

**Chair's Summary from
the third meeting between the representatives of the governing bodies
of the ECE Environmental Conventions and the Committee on Environmental Policy**

27 February 2013, Geneva

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Chris Dijkens, Chairperson of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.

The purpose of the meeting was to continue the discussion on identifying and implementing potential synergies between the ECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); discuss possible further actions towards increased implementation of MEAs in Central Asia; and exchange views on how to address issues related to MEAs at the upcoming session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) and within the "Environment for Europe" (EfE) process mid-term review of the Astana Conference main outcomes.

1. Further discussion on identifying possible synergies between the MEAs

(a) Draft paper on possible synergies among the Conventions

The representatives of the governing bodies of the MEAs and of the CEP (the participants) discussed and revised the draft strategic document on synergies between the ECE MEAs prepared by a drafting group comprising Mr. Dijkens, Ms. Jasmina Karba and Ms. Sibylle Vermont. The participants agreed to a number of changes in the draft document with a view to streamlining it and clarifying some parts. A revised version will be circulated in order to give the participants the opportunity to make final comments, if needed, and to endorse the document electronically.

The meeting also discussed the status of the strategic document and agreed that it should be an informal and living guidance document which the MEA governing bodies should strive to implement and that this should be clearly spelled out in a text-box at the beginning of the paper. It was also decided that following its final endorsement, the document will be first shared by the participants with their Bureaux and subsequently with national focal points. The discussions in the Bureaux should result in the selection of some priority actions for implementation, they could be further considered at the next informal meeting.

Ms. Quintas da Silva, the Chair of the CEP suggested as a first step to identify a few actions and encouraged their implementation.

(b) Improved exchange of information between the Conventions in the planning stage of drawing up workplans and possibilities of undertaking joint activities

Mr. Marco Keiner reported about the informal Conventions' secretariats consultation held on 9 January 2013, at which opportunities for cooperation and synergies between the MEAs as well as with other activities carried out within the Environment Division were discussed. The informal minutes of the consultation, including its key conclusions will be shared with the participants at their next informal meeting.

Subsequently the participants discussed existing and potential future areas of cooperation, but also challenges such as the differences in the Conventions' workplan cycles, different working methods or the lack of time and of knowledge about the other Conventions' work.

At the same time it was stressed that artificial synergies were not useful and back-to-back meetings do not always save money and time; therefore, costs and benefits should be assessed before embarking on joint activities.

The meeting concluded that the informal exchanges among representatives of the governing bodies of ECE MEAs and Convention secretariats should be continued by organizing regular meetings. Secondly, opportunities for adding more details to the workplans, e.g. on dates and locations of meetings, as well as for alignment in workplans and financing should be considered. Thirdly, concrete opportunities for cooperation should be shared in writing, compiled by the secretariat and subsequently discussed at the next informal meeting.

2. Missions of the secretariat to ECE member countries in Central Asia

Mr. Keiner informed the participants on the main outcome of the secretariat's missions to identify the status of implementation of the LRTAP Convention and other MEAs in the ECE Central Asian member countries. The mission to Turkmenistan was still to take place. The missions had shown that the Central Asian countries were ready to draw up action plans to implement the LRTAP Convention and its recent protocols. Some of them would also be interested in the elaboration of cost/benefit analyses of joining selected MEAs. Further needs of the countries in terms of capacity building and advisory services were identified, among them, fostering cooperation related to the MEAs within and among the Central Asian countries. For example, Uzbekistan offered to host subregional seminars to raise awareness on the MEAs focusing especially on costs and benefits of acceding to them.

Mr. Massimo Cozzone informed about the recent EU-Central Asia High Level Conference on Environment and Water, held in Bishkek on 13-14 February 2013 in the framework of the Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation of the EU-Central Asia Strategy. Conclusions of the meeting will be used to shape the future EU assistance programme in Central Asia. Since the five ECE MEAs were included in the conclusions under the environmental governance sub-topic, support to promoting the ECE Conventions' ratification and implementation in Central Asia could potentially be included in the future EU assistance programme with funding opportunities for ECE.

3. Review of the implementation of the ECE 2005 reform

The representatives of the governing bodies of the MEAs expressed appreciation to the Chair of the CEP for her excellent presentation on the Environment subprogramme's activities, including those under the MEAs, to the ECE Executive Committee in May 2012.

At the same time, the participants expressed their disappointment with conclusions related to the allocation of resources available to service the MEAs drawn by member States within the ECE Executive Committee and contained in the draft outcome of the review of the 2005 ECE reform, especially in the light of the recent entry into force of several Protocols which now had to be serviced without additional regular budget resources. Therefore, they decided to address a joint letter to the ECE Executive Secretary. Mr. Michel Amand agreed to prepare a draft of the letter for comments by the other participants.

4. Participation of MEAs at the 19th session of the CEP, including in the EfE mid-term review of the Astana main outcomes

The CEP Chair informed that the usual item on MEAs within CEP-19 (Geneva, 22-25 October 2013) would take place on the first day of the session. She invited the representatives of the MEAs to participate in the session and asked them to consider whether reporting on progress in strengthening implementation and compliance would be a suitable theme for the discussion at CEP-19.

The participants agreed that strengthening implementation and compliance could be an interesting theme. The secretariat was requested to prepare an outline in the form of bullet points in order to harmonize the interventions. The differences in nature between the Conventions as well as the difficulties in measuring implementation and compliance should be taken into account. Efforts under the MEAs to promote implementation and compliance will also be presented.

The CEP Chair informed that she would put forward the above theme to the CEP Bureau at its next meeting on 29 April 2013 for consideration and subsequent endorsement.

The CEP Chair also informed the participants that a mid-term review of the Astana Conference main outcomes is being organized as part of CEP-19 on 22-23 October 2013. As part of this review, a summary report to demonstrate the work carried out by the secretariat to assist countries to ratify and implement ECE MEA's, as well as to assess obstacles to ratifying them is being prepared by the secretariat at the request of CEP. The report will be submitted to CEP-19 to support the discussion on this theme.

5. Enhanced visibility and attention to MEAs at the next EfE Ministerial Conference

In view of a possible discussion to be held within CEP-19 on potential themes for the next EfE Ministerial Conference, the CEP Chair shared an idea to enlarge the scope and format of the Conference by offering its high-level multistakeholder platform to be used by other activities under the Environment subprogramme. For instance, ordinary or extraordinary meetings of the governing bodies of several MEAs could be organized, back-to-back to the conference, in order to raise the profile of the MEAs and to increase political attention to them.

Most of the participants appreciated the idea of raising attention to the MEAs; however, serious concerns were expressed about the potential difficulties and additional costs of such an approach, e.g. it was considered difficult to change dates of the regular COPs/ MOPs. The Water Convention Chair explained that the next MoP would be held in 2015, and that Hungary had already offered to host it.

Another idea was to organize a high-level session on MEAs during the EfE Conference in order to raise the political attention to the MEAs among high-level policy-makers. This approach was considered as more operational and it was agreed that an interesting theme for discussion would need to be developed.

The CEP Chair will bring this idea to the attention of the CEP Bureau at its meeting on 29 April 2013. Depending on the discussion outcomes, the Bureau might request the secretariat to prepare a note outlining the preparation of the next EfE Ministerial Conference for the further consideration by CEP-19.

The participants agreed to explore this idea further at their next informal meeting. In the meantime, they could take the opportunity to discuss the issue within their Bureaux.

6. Financial arrangements under the MEAs

The secretariat presented a background document describing the financial arrangements under the MEAs. The document was welcomed by the participants who considered the regular exchange of experience on funding issues between the Conventions very important. The participants agreed to share the document with all Bureaux, to further analyze the situation and to continue the exchange of information and experiences at their next informal meeting.

In addition, the Aarhus Convention Chair introduced a draft evaluation report of the financial situation under the Convention which had identified similar challenges, such as unpredictability and late arrival of funds.

7. Other business

The secretariat informed that a joint MEA website is now operational at:
<http://www.unece.org/env/treaties/welcome.html>.

The participants were informed about the thematic consultations on environment and water within the framework of the discussion on the post-2015 development agenda and the future Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Within the latter topic ECE was leading the water management sub-consultations and convening a global consultation meeting in this regard on 27-28 February 2013.

The participants decided to postpone a discussion on a possible joint strategy/roadmap for implementing the outcomes of Rio+20 related to green economy to their next informal meeting.

The participants agreed tentatively to hold their next informal meeting on 21 October 2013, back-to-back with CEP-19, which would allow them to participate in the CEP session, in particular in the discussion related to MEAs, which was scheduled for 22 October.

Before closing the meeting, Mr. Dijkens called upon the other participants to consider succeeding him as Chairperson of the informal meeting in the future.

List of Participants



Attachment 1

Informal Meeting of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the 5 MEA's and their protocols

27 February 2013

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