



UNECE Weekly

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Issue N° 97 – 6-10 December 2004

It's just happened

Executive Body jubilee session



The 25th anniversary of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution was marked by a meeting of its Executive Body at which the United States announced its ratification of the Gothenburg Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone. The Protocol is now only two ratifications away from entry into force. A new task force has been set up to study the hemispheric transport of air pollution, and also a new expert group on fine particles – another priority under the Convention – whose work may lead to either a change to the Gothenburg Protocol or a new protocol specifically on fine particles. The Executive Body also decided to review two new persistent organic pollutants (POPs) that may be considered for addition to the Protocol on POPs.

The Executive Body intends to redouble its efforts to involve East European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries in its work. At present all except Albania, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are Parties to the Convention, but few have signed up to its Protocols. The Convention continues its practice of “naming and shaming” those Parties that fail to either fully meet their obligations under the Protocols or to report on their compliance. Since its introduction in 1997, this practice has greatly improved compliance. Greece, Ireland, Norway, Slovenia and Spain fell short on their commitments under one or more Protocols.

For more information contact Keith Bull (keith.bull@unece.org)

Severe storm damage in Tatras Mountains (Slovakia) – UNECE mobilizes solidarity

On 19 November, winds of over 170 km/h struck Slovakia's Tatras mountains – a beautiful area whose highest peak features on the national flag. Two lives were lost, several towns were cut off for days and much damage was done to infrastructure. Over a large area, the forest was completely destroyed, with one day's felling accounting for more than the country's normal annual harvest. This created the problem of how to harvest the wood safely – after the windblows of 1999 tens of people died in the clear-up process – and without excessive damage to roundwood markets, as well as of how to restore the forest.



*This will not be seen again
for 30-50 years*

Most foresters never encounter such a catastrophic situation in their whole career, and therefore rely heavily on the experience of others. An EU project (STODAFOR, led by the French Centre technique du bois et de



l'ameublement, CTBA), working with the Joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training, has just finished a technical manual on harvesting and storage of storm damaged timber, drawing on experience in France and elsewhere after the disastrous storms of 1999. The manual was sent immediately to the Slovak authorities, and the UNECE secretariat is mobilizing the solidarity of the international forestry community to help the Slovak colleagues with advice and experience in such matters as preventing fatal accidents to workers and handling the economic, social and ecological consequences of such a windblow.

For more information contact info.timber@unece.org

Not an official record - For information only

UNECE leads the work on the preparation of the 2010 census recommendations

In the week 22-26 November, UNECE organised jointly with Eurostat three meetings on population and housing censuses, which were attended by over 100 participants from 52 countries (including 7 countries outside the UNECE region) and various international organizations. The [Seminar on New Methods for Population Censuses](#) provided an opportunity to discuss innovative methodologies developed by France, Israel, Netherlands and United States to carry out the population census. The UNECE-Eurostat Work Sessions on [Population Censuses](#) and on [Housing Censuses](#) represented an important step in the preparation of the new [Recommendations for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses in the](#)

[UNECE region](#). The main issues to be addressed in the preparation of the new recommendations were discussed at the two meetings, taking into account the experience of the 2000 round of censuses. The participants also agreed on the draft structure of the new recommendations, which should include an expanded section on census methodology and technology. The new recommendations will be adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians at its June 2006 plenary session.

For more information contact Paolo Valente (paolo.valente@unece.org).

UNECE participates in the 2004 CEI Summit and Economic Forum in Portoroz

The UNECE Executive Secretary, Mrs. Brigita Schmögnerová, presented the UNECE view on challenges and opportunities of the Enlarged Europe at the Summit of Heads of Governments of member countries of the Central European Initiative (CEI). The Summit, held on 25-26 November 2004 in Portoroz, Slovenia, marked the 15th anniversary of the CEI. The leaders of the 17 Member States adopted a declaration calling for integrating the remaining countries with economies in transition into the European economy. These are also UNECE objectives, Mrs. Schmögnerová said, and cooperation between UNECE and CEI could facilitate their implementation. The main UN initiatives in 2005, including a Summit on MDGs, Copenhagen +10 and a Summit on the Information Society, which are linked with CEI's objectives, provide a good platform to strengthen mutual cooperation.



A round table of ministers of economy underscored the importance of restructuring industries, accelerating the process of innovations and improving competitiveness of member countries' economies. In line with the well-established cooperation between the two organizations (MoU since 1998), the UNECE contributed to sessions on women's entrepreneurship and their role in improving economic efficiency and SME development, and on innovative approaches to energy efficiency. The Energy Efficiency 21 Project (EE21) was presented by UNECE as a concrete example towards sustainable development in the energy sector.

For more information contact Ewa Ruminska-Zimny (ewa.zimny@unece.org)

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development

The Bishkek Conference on Information Society and Regional Cooperation in Information and Communication Technologies for Development was organized on 16-18 November 2004 at the invitation of the Government of Kyrgyzstan in cooperation with UNECE, UNESCAP, UNDP and the UN ICT Task Force. Its main goal was to promote the development and application of ICT in Central Asia with a view to enhancing its support to the sub-region's economic and social development, and to identify opportunities for strengthening national actions as well as regional and international cooperation in support of progress towards knowledge-based economy and information society in the Central Asian countries. Participants from Azerbaijan, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

Mongolia, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well as from UNESCAP, UNDP, EBRD, CIS Regional Communication Community and a number of international and national NGOs, private sector and academia attended. The Conference adopted a Concluding Document containing commitments and recommendations aimed at speeding up the development and application of ICT and promoting international cooperation for securing progress towards knowledge-based economy and information society in the Central Asian countries.

For more information contact Andrey Vasilyev (andrey.vasilyev@unece.org) or Hans Hansell (hans.hansell@unece.org)

Coming up soon ...

December

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 6 | Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane |
| 7-8 | Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Coal in Sustainable Development |
| 7(pm)-10 | Working Party on Passive Safety |
| 9-10 | Working Group on Water and Health |
| 7(pm)-9 | ECOSOC Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals |
| 10 | ECOSOC Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals |

For further information please contact:

**Information Service,
UN Economic Commission for Europe
(UNECE)
CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland**

**Tel: +41(0)22 917 44 44
Fax: +41(0)22 917 05 05
E-mail: info.ece@unece.org
Web site: <http://www.unece.org>**