (Germany) in February 2012. EHMB agreed on its rules of procedures as well as considered best ways to conduct its work with a view to efficiently fulfilling the mandate given by the Parma Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health — that it serve as a political driving force for the Environment and Health Process.

71. CEP took note of the progress of work of EHMB. In the ensuing discussion, CEP deliberated on a number of issues related to the appointment of members from the environment sector for the second term of EHMB (2013–2014).

72. CEP mandated its Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to appoint the four members from the environment sector to EHMB for the second term 2013–2014, taking into account the agreement reached at its seventeenth session with regard to Belgium and the Republic of Moldova.

73. Furthermore, CEP agreed with the proposal by EHMB to invite Germany to be a permanent observer to EHMB, took note of the EHMB proposal to change the length of its terms from a two to three years and decided to further discuss the latter proposal, if needed, at the nineteenth session of CEP in autumn 2013.

E. Green building

74. The ECE secretariat informed CEP that the establishment of the task force on green building had been put on hold by the Executive Committee until the finalization of the review of the 2005 ECE Reform. The secretariat then presented an overview of ongoing and planned activities in the area of green building, including events and materials to mark the 2011 international year of forests, as well as a number of activities related to promoting green homes and energy-efficient housing.

75. CEP took note of and welcomed the information provided on work undertaken with regard to green building.

VIII. Review of the 2005 Reform: Environment subprogramme

76. The Chair informed CEP that during the period 2011–2012 the Executive Committee was conducting a review of the ECE Reform adopted in December 2005 with a view to drawing conclusions on the future work priorities of ECE. The Environment subprogramme was to be reviewed in May 2012. Following a request by the Executive Committee, the ECE secretariat had prepared a document, “Draft information requested by the Executive Committee for the review of the 2005 ECE Reform: Environment subprogramme” (information paper No. 7), which had been circulated to CEP by e-mail. A final version of that document, to reflect comments received by CEP, would be submitted to the Executive Committee.

77. Delegations considered the draft paper and provided comments. CEP expressed high appreciation for the work undertaken within the Environment subprogramme. It invited delegations to send comments to the document in track-changes mode by 27 April 2012.

IX. Programme of work

A. Review of programme performance in the biennium 2010–2011

78. The Chair informed CEP that the review of performance of the Environment subprogramme in the biennium 2010–2011 was presented in document ECE/CEP/2012/4. The document had been prepared by the secretariat, taking into account the requirements for the review of programme performance established within ECE.

79. CEP approved the review of performance of the Environment subprogramme in the biennium 2010–2011 (ECE/CEP/2012/4).

B. Work for the bienniums 2012–2013 and 2014–2015

80. The Chair informed CEP that the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for the biennium 2012–2013 and the evaluation plan for performance in that biennium, as well as the strategic framework for the biennium 2014–2015, were provided in document ECE/CEP/2012/3. The document had been prepared by the secretariat, taking into account a new template for the programme of work established by the Executive Committee.

81. CEP adopted the programme of work for the biennium 2012–2013 (ECE/CEP/2012/3, section II and annex I), which would subsequently be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.

82. Furthermore, CEP approved the plan for the biennial performance assessment of the Environment subprogramme in the biennium 2012–2013 (*ibid.*, annex II) and adopted the strategic framework for the biennium 2014–2015 (*ibid.*, annex III).

C. Resource requirements and criteria for financial support

83. The Chair informed CEP that the revised criteria for country eligibility for financial support to participate in meetings and events were presented in information paper No. 4. In that regard, it was noted that the statistical data for GDP per capita at current prices, converted to United States dollars using current exchange rates, were for 2010, as data for 2011 were expected to be available only in late 2012.

84. The Delegation of Belarus informed CEP about the devaluation of the country's national currency in 2011 and asked CEP to consider the inclusion of Belarus in the list of eligible countries.

85. CEP approved the list of countries eligible for financial support, with a special provision that its Bureau would consider the request from Belarus to be included in the list, given that the country's GDP for 2010 did not reflect its current financial situation. CEP mandated the Bureau to take a decision on the request by Belarus by 15 June 2012 (see annexes I and II).

86. Furthermore, CEP mandated the Bureau to consider criteria for financial support for participating in meetings and events with the view to assessing whether the current criteria were the most appropriate ones, and to provide recommendations to CEP at its nineteenth session.

87. Also, CEP mandated the Bureau to provide recommendations to CEP at its nineteenth session on the possible elaboration and further adoption of the rules of procedure

of CEP, in accordance with rule 20 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of ECE (E/ECE/778/Rev.5)⁹.

88. The status of resources, including financial resources available in various trust funds, as well as estimated financial resources required to carrying out the respective programmes of work for the current biennium 2012–2013, were presented in information paper No. 6. Following remarks made by CEP at its sixteenth session (October 2009) an overview of the trust funds, including the contributions by countries, had been provided in a separate addendum to the paper (circulated at the meeting).

89. CEP welcomed the information provided by the secretariat on the status of resources in the environment subprogramme for the biennium 2010–2011. It requested the secretariat to provide such information for the biennium 2012–2013 at the next relevant session of CEP.

X. Calendar of meetings

90. CEP agreed to organize its nineteenth session from 22 to 25 October 2013.

XI. Other business

91. The Executive Director of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia informed CEP that his second and last term was coming to an end in 2012. CEP expressed its appreciation for the active role the Regional Environmental Centre had taken in the work of CEP under his leadership.

XII. Summary of decisions by the Committee

92. At its meeting, CEP:

(a) Adopted the agenda of the eighteenth session with the proposed timetable and changes in mind;

(b) Took note of the information provided regarding the preparations for the Rio+20 Conference, welcomed the informal input prepared by the representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE MEAs and the CEP Chair into the Rio+20 outcome document, and invited its members to contact their national coordinators for the Rio+20 Conference to stress the importance of keeping the regional initiatives and perspectives that were currently included in the blue text of the outcome document;

(c) Took note of the information provided by the Chairs of the ECE MEAs and welcomed the work of the MEAs;

(d) Highly appreciated the organization and the outcomes of the Astana EfE Ministerial Conference, organized in a new format according to the EfE reform plan, and expressed its gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan for the excellent organization of the Conference;

(e) Welcomed the document on preparation of the EfE mid-term review (ECE/CEP/2012/5) prepared by the secretariat, and approved the proposed preparations for the mid-term review in 2013, including its scope, format and modalities, as presented in the

⁹ Available from http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/oes/mandate/Commission_Rev5_English.pdf.

document, including the following specific decisions and additional requests, as specified in paragraph 25 above;

(f) Invited delegations to provide comments to the draft outline on the establishment of a regular assessment and reporting process underpinned by the gradual development of SEIS by 30 April 2012;

(g) Adopted by acclamation the recommendations in the First EPR of Turkmenistan (information paper No. 8);

(h) Adopted by acclamation the recommendations in the Second EPR of Albania (information paper No. 9);

(i) Adopted by acclamation the recommendations in the Second EPR of Romania (information paper No. 10);

(j) Invited countries to provide in-kind support (e.g., experts, associated experts), as well as financial support, to the EPR Programme, including to enable the first EPR of Morocco to be conducted in autumn 2012;

(k) Took note of the information provided regarding the third cycle of EPRs, as well as the results of the EPR Programme self-evaluation conducted in 2011–2012 (information paper No. 3);

(l) Highly appreciated the work of the Expert Group on EPRs and adopted the renewed mandate of the Expert Group for 2013–2014 (annex III), which would subsequently be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval;

(m) Highly appreciated the work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and adopted the renewed mandate of the Working Group for 2012–2014 (ECE/CEP/2012/6, annex), which would subsequently be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval;

(n) Highly appreciated the work of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators, and adopted the renewed mandate of the Task Force for 2013–2014 (annex IV), which would subsequently be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval;

(o) Took note of the information provided and welcomed the progress of work under the ECE Strategy for ESD;

(p) Took note of the information provided by and welcomed the progress of work under THE PEP;

(q) Took note of and welcomed the information provided by ENVSEC;

(r) Took note of and welcomed the information provided on work undertaken with regard to green building;

(s) Took note of the progress of work of EHMB;

(t) Mandated the CEP Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to appoint the four members from the environment sector to EHMB for the second term, 2013–2014, taking into account the agreement reached at its seventeenth session with regard to Belgium and the Republic of Moldova;

(u) Took note of the EHMB proposal to change the length of its terms from two to three years, and accepted to further discuss that proposal, if needed, at the nineteenth session of CEP in autumn 2013;

(v) Agreed with the proposal by EHMB to invite Germany as a permanent observer to EHMB;

(w) Expressed high appreciation for the work undertaken within the Environment subprogramme and invited delegations to send comments in track-changes to the draft document on information requested by the Executive Committee for the review of the 2005 ECE reform: Environment subprogramme (information paper No.7) by 27 April 2012;

(x) Approved the review of performance of the Environment subprogramme in the biennium 2010–2011 (ECE/CEP/2012/4);

(y) Adopted the programme of work for the biennium 2012–2013 (ECE/CEP/2012/3, section II and annex I), which would subsequently be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval;

(z) Approved the plan for the biennial performance assessment of the Environment subprogramme in the biennium 2012–2013 (*ibid.*, annex II);

(aa) Adopted the strategic framework for the biennium 2014–2015 (*ibid.*, annex III);

(bb) Approved the list of countries eligible for financial support (information paper No. 4) with the special provision that the CEP Bureau would consider the request from Belarus to be included in the list, given that the country's GDP for 2010 did not reflect its current financial situation, and mandated the Bureau to take a decision on the request by 15 June 2012;

(cc) Mandated the Bureau to consider criteria for financial support for participating in meeting and events, with a view to assessing whether the current criteria were the most appropriate, and to providing recommendations to CEP at its nineteenth session;

(dd) Mandated the Bureau to provide recommendations to CEP at its nineteenth session on the possible elaboration and further adoption of the rules of procedure of CEP, in accordance with rule 20 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of ECE (E/ECE/778/Rev.5);

(ee) Welcomed the information provided by the secretariat on the status of resources in the environment subprogramme for the biennium 2010–2011 (information paper No. 6 and add.1), and requested the secretariat to provide such information for the biennium 2012–2013 at the next relevant CEP session;

(ff) Elected the Chair and other members of its Bureau, as specified in paragraph 11 above;

(gg) Agreed to organize the nineteenth session of CEP from 22 to 25 October 2013;

(hh) Requested the Bureau and the secretariat to follow up on CEP decisions;

(ii) Expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for an excellent organization of the meeting.

XIII. Closure of the meeting

93. The Chair informed CEP that the report of the present meeting and the list of participants would be posted on the ECE website and circulated to the participants after the meeting. A summary of decisions taken by CEP at its eighteenth session would be circulated by e-mail after the meeting.

94. The Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.

Annex I

Countries eligible for financial support to participate in meetings and events (2012–2013)^a

Note by the secretariat

The threshold for financial support to countries to participate in meetings and events for 2012–2013 equals US\$ 4,500: (a) countries with gross domestic product (GDP) per capita between US\$ 4,000 and US\$ 4,500 are eligible for financial support (DSA only); (b) countries with GDP per capita below US\$ 4,000 are eligible for financial support (DSA and travel expenses).

List of eligible countries, showing category of assistance, and GDP

<i>Country</i>	<i>GDP per capita (US\$)^a</i>	<i>Number of countries</i>
<i>Daily subsistence allowance (DSA) only</i>		
Turkmenistan	4 249	
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	4 450	
Subtotal		2
<i>Travel expenses and DSA</i>		
Tajikistan	749	
Kyrgyzstan	865	
Uzbekistan	1 420	
Republic of Moldova	1 630	
Georgia	2 624	
Ukraine	3 015	
Armenia	3 031	
Belarus	3 418	
Albania	3 797	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3 867	
Subtotal		10
Total		12

Note: Countries are listed above in ascending order of GDP, by category.

^a GDP per capita at current prices converted to United States dollars using current exchange rates (2010; data for 2011 is not available until late 2012). Data was extracted from the ECE Statistical Division Database, which is compiled from national and international official sources (Commonwealth of Independent States, EUROSTAT, the International Monetary Fund, OECD).

^a As approved by CEP at its eighteenth session, and amended in accordance with the decision by the Committee's Bureau regarding Belarus (see annex II). Other approaches may be applied under projects where donors earmark their contributions with particular conditions.

Annex II

Eligibility of Belarus for financial assistance to participate in meetings and events (2012–2013)

1. In accordance with the mandate from CEP (see para. 85 above), the Bureau considered the request of Belarus to be included in the list of countries eligible to receive financial assistance to participate in meetings, on the basis of the new statistical information and assessments that would become available after the eighteenth session of CEP, in June 2012. In that regard, the Bureau found that during the year 2011 the national currency of Belarus had indeed undergone sharp devaluation.^a Based on the data from the National Bank of Belarus on GDP per capita for 2011 (assessed at BYR 28,953,000) and the exchange rate for December 2011 (BYR 8,470.09 per US\$ 1), the Bureau found that the nominal GDP per capita of Belarus in 2011 had been at the level of US\$ 3,418, which was significantly less than the US\$ 4,500 threshold accepted by CEP for defining the eligibility for financial support.

2. Based on the above, the CEP Bureau:

(a) Found that the country's GDP for 2010 did not reflect its current financial situation;

(b) Decided by consensus to include Belarus in the list of countries eligible for financial support;

(c) Requested the ECE secretariat to reflect the present decision in the report of the eighteenth session of CEP.^b

3. In the light of the above, the list of countries eligible for financial support was revised and included in the present report (annex I).

^a As confirmed by both the decisions of the governing institutions of Belarus and the records of historic exchange rates.

^b The Bureau's decision was not supported by the representative of the United States of America.

Annex III

Revised terms of reference for the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews for 2013–2014

Membership

1. The core of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews for 2013–2014 should comprise 10 to 14 members, with due consideration given to geographical balance among countries in the region. It is also suggested that, when new members are chosen, due regard should be given to experts from countries that have recently been reviewed, as well as to those who have undergone or will soon undergo second reviews.
2. Participation, as observers, in the meetings of the Expert Group will be open to CEP delegates, who shall act as advisers to review the report and its recommendations.
3. In addition, participation in the meetings of the Expert Group on any reviewed country will be open to experts nominated by the CEP delegates, and agreed by the members of the Expert Group in consultation with the secretariat.

Terms of reference

4. The mandate of the core members of the Expert Group is renewed for a period of two years for the purposes of:
 - (a) Carrying out the expert review process, prior to the peer review to be undertaken by CEP;
 - (b) Providing guidance to the ECE secretariat and CEP on all substantive and organizational matters arising in the implementation of the ECE EPR Programme;
 - (c) Assisting the ECE secretariat in coordinating the ECE EPR Programme with processes under way in other international institutions that have a bearing on it, inter alia, UNEP, WHO, EEA, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Asian Development Bank and OECD.
5. The guidance of the Expert Group to the ECE secretariat and CEP will include:
 - (a) Identification of opportunities and requirements for improving the conduct of EPRs;
 - (b) Assessment of environmental trends relevant to the EPRs process in non-OECD member countries, including the organization of joint meetings, seminars and workshops at the regional and subregional levels, where these are demand-driven;
 - (c) Review and improvement of the data and information used for EPRs;
 - (d) Drawing up proposals on how to improve the adoption of the recommendations contained in the EPR country reports and their implementation.
6. The core members of the Expert Group are elected by CEP upon the recommendation of the Bureau. The secretariat will invite international institutions pursuing related work to participate in the work of the Expert Group.

7. While taking decisions on an EPR report under review and its recommendations, the Expert Group shall take into consideration the inputs by the reviewing countries and CEP delegates who participate in the meeting.
8. The Expert Group shall elect its Chair and Vice-Chair.
9. The Expert Group will report annually on its activities to CEP, and may raise any issue with CEP that it deems necessary for the implementation of its mandate.

Timetable

10. The mandate of the Expert Group will cover a two-year period, from 2013 to the end of 2014.

Annex IV

Revised terms of reference for the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators for 2013-2014

I. Background

1. The Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators was set up by CEP and the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) in 2009 to improve environmental data collection and reporting in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and SEE, and to promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in the ECE region.
2. The Joint Task Force will have held a total of seven meetings for the period 2009–2012. It will have reviewed, to varying degrees, all the indicators covered by the Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (Indicator Guidelines) prepared by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and endorsed at the Belgrade EfE Ministerial Conference (2007). The Joint Task Force will also have considered indicators that are important but which are currently not included in the Indicator Guidelines.
3. The Joint Task Force noted that methodological discrepancies in producing the indicators required further examination with the aim of achieving data comparability and providing a better basis for making informed decisions on environmental policy.
4. Unanimous support was expressed to continue the work, in particular, to review and revise the indicators from the Indicator Guidelines, to clarify further definitions and to develop detailed guidance, possibly in the form of data tables, on the production of indicators. Continuation of data reporting on indicators was considered of high importance for identifying gaps and opportunities for filling those gaps.

II. Mandate and reporting

5. The Joint Task Force will continue to report to its parent bodies, CEP and CES. It will submit a report on its accomplishments to both bodies.

III. Objective

6. The objective of the Joint Task Force is to assist national statistical agencies and institutions responsible for the production of national state-of-the-environment reports in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and SEE to further improve environmental statistics and the production of agreed indicators, strengthen environmental reporting and promote comparability of environmental statistics and indicators in the pan-European region.

IV. Planned activities and outputs

7. To achieve its objectives, the Joint Task Force will undertake the following activities:

(a) To review further and revise, when necessary, the indicators covered by the Indicator Guidelines to better explain the methodologies, clarify concepts and definitions and develop detailed guidance, possibly in the form of data tables, on the production of indicators;

(b) To provide guidance on primary data collection, including statistical data, as a basis for indicators in the Indicator Guidelines through data exchange on indicators and the subsequent evaluation of gaps and opportunities to fill them;

(c) To propose additional environmental indicators to be included in the Indicator Guidelines;

(d) To continue strengthening, in cooperation with EEA and other relevant institutions, the capacity of the countries concerned to produce environmental data, including statistical data, and indicators, through providing technical assistance and training, in concord with the principles of SEIS and regular environmental assessments;

(e) To provide and adapt to the needs of the countries concerned relevant guidance materials available at the international level;

(f) To maintain a network of environmental experts in statistical offices and Government agencies dealing with environmental assessments, to further broaden the exchange of experiences and approaches.

8. The Task Force will prepare, in particular, the following outputs:

(a) Reviews of the application of environmental indicators from the Indicator Guidelines in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and SEE. Analysis of the results of these reviews will help to identify priority work areas where further improvement is most needed in these countries and where training courses and workshops may have a maximum effect. The reviews may also help international donors to identify potential areas for technical assistance;

(b) Further improvement of the texts of indicators in the Indicator Guidelines;

(c) Agreed texts of additional indicators to be included in the Indicator Guidelines;

(d) Methodological documents, presentations and recommendations on data collection and production of indicators.

V. Timetable

9. The mandate of the Task Force will cover the period from the start of 2013 to the end of 2014.

VI. Method of work

10. The Joint Task Force is expected, subject to the availability of donor support, to have four face-to-face meetings during its mandate. The Joint Task Force will also work via e-mail and other electronic means. It will closely cooperate with the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. Donors will be invited to provide voluntary contributions to support the Joint Task Force.

VII. Membership

11. The Joint Task Force will be open to all ECE countries. Other interested countries are also welcome to participate. EEA, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Statistics Division, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, the International Energy Agency, the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, the Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, secretariats of relevant MEAs and other institutions will be invited to participate.

VIII. Secretariat support

12. The Environment Division and the Statistical Division of ECE will jointly service the Task Force. This will include:

(a) Servicing the Joint Task Force meetings (with interpretation and translation), including the preparation of meeting agendas and reports;

(b) Preparing background documents and compilation papers for the Joint Task Force, at its request;

(c) Arranging for financial support for members of the Joint Task Force from countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and SEE, so that they can participate in the Joint Task Force meetings;

(d) Helping the above-mentioned countries, under projects with EEA and other interested institutions, to improve their capabilities for producing indicators.
