



DECLARATION

**by the Ministers of Environment of the region of the United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)**

25 October 1995

PREAMBLE

1. We, the Ministers of Environment from 49 countries in the UN ECE region (Europe, North America, Central Asia)¹ and the Representative of the European Commission, met at Sofia, Bulgaria, from 23 to 25 October 1995, in the third of a series of meetings held as part of the "Environment for Europe" process.
2. We reaffirm our commitment to cooperation in the field of environmental protection in Europe, the principles of which were agreed in Lucerne, Switzerland, on 30 April 1993. We underline the urgent need for the further integration of environmental considerations into all sectoral policies, so that economic growth takes place in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. We recognize that the countries in the region have a common but differentiated responsibility, both in contributing to global environmental problems and in actively taking a lead in resolving them in line with the objectives of Agenda 21.
3. We deeply regret that armed conflicts in parts of the region have led to loss of human lives and to a further degradation of the environment and support appropriate measures to limit this degradation.
4. We acknowledge that, since our meeting in Lucerne, progress has been made in a number of areas, but many serious problems remain, such as those of health and environment and others described in the Dobris Assessment, as well as nuclear safety. Our conclusions as to how we should address them together are as follows:

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAMME FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (EAP)

5. We welcome the positive results achieved by the central and eastern European (CEE) countries and their partners in implementing the EAP and we continue to endorse its broad strategy. There are clear signs that policy reforms, institutional strengthening and environmental investments have been producing improvements in environmental conditions in CEE countries.

¹ Three non-members of the UN ECE also attended the Conference: Australia, Japan and Mexico.

6. We recognize that the EAP Task Force has provided an effective mechanism for disseminating and promoting the implementation of the EAP. We endorse the continuation of the Task Force and we encourage the CEE countries to assume greater ownership of the EAP implementation process. We invite the EAP Task Force to develop a work plan within the EAP which will support the integration of environmental interests into the areas of economic and social reforms in the CEE countries. Countries participating in the "Environment for Europe" process for the first time are urged to endorse the EAP and to participate in the work of the Task Force.
7. We welcome the progress achieved by the CEE countries in developing and implementing the National Environmental Action Programmes (NEAPs) and we strongly urge that they should be further developed and implemented. Coordination should be ensured with the objectives and implementation of the National Environmental Health Action Plans. The EAP Task Force should evaluate progress made, by the end of 1997, using the Framework Document for Developing NEAPs. The various partnerships associated with these efforts, including informal sectors, should be strengthened taking into account the best practice guides developed within the framework of the Task Force.
8. We endorse the achievements of the Project Preparation Committee (PPC) and we are committed to supporting the continuation of its activities so as to facilitate and strengthen environmental investments in CEE countries. The PPC should strengthen its cooperation with CEE countries and, in conjunction with NEAPs, identify, prepare and develop economically viable environmental investment projects. The PPC should also continue to work closely with the EAP Task Force to enable it to integrate policy reform, institutional strengthening and investment efforts.
9. We welcome the "Sofia Initiatives" developed by CEE countries in cooperation with the EAP Task Force and international financing institutions (IFIs). These initiatives build on achievements in CEE countries in reducing pollution through policy, regulation and investment. They will provide concrete steps to further implement the EAP after the Sofia Conference, in cooperation with western partners, and to exchange experience.
10. At the same time, we recognize that more account needs to be taken of developments such as the association agreements which some of the countries concerned have signed with the European Union, and the special needs of the newly independent States. In particular, we urge that due account is given to environmental cooperation and welcome the intention of the parties concerned to set up subcommittees on the environment within existing and new association agreements of central and east European Governments with the European Union.

ENVIRONMENTS FINANCING IN CEE COUNTRIES

11. We recognize that, in general, the financing of environmental expenditures should be based on the "polluter pays principle". Domestic financing by CEE countries is decisive. During the transition period it is insufficient, however, to tackle all of the serious environmental problems of the region and external financial resources will continue to be important as a catalyst. We welcome, therefore, the approaches

outlined in the "Integrated Report on Environmental Financing" to overcome the barriers to environmental investment, both domestic and external.

12. All countries should pay particular attention to removing macro-economic imbalances, establishing effective environmental standards and regulations, strengthening compliance and enforcement, addressing liability issues, reforming prices for energy and natural resources, reducing subsidies harmful to the environment, and introducing cost-recovery mechanisms. Donors and IFIs should continue to support the efforts of CEE countries to establish these and other necessary preconditions for environmental investment.
13. While recognizing and welcoming the increase of financial assistance for the environment, we stress the importance of external financial assistance, as a catalyst, for environmental investment projects in CEECs. In the same context we call on individual donors and IFIs to further improve the efficiency of their assistance, to make the environment a high priority area in their assistance programmes, to consider devoting an increased proportion of the total assistance to the environment and to promote environmental investment in CEECs including through innovative financial mechanisms. We underline that IFIs, the external private sector and bilateral donors will continue to play an essential role, especially during the transition period. We will focus our cooperation efforts on the priority needs established by the CEECs, including priorities which have been set in subregional cooperation, and will promote the involvement of local consultants and procurement, promote and financially support twinning arrangements, and consider other steps and mechanisms to improve our assistance. We also encourage the further commitment of donors to co-finance with IFIs, under the PPC or other framework, environmental projects in the CEECs.
14. We encourage CEE countries to enhance domestic financing for environmental investments. In particular, noting with appreciation the results already achieved, we support the establishment and strengthening of environmental funds by CEE countries following the recently prepared guidelines. We call upon external donors and IFIs to support and work together with environmental funds to achieve these goals.
15. We acknowledge the results achieved and support the further development and wider application of environmental or "green" equity schemes, as well as guarantee schemes adapted to environmental projects, taking into account the diversity of situations. We call on public and private investors, IFIs and countries to develop concrete programmes for implementing such schemes on a pilot basis, based on sound banking principles. We welcome specific commitments by interested parties to such initiatives.
16. We call on bilateral donors to consider, in keeping with their domestic legislation, mutually untying traditionally tied financing, including grant assistance and soft financing, with appropriate modifications to procurement and bidding procedures. We welcome the continuation of ongoing multilateral discussions regarding the increased use of untied financing by donors within the OECD.
17. We note the recent initiatives to establish pilot projects for activities implemented jointly as a cost-effective means for private investments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a bilateral basis. We call for the further development of pilot projects and reporting on national experiences within the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change. We encourage, *inter alia*, the PPC to play a role in identifying such potential pilot projects, and note the efforts by UNEP to facilitate the exchange of information on the subject.

18. Recognizing the importance of supporting environmental projects and of including environmental considerations in others, we call upon the IFIs to provide their most favourable terms and conditions for qualified environmental investments in both public and private sectors. Such terms might include provision of longer maturities, longer grace periods, increasing the IFI financing share of loan projects and lower limits on minimum IFI loan sizes. We also call upon the IFIs to direct more internal resources to preparing and managing environmental projects and to make better use of their ability to mitigate political risk and to continue and improve their practice of blending loans and donor grants in well-designed financial packages.
19. We recognize that for some countries debt-for-environment swaps are a useful and valuable option offering benefits to the creditor and debtor countries and the environment. We note with appreciation initiatives in this area.

BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND ENVIRONMENT

20. We affirm the crucial importance of the business and industrial sectors in securing environmentally sustainable economic development in Europe and in reducing current levels of pollution and the risk of environmental degradation.
21. We acknowledge the significant progress made in a number of countries as a result both of policy and price reform and of energy saving, waste minimization and cleaner production measures applied in individual plants; but we note that some beneficial effects result from lower levels of production, particularly in central and eastern Europe, rather than from environmentally friendly investment.
22. We commit ourselves to a close and continuous consultation with the business sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises, and other stakeholders in the process of:
 - (i) developing, phasing in compliance with, and equitably enforcing environmental regulations with a view to ensuring a sound and healthy environment, least-cost and equitable solutions for environmental problems, and resolution of liability issues; and
 - (ii) encouraging the private sector to take stronger responsibility for protecting the environment and human health through sound environmental management and other voluntary mechanisms taking into account, where possible, the positive economic effects of such mechanisms.
23. We welcome and endorse collaborative business and industry programmes, particularly to develop capacity building for environmental management in CEE countries. We call for the implementation of product stewardship from cradle to grave and the introduction of a corresponding responsibility on the part of Industry and business. We support new programmes and investments to improve the environmental performance of large polluting plants in central and eastern Europe which are likely to remain in the

public sector for some considerable time. We invite the EAP Task Force to draw up a work programme to promote the implementation of cleaner production programmes in all GEE countries by 1998 and to foster cooperation and networking among all the stakeholders involved in cleaner production.

24. We call upon the industry and business sectors to strengthen their environmental commitment and performance. Business should fully recognize the increasing potential of the environmental goods and services industry, the access to markets to be obtained through high environmental standards and the importance of environmental management and audit. We believe that high environmental achievement is good for business as well as for the wider community.
25. Taking into account the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development's decisions on sustainable consumption and production patterns, we invite interested Governments, industry, environment and consumer organizations, in cooperation with relevant international organizations, to establish a trial programme for more environmentally benign procurement.

BIOLOGICAL AND LANDSCAPE DIVERSITY

26. Recognizing the uniqueness of landscapes, ecosystems and species, which include, *inter alia*, economic, cultural and inherent values, we call for a pan-European approach to the conservation and sustainable use of shared natural resources. We endorse the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, as transmitted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for adoption at this Conference, as a framework for the conservation of biological and landscape diversity. We welcome the readiness of the Council of Europe and UNEP, in cooperation with OECD and IUCN, to establish a Task Force or other appropriate mechanism in order to guide and coordinate the implementation and the further development of the Strategy. In this respect we request the widest possible consultation and collaboration in order to achieve its objectives with a view to reporting on progress at the next Conference.
27. We welcome the IUCN report "Biological and Landscape Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe: Best Practices for Conservation Planning in Rural Areas", carried out under the auspices of the EAP Task Force, and encourage its application especially in mountain areas.
28. We urge that all Parties effectively implement the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant conventions in the region. We urge all Parties to elaborate, and other countries to consider the elaboration of national strategies, plans and programmes on biological diversity by 1998, and call upon all countries to cooperate in taking concrete measures.
29. We call for the promotion of nature protection, both inside and outside protected areas, by implementing the European Ecological Network, a physical network of core areas linked by corridors and supported by buffer zones or other appropriate measures, thus facilitating the dispersal and migration of species.

30. We call for an adequate contribution from national, bilateral and multilateral funds and for increased contributions from the private sector for actively promoting conservation of biological and landscape diversity, and for the development and application of innovative financing mechanisms for this purpose. Relevant efforts should involve local communities, informal sectors and government authorities at all levels.
31. We call for the effects of agriculture on the environment to be recognized, and for agricultural practices to be conducive to the conservation and enhancement of biological and landscape diversity.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND NUCLEAR ISSUES

32. In view of the continuing grave concern about unsafe nuclear installations, almost ten years after the Chernobyl accident, we reaffirm our commitment to phase out, as soon as possible, unsafe nuclear installations, in particular unsafe nuclear reactors². Such action should be accomplished through international co-operation. In this context we welcome the adoption of the International Convention on Nuclear Safety and we invite all countries with nuclear installations to become a party to the Convention as appropriate. In implementing these policies, particular emphasis will be placed on the development of new and renewable sources of energy and enhancement of energy efficiency, taking into account the socio-economic and environmental conditions in the countries concerned. Moreover, we are committed to solve the problems connected to the management of nuclear wastes and enhance prompt and effective response to environmental emergencies.
33. We recognize the need for improving existing regimes on international liability for nuclear damage and establishing such effective regimes in all countries in order to ensure the channelling of liability to operators of nuclear installations to ensure adequate compensation to reimburse victims for damage to health and property. Damage to the environment should be considered for inclusion in such liability.
34. We note the concerns expressed by many States about the risks of environmental and health damage involved in nuclear arms testing and recall the precautionary principle enshrined in principle 15 of the UN declaration on environment and development of June 1992 (the Rio Declaration).
35. We share the expectation expressed by the 39th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency that the negotiations for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty will be completed and a Treaty signed in 1996 and urge all participants in the negotiations to further intensify their efforts to this end.

² Austria, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden reaffirm their position that the use of nuclear energy in general should be phased out in the long term. This position is shared by Denmark and Latvia.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME FOR EUROPE

36. We are concerned by the findings of the "Europe's Environment: The Dobris Assessment" report, which was called for at Dobris and which assesses for the first time Europe's environment as a whole, since it demonstrates the need for far-reaching action in a number of environmental sectors. We suggest that the European Environment Agency should build on the assessment, using the pan-European network for data collection, processing and dissemination, by reporting progress in respect of the main issues covered by the assessment, provided that the necessary resources are made available.
37. We call on all European countries to take steps with a view to participating in the work of the European Environment Agency in order to make comparable, harmonize and coordinate existing data collection systems, and call for assistance to be provided for that purpose where appropriate.
38. We endorse the Environmental Programme for Europe (EPE), which addresses some of the findings of the Dobris Assessment and highlights a number of long-term environmental priorities at a pan-European level.
39. The Environment Ministers of Europe endorse, in particular, the key recommendations for action in Europe in the EPE as annexed to this Declaration, and call for their implementation while recognizing the need for a differentiated approach.
40. We invite the ECE to assess and report on progress in the implementation of the Programme to our next Conference.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

41. We believe it is essential that, in accordance with Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, States should give the public the opportunity to participate at all levels in decision-making processes relating to the environment, and we recognize that much remains to be done in this respect. We call upon all countries in the region to ensure that they have a legal framework and effective and appropriate mechanisms to secure public access to environmental information, to facilitate and encourage public participation, *inter alia* through environmental impact assessment procedures, and to provide effective public access to judicial and administrative remedies for environmental harm. We invite countries to ensure that in relevant legislation effective public participation as a foundation for successful environmental policies is being introduced.
42. We endorse the ECE Guidelines on Access to Environmental Information and Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making and invite the ECE to review their implementation in 1997 and to report to the next Conference.
43. We will ensure that the results of this Conference will be broadly disseminated. We request international organizations in the Environment for Europe process to do the same.

REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRES

44. We reconfirm the Lucerne call for training and education schemes in environment management for NGOs and the media; we commend the efforts of the Regional Environmental Center in this area and call for greater support for this Center. We welcome the initiatives to establish additional regional environmental centres for the NIS and encourage interested donors as well as governments of beneficiary countries to assist in creating a network of such independent centres.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS

45. We call on all countries in the region and the European Community to ratify, or accede to, as appropriate, environmental conventions of relevance to the ECE region, in particular the recent ECE environmental conventions and protocols, and consider it essential that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure implementation and compliance with these instruments, and support the proposed development of new protocols on further reductions in the emissions of nitrogen compounds as well as of persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals under the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution.

THE FUTURE

46. We will contribute through the European Environment and Health Committee to the preparations for the third European Environment and Health Conference to be held in London in 1999.
47. We believe that the "Environment for Europe" process remains essential as a political framework for cooperation in the field of environmental protection in Europe. Its structure must enable all countries of the European region to play a full and equal part in the further development of that cooperation and take account of related activities at the pan-European level, notably on environment and health, environment and transport, and sustainable management of forests, in order to create synergies and avoid duplication of efforts. The structure of the process must also be efficient and cost-effective. The emphasis should be on concrete actions.

In this context:

- The ECE Committee on Environmental Policy (ECE/CEP) should screen the EPE in order to make proposals for concrete priority actions.
- The development of a regional Convention on Public Participation should be considered with appropriate involvement of NGOs.
- The Task Force of the EAP and the PPC should continue their work. The financial aspects regarding this work should be further developed in these frameworks. The present secretariat arrangements should be continued.
- The PPC should keep the Task Force informed of its activities.

- The follow-up of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, as referred to in point 26 above, should be pursued within the agreed mechanisms, open to all countries of the region.
- The Task Force of this Strategy should keep the ECE/CEP informed of its activities.
- The European Environment Agency, referred to in point 36, should carry out further work on the pan-European state of the environment assessment by reporting progress in respect of the main issues covered *in due course*, before the next conference.
- We call upon the NGO community to continue their involvement in the "Environment for Europe" process.

48. We acknowledge the large extent of work done to date in the framework of this process and the important role of the ECE in overseeing the process in close cooperation with relevant agencies. We consider that this complex process now needs to be simplified and streamlined.

As a first step, we agree on the following regarding the next Ministerial Conference:

- At the next meeting of the ECE/CEP, a preparatory Ad Hoc Working Group of senior officials should be established, ensuring the full and equal participation of all UN ECE member countries as well as the participation of the European Commission, relevant international organizations and bodies, and NGOs. It should be chaired by the host country of the next conference.
- This Ad Hoc Working Group should not convene until 12 months before the next conference.
- The work of the above Group should be prepared by an Executive Committee composed of three senior officials from the CEECs and three senior officials from the western European countries. It should be chaired by the host country, the Vice-Chairman being a senior official from the CEECs. The Executive Committee should be established at the next meeting of the ECE/CEP;
- The practical preparations for the next conference will be the responsibility of the host country.

49. We gratefully acknowledge the offer of the Government of Denmark to host the next Ministerial Conference in May 1998.

50. We express our deep gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria for having hosted the Conference and we wish to thank it and its people for the hospitality received.

ANNEX

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME FOR EUROPE

PROMOTE the participation of all European countries in the work of the European Environment Agency in order to make comparable, harmonize and coordinate existing data collection systems and to provide the necessary information for the next pan-European state-of-the-environment reports.

APPLY the ECE Guidelines on Access to Environmental Information and Public Participation in Environmental Decision-Making, respecting any limitations to their application which may arise if subnational approval is required in federal States, and invite the ECE to review the implementation of these Guidelines in 1997.

ENSURE the integration of environmental considerations into decision-making, including the consideration of environmental costs and benefits and the assessment of risks involved and the application of the precautionary and polluter-pays principles in all key sectors, and take further steps to promote partnerships between ministries, parliaments, business and industry, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other major groups.

RECOGNIZE the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Meeting on Military Activities and the Environment convened in Linköping (Sweden) in cooperation with the ECE in 1995 as an important contribution to the dialogue between the military and environmental sectors; recognize and encourage the efforts made by the military sector in many countries in addressing environmental problems as well as those conducted or planned under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society, in which all countries are invited to participate; and invite other appropriate international organizations to consider promoting, at an appropriate time, a dialogue between the military sector, environmental ministries and organizations on the development of national environmental policies for the military sector.

ENCOURAGE the ratification of, and ensure compliance with, international legal instruments in the field of the environment of relevance to the ECE region, in particular the recent ECE environmental conventions and protocols.

TAKE measures which will ensure that all European countries have reached a high level in energy efficiency by the year 2010.

FULLY IMPLEMENT existing national commitments under the Framework Convention on Climate Change and pursue the process of strengthening those commitments as agreed in the Decisions of the 1995 Berlin Conference of the Parties, using all appropriate means for that purpose such as:

- (a) economic instruments, including fiscal measures such as CO₂ energy taxation and the elimination of disincentives to the efficient use of energy;
- (b) the provision of more efficient thermal insulation for buildings;
- (c) the promotion of the use of new and renewable sources of energy;
- (d) the reduction in CO₂ emissions from energy-intensive industrial sectors:

- (e) *the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector;*
- (f) *the enhancement of carbon sinks In agriculture and forestry sectors;*
- (g) *the reduction of methane emissions through, for example, improved management of municipal landfills.*

INVITE *interested Governments, in cooperation with the ECE and other relevant intergovernmental organizations/institutions, business and industry, environmental and consumer organizations, to identify ways and means of carrying out life-cycle assessments and environmentally benign procurement and of facilitating market access for environmental goods and services in the ECE region.*

ENCOURAGE *the implementation of product stewardship from cradle to grave, the introduction of a corresponding producer s responsibility and the internalization of external costs.*

TAKE FORWARD *existing efforts to improve the resource efficiency and reduce the environmental and health impacts of all forms of transportation by introducing policies that take into account the mode of transport and the possibilities for reducing the volume of transport; to these ends, promote a variety of actions, including better land-use planning, strengthening water, rail and public transport systems, lightening technical standards and applying environmental impact assessment and economic instruments, such as measures to encourage the further use of unleaded petrol, to reduce the lead content of petrol with the aim of phasing out lead in petrol, to reduce vehicle fuel consumption and the introduction of air-fuel taxation at an international level.*

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT *codes of good agricultural practice on local national and pan-European scales, to protect waters, soils and the environment in general, and invite the ECE, in that regard, to develop appropriate best practice guidance.*

STRENGTHEN *measures to protect soil and draw up appropriate remediation strategies to control water shortages and desertification, in particular in eastern and southern Europe.*

MJNTMZZE *to a harmless level discharges into transboundary waters from point and non-point sources likely to cause adverse transboundary impacts, and implement, in a transboundary context and by way of agreements between riparian parties, sustainable water management schemes established by joint bodies in consultation with water users within the framework of the agreements mentioned above.*

SUPPORT *the efforts made for the integration of the conservation of biological and landscape diversity in all sectoral policies in the region.*

PROMOTE *the sustainable management and conservation of all kinds of forests, especially by supporting the ongoing international processes, such as the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests established by the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development.*