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**The “Environment for Europe” mid-term review
of the Astana Conference main outcomes:
environmental assessment and reporting**

Outline on the establishment of a regular assessment and reporting process underpinned by the gradual development of a Shared Environment Information System

Note by the European Environmental Agency

Summary

At the Seventh “Environment for Europe” (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21–23 September 2011) Ministers decided to establish a regular process of environmental assessment and to develop a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) across the region in order to keep the pan-European environment under review. The SEIS should serve multiple policy processes, including the multilateral environmental agreements, and include building of capacity of countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe to monitor and assess their environment. Ministers invited the European Environment Agency (EEA) and its partners to develop an outline for how these actions could be performed and to present it to Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/2/Add.1, para. 14).

The present document was prepared by EEA in line with the above request. A preliminary version was presented to CEP at its eighteenth session (Geneva, 17–20 April 2012) as an informal paper. A revised version, reflecting the comments received, was later circulated by e-mail to CEP in December 2012 (in English and Russian).

The present document aims to support the discussion by CEP on the establishment of SEIS. Other documentation concerning SEIS that will be before CEP at its nineteenth session include a report by EEA on progress achieved in establishing SEIS (ECE/CEP/2013/18) and a compilation by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and other EfE partners of inputs into SEIS development (ECE/CEP/2013/13).

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Introduction

1. The present document is a response to the request addressed to the European Environment Agency (EEA) by the ministers of environment at the Seventh “Environment for Europe” (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21–23 September 2011) to develop an outline for the establishment of a regular process of environmental assessment and for the gradual development of a Shared Environment Information System (SEIS) across the pan-European region (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/2/Add.1, para. 14). The document was presented to the eighteenth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) (Geneva, 17–20 April 2012) and it was open for comments and input from countries and organizations in the region. The current version is the result of this dialogue and the basis for setting in place a long-term action plan for the gradual development of SEIS in the pan-European region.

2. In preparing this paper a number of key policy and legal documents across the region, as well as relevant reports and articles, have been consulted to ensure that the outline is embedded in related existing and evolving frameworks and developments.

3. As a first step in the development of the outline for establishing the regular process, the paper addresses the following elements:

- (a) Background;
- (b) Part I — The Astana mandate;
- (c) Part II — The current status;
- (d) Part III — Next steps.

4. In addition, annex I provides an overview of SEIS implementation activities in which EEA and its Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET) are currently involved that have potential relevance for the pan-European region, supplemented with a first list of other relevant project-based SEIS activities, to be further commented by countries, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the business community.

5. In response to the comments received, annexes II and III provide concrete examples of SEIS-related activities implemented by EEA in the Western Balkans and in the European Union (EU) neighbours, as well as their added value in support of the regular assessment and reporting process and in improving environmental policies.

6. *Background.* This section aims to place the request of ministers in Astana to develop SEIS in the global framework of facilitating public access to information and increasing the use of relevant and reliable information in the whole policy chain, from development to implementation.

7. *Part I — The Astana mandate* provides a comparative analysis of the Astana mandate against the present assessment and reporting landscape across the pan-European region by highlighting both the novelties as well as the elements of continuity to be addressed in this process. The analysis recognizes that a legal framework for regular assessment is already in place,¹ that tools and methods for reporting and assessment are

¹ I.e., the ECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters and Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2003 on public access to environmental information and repealing Council Directive 90/313/EEC.

being used across the region and that SEIS elements are starting to be applied in support of the various reporting processes. There is, however, a clear need to coordinate and streamline these efforts and to orient them towards clear and achievable goals.

8. *Part II — The current status* is a brief overview of the main findings gathered through the Assessment of Assessments (AoA) process (pan-European complemented by its subregional components) concerning the current reporting practices across the region, the main shortages/gaps in terms of policy demand versus content focus, networks involved, tools and methodologies applied and supporting information available.

9. *Part III — Next steps* identifies possible alternatives to support countries in a stepwise development of SEIS in the region. Two time perspectives are considered: (a) a short-term perspective (2012–2013); and (b) a medium-/long-term perspective (2014–2020).

10. For both time intervals the activities foreseen are structured according to the three SEIS components: governance/cooperation, content and infrastructure.

11. The immediate actions needed are rather straightforward. EEA actions and involvement are listed. Others have yet to be identified including possible synergies and interlinkages² between existing relevant initiatives to enhance their effectiveness.

12. For the medium-/long-term perspective the picture of foreseeable activities is gradually emerging as a result of dialogues and cooperation with countries and organizations in the region. Annex IV provides an overview of key events in 2012 relevant to the implementation of the Astana mandate.

I. Background

13. In 1992, at the World Summit on Environment and Development world leaders concluded that environmental issues were of common interest and consequently best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens at the relevant level. In that context, an open invitation to countries and information holders was launched, to find appropriate ways and practical means to facilitate public access to environmental information as a practical tool for informed action. That invitation was captured in the Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.³ Twenty years later, in Rio once again at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference), in order to promote the enhancement of the institutional framework for sustainable development particular attention was given to the need for effective analysis and assessments to underpin the decision-making process (see annex V).

² See also the same approach pursued by the United Nations Environment Programme for strengthening international environmental governance presented in a background paper for the ministerial consultations at the twelfth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (Nairobi, 20–22 February 2012) (UNEP/GCSS.XII/13/Add.2).

³ “Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.” Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), resolution 1, annex I.

14. For the pan-European region, the translation into practice of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration materialized with the adoption of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention). Indeed, worldwide, the 1998 ECE Aarhus Convention is the first (and still the only) legally binding instrument transposing the provisions of Principle 10. By January 2012, 45 countries⁴ from Western Europe to Central Asia — 85 per cent of the pan-European region — were gradually implementing the Aarhus Convention's provisions. Furthermore, EU remodelled its legislation in the field and adopted a new directive on access to environmental information based on the Aarhus Convention's provisions.⁵

15. In the more than 10 years of its implementation,⁶ the most successful pillar of the Aarhus Convention translated into actions across the ECE region is access to environmental information.

16. As an important tool for communicating and disseminating environmental information, state-of-the-environment reports (SoERs) are specifically addressed by the Aarhus provisions. The Parties are requested "at regular intervals not exceeding three or four years, to publish and disseminate a national report on the state of the environment".⁷ From the content perspective, the reports need to contain, among other things, "information on the quality of the environment and information on pressures on the environment".⁸

17. Building on these provisions, the 2003 EU Directive on public access to environmental information stipulates further that "Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that national, and, where appropriate, regional or local reports on the state of the environment are published at regular intervals not exceeding four years; such reports shall include information on the quality of, and pressures on, the environment".⁹

18. The Europe's Environment AoA (EE-AoA) (which underpinned the Astana ministerial decision related to regular reporting) was published by EEA in 2011. It assessed the status of current environmental reporting and assessment across the ECE region and concluded that all countries had developed websites containing relevant environmental information and produced, in the previous five years, a SoER at least once. That is to say, even countries not party to the Aarhus Convention were producing SoERs and, more broadly, making steps towards ensuring public access to environmental information.¹⁰

19. The aim of the current document is to develop a clear vision and integrated approach for EEA and pan-European activities in support of the Astana mandate, welcoming at the same time concrete contributions from various partners, countries and international/regional bodies.

⁴ Currently, there are 46 Parties to the Convention. For an updated list, please see http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-13&chapter=27&lang=en#1.

⁵ Directive 2003/4/EC Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2003 on public access to environmental information and repealing Council Directive 90/313/EEC,

⁶ The Convention entered into force in 2001.

⁷ Aarhus Convention, art. 5, para. 4.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Directive 2003/4/EC, art. 7, para. 3. Available from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32003L0004:EN:HTML>

¹⁰ This is the case, for example, of the Russian Federation (which is in the process of ratifying the Aarhus Convention) which produced its latest SoER in 2012 (see <http://aoa.ew.eea.europa.eu/>).

II. The Astana mandate

20. While first taking note of the progress achieved in the region concerning the provision of environmental information and reporting on the state of the environment, including on the existing gaps and shortcomings, in the Astana Ministerial Declaration of 23 September 2011, ministers decided “to keep the pan-European environment under review” and for that purpose “to establish a regular process of environmental assessment and to develop the SEIS across the region”.¹¹

21. The Declaration also indicates in brief some possible ways to achieve this objective, by strengthening the role of the countries through capacity-building (training, exchange of experience and good practices, networking, etc.) along the entire monitoring-to-reporting chain.

22. The geographical focus of future cooperation is also reflected in the Declaration by highlighting subregions in need of particular attention and support, building on the findings of the EEA EE-AoA (which was complemented by the regional AoAs for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Russian Federation).

23. The Astana Declaration goes on to say that the regular process of environmental assessment and the SEIS to be developed “will serve multiple policy processes, including multilateral environment agreements, and include capacity-building of countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe to monitor and assess their environment”.

24. The Declaration refers to a large spectrum of policy processes and legal instruments¹² that need to be served by a regular process of environmental assessments and supported by SEIS.

25. To properly steer the process and develop a realistic road map for implementation, ministers in Astana invited “*EEA and its partners* to develop an outline for how these actions could be performed and to present it to the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy” (emphasis added).¹³ That outline is the current document.

26. The following section highlights what is new in the mandate compared with the current monitoring-to-reporting chain of activities in the pan-European region in order to put in place a regular assessment process and to develop SEIS across the region.

A. A regular process of environmental assessment

27. At the pan-European and EU levels the frequency of the environmental reporting process is already regulated by both the Aarhus Convention and the EU Directive on public access to environmental information, indicating that a comprehensive SoER has to be produced every four years. However, in practical terms, the situation varies among countries and subregions and is influenced by national policy demands, legislation or financial considerations. Consequently the scope of the current mandate is to assist the countries in the **gradual stabilization of the national environmental reporting process to a four year cycle**.

¹¹ ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/2/Add.1, para. 14. Available from <http://www.unece.org/env/efe/astana/welcome.html>.

¹² National strategies and action plans, national legislation, compliance with multilateral agreements, reporting to EEA, the United Nations, etc.

¹³ ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/2/Add.1, para. 14.

28. It is also foreseen that the content of the “regular reporting” will be addressed and improved in this process so as to become more relevant to the policy process and to the public at large. This evolution is indicated by the “assessment” perspective introduced by the Astana Declaration on the quality of the environment and the pressures on the environment,¹⁴ rather than the descriptive approach identified in the current environment-related reports.

29. One approach to help embed the Astana mandate into EU activities is to consider the following objectives:

(a) Support the implementation of EU legislation (covering primarily the EU member States, but also other EEA member countries, EU candidates and possibly European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries);¹⁵

(b) Support the implementation of Aarhus Convention provisions related to regular reporting on the state of the environment as well as the provisions of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration (covering in particular the non-EU members);

(c) Support the enforcement of key international environmental agreements (covering the EEA countries and other countries in the pan-European region party to multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs));

(d) Support public participation and awareness-raising by increased online and near real-time dissemination of environmental information (data, indicators, assessments, etc.).

30. These are identified to help countries in other regions prioritize and organize their responses to the Astana requests.

B. The development of the Shared Environmental Information System

31. The AoA methodology, applied to marine¹⁶ and water-related issues, as well as to the green economy concept, provided insights about the information and assessments available in these areas over recent years in the pan-European region — which countries and organizations are involved, and where and what can be found as a potential basis to be reused, shared and built upon in the future. However, a full overview of what information exists across this region is not available.

32. The production of regular reports is a complex process, involving networks, data and information, tools and methodologies and expert support. The SEIS mandate in the Astana Declaration opens up the possibility of improving the organization of available information, to facilitate its reuse and sharing and in the end to provide a stable platform for future assessment and reporting activities. Within the same objective it is also intended to identify the data and information gaps and incompatibilities, the accessibility restrictions (confidentiality, formats, etc.) and to suggest ways to address and overcome these issues.

III. The current status

33. The EE-AoA process, carried out at both pan-European and subregional levels, provided relevant information on the current environmental reporting landscape as well as

¹⁴ As defined by the Aarhus Convention.

¹⁵ Subject to additional funding.

¹⁶ See <http://www.unga-regular-process.org/> and <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/europes-environment-aoa>.

the manner and ways (networks, tools, information systems) in which these reporting activities are organized and implemented. A summary of the current status, extracted from the EE-AoA reports and from other recent materials, is presented below.

A. Content

34. The analysis of state-of-the-environment and thematic assessments has revealed a multitude and variety of products and information. At the same time, much information is lacking and the policy relevance of the information remains weak.

35. Assessments are currently too restricted to environmental status and trends. The most common assessments are thematic (75 per cent) and status and trends (71 per cent), and very few take a more integrated approach, encompassing a range of concepts or the whole of the Driving Forces-Pressures-State-Impacts-Responses (DPSIR) framework.

36. In existing assessments, ex post analysis is preferred to ex ante or forward-looking analysis. Reliance on long time series is limited. Forward-looking analyses are included in approximately 20 per cent of the assessments reports.

37. In Central Asian countries, assessments of the state of the environment, policy formulation, fulfilment of reporting obligations under MEAs and capacity developments have been significantly supported and assisted mainly through the United Nations system organizations and programmes and official development aid.¹⁷ Consequently, the sustainability of the assessment process is not ensured.

38. Western Balkans and EEA member countries have the highest number of reports based on regular data-gathering exercises.

B. Infrastructure and services

39. Assessments are very poorly supported by infrastructure and services across pan-Europe and only in 22 per cent of the reviewed assessments was there an indication that an information system supporting the data management for access and sharing had been established while preparing the assessment. Central Asia and Eastern Europe are lagging behind in the use of service providers and common platforms supporting data management, sharing and exchange.

40. Countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and the Russian Federation have the basic hardware and software available, but more advanced equipment (for data transfer via Internet), clear data policies and special software (databases, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) and internationally recognized models for data treatment and interpretation) are often missing.

41. In Central Asia data storage and management are still a major issue. Environmental data are not always stored using electronic media, databases being incomplete and generally inaccessible; integrated environmental monitoring, databases and information systems do not exist.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, *Europe's Environment an Assessment of Assessments — Central Asia* (Almaty, 2011). Available from <http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/regions/pan-european/sub-regional-assessment-of-assessment-reports>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

42. The Internet is the most used interface across the pan-European region to make the assessments available. Nevertheless, the production of hard copies is still significant, with the Russian Federation and the Caucasus showing the highest shares of dissemination of their assessments in hard copies.

C. Governance/cooperation

43. Institutional arrangements are unclear, with a wide range of organizations and ministries involved in the preparation but with limited coordination either between or within regions and countries, or between the public and private sectors. An assessment undertaken as a contribution to the 2011 Astana Ministerial Conference shows that only 28 per cent of the reports analysed are produced in coordination with different assessment processes. With the exception of the Russian Federation and, to a lesser extent, Central Asia, not even one third of the assessments produced in the other subregions are coordinated with other processes.

44. In the late 1990s an initial capacity-building activity was carried out by countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia together with EEA and the ECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. The initiative conducted under the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) programme helped assess the availability of environmental data and information, collect them into a database and establish a prototype reporting system initially developed by EEA and customized and implemented by ECE. Since then, complementary, voluntary international developments like intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO)/Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS)¹⁹ have increased networking and availability of selected data. Being a very recent development, the Global Network of Networks (GNON) activity (a special initiative established at the Eye on Earth (EoE) summit in 2011)²⁰ is a further initiative to improve networking, focusing in the first instance on providing support to the implementation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) online environmental information-sharing platform, UNEP-Live (www.uneplive.org), and providing better access to and use of environmental data and information globally following SEIS principles.

IV. The next steps

45. Across the pan-European region the implementation of SEIS and its principles is already taking place. With different speeds, in various ways and gradually engaging diverse target groups, the exchange of environmental information, their reuse and dissemination is growing.

46. The central role in the development of a regular assessment process based on SEIS belongs to the countries themselves. The ownership of the process by each participating country is a basic requirement for a successful stepwise implementation. Furthermore, to ensure the sustainability of the actions proposed, the assessment work needs to be driven by countries' own policy needs and to gradually be able to respond to and guide their effective and efficient implementation. Therefore the focus of future actions should, in the first phase at least, be oriented towards countries, with the international and regional partners

¹⁹ GEO is leading a worldwide effort to build a GEOSS over the next 10 years.

²⁰ See: <http://www.unep.org/civil-society/MeetingsandEvents/UpcomingMeetingsandEvents/EyeonEarthSummitDecember2011AbuDhabi/tabid/54257/Default.aspx>

supporting this process by facilitating the cooperation and the exchange of knowledge between countries and adding, whenever possible, additional environmental dimensions (regional, global) to the national perspectives. The AoA consultation paper, “Europe’s Environment: Enhancing the Knowledge Base”, provides an assessment of the nature of the current environmental challenges and the data and information base needed to address them, which have implications for the content and the approach to be taken by the regular assessment process and SEIS at all levels.

A. Expected outcomes (short term)

47. In the short-term perspective, two outcomes will be focused on the implementation of the Astana Declaration: (a) the production of the next national SoERs based on SEIS elements; and (b) improved reporting of obligations under MEAs using SEIS elements.

48. To reach these goals, the following activities are proposed:

(a) Identifying the data and information available, facilitating access and sharing, supporting the development of regular priority data sharing (formally, “data flows”) (countries assisted by EEA and its partners);²¹

(b) Creating or facilitating institutional partnerships at the national level to respond to such obligations (e.g., through government decisions, ministerial orders, joint governmental bodies or structures, etc.);

(c) Supporting the development of common/shared platforms for dialogue and information sharing (e-governance, Reportnet,²² the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (InforMEA),²³ the Caspian Environmental Information Centre,²⁴ UNEP-Live, etc.);

(d) Training and capacity-building in the use of assessment tools and methodologies (indicators, Integrated Environment Assessment (IEA), scenarios and forward-looking studies, etc.);²⁵

(e) Through partnership with existing projects and initiatives, developing building blocks for the regular SoER²⁶ and for MEA reporting obligations;

(f) Assisting countries in the preparation of new SEIS-compliant project proposals and in filling in the monitoring-to-reporting gaps identified in the EE-AoA process (EEA and other partners including at the regional level).

49. The implementation of these activities will imply bringing together and connecting all existing and planned initiatives across the region. Below, some concrete actions

²¹ International organizations, MEA secretariats, etc., are invited to join in providing a specific type of support based on their specific competences and expertise.

²² Reportnet is the system used by EEA/EIONET for electronic reporting according to SEIS principles. See <http://www.eionet.europa.eu/reportnet>.

²³ Available from <http://informea.org/>.

²⁴ Serving the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea on the Caspian Sea project currently implemented by UNEP/Global Resource Information Database centre in Arendal, Norway (Grid-Arendal) with EEA support. See <http://kaspinfo.net/>.

²⁵ Activities such as workshops, seminars and trainings currently covering these areas are organized by EEA jointly with ECE, Eurostat and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

²⁶ The current Animal WellAre Research in an enlarged Europe (AWARE) project funded by the EU in Central Asia is promoting SEIS in the region and is assisting countries in the region in the preparation of the next SoER. Similar activities are carried out for EU neighbours under the ENP/SEIS project managed by EEA.

currently taken in support of the overall Astana mandate are highlighted. Furthermore, a comprehensive list of SEIS-related activities currently under way at various levels is presented in annex I. The list is not exhaustive, but a living one which should be regularly updated with the contribution of all stakeholders.

B. Short-term actions

50. The following short-term actions to implement the Astana mandate are foreseen:

(a) *Review the EEA core set of indicators (CSI).* This is under way, covering EEA member and cooperating countries, with proposed adjustments, and aims to have a direct impact on the next SoER process (in particular the forthcoming EEA State and Outlook Report 2015);

(b) *Assist countries in the effective production of a trial set of indicators underpinned by regular data flows.*²⁷ Moreover, assist the countries in the use of these indicators in the regular assessment and reporting activities. The extended mandate of the ECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators until 2014 and the EEA support provided through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)/SEIS project will facilitate this progress from methodological improvements to the effective production and use;

(c) *Update the State of Environment Reporting Information System (SERIES) by using the AoA methodology and AoA-related tools.* A light version of the AoA portal for hosting the national SoERs is already in development by EEA;

(d) *Promote the annual indicator-based assessment process of EEA (in 2012 addressing the complex and cross-cutting issue of green economy) as a possible model with a view to establishing a regular assessment process at national level;*

(e) *Facilitate countries' access and contribution to the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) as a basis for assessing the sustainability and vulnerability of water resources, as well as for providing information on policy responses.* Capacity-building activities attached to the use of the system can also be provided within the existing ENP/SEIS project;

(f) *Promote and gradually facilitate the use of Reportnet beyond EEA countries (e.g., ENP, Central Asia).* The system is continuously being enhanced through new technical approaches in order to cover new legal demands around reporting obligations;

(g) *Promote the use and further population of the SEIS Cookbook by countries beyond EEA members.* The SEIS Cookbook activity was launched under the ENP/SEIS project in 2012 and extended also to all EEA and cooperating countries, and will lead to the development of a living collection of SEIS good examples and best practices.²⁸ The EEA global public environment information platform, "Eye on Earth", is already available for use to other communities beyond the EU.

²⁷ In 2012 the Joint Task Force on indicators planned two meetings on this topic, namely July and October-November. Support to ENP East countries and the Russian Federation to actively participate in the process was provided by EEA under ENPI/SEIS project (See: <http://enpi-seis.ew.eea.europa.eu/>).

²⁸ See SEIS Cookbook version 1 at <http://www.seiscookbook.net/>.

C. Long-term perspective

51. In the context of the Europe 2020 strategy, EEA and Eurostat will join their networks and information holders to provide statistical information and indicators that allow sustainability to be measured and reported. Efforts will be focused on the long-term priorities to be addressed by the EU, as reflected in the current activity plan, and are expected to be further detailed in the context of the Seventh Environmental Action Programme (7EAP), as follows:

- (a) Assessing implementation of existing instruments and ensuring ways for better implementation;
- (b) Moving towards a greener and more resource-efficient economy;
- (c) Better integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies in view of promoting sustainable development;
- (d) Achieving the 2020 targets on halting biodiversity loss;
- (e) Addressing water scarcity and extreme events;
- (f) Tackling climate change.

52. By 2014 the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) operational services for land monitoring and emergency response are expected to be fully operational and able to provide timely and consistent information to support policymaking and its implementation. Since it is foreseen²⁹ that the core data will be freely accessible, important input is expected to be provided to the next reporting cycle (the next EEA regular assessment is due in 2015) as part of the regular assessment process on the state of the environment. Similar contributions are expected to feed into the national regular assessment processes from 2014 onwards and to complement the in situ monitoring activities.

53. The new LIFE+ programme 2014–2020 with dedicated subprogrammes for environment and for climate change will promote a new type of “integrated projects” aiming at implementing on a large territorial scale environmental or climate strategies or action plans, and mobilizing other EU, national and private funds. These will focus primarily on nature, water, waste, air and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The LIFE+ subprogramme for Environment will support three priority areas: environment and resource efficiency; biodiversity; and environmental governance and information. The latter could represent the basis to accommodate SEIS development and regular assessment processes. LIFE+ will also enlarge its territorial scope to countries outside the EU, under certain conditions, and will adopt simplified procedures.³⁰

54. The Digital Agenda for Europe process supports the growth of e-Government services and open data provision. The review of selected EU legislation (e.g., Public Sector Information and access to information directives) will have a positive impact on environmental information flows and significant improvements are expected already in 2013.

²⁹ An EU regulation is expected by the end of this year to endorse the access and use of the GMES information for environmental purposes. It is expected that the core satellite data and the core information services will be widely available free of charge, at least for EU member States and candidate countries.

³⁰ For information on the continuation of LIFE+ beyond 2013, see <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/about/beyond2013.htm#proposal>.

55. Until 2019, the current legislation on the Infrastructure for Spatial information in European Community (INSPIRE)³¹ will have to be fully implemented by the member States. Data discovery and access across all INSPIRE themes — using a range of modern information technology (IT) services — will be achieved. INSPIRE could be gradually implemented by a set of neighbouring countries (or Central Asia countries), based on voluntary agreements and responding to specific policy priorities.

56. The EEA indicator review processes is leading to an improved and more widely shared set of indicators which are underpinned by more continuous e-reporting flows. EEA member countries are expected to be forerunners, complemented by cooperating countries which are keen to share along the same lines. The outcome will feed already into the SoER 2015.

57. Thematic information services — linked to data centres and beyond — will be more strongly based on indicators, provide more depth and be better integrated across domains. Individual thematic areas, in particular air, waste and water, are expected to be strengthened in the neighbouring countries through projects like the ENP/SEIS by 2014.

Role and potential contributions of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators

58. The mandate of the ECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and of Joint Task force on Environmental Indicators have recently been extended until 2014,^{32,33} reconfirming their role as key contributors to the implementation of the Astana mandate.³⁴ Their planned activities are expected to assist the countries in the region in both the gradual development of SEIS and the development of a regular assessment and reporting process. The work of the two structures is complementary and will address elements across the entire monitoring-to-reporting chain.

59. In this framework, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment will focus on the following aspects:

- (a) Modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks and information systems;
- (b) Improvement of data collection, transfer and use and the application of modelling;
- (c) Strengthening of monitoring of specific environmental media;
- (d) Promotion of the use of indicator-based mechanisms for periodic environmental assessments and evaluation of the effectiveness of environmental policies and decision-making;

³¹ Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE).

³² The revised terms of reference for the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators for 2013–2014 were approved by CEP at its eighteenth session (ECE/CEP/2012/2, para. 49 and annex IV, available from <http://www.unece.org/env/cep/2012sessionapril.html>).

³³ The mandate of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment was extended for the period 2012–2014 by CEP at its eighteenth session (ECE/CEP/2012/2, para. 48, available from <http://www.unece.org/env/cep/2012sessionapril.html>).

³⁴ The Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment posits that the Working Group “should contribute ... to establishing a regular process of environmental assessment and the development of the Shared Environment Information System across the region jointly with the European Environment Agency (EEA) and its partners” (ECE/CEP/2012/6, annex, para. 2 (a); available from <http://www.unece.org/env/cep/2012sessionapril.html>).

(e) Improvement of environmental assessments, including the use of the methodology of the EE-AoA report (see ECE/CEP/2012/6, annex, para. 3).

60. Concerning the content and tools components of SEIS, the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators will “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” (ECE/CEP/2012/2, annex IV, para. 7 (d)).

61. The Joint Task Force will also contribute to another SEIS component, namely, institutional cooperation and networking by maintaining “a network of environmental experts in statistical offices and government agencies dealing with environmental assessments to further broaden the exchange of experiences and approaches” (ibid., para. 7 (f)).

62. Since the two groups are playing an important role in SEIS development across the region, as well as in the development of a regular reporting process, a better interlinkage between the activities and deliverables of the two groups will be envisaged. In this respect the indicator work of the Joint Task Force should lead to the effective production of common environmental indicators across the region, underpinned by regular data flows. For its part, the Working Group, with the support of EEA and other international bodies, could further work with the countries towards the preparation of the next environmental reporting cycle (2014–2015), using the produced indicators and related assessments as key inputs.

Annex I

Shared Environment Information System implementation activities

A. EEA/Eionet SEIS implementation activities

<i>Lead</i>	<i>Geographical area</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Focus^a (G/C/I)</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Member country/country impact</i>
EEA/ Directorate- General for Eurostat (DG ESTAT)	EEA (39 countries) ENPI-SEIS (16 partner countries)	Indicator review	C	2012– 2014	<p>Joint project with Eurostat on a shared approach and set of indicators</p> <p>Revised indicator management system</p> <p>Update of the EU General Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus (GEMET) to represent indicator terminologies and other user needs</p> <p>Development of comparable regional indicator sets for ENPI East and ENPI South, taking into consideration the EEA CSI review process</p>	<p>Reduced set of more policy relevant indicators</p> <p>Better tailored to user needs</p>
EEA	EEA (39 countries) ENPI-SEIS (16 partner countries)	SENSE	I	2012– 2014	<p>SENSE2 project to allow exchange of indicator and underpinning data and information between EEA and member countries and among countries (supported by semantic web technologies)</p> <p>SENSE2 project meeting as part of the National Reference Centre (NRC) Environmental Information System (EIS) workshop at INSPIRE conference (June 2012)</p> <p>Expanding SENSE examples to the ENP region</p> <p>Continued work from 2013–2015 to stepwise build an operational system, including enhanced indicator-data linkages and increased country participation with the aim to underpin the 2015 SoER</p>	<p>More consistent message on the countries' SoERs</p> <p>Less reporting burden</p>

<i>Lead</i>	<i>Geographical area</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Focus^a (G/C/I)</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Member country/country impact</i>
EEA	EEA (39 countries) ENPI-SEIS (16 partner countries)	SEIS state-of-play review	G	2012 onwards	SEIS country visits where needed, identifying further country priority needs and joint actions (also between Eionet and ENP partners) Support national activities on demand Progressive inclusion of good practice examples of SEIS implementation in the ENP region	Modernized information systems Better common understanding
EEA	EEA (39 countries)	European Data Centres	C	2012 onwards	Work on the European Spatial Data Infrastructure as a link to National SDIs Identifying the need for and establishing reference data sets — partly servicing across domains	Better data link between Europe and countries
Directorate-General for Environment (DG ENV) with EEA	EEA (39 countries)	eReporting	I	2012–2015	Modernize and further develop thematic reporting systems with emphasis on air (Air Quality Directive ^b -Implementing Provisions for Reporting ^c (AQD-IPR)), water (WISE) and biodiversity (Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE)) Review links between INSPIRE provisions and EU reporting obligation (supported by an INSPIRE eReporting workshop, June 2012)	Easier reporting Improved visibility of country data and information
DG ENV, DG ESTAT, Joint Research Centre	EU-27 (27 countries) and volunteers ENPI-SEIS (16 partner countries)	INSPIRE implementation	I	2012 onwards	Stepwise support for INSPIRE implementation by finalizing data specifications, identifying needs for common code-lists/nomenclatures and registries to host them, establishing an EEA metadata catalogue and linking this to European and national SDIs Support implementation activities (content/technology) in thematic areas in close cooperation with countries Inform and market the INSPIRE/SEIS connections at the INSPIRE Conference in Istanbul (June 2012) and the INSPIRE eReporting workshop (June 2012) Dedicated side event planned at the annual INSPIRE Conference in 2012 for the ENP region, supporting activities in the process towards development of EIS and SDI in these countries	Improved national SDI Easier access to EU and neighbouring country data

<i>Lead</i>	<i>Geographical area</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Focus^a (G/C/I)</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Member country/country impact</i>
EEA	EEA (39 countries)	NatureWatch	I	2012	Launch a new watch as part of EoE platform to allow citizen participation around invasive alien species together with the European Commission	Complement and support country activities
EEA	EEA (39 countries)	GMES	C	2012–2014	Deliver outcomes of the GMES in-situ coordination (GISC) project related to in situ activities of countries and (international) organizations, in particular establishing links and service agreements Present and discuss activities during 2012 at the GMES in action: Danish Presidency event (June 2012)	Better linkages of in situ and Earth observation data Better x-country comparison
EEA	EEA (39 countries)	Initial operations of the GMES land monitoring service (GIO land)	C	2012–2014	Under the GMES umbrella and with the Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry funding, develop CORINE Land Cover update and five thematic high-resolution layers and local components on biodiversity (riparian zones) and the Urban Atlas, in close cooperation with EEA member countries, including the data sets and the necessary web service Present and discuss activities during 2012–2013 at the NRC land workshop	Cost reduction of production of national environmental data through replacement by remote sensing-derived data Better x-country comparison
EEA	ENPI-SEIS (16 partner countries): ENP East (6) ENP South (9) Russian Federation	ENP/SEIS	G	2012–2014	Under the ENP and with the Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation — EuropeAid (DG DEVCO) funding: Support production of a core set of environmental indicators, underpinned by regular data flow collection, for ENP-East and the Russian Federation, in line with EEA CSI, to monitor progress and to review environmental policies in support of various national, regional and international obligations Support the development of regular data flows for the production of indicators and regular reporting to international agreements Provide capacity-building and expert support activities to the partner countries in the identified priority areas (air,	Streamlining leads to a reduced number of indicators to be compiled, i.e. increasing the efficiency of the data collection/storage process and provide clearer guidance on indicators' definition, metadata, presentation/analysis concepts Indicator sets will be tailored to different users' needs, meeting better policy demand and

<i>Lead</i>	<i>Geographical area</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Focus^a (G/C/I)</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Member country/country impact</i>
					water and waste), jointly with key partners and international organizations active in the region, as relevant	international reporting obligations
					Reinforce countries' capacities in the field of monitoring, collection, storage, assessment and reporting of environmental data in the relevant environmental authorities, including the national statistical systems (creation of dedicated IT Working Group, publication of a first edition of the SEIS Cookbook, participation in relevant EEA/EU thematic meetings, etc.)	Allowing countries a better approximation
EEA	Pan-European	SERIS +	C/I	2013	Plan a follow-up project in 2013 building on the Astana AoA application in a lighter version — to include also the latest SoERs from non-EEA countries	More visibility of country assessments
EEA	Global	EoE network	I	2012 onwards	Further develop the EoE Network application Maintain and enhance available watches Fully establish the EoE governance arrangement Market EoE to new partners link EoE to UNEP-Live Run an EoE user conference in early 2013	Easier access to and distribution of environmental information
Open communities, EEA as partner	Global	Global Network of Networks (GNoN)	G	2012–2014	Further develop the GNoN as a special initiative stemming from the Abu Dhabi Summit. The initiative aims to connect relevant international networks dealing with environmental information which are previously not related in a similar way Second EoE summit in early 2014	Improved country participation in international networking and information exchange
GEO, EEA as partner	Global	GEOSS contribution	I	2012–2015	Contribution to GEOSS workplan through the Ecosystem Capital Accounting and the linkage of EoE with the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) architecture Develop the GEOSS-EoE link, mainly through the EuroGEOSS project	Better visibility and access of national data at the international level and vice versa

<i>Lead</i>	<i>Geographical area</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Focus^a (G/C/I)</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Member country/country impact</i>
					Continuous delivery of EEA data to the GEOSS data core	
					Participation in the establishment of the GEOSS data sharing principles	
EEA	EEA (39 countries)	Eionet Priority Data Flows	C	2012 onwards	Enhance both the quality and quantity of EEA member countries delivery to EEA EEA publishes annual report on detailed performance In 2014 consider the inclusion of reference data from the ENP countries	Enhanced performance of countries in benchmarking
DG ENV	EU-27	Better regulation/ revision of EU directives	G	2012 onwards	The “Draft Commission Staff Working Paper” on SEIS implementation indicates activities to review reporting obligations and related legislation according to the policy review cycle, including SEIS for ENP	Improved legislation, better meeting member countries’ needs
Directorate-General for an Information Society and Media	EU-27	EU Digital Agenda	I	2012–2020	A range of actions are being identified to be implemented by the EU Commission and suggested to countries, mainly related to e-Government and open data activities	Modernized internal and external member country services

^a Abbreviations refer to the SEIS pillars: G = governance; C = content; and I = infrastructure.

^b Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe.

^c Commission Implementing Decision 2011/850/EU of 12 December 2011 laying down rules for Directives 2004/107/EC and 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the reciprocal exchange of information and reporting on ambient air quality.

B. Other project-based activities supporting SEIS implementation at the pan-European level^a

<i>Lead</i>	<i>Geographical Area</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Focus^b (G/C/I)</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Member country/country impact</i>
UNEP/GRID-Arendal ^c EEA as contributor	Caspian sea countries: Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan	Development of Caspian Environmental Information Centre	C/I	2012–2013	Web Portal environment Content, documents and meta-data management system Interactive GIS database and stakeholders and projects database Inputs to first draft of Caspian Environmental Atlas and SoER	Set up a centralized database and information management system to store data and support reporting to Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea Capacity-building and enhanced cooperation
Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia EEA as contributor	Central Asia (5)	AWARE SEIS	G	2012–2013	Workshop and seminars in each of the Central Asian countries promoting SEIS benefits	Raise awareness concerning SEIS and its benefits
DG DEVCO	Central Asia	Environmental Monitoring in Central Asia (MONECA)	G/C	2013–2014	Development of SEIS in Central Asia through indicator development and related data flows, support to reporting activities Capacity-building, training	Streamline reporting process Strengthen institutional partnership Facilitate data and information exchange and multiple use of available information

^a List to be completed by countries, international organizations, NGOs and members of the business community

^b Abbreviations refer to the SEIS pillars: G = governance; C = content; and I = infrastructure. Nota bene: this column was left blank in the original EEA submission.

^c Global Resource Information Database centre in Arendal, Norway.

Annex II

Input to the post-Astana process from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance West Balkan project

Participation of West Balkan countries in the work of the European Environment Agency (period of implementation, December 2011–November 2013)

Overall objective of the project

1. To support West Balkan countries participation in the full range of activities of EEA and Eionet, as per the EEA Work Programme 2012 and 2013.
2. Specific activities to meet the overall objective:
 - (a) Further extension of the EEA/Eionet annual work programme to the West Balkan countries;
 - (b) Strengthened support in the Eionet network of organizations and participation of the National Focal Points, National Reference Centres and country experts in major EEA/Eionet meetings and events;
 - (c) Technical support in the Western Balkan countries.
3. The EEA work programme is extended through this (and previous) projects to include West Balkan countries according to their state of development and the scale of financial support provided to participate in a selection of the main EEA/Eionet activities.

A. Geographical coverage

4. The EEA has been cooperating with West Balkan countries since 1996 (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia since 1996, Croatia since 2001, Serbia and Montenegro together since 2002 and separately since 2007, and with Kosovo, under United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), since 2010).
5. The seven West Balkan cooperating countries and territories participate in Eionet on a similar basis as the 32 EEA member countries do.
6. Relevant SEIS activities in the West Balkan region provide value to the countries in preparing for accession, as well as benefits to the EU in terms of enhanced cooperation and security.

B. Cooperation

7. Cooperation in the framework of the West Balkan project includes:
 - (a) Establishment of a network and regular contact with National Focal Points and up to 25 National Reference Centres in each country;
 - (b) Agreement on the main thematic priorities for development in the West Balkan region;

- (c) Agreement on continuing development of indicators and regular state and outlook reporting;
- (d) Country visits and regional workshops.

C. Content

8. The content of the project consists of the following:

- (a) Building up regular reporting and exchange of information according to the EEA Priority Data Flows³⁵ and EEA Core Set of Indicators;
- (b) Regular assessment work: the West Balkan countries were fully included in the main EEA assessment and thematic reports (pan-European environmental assessment reports in 1998, 2003, 2007) and most recently in *The European environment: state and outlook 2010*³⁶ and *Europe's environment — An Assessment of Assessments* report in 2011;³⁷.
- (c) Extending the work of the EEA European Topic Centres to West Balkan countries (currently Air Pollution and Climate Change Mitigation; Climate Change Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation; Spatial Information and Analysis; Inland, Coastal and Marine Waters; Biological Diversity; and Sustainable Consumption and Production);
- (d) Participation in European-level projects: e.g., CORINE Land Cover and the Emerald Network.

D. Infrastructure

9. In terms of infrastructure, the Eionet telematics network development and application ensure the communication tool for environmental data and information exchange across the entire EEA network.

10. More information on the specific activities, events and country information is available on the Eionet portal (<http://www.eionet.europa.eu/>).

E. Way forward

11. West Balkan countries will continue to participate in all Eionet meetings alongside representatives and experts from 32 EEA member countries, benefiting from the exchange of experience and all the tools and support available to Eionet countries. These activities will benefit individual countries, regional cooperation and legal reporting obligations under EU and international law and can be grouped as follows:

- (a) Support for the EU accession process in relation to policy-relevant environmental information;
- (b) Support for the development of SEIS-compatible environmental information systems by providing European and international expertise, advice and quality control to the accession and pre-accession countries (addressing the cross-cutting elements of national information systems, their legal basis, data management and communication, as well as the specific subsystems related to agreed priority themes);

³⁵ See <http://www.eionet.europa.eu/dataflows>.

³⁶ EEA, Copenhagen. Available from <http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer>.

³⁷ EEA, Copenhagen. Available from <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/europes-environment-aoa>.

(c) Support for the development and use of common environmental indicators by all the countries to ensure increasingly comprehensive and consistent assessment and reporting across countries, subregions and regions;

(d) Facilitation of overall access to EU expertise and technologies through training, workshops, expert missions and exchange visits addressing the three SEIS components.

Annex III

Input to the post-Astana process from the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument-Shared Environment Information System project

Towards a Shared Environmental Information System in the European Neighbourhood (period of implementation: 2010–mid-2014)

Overall objective of the project

1. The overall objective of the ENPI-SEIS project is to promote the protection of the environment in the countries of the ENP area.

A. Specific objectives

2. Specific objectives of the project include to:

(a) Promote the setting up of national and regional environmental information systems in line with SEIS principles;

(b) Improve capacities in the field of monitoring, collection, storage, assessment and reporting of environmental data;

(c) Identify and/or further develop environmental indicators;

(d) Track progress of the regional environmental initiatives (ENP, Eastern Partnership, Horizon 2020, etc.).

3. These objectives are being addressed through six main activity areas, namely: (a) Indicators; (b) Data flows; (c) SEIS infrastructure; (d) Assessment; (e) Communication; and (f) Coordination.

B. Geographical coverage

4. **ENPI East** includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

5. **ENPI South** includes Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia.

6. Relevant SEIS activities in the ENPI East region provide value to the countries and eventually benefits to the EU in terms of enhanced cooperation and security.

C. Cooperation

7. Cooperation in the framework of the ENPI-SEIS project includes:

(a) Establishment of a network and regular contact with National Focal Points (one from the Ministry of Environment and one from the Statistical office) in each country;

(b) Agreement on the main thematic priorities for development in the East region:

(i) Water, particularly freshwater, both in terms of quality and quantity;

- (ii) Municipal/household waste;
- (iii) Air emissions, climate change, and potentially air quality;
- (c) Country visits to all partner countries in 2011 and the resulting country reports that have provided an insight into the countries' situation, priorities and needs, as well as contributed to the design of next steps in project implementation. Overall, the demands cover activities across the three SEIS pillars of governance/cooperation, content and infrastructure in the agreed thematic priorities.

D. Content

8. The content of the project includes:
- (a) Training workshops, seminars and other events organized jointly with major regional partners in the agreed priority areas to build capacities and experience in putting SEIS into practice;
 - (b) Specific expert country support offered upon request from the countries;
 - (c) Enhanced support for indicator review and development already under way under the coordination of the ECE Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators, as well as the development of a regular and sustainable data flow and indicator production to improve the quality and consistency of environmental information, assessment, reporting and resulting policymaking and implementation to improve the environment within the countries and more widely across Europe.

E. Infrastructure

9. In terms of infrastructure, the Working Group on Information Technology supports the development of a regular data flow system based on SEIS principles.
10. Sharing of data and information on the EEA tools and practices will help kick-start the countries in a SEIS-compliant manner, including the preparation of the first edition of SEIS Cookbook.
11. More information on the specific activities, events and country information is available on the project website (<http://enpi-seis.ew.eea.europa.eu/>).

F. The way forward

12. A range of common (regional, subregional, bilateral) and individual country actions are envisaged based on the feedback received during the country visits in 2011 and the regional discussions held so far. These will benefit individual countries, regional cooperation and legal reporting obligations and can be grouped as follows:
- (a) Support for the development of SEIS-compatible environmental information systems by providing European and international expertise, advice and quality control to the interested countries (addressing the cross-cutting elements of national information systems, their legal basis, data management and communication, as well as the specific subsystems related to agreed priority themes);
 - (b) Support for the development and use of common environmental indicators by all the countries, and in particular by their statistical offices, to ensure increasingly comprehensive and consistent assessment and reporting across countries, subregions and regions;

(c) Facilitation of overall access to EU expertise and technologies through training workshops, expert missions and exchange visits addressing the three SEIS components in the identified priority areas.

Annex IV

Relevant events for Astana mandate implementation

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Institution</i>
3–4 July 2012	Geneva, Switzerland	Joint meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment and the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management	ECE/Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) secretariat
4–6 July 2012	Geneva, Switzerland	Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators	ECE
3–5 September 2012	Geneva, Switzerland	Fifteenth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention	ECE/Aarhus Convention secretariat
13–14 September 2012	Almaty, Kazakhstan	EU-Central Asia Strategy for a New Partnership — Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation; Working Group on Environmental Governance and Climate Change	EU
17–19 September 2012	Geneva, Switzerland	Thirty-sixth session of the Steering Body to the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP)	ECE/Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) secretariat
24–25 September 2012	Oslo, Norway	Annual Meeting of the Environmental Action Programme Task Force	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
2 October 2012	Copenhagen, Denmark	Workshop on an environmental information system in the Caspian region	EEA, UNEP, UNEP/Grid-Arendal
11–12 October 2012	Geneva, Switzerland	Fifth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health under the Protocol on Water and Health to the Water Convention	ECE/Water Convention secretariat
17–18 October 2012	Luxembourg	National Focal Points/Eionet meeting	EEA
30 October– 1 November 2012	Geneva, Switzerland	Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators	ECE
1–2 November 2012	Geneva, Switzerland	Thirteenth session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment	ECE

<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Institution</i>
20–21 November 2012	Geneva, Switzerland	Second meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Aarhus Convention	ECE/Aarhus Convention secretariat
21–22 November 2012	Copenhagen, Denmark	ENPI-SEIS Steering Committee meeting	EEA
28–30 November 2012	Rome, Italy	Sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention	ECE/Water Convention secretariat
10–11 December 2012	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	Ministerial meeting of Central Asian countries	EU-Central Asia partnership
11–13 December 2012	Geneva, Switzerland	Thirty-first session of the Executive Body for the Air Convention	ECE/Air Convention secretariat

Annex V

Rio+20 process and the reform of the institutional framework

How the Rio outcomes contribute to reinforcing the Astana mandate

1. As major outcomes of Rio+20, green economy and the strengthening of the institutional framework have been considered as the most valid tools for achieving sustainable development and for poverty eradication. In particular, **promoting inclusive, evidence-based assessment, as well as access to reliable relevant and timely data**, have been listed among the necessary actions for reforming the institutional framework:

“76. We recognize that effective governance at the local, subnational, national, regional and global levels representing the voices and interests of all is critical for advancing sustainable development. The strengthening and reform of the institutional framework should not be an end in itself, but a means to achieve sustainable development. We recognize that an improved and more effective institutional framework for sustainable development at the international level should be consistent with the Rio Principles, build on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and its objectives on the institutional framework for sustainable development, contribute to the implementation of our commitments in the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields and take into account national priorities and the development strategies and priorities of developing countries. We therefore resolve to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development, which will, inter alia:

...

(g) *Promote the science-policy interface through inclusive, evidence-based and transparent scientific assessments, as well as access to reliable, relevant and timely data in areas related to the three dimensions of sustainable development, building on existing mechanisms, as appropriate; in this regard, strengthen participation of all countries in international sustainable development processes and capacity-building especially for developing countries, including in conducting their own monitoring and assessments*” (emphasis added).^a

2. Furthermore in Rio has been agreed that a new structure will replace the actual Commission on Sustainable Development. This structure, shaped on the basis of a universal intergovernmental high-level forum, could decide among its tasks to provide support in bringing together dispersed information and assessments and contribute to the ongoing capacity-building efforts on data collection and analysis in developing countries:

“85. The high-level forum could:

...

(k) *Strengthen the science-policy interface through review of documentation bringing together dispersed information and assessments, including in the form of a global sustainable development report, building on existing assessments;*

^a The Future We Want (A/RES/66/288, annex). Available from <http://www.uncsd2012.org/thefuturewewant.html>.

(l) Enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels and contribute to *strengthening on-going efforts of capacity-building for data collection and analysis in developing countries*” (emphasis added).^b

3. At the same time, it has been highlighted that the decision-making process in order to be effective needs integrated social, economic and environmental data and information, as well as effective analysis and assessment of implementation:

“98. We encourage regional, national, subnational and local authorities as appropriate to develop and utilize sustainable development strategies as key instruments for guiding decision-making and implementation of sustainable development at all levels, and in this regard *we recognize that integrated social, economic and environmental data and information, as well as effective analysis and assessment of implementation, is important in decision-making processes.*” (emphasis added)

4. In the light of the above, the Rio outcome document recalls that there is a need for global integrated and scientifically based information on sustainable development, hence regional economic commissions need support from the United Nations system in collecting and compiling national inputs:

“251. We recognize that there is a need for global, integrated and scientifically based information on sustainable development. In this regard, *we request the relevant bodies of the United Nations system, within their respective mandates, to support the regional economic commissions in collecting and compiling national inputs in order to inform this global effort.* We further commit to mobilizing financial resources and capacity-building, particularly for developing countries, to achieve this endeavour.”^c

5. The Astana mandate finds its justification and recognition at the global level within the framework of the Rio+ Conference. The Heads of States and Government have stressed in several sections of the outcome document the importance for the relevant decision-making processes of having relevant and reliable information collected at the regional, national or local level, and with the support of the regional economic commissions, in order to keep the world environment under constant review. Moreover, this information collected needs to be integrated also with social and economic data in order to be as comprehensive as possible. Decisions cannot in fact be taken without information and knowledge. In this important scene-setting, EEA and its partners can contribute to work towards the achievements of this important goal in an easy and effective way, paving the way to the gradual development of SEIS.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.