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**Mapping of the Environment subprogramme processes
and activities that support countries in achieving the
Sustainable Development Goals**



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Mapping of the Environment subprogramme processes and activities that support countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present information document was prepared by the secretariat at the request of the Committee on Environmental Policy at its special session in February 2016 (ECE/CEP/2016/2, forthcoming), which was held to prepare the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. The document also responds to the call in General Assembly resolution 70/1 for an “adequately resourced, relevant, coherent, efficient and effective United Nations system in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable development”, which also emphasized “the importance of system-wide strategic planning, implementation and reporting in order to ensure coherent and integrated support to implementation of the new Agenda by the United Nations development system” (paras. 46 and 88, respectively).

The document aims to support the ministerial discussion on advancing the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the pan-European region.



Introduction

1. The present document provides a mapping of processes and activities already being carried out under the Environment subprogramme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), including the multilateral environmental agreements, that will support countries in their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030). It also describes existing processes and specific activities that will support the follow-up to and review of Agenda 2030 at different levels — national, regional and potentially global. Multilateral environmental agreements of a procedural nature will offer support to the implementation of Agenda 2030 across the SDGs, whereas other processes and activities will help countries with elements of certain goals and with integration and policy coherence (see figure below).

Overview of the Environmental subprogramme’s relative bearing for each SDG¹



2. The work of the Environment subprogramme is carried out through international policy dialogue, normative work, capacity-building and dissemination of good practices and lessons learned, in the areas of air quality, water, industrial safety, public participation, environmental assessment, monitoring and performance, education for sustainable development, green economy and the mainstreaming of environmental concerns into other dimensions of sustainable development.

3. The present note looks first at existing processes and activities that may provide cross-cutting support to countries, including with respect to follow-up and review at the regional level, reflecting on the integrated nature of Agenda 2030. Second, the processes and activities are examined goal by goal, with reference to relevant targets under each goal.

I. Cross-cutting processes

4. The Environment subprogramme includes a number of cross-cutting processes that will support countries in their achievement of a range of SDGs.

¹ Based on an estimate of the number of relevant targets and processes and the uniqueness of the ECE instruments in addressing the related challenges.

5. In line with the United Nations Charter, the Environment for Europe ministerial process fosters regional-level policy dialogue and integration, is based on respect for the principle of the equal rights of nations, encourages international cooperation in solving international environmental challenges and assures national political buy-in to solutions. In support of Agenda 2030, the Environment for Europe process will continue to serve as a mechanism to:

- (a) Improve the environment throughout the region, contributing to sustainable development, poverty eradication, a better quality of life and a safer world;
- (b) Strengthen and enhance the implementation of national environmental policies and the prioritization of environmental objectives;
- (c) Support the convergence of environmental policies and approaches, while recognizing the benefits from a diversity of approaches to achieve common goals;
- (d) Encourage the participation of civil society in environmental matters;
- (e) Promote broad horizontal environmental cooperation.

The Environment for Europe process and its ministerial conferences, taking place every five years, as well as the mid-term review in between the two conferences, will continue to integrate issues related to SDGs and the achievement of SDG targets at the regional level, in particular those related to green economy and the work under the ECE multilateral environmental agreements and policy instruments.

6. The ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and, in particular, its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA) provide a framework for the comprehensive integration of environmental and health concerns into a wide range of policies and legislation, programmes, plans and development activities in all economic sectors, thus helping countries to ensure the alignment of development with the SDGs. As the secretariat to these treaties, ECE will assist countries in their efforts to accomplish sustainable development by provision of technical assistance and capacity development, including:

- (a) Facilitation of legal reforms;
- (b) Pilot projects;
- (c) National and local training-of-trainers courses aimed at strengthening institutional and human capacities among Government officials and other experts;
- (d) Organization of subregional and national experience-sharing and awareness-raising events;
- (e) Development of recommendations and guidance materials on the basis of good practices identified by Parties and other stakeholders.

7. The ECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) provide an institutional framework to assist countries in achieving the SDGs by implementing commitments on access to information, public participation and access to justice regarding a wide range of issues that affect environment and human health. The treaties also facilitate consensus building among Parties and a wide range of stakeholders on these issues, and will continue to provide support to multilateral decision-making processes to take joint commitments, regional multi-stakeholder meetings to share challenges and good practices and to regional and global coordination mechanisms. The work under the two treaties further assists countries in implementing commitments relevant to the SDGs by developing recommendations, guidance material and electronic information tools and through advisory services to Governments and international organizations. Specific activities include

sessions of the respective meetings of the Parties and subsidiary bodies, round tables and workshops and coordination mechanisms.

8. More generally, the reporting mechanisms under the ECE multilateral environmental agreements will support countries in reporting progress on attaining SDGs.

9. Furthermore, the Environmental Performance Review Programme assists countries by regularly assessing their environmental performance and by providing recommendations so that they can take steps to improve their environmental management, integrate environmental considerations into economic sectors and meet their international commitments. The Programme will continue to undertake assessments of environmental performance in interested countries that are not members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, thus helping countries in achieving SDGs and reviewing progress in this regard.

10. The Programme on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment assists countries in developing environmental data and information, with a view to producing indicator-based national and international state-of-the-environment reports. This includes capacity development and co-managing the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) to underpin regular environment assessments in the region. The Programme will continue to support national and international monitoring programmes and to undertake activities that help to improve environmental data collection, strengthen environmental reporting and promote comparability of environmental data sets and indicators.

11. Finally, the work under the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, which will help countries to achieve the education SDG, allows for a better understanding of and enhances competences related to all aspects of sustainable development. However, it is only tangentially linked to implementation of the other SDGs.

II. Goal by goal

12. This chapter presents, for each SDG, subprogramme processes, including specific, concrete activities, that will support countries in achieving the SDG. Reference to specific targets is provided in parentheses after the titles.² All the SDGs are listed, though the relative significance of the subprogramme for each of the goals, as identified in the figure above, should be borne in mind.



Goal 1 **End poverty in all its forms everywhere** **(targets 1.4, 1.5)**

13. The Protocol on Water and Health, jointly serviced by ECE and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, specifies that, in pursuing the aim of access to drinking water and provision of sanitation for everyone, special consideration should be paid to ensure equitable access. Under both the Protocol and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), policy guidance and activities on the ground have been developed to strengthen country resilience to water-related disasters, thus reducing exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events, as the majority of disasters and their social and economic impacts are water related (floods and droughts).

² Owing to word limits for the present document, the wording of the targets has not been reproduced here. For the text of the targets please see General Assembly resolution 70/1 available from <http://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/70>.

14. The Equitable Access Score-card (ECE/MP.WH/8) developed under the Protocol will continue to be used at the subregional, national and local levels to promote awareness on equitable access and provide a sound basis for policies and measures. Under the Convention, pilot projects on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins will continue to be implemented, thus increasing the resilience of populations to climate change, including the poor and those in vulnerable situations. Activities on climate change are also planned under the Protocol.

15. The activities of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs facilitate effective public participation and transparent and accountable governance, which are critical for ending poverty. They help Governments to tackle inequality by ensuring that all persons, including the poorest segments of society and rural communities, have access to reliable information and are able to participate in decisions that impact on their lives. Specific activities on climate change matters will include thematic sessions on promoting the Convention's principles in international forums, meetings of a task force and advisory services.



Goal 2

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (targets 2.2, 2.4)

16. The Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) sets targets for ammonia and nitrogen oxides and thus assists countries in abating nitrogen emissions and managing nitrogen more sustainably. This has direct impacts on soil quality and will help in promoting sustainable agriculture.

17. A task force under the Air Convention will continue to develop technical and scientific information and encourage coordination of air pollution policies on nitrogen in the context of the nitrogen cycle. The work of the task force will also help countries in fulfilling their obligations to reduce nitrogen oxides and ammonia emissions under the Convention's Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (Gothenburg Protocol) and the Protocol concerning the Control of Emissions of Nitrogen Oxides or their Transboundary Fluxes.

18. Under the Water Convention, the work on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus promotes increased efficiency of resource use. Assessments of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus will make it possible to develop concrete, cooperative solutions to increase water productivity, including in agriculture, and to maintain ecosystems. Unsafe water is a primary cause of malnutrition so, by promoting access to safe drinking water for all, the Convention's Protocol contributes to ending malnutrition. Activities to increase surveillance of drinking water and water-related diseases will therefore ultimately reduce malnutrition, in particular stunting and wasting.

19. The work under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol helps Governments to achieve sustainable agriculture by promoting effective access to environmental information and the effective engagement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local communities and other stakeholders in developing and implementing agriculture-related plans, programmes and projects. It also builds capacity of national and local authorities with regard to implementing the Convention's public participation and access to information obligations.



Goal 3 **Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages** **(targets 3.2–3.4, 3.9, 3.d)**

20. ECE is a partner in the European Environment and Health Process, which brings together ministries from the two sectors to shape European policies and actions on environment and health. ECE promotes synergies to facilitate intersectoral policymaking from the environment perspective, and contributes the experience from ECE multilateral environmental agreements to the Environment and Health Process. ECE will continue to promote synergies among the different sectors involved and to assist member States to coordinate policies addressing environmental and health issues in the region.

21. Activities organized under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) promote mobility and transport strategies integrating environmental and health concerns. The work under THE PEP will continue to assist member States in achieving THE PEP goals, which at the same time will forward efforts to attain Sustainable Development Goal 3.

22. By reducing air pollution, the Air Convention is tackling the world's largest environmental health risk for non-communicable diseases. A joint task force, established by the Executive Body for the Convention and the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, will continue to assess the health effects of long-range transboundary air pollution and provide supporting documentation. These assessments make it possible to quantify the contribution of transboundary air pollution to human health risks and to define priorities to guide future monitoring and abatement strategies. This will help countries in reducing morbidity and premature mortality related to air pollution.

23. The Protocol on SEA and, at the project level, the Espoo Convention, emphasize the links between environment and health; they contribute to reducing health hazards from chemicals, air, water and soil pollution and contamination by ensuring that environmental and health considerations are taken into account in the planning of all potentially polluting economic activities. By assessing the potential environmental and health impacts of plans and programmes, the Protocol provides early warning of unsustainable options and contributes to the reduction and management of health risks from economic activities. Capacity-development activities such as training-of-trainers workshops and pilot projects will continue to be undertaken to assist countries to effectively implement strategic environmental assessment (SEA).

24. The reduction of water pollution and the protection of water resources are obligations under both the Water Convention and its Protocol. Regular assessments of the status of transboundary water resources make it possible to track progress in reducing the pollution of transboundary watercourses. Regular reports under the Protocol similarly enable countries to assess their own progress towards the reduction of pollution and the impacts on human health and well-being.

25. Another objective of the Protocol on Water and Health is to reduce water-borne disease. The establishment of surveillance and early warning systems for water-related disease is a core obligation. Capacity-development activities will be carried out regularly to support the establishment of surveillance and early warning systems, thus helping to reduce the incidence of water-related disease and, specifically, mortality and morbidity caused by diarrhoea. Activities to prevent pollution and increase sanitation will support the same objective.

26. The Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) promotes the prevention, preparedness and response to industrial accidents that release hazardous substances, especially those with transboundary consequences. Activities under the Convention will continue to support countries in the safe management of hazardous chemicals, through their identification and classification in

accordance with the Convention, now aligned with the Globally Harmonized System on the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. The Convention aims to reduce the risk of technological disasters arising from installations where chemical substances are present. Activities related to education about and raising awareness on industrial safety and technological disaster risk reduction and management will continue to be organized.

27. The Convention also supports countries in early warning and an Industrial Accidents Notification System is available to countries to alert each other about accidents and to request assistance. The notification system will be regularly maintained and tested and its possible integration with other early warning and notification systems will be examined.

28. Activities under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs benefit Governments by enabling them to establish a coordinated reporting system on the release of hazardous chemical substances and by promoting easy online access to this reporting system and other environmental information, which in its turn can facilitate early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks. Dialogue is fostered among authorities, technical experts, NGOs and other stakeholders by organizing meetings, workshops and round tables to support the development of capacity to manage hazardous chemical substances.



Goal 4

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (targets 4.7, 4.a)

29. The UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development is a practical instrument to incorporate key themes of sustainable development into the region's education systems. It is a cross-cutting process that allows for a better understanding of and enhanced competences related to all aspects of sustainable development. Therefore the implementation of the Strategy will contribute not only to the achievement of Goal 4, but also to the attainment of all SDGs.

30. Implementation of the Strategy envisages activities focused on: coordination, sharing experience and good practices; capacity development; raising public awareness; strengthening subregional cooperation; and development and application of a set of indicators to measure the effectiveness of implementation. The ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development is responsible for giving guidance and strategic direction to the implementation of the Strategy, deciding on the activities to be carried out and reviewing the progress of implementation.

31. A common problem in education facilities is the lack of adequate water and sanitation services and proper hygiene, which particularly affects menstruating girls. The Protocol on Water and Health has a dedicated activity in its programme of work to improve water, sanitation and hygiene in schools. A number of activities in the framework of the Protocol aim to increase the awareness of policymakers about these issues through advocacy, as well as to strengthen the surveillance of the public health authorities and increase the capacity of school managers in this area.



Goal 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (targets 5.1, 5.5, 5.c)

32. ECE continuously strives to promote gender balance in all its environmental governance bodies, not only in the overall representation but also in the identification of speakers, as well as in its environmental capacity-development activities. The Committee on Environmental Policy has gender mainstreaming on its agenda.

33. Gender issues, including gender equality, are addressed in environmental performance reviews.

34. The Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development is gathering good practices and success stories related to gender equality in the education sector, organizes discussions to share experiences and achievements in the area of mainstreaming gender issues in the education sector in general, and specifically in education for sustainable development, and disseminates good practices and relevant resources regarding gender equality.

35. The application of the Equitable Access Score-card under the Protocol on Water and Health often reveals gender disparities in access to sanitation facilities, especially in schools. Activities under both the Water Convention and its Protocol aim to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership. For instance, in the framework of the National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management, ECE strives for equal representation in policy processes.



Goal 6

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water **and sanitation for all** (all targets)

36. The Protocol on Water and Health aims at access to drinking water and the provision of sanitation for everyone through improved water management. The Protocol covers the whole water cycle, and therefore comprehensively addresses all of the targets of Goal 6. By requesting Parties to set national targets, assess progress and report, the Protocol also offers a useful approach for the achievement of SDG 6.

37. The Protocol calls for international cooperation and joint action to support implementation, in particular in relation to extreme events, contingency planning, integrated information systems and databases, the exchange of information and the sharing of technical and legal knowledge and experience. It also recognizes the vital role of public participation in the decision-making process for a better management of water resources. The public should, for example, be involved in the process of setting targets and in preparing national summary reports.

38. Countries will be further supported in setting and implementing targets under the Protocol — similar to targets under Goal 6 — through in-country projects, the exchange of experience and the preparation of a collection of good practices and lessons learned on target setting. The Equitable Access Score-card will be applied in additional countries and communities. Furthermore, it is planned to revise the reporting template, including the common indicators under the Protocol, in line with the review of progress in achieving the SDG.

39. The Protocol workplan also foresees activities to: promote targeted health interventions for water- and sanitation-related diseases; strengthen water, sanitation and hygiene in schools; improve small-scale water supplies and sanitation; and ensure the safe and efficient management of water supply and sanitation systems. In addition, the exchange

of experience and networking on the regional level will be fostered to address common challenges.

40. The Water Convention requires Parties to take national measures for the protection and ecologically sound management of transboundary surface waters and groundwaters. It obliges Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impacts, for example by using best available technologies, monitoring and assessment and the licensing of emissions.

41. Those obligations, together with the obligation to use transboundary waters reasonably and equitably, provide a basis for balancing demand between different water uses, as well as the ecosystem needs, and for improving water-use efficiency. The Water Convention includes provisions for integrated water resources management and requires countries to cooperate by concluding agreements for shared waters and setting up joint institutions for their management.

42. A third comprehensive assessment of transboundary waters in the region is expected to be prepared in the period 2018–2021, assessing water quality and quantity and other legal and institutional frameworks for water regulation in the ECE region and beyond. The activities on water and climate change (see SDG 13) will increasingly address water scarcity. The work will support countries in allocating water among different sectors, ensuring sustainability of withdrawals and fighting water scarcity.

43. With the global opening of the Water Convention, its legal and institutional framework, its soft laws and activities — the exchange of experience, projects on the ground, assessment, capacity development, policy advice, guidelines, etc. — will be available to all countries worldwide. The reporting mechanism will enable countries to review their own progress in transboundary water cooperation and will support monitoring of this goal. In addition, the National Policy Dialogues will support the countries in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe to better implement integrated water resources management through improved intersectoral cooperation and the adoption of policy packages, such as strategies, laws, action plans and basin management plans.

44. The conservation and, where necessary, the restoration of ecosystems is a specific obligation under the Convention. In some field projects ecosystems have been restored. Such projects will be replicated elsewhere. In addition, the activities on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus take into account the ecosystem needs. Additional nexus assessments will be carried out in basins worldwide.

45. The work programmes of the Water Convention and its Protocol include a broad range of capacity-development activities related to all the targets of Goal 6. Similarly, the workplans under the Espoo Convention and notably its Protocol on SEA include capacity-development activities to promote the use of SEA, together with cumulative assessment procedures, as a central tool in the sector of sustainable water management.

46. Through ensuring transparency and effective public participation with respect to water management and sanitation, the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol play a similar role to that mentioned under SDG 2 (para. 19 above). Specific activities in this area include meetings of the Convention's Task Forces on Access to Information and on Public Participation in Decision-making.



Goal 7

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (targets 7.2, 7.a)

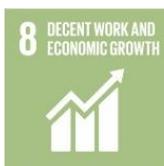
47. The Air Convention sets emission limit values for air pollutants and these have proven to be an effective tool in stimulating investment in clean technologies, including in the energy sector. A task force was under the Convention is developing a techno-economic

database of information on control technologies for air pollution abatement and their costs. The information will be used both to update the technical annexes to the Convention's protocols as well as for input data to integrated assessment modelling. It will also assist countries in identifying technologies, including in the energy sector, that will reduce air pollution.

48. An increase in hydropower will be needed to achieve SDG 7. The work on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus under the Water Convention seeks to improve the efficiency and sustainability of all uses of water resources, including for hydropower. Nexus assessments will enable the definition of concrete cooperative solutions to increase the ratio of renewables in the energy mix, reducing trade-offs linked to the use of water resources.

49. The application of SEA significantly contributes to the development of sectoral energy plans and programmes, as well as policies and legislation, that assist countries in meeting their renewable energy targets and enhance international cooperation. The joint workplan under the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA includes assistance to countries to develop their legislative and institutional frameworks, through legal advice and capacity-development programmes. It also coaches countries in the pilot application of SEA to strategic documents in the energy sector.

50. By ensuring transparency and effective public participation with respect to energy issues, the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol play a similar role in assisting countries to achieve Goal 7 as mentioned under SDG 2 (para. 19 above).



Goal 8

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (target 8.4)

51. By integrating environmental and health considerations into all development planning, the Protocol on SEA provides a key tool for greening economies, the integration of green economy considerations into development activities and making production patterns more sustainable. ECE will continue to promote SEA and support the establishment of SEA systems. The funding of follow-up activities to current green economy programmes and the replication or extension of activities to other countries or subregions is currently under consideration.

52. The work under the Water Convention on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus aims to improve resource efficiency. Assessments of the nexus will enable the definition of concrete cooperative solutions to increase resource efficiency and reduce trade-offs.

53. By ensuring transparency and effective public participation with respect to green economy issues, the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol play a similar role on Goal 8 to that mentioned under SDG 2.

54. The joint work with the United Nations Environment Programme on green economy under the Environment for Europe process has resulted in a strategic framework and an initiative for greening the economy in the region that support countries' efforts to transition to a green economy and, at the same time, contribute to the achievement of relevant SDGs.



Goal 9

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (targets 9.1, 9.4, 9.a)

55. The Environmental Performance Review Programme assists countries in assessing their actions to use resource-efficient and environmentally sound technologies, through a specific focus on the application of green economy approaches and green technologies, and by providing recommendations to the countries reviewed.

56. As noted under Goal 7, the Air Convention stimulates investment in clean technologies. This helps countries in promoting sustainable industrialization. The information on control technologies for air pollution abatement, mentioned under SDG 7, will also assist countries in identifying technologies that will help reduce air pollution.

57. By ensuring that a full range of potential environmental and health impacts and opportunities are considered in the planning of infrastructure, SEA favours sustainable alternatives and the use of best available technologies. Pilot projects and training events organized under the Espoo Convention and its Protocol further foster these outcomes.

58. Activities on adaptation to climate change under the Water Convention strengthen countries' resilience, including the resilience of infrastructure. Several African, least developed and landlocked developing countries are involved in such activities. Regular workshops on increasing resilience, exchanges between transboundary basins active in adaptation to climate change and pilot projects will continue to be organized.

59. The Industrial Accidents Convention promotes actions by Governments and operators of hazardous industrial facilities to ensure the safe management of such installations. The Convention will continue to offer capacity-development activities to support national Governments and industry in this regard. A guidance document and checklist on safety reports has been prepared and Governments will continue to be supported in its application. The Convention will also continue to offer activities and interactive seminars on the exchange of information and technology.

60. The Aarhus Convention and its Protocol can play a similar role to that mentioned under Goal 2 with respect to inclusive and sustainable industrialization. Furthermore, PRTRs benefit Governments and industry by stimulating improved environmental management. For facilities, monitoring or estimation of pollution levels and their mandatory publication encourages efficiency and the reduction of pollution levels and associated costs. PRTRs can therefore serve as a major driving force for pollution reduction and eco-innovation throughout many sectors of the economy. At workshops and global round tables under the Protocol on PRTRs, industry, industry associations and public authorities benefit from exchanging experience, enhancing experts' capacities and promoting synergies on PRTR-related issues. This also contributes to achieving greater convergence between national PRTRs, so that information on pollution levels in the registers can be compared worldwide.

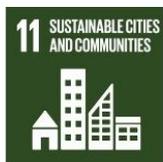


Goal 10

Reduce inequality within and among countries (targets 10.2–10.4)

61. The Protocol on Water and Health specifies that, in pursuing the aims of access to drinking water and the provision of sanitation for everyone, special consideration should be paid to ensuring equitable access. The Equitable Access Score-card is being applied in regions, cities and countries.

62. The Aarhus Convention helps Governments to reduce inequality by promoting the rights of every person without discrimination to access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice regarding a wide range of issues that affect the environment and human health.



Goal 11

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

(targets 11.1–11.7, 11.a, 11.b)

63. THE PEP works towards the achievement of its goals by supporting integrated approaches and solutions to achieve sustainable and healthy transport and mobility. In 2014 a new goal was introduced, to integrate transport, health and environmental objectives into urban and spatial planning policies. ECE will thus continue to assist member States to integrate transport, health and environmental objectives into urban and spatial planning policies and build capacities in these areas.

64. The Environmental Performance Review Programme helps countries to improve national, regional and local development planning by reviewing sustainable development policies at various levels and providing recommendations.

65. Reductions in air pollution at the national level achieved under the Air Convention also mean an improvement in air quality at the city level. In turn, this protects historical buildings and monuments, as air pollution is a key factor in the degradation of building materials. The Convention's International Cooperative Programme on Effects of Air Pollution on Materials, including Historic and Cultural Monuments performs quantitative evaluations of the effect of major pollutants on the atmospheric corrosion of important materials and assesses the trends of corrosion and pollution. The information assists countries in protecting their cultural heritage. The quantification of the effects of air pollution at the city level under the Convention's Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP) will assist countries in tracing progress towards improving urban air quality.

66. By ensuring that environmental and health concerns are thoroughly taken into account in urban, land-use and regional planning, and that the relevant authorities, stakeholders and the public are effectively consulted, the Protocol on SEA considerably helps to improve development planning and enhances sustainable urbanization and human settlement. SEA is a key tool for integrated plans, programmes and policies, the incorporation of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures and risk prevention and management. Under the Protocol, pilot projects, training events, guidelines and a seminar for the exchange of experience — possibly in cooperation with the ECE Housing and Land Management unit and with THE PEP and the NGO Local Governments for Sustainability — are being discussed.

67. The Water Convention obliges its Parties to prevent, control and reduce transboundary impacts, including from floods and unilaterally decided flood protection measures. Model provisions on transboundary cooperation in flood management that can complement transboundary water agreements have been developed, as well as guidance on climate change adaptation in basins. The global network of basins working on climate change adaptation, established by ECE and the International Network of Basin Organizations, promotes experience and knowledge exchange in the fields of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, especially in transboundary basins. The network will be further expanded.

68. The Protocol on Water and Health focuses also on the safety of drinking water supplies and the equity (including affordability) of access. Activities on setting targets

allow cities to develop measurable, time-bound strategies to improve access to water and sanitation.

69. The Industrial Accidents Convention supports Governments in reducing the number of deaths and people affected by technological disasters, including accidents triggered by natural disasters. It requires its Parties to take the siting of hazardous facilities into account in their land-use plans or policies, including those of neighbouring countries. It also supports countries in establishing structures for cooperation and coordination, both horizontally — with the different ministries involved — and vertically — with local authorities. As such, the Convention supports countries and cities in implementing the holistic management of technological disaster risk.

70. Under the Industrial Accidents Convention, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, guidance on land-use planning, the siting of hazardous activities and related safety aspects is being prepared. Countries will be further supported in the implementation of the guidance through dedicated capacity-development efforts. The joint expert group under the Industrial Accidents and Water Conventions will also continue to support countries in the application of the checklist on contingency planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters.

71. The Aarhus Convention and its Protocol promote truly participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management through similar measures to those mentioned under SDG 2.



Goal 12

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (targets 12.1, 12.2, 12.4–12.8)

72. The Environmental Performance Review Programme assists countries in reducing waste generation through a specific focus on the assessment of waste management policies during reviews and by providing recommendations to countries.

73. By implementing the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, countries will ensure people's awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

74. The Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy, together with its Initiative, will support countries in their efforts to promote more sustainable production patterns, consumption habits and investment choices for the sustainable and efficient use of natural resources.

75. By setting emission targets for various air pollutants, the Air Convention assists countries in sustainably managing and improving air quality and in reducing releases of chemicals to air. In doing so, the effects of air pollution on other natural resources, such as water, will also be reduced. EMEP will provide sound scientific support, playing a major role in informing policy developments and helping countries in monitoring progress in reducing air pollution. The Convention's International Cooperative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Acidification of Rivers and Lakes (ICP Waters) assesses, on a regional basis, the degree and geographical extent of the acidification of surface waters. The three latest protocols to the Convention further help countries in ensuring the environmentally sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle and to reduce their release to air.

76. SEA contributes to reducing related environmental impacts of economic activities by ensuring that environment and health concerns are thoroughly taken into account in, among others, waste management plans and programmes. Pilot SEAs of waste management strategies in the Caucasus are under way under the Protocol on SEA. Similar assessments could be carried out in other countries should funding be available.

77. The Industrial Accidents Convention provides a framework to prevent the accidental release of hazardous substances. It promotes the safe management of installations producing, handling or storing chemical substances and, as such, the protection of human health and the environment. Activities support countries in the safe management of hazardous chemicals, through their identification and classification in line with the Convention. Subregional seminars, focused on the identification and notification of hazardous chemicals falling under the Convention, foster transboundary cooperation for the sound management of chemicals and reducing accident risk.

78. Through ensuring transparency and effective public participation with respect to the management and use of natural resources, the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol play a similar role in helping to ensure sustainable consumption and production to that mentioned under SDG 2. Activities under the Protocol benefit Governments and industries by tracking the release of hazardous chemical substances and pollution trends over time; reviewing compliance of local facilities with their permit conditions; examining progress in reducing emissions; monitoring compliance and national progress with international commitments; and helping achieve pollution prevention.



Goal 13

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (targets 13.1–13.3)

79. The Environmental Performance Review Programme helps countries integrate climate change measures in their policy framework by reviewing national policies on the environment and sectoral management and providing recommendations.

80. By implementing the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, countries improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

81. The Air Convention's Gothenburg Protocol is the first legally binding agreement containing obligations to reduce the broader spectrum of short-lived climate pollutants, including ground-level ozone precursors and black carbon. Implementation of the Protocol's obligations also has climate co-benefits. In addition, Convention task forces are working to better understand the intercontinental transport of air pollution across the Northern Hemisphere, including estimates of specific air pollutants, as well as the interactions between greenhouse gases and air pollution. Convention bodies will furthermore cooperate with the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme on modelling of air pollutants, including black carbon.

82. The Protocol on SEA provides a concrete procedural tool that can ensure the integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into national planning, strategies and policies. Future work under the Protocol is expected to include the development of a database with examples of the use of SEA for the development of adaptation and mitigation strategies, training-of-trainers workshops, guidelines on SEA and climate change adaptation and a pilot project to test them, as well as a thematic seminar.

83. The Water Convention provides a unique intergovernmental framework supporting transboundary cooperation on climate change adaptation. The Convention will continue assisting countries in developing transboundary adaptation strategies through guidance, projects on the ground and exchange of experience. It also helps countries in shared river basins to adapt jointly to climate change, making them more resilient to disasters and water scarcity, by developing common assessments and strategies and implementing joint adaptation measures.

84. The Industrial Accidents Convention helps Governments and operators to ensure the safe performance of hazardous activities, among others by running risk assessments and

taking all appropriate measures to reduce risks — including the risks from natural disasters arising from climate change. The Convention will, together with partners, continue to address the prevention and mitigation of the transboundary impacts of natural accidents triggering technological disasters. Supporting countries in harmonizing or preparing joint contingency plans and response exercises, ECE will provide further support to strengthen resilience and the adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters.

85. Through ensuring transparency and effective public participation in climate-related decision-making, the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol play a similar role in helping to combat climate change as mentioned under SDG 2. Specific activities on climate change matters will include thematic sessions on promoting the Convention's principles in international forums, meetings of a task force and advisory services.



Goal 14

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (target 14.1)

86. The Air Convention sets targets for various air pollutants, including ammonia and nitrogen oxides, and thus assists countries in reducing marine pollution from land-based activities, particularly nutrient pollution. Under the Convention, ICP Waters assesses the degree and geographical extent of the acidification of surface waters in the region, with follow-on effects for oceans, seas and marine resources.

87. By fostering the protection of freshwater resources, the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health promote the reduction of water pollution from land-based activities. Regular assessments under the Convention and reporting under its Protocol will allow countries to track progress in reducing land-based pollution of water.



Goal 15

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss (targets 15.1, 15.3–15.6)

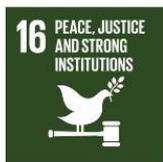
88. The Air Convention sets targets for emissions of various air pollutants, and thus assists countries in mitigating pollution effects on ecosystems and biodiversity. The Convention's International Cooperative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests provides a periodic overview of the condition of forest ecosystems in terms of health, productivity, diversity and nutrition. ICP Waters assesses the degree and geographical extent of acidification of surface waters. This, too, will assist countries in mitigating pollution effects on ecosystems and biodiversity.

89. By ensuring that environmental concerns are thoroughly taken into account in the planning of land-use and sectoral activities, SEA contributes to protecting biodiversity and natural habitats. The development of recommendations under the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on the integration of biodiversity considerations into all SEAs and environmental impact assessments, possibly in cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity, is under discussion.

90. The conservation and, where necessary, restoration of ecosystems is a specific obligation under the Water Convention. Previous assessments under the Convention have focused attention on biodiversity and the integrity of water-related ecosystems. Moreover, *Recommendations on the Payments for Ecosystem Services in Integrated Water Resources Management* (ECE/MP.WAT/22) have been developed under the Convention and their use

is promoted. Pilot projects on adaptation to climate change promote the implementation of natural measures to increase resilience, such as afforestation and ecosystem restoration. Assessments of the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus also permit the identification of solutions to protect ecosystems with benefits for the other sectors.

91. Through ensuring transparency and effective public participation in the use of ecosystems, the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol play a similar role to that mentioned under SDG 2.



Goal 16

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (targets 16.3, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, 16.b)

92. By ensuring consultation of the environmental and health authorities, other stakeholders and the public at the local, national and international levels in decisions on economic activities that are likely to have adverse impacts on the environment and the health of the population, the Espoo Convention and SEA procedures concretely render such decision-making more inclusive, participatory and representative. The procedures provide for the right of the public to be informed and consulted, and obligate decision makers to take the outcome of the consultations into consideration in taking decisions.

93. The Water Convention promotes peaceful societies and the rule of law by fostering the development of agreements based on international water law principles and the establishment of transboundary institutions for cooperation on shared resources. The Convention thus helps to prevent the emergence of conflicts over the use of shared water resources. Projects on the ground and capacity-development activities promote the efficiency and accountability of joint bodies for transboundary waters.

94. The Industrial Accidents Convention stipulates the need to inform the public and to involve it in consultations and activities related to the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents, in particular with regard to transboundary issues. It also stipulates inclusive governance arrangements and decision-making structures involving national competent authorities, the public, and industry. An amendment to strengthen the Convention's provisions on public information, participation and access to justice will be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting (Slovenia, 28–30 November 2016). Implementation guidance will offer further support to Parties. The Convention will continue to foster cooperation among authorities, with industry, the public and other relevant stakeholders and respective governance arrangements.

95. Activities under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol help Governments to achieve SDG 16 by promoting effective, accountable and transparent institutions, effective access to information, effective and inclusive stakeholder participation and transparency in national and international decision-making, and effective and equal access to justice for all. Concrete support is provided through the development of guidance materials and recommendations, as well as via online databases and clearing houses containing good practice case studies and other information. Advisory support is also provided to Governments and international forums on Aarhus issues. Subsidiary bodies of the Convention and its Protocol provide an effective mechanism to address the challenges and to disseminate good practices in relation to efforts to achieve Goal 16.

96. The Environment for Europe ministerial process provides a high-level platform for all stakeholders to discuss, on an equal footing, decide and join efforts in addressing environmental priorities across the region in an integrative way, thereby promoting inclusive societies and institutions for sustainable development.



Goal 17

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (targets 17.6, 17.9, 17.13, 17.16, 17.17, 17.19)

97. The Programme on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment assists countries in improving the quality and flow of environmental data and information across the region as part of a process to establish a SEIS that promotes good environmental governance and sustainable development. Greater harmonization and prioritization of monitoring activities provides long-term and sustainable prospects for cooperation and partnerships, internationally and across the pan-European region, to support sustainable development. The Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, under the ECE Environment and Statistics subprogrammes, will continue to assist the countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, and interested South-Eastern European countries, in addressing the challenges related to producing high quality, timely and reliable environmental statistics and indicators, in connection with SEIS activities and the United Nations System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, through capacity-development and other relevant activities.

98. The Environmental Performance Review Programme, during the expert review and peer review stages of the review preparation process, facilitates the exchange of experience and knowledge between countries on the efficiency of specific policies, tools and practices, as well as experiences in implementation of international commitments.

99. The Air Convention provides a regional platform for sharing knowledge and expertise to support the achievement of a number of SDGs in countries of the region. The knowledge gathered is freely available and can also be used by countries beyond the ECE region. Exchange of data is also being fostered between the Air Convention, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Arctic Council.

100. The Protocol on SEA contributes to ensuring that SDGs are taken into account in policymaking, in consultation with all relevant sectors and levels of government. Pilot projects, training events, guidelines and seminars for the exchange of experience organized under the Protocol further foster these outcomes

101. Both the Water Convention and its Protocol are aligning their work to support country efforts to achieve water-related targets. They provide intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platforms to promote the exchange of experiences to achieve those targets. Activities support developing countries and countries in transition in their efforts to implement their treaty commitments. Policy-related activities in particular, such as National Policy Dialogues and activities on setting targets under the Protocol, support the development of national action plans. The governing and subsidiary bodies of the Water Convention and its Protocol, as well as workshops at the national and global levels, promote partnerships and the exchange of experiences.

102. The Industrial Accidents Convention stipulates that Parties must facilitate the exchange of technology for the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents. Workshops under the Convention will continue to be held to exchange information and good practices, including on technology. It is also expected that new guidance under the Convention targeting specific kinds of installations or industries — as was done for oil terminals and tailings management facilities — will continue to be developed. Furthermore, activities under the Assistance Programme will continue to support countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe in their efforts towards accession and the full implementation of the Convention's provisions. Awareness-raising on the Convention beyond the region and possible future capacity-development efforts will be conducted in cooperation with the other United Nations regional commissions or other international organizations.

103. The Aarhus Convention and its Protocol provide platforms for sharing knowledge and expertise to support countries in the attainment of a number of SDGs. The treaties' activities facilitate joint commitments and foster international cooperation between Parties, organizations and other stakeholders. The knowledge that is gathered under the two treaties is widely used by countries beyond the region. Regional and global coordination mechanisms have been established to facilitate the promotion of synergies and partnerships. Regular global round tables on PRTRs, for example, will be held to foster the exchange of knowledge among Governments and stakeholders from different regions.

III. Concluding remarks

104. As the environment represents one of the three interlinked dimensions of sustainable development, the ECE Environment subprogramme will contribute to the achievement of all the SDGs, including through partnerships with other organizations and institutions and by strengthening synergies with all ECE subprogrammes in the relevant areas of work. The Committee on Environmental Policy and the Environment for Europe ministerial process will continue to provide efficient platforms to foster policy integration through partnership and inclusive dialogue on an equal footing.

105. The subprogramme is most relevant to Goals 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16 and 17, moderately relevant to goals 4, 7 and 15 and tangentially relevant to goals 1, 2, 5, 8, 10 and 14. The subprogramme — specifically the multilateral environmental agreements, environmental performance reviews, THE PEP, the Programme on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, the Environment for Europe process and the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy — will provide practical support to the implementation of Agenda 2030 by, among others:

- (a) Strengthening environmental governance;
- (b) Supporting monitoring and review of progress towards the SDGs;
- (c) Breaking down silos within Governments and within ECE in addressing environmental issues;
- (d) Building partnerships outside ECE, with other multilateral environmental agreements, other international organizations, NGOs, academia and the private sector;
- (e) Developing capacity and sharing experiences and lesson learned;
- (f) Translating global goals into national action.

106. The Environment subprogramme thus offers mechanisms and tools to help ECE member States to achieve the SDGs.
