

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

121st meeting  
Geneva, 3 March 2022

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Informal document No. **2022/9**

**Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy**  
**Report by the Chair**

## **Report by the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy\***

### **I. Introduction**

1. In the reporting period, the Environment subprogramme under the general governance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy and the other governing and subsidiary bodies under the Environment subprogramme continued to support countries to enhance their environmental governance and transboundary cooperation as well as strengthen implementation of the ECE regional environmental commitments and advance sustainable development in the region.

### **II. Achievements over the past twelve months**

#### **Advancing sustainable development and environmental governance in the region**

2. The 27th session of the Committee on Environmental Policy was held in Geneva on 3–5 November 2021. Agenda items included sustainable development in the region; a number of issues related to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5-7 October 2022): draft agenda, background thematic documents, Pan-European environmental assessment and other documents, organizational issues and resource requirements; work related to environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting; peer review of the environmental performance of Morocco; the developments in a number of cross-cutting activities (such as: education for sustainable development; transport, health and environment; environment and health; and mainstreaming a gender perspective in environmental activities); annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2022 and outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2023; presentation and exchange of views on the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme; and procedural matters of the work of the Committee.

3. The Committee on Environmental Policy expressed appreciation to Cyprus, as the host of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, adopted the draft agenda for the Conference, approved the general framework and structure of the proposed elements for the draft ministerial declaration, welcomed the progress in preparation of a number of official documents for the Conference and took other decisions to advance the preparatory process for the Conference. It encouraged the member States, partner organizations and all interested stakeholders to actively participate in the preparation and conduct of the Conference.

4. In 2021, the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme continued to serve as a platform to advance the monitoring and assessment of environmental conditions and trends, the production, harmonization and sharing of environmental data, statistics, indicators and information for reporting to policymakers, international forums and the public. It also continued to support policy development and its implementation, including the monitoring of relevant SDGs. Under a United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project on “Improved environmental monitoring and assessment in support of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus”, four training webinars on “Towards clean, renewable and efficient energy use”, “Waste Management Indicators and Policies”, “Freshwater Management Indicators and Policies” and on “Informing biodiversity restoration policies” and a Regional Conference on “Measuring

---

\* This document was not formally edited.

and monitoring the circular economy and the use of data for policymaking” were held. Furthermore, a Regional Knowledge sharing platform and an e-learning course on environmental monitoring were developed. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators met both in a hybrid format in 2021, focusing on among others the final progress review of the establishment of a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS), the development of a light indicator-based pan-European environmental assessment and the revision of the Guidelines on the Application of Environmental Indicators. The core set of the revised indicators was approved at the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint Task Force in October 2021. The development of the 7<sup>th</sup> pan-European environmental assessment and the development of training material on the revised indicators were other important activities under the programme in 2021.

5. In 2021, the Committee on Environmental Policy peer reviewed the environmental performance of Morocco for the second time and adopted the associated recommendations, which had earlier been examined by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs). The 3<sup>rd</sup> EPR of Uzbekistan was launched at national level. The 3<sup>rd</sup> EPR of Romania was published. The country review mission for the 3<sup>rd</sup> EPR of Azerbaijan was carried out in November 2021. The preparatory mission for the 2<sup>nd</sup> EPR of Armenia took place in December 2021. With the support of funds from the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC), roadmaps for implementing EPR recommendations have been developed by North Macedonia and Uzbekistan, as well as was nearing completion for Tajikistan.

6. Activities under the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project on “Evidence-based environmental governance and sustainable environmental policies in support of the 2030 Agenda in South-East Europe” (2018–2021) concluded in December 2021, with the main outcomes including policy packages on green economy, air quality, climate change, waste management, medical waste management, chemical safety, environmental inspections, sustainable agriculture, coastal management, financing environmental protection, and greening the public administration and commercial sector. As a result of the 2020–2021 global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic affecting all aspects of life, ECE and targeted countries agreed to shift travel and workshop funds to more policy papers to support the achievements of EPR-relevant SDGs and strengthen the recovery from and resilience to future possible pandemics. In 2021, based on the thematic policy documents developed under the UNDA Project, a follow up initiative looked into common challenges and issues on biodiversity, climate change, green economy and waste management in countries of the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova.

7. In 2021, the ECE EPR Programme celebrated one quarter of a century since its establishment in 1996. Over 25 years of EPRs, the ECE has carried out some 55 EPRs in 25 countries, including beyond the ECE region in Mongolia and Morocco. To mark this jubilee, a guest article co-authored by the CEP Chair and the ECE Executive Secretary was published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in July 2021.

8. The fifth High-Level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment<sup>1</sup> was held on 17 and 18 May 2021 in a virtual format, with over 40 ministerial-level speakers. It was hosted by the Government of Austria and more than 850 participants registered for the meeting, side events and exhibition online. At the fifth High-level Meeting, member States agreed to develop a comprehensive pan-European strategy on transport, health and the environment, including a clear pathway for its implementation, for adoption in 2023. The meeting also decided to establish an ad hoc working group to analyse different legal options to give effect

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the event and its official documents please see <https://thepep.ECE.org/events/fifth-high-level-meeting-transport-health-and-environment-0>

to our vision and strategy, and elaborate draft proposals for possible legal instruments. In addition, the fifth High-level Meeting created a new Partnership on Child- and Youth-Friendly Mobility, modified the focus of two others so that they would cover active mobility – instead of only cycling – and sustainable tourism mobility – instead of being focused only on the Danube region, and decided to fund a new study under the Partnership on Jobs in Green and Healthy Transport.<sup>2</sup>

9. The nineteenth session of the Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), organized in hybrid form on 27 and 28 October 2021, established the ad hoc working group to work on the strategy, invited member States to nominate participants to the open-ended group and decided that the first meeting of the working group would be held in the first quarter of 2022. The group, supported by a consultant, will present the first draft of the strategy at the twentieth meeting of the Steering Committee. It will also tackle the work on possible legal instruments. The Steering Committee also took note that one of the side events during the High-level Meeting addressed gender mainstreaming (“Transport, Health and Environment: The Gender Perspective”) and that it was opened by the ECE Executive Secretary. The Committee decided that THE PEP was to further work on gender mainstreaming in transport, health and environment and to include activities on the topic in its workplan for 2021–2025.

10. The French Government hosted a virtual meeting in Paris on 13 and 14 January 2022<sup>3</sup> to take stock of progress on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of THE PEP. There was consensus among member States that transport needs to be decarbonized and that electric bikes and cars were to be an important element of future mobility, together with public transport.

11. Supported by the Government of the Russian Federation project “Capacity Building for Cooperation on Dam Safety in Central Asia (phase 3) was completed in June 2021. The project enabled regional and transboundary cooperation on safe management of dams in Central Asia by building national capacities in development and implementation of legal, regulatory and technical frameworks on dam safety; improving national legislation governing the management of dams; and strengthening transboundary cooperation on individual dams.

#### **ECE multilateral environmental agreements – highlights**

12. The ECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) continued their work focusing on improving the implementation and compliance by Parties. Meetings of the governing bodies under three MEAs were organized in 2021, namely the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention ( 29 September – 01 October 2021), the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, the fourth session of the Protocol on PRTRs, and their joint High-level Segment (18-22 October 2021), the forty-first session of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) (6-8 December 2021).

##### *Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention)*

13. In 2021, Parties continued their work on the review of the Protocol to Abate Acidification Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (the Convention’s flagship Gothenburg Protocol), which was initiated in December 2019 following the entry into force of the Protocol’s amendment. According to article 10 of the Protocol, Parties shall keep under review the obligations under the Protocol, including their adequacy, and the progress made

---

<sup>2</sup> For more information on THE PEP Partnerships, please see <https://thepep.ECE.org/partnerships>

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the meeting, please see <https://thepep.ECE.org/index.php/events/20st-anniversary-pep>. The Executive Secretary also mentioned the event in a blog available at <https://ECE.org/media/news/364406>.

toward the achievement of the Protocol's objective. At its forty-first session in December 2021, the Executive Body considered the first draft of the report on the review. Parties aim at finalizing the review and considering its conclusions at the forty-second session of the Executive Body (Geneva, 12–16 December 2022, tentatively).

14. The adoption of the Guidance document on reduction of emissions from agricultural residue burning and the Guidance document entitled “Prioritizing reductions of particulate matter from sources that are also significant sources of black carbon – analysis and guidance” is another major accomplishment of the Air Convention in 2021. The documents aim to support Parties in reducing emissions of air pollutants, including those that are also short-lived climate pollutants, from agricultural residue burning, thus reducing their negative effects on human health, environment and economy, and to clarify in which sectors Parties can implement fine particulate matter emission reduction measures that will enable reductions of black carbon that is an air pollutant with significant impacts on health and climate.

15. At the session in December 2021, Parties welcomed the assessment report on ammonia. Both ammonia and nitrogen oxide emissions contribute to eutrophication and acidification, as well as to the formation of secondary particulate matter. In the past few decades, policy efforts have been more focused on emission reduction of nitrogen oxides than on ammonia emission reduction. The report aims to contribute to improving understanding of the benefit of ammonia mitigation and to support ratification and implementation of the Gothenburg Protocol.

16. At the same session, Parties established a Task Force for International Cooperation on Air Pollution. It will be a forum for the international exchange of information and mutual learning on both the scientific/technical and policy levels within and beyond the ECE region. It is intended to be a repository for technical information and a convener of countries and organizations, with the goal of increasing international cooperation on addressing air pollution.

17. As a result of continued capacity-building activities, Parties in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia improved their emissions reporting in 2021. In July, the secretariat organized a high-level roundtable in Kazakhstan, where the results of a gap analysis in the national air quality management legislation, an economic assessment of ratification scenarios and the draft national action plan for implementation of the protocols were presented and discussed with national authorities. Remotely held meetings of the EECCA<sup>4</sup> Coordinating Group, a workshop on transport emissions and in-country workshops on emission inventories helped to promote ratification and implementation of the Convention and its key protocols. The secretariat also launched a new project to develop an e-learning starter course on the Convention and its key protocols, which is expected to give decision makers and new staff in countries an introduction and orientation to the Convention framework overall, key principles, legal requirements and obligations.

*Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)*

18. 2021 confirmed the growing recognition worldwide of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). The Convention effectively further expanded its global reach with the accession of Guinea Bissau and Togo, respectively in June and September 2021, therefore now counting five Parties from beyond the ECE region (in total 46 Parties). In addition, countries such as Cameroun, Iraq and Côte d'Ivoire are at final stages in the accession process. In 2022, the provision of tailored guidance to the numerous countries in the process of accession, as

---

<sup>4</sup> EECCA - Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia

well as support to regional and basins dialogues, will be continued, with the support of relevant partners.

19. 2021 was a milestone for reviewing and accelerating progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals target 6.5 and highlighted the growing momentum at the global level to strengthen the sustainable management of transboundary water resources. However, reporting by countries under the Convention and on SDG indicator 6.5.2 highlighted the urgent need to accelerate progress, with only 24 countries worldwide having all their shared waters covered by operational arrangements for water cooperation (see *Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation: global status of SDG indicator 6.5.2 and acceleration needs, 2021, ECE and UNESCO, 2021*). It also proved that the Convention effectively supports transboundary water cooperation (see *Progress on transboundary water cooperation under the Water Convention: Second report on implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, 2017–2020*).

20. The ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (MOP9) confirmed that transboundary water cooperation provides opportunities to promote regional stability and development and is key for peace and conflict prevention. MOP9 adopted a new programme of work for 2022-2024, as well as targets for a more sustainable and predictable funding of the work under the Convention, and a procedure for proposing to host future sessions of the Meeting of the Parties, among others.

21. MOP9 adopted several new publications, aiming to support countries address their current issues in transboundary water cooperation, including:

- The *Practical Guide for the Development of Agreements or Other Arrangements for Transboundary Water Cooperation* helps countries in their negotiations to develop agreements.
- The *Handbook on Water Allocation in a Transboundary Context* provides methods and good practices to help share waters in an equitable and reasonable way.
- *Solutions and investments in the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus: A synthesis of experiences in transboundary basins* shows how to overcome silo approaches and strengthen intersectoral coordination in transboundary basins for the benefit of all.
- *Funding and Financing of Transboundary Water Cooperation and Basin Development* explains financial needs and possible financing sources to support these endeavours.

22. The Convention organized more than 25 events (virtual and in-person, adapting to the restrictions associated to the COVID-19 pandemic) at national, basin, regional and global levels. In addition to MOP9, global intergovernmental meetings provided platforms to exchange knowledge and good practices, including during the global workshop on building climate resilience through improving water management and sanitation at national and transboundary levels (March 2021); and meetings of the Task Force on Water and Climate Change (March 2021) and of the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management and the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (April 2021). Support to on-the-ground projects continued. For example, the secretariat provided support to:

- the Chu-Talas Water Commission in finalizing approval of a Strategic Action Programme developed within the GEF project and endorsed by the riparians on 15 April 2021.
- the regional dialogue on the Senegalese Mauritanian Aquifer Basin (SMAB) shared by the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal. The Regional Working

Group for Transboundary Cooperation on the SMAB developed of a joint vision for transboundary cooperation around the aquifer and a 5-year Action Plan.

23 Finally, the Convention contributed to global processes and events, such as the World Water Week 2021, the Climate Adaptation Summit 2021 (January) and COP26.

*Protocol on Water and Health to the Water Convention*

24. In 2021, the Protocol on Water and Health, jointly serviced by ECE and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe), has continued to serve as a key legally binding instrument driving forward action on water, sanitation, hygiene and health in the ECE region. The Protocol supports the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goals 6 on clean water and sanitation and 3 on good health and well-being and has a special relevance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which served as a reminder of the crucial role of water, sanitation and hygiene as a first line of defence in preventing and controlling the spread of infectious diseases.

25. During the year of 2021, work under the Protocol has continued to strengthen the capacity of countries to provide safe, climate-resilient and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene services. Dedicated events were organized under the Protocol in these areas, including an expert group on equitable access to water and sanitation and a global workshop on building climate resilience through improving water management and sanitation at national and transboundary levels, in cooperation with the Water Convention and other partners. Countries were also encouraged to make use of the Protocol's intersectoral target setting mechanism to devise COVID-19 sensitive targets on water, sanitation, hygiene and health.

26. The Protocol has also been acknowledged as a key instrument in other international processes relating to water, sanitation and health in the ECE region. The revised EU Directive on the quality of water intended for human consumption (December 2020), for instance, makes explicit reference to the Protocol and its tools on equitable access to water and sanitation as possible guidance for EU Member States to assess the baseline situation on access to water and to define the actions necessary to improve equitable access for all.

*Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention)*

27. In 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, all activities under the Convention continued, mainly in a hybrid or online form. The Convention organized, in cooperation with partners, two major policy-oriented seminars, prepared extensively in the course of the year, with the close involvement of representatives of the Bureau, nominated experts and representatives of industry:

(a) The featured thematic discussion on industrial accident risk entitled "Preventing another Sandoz, Baia Mare or Beirut accident: Perspectives on risk management in the context of the Sendai Framework" in the framework of the European Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction (online, 24 November 2021), organized by ECE, in cooperation with the European Investment Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Norway and Slovenia;

(b) The UN/OECD seminar in follow-up to the Beirut port explosion: Lessons learned, experiences and good practices in managing risks of ammonium nitrate storage, handling and transport in port areas, preventing accidents and mitigating their consequences (online, 14 December 2021). ECE led, under the auspices of the Industrial Accidents Convention, in close cooperation with the secretariat to the ECOSOC Sub-committees of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) and on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (TDG), a partnership with the

International Labour Organization, International Maritime Organization, the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit and the OECD, in organizing this seminar. In addition, ECE coordinated the efforts of an Advisory Group, comprising representatives from 11 countries, the European Union (EU) Joint Research Centre and four industry organizations, which provided advice as to the content of the seminar and a survey conducted in advance. The survey received over 100 replies from countries worldwide, which revealed that while the Beirut accident prompted countries to take action to strengthen their measures for ammonium nitrate handling and storage so as to prevent related accidents and mitigate possible impacts, significant challenges remained in effectively implementing the provisions of legislation and international legal instruments.

28. In the area of disaster risk reduction, the Convention's secretariat contributed to the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR) Roadmap 2021-2030, which highlights the Industrial Accidents Convention as an instrument fostering and 'all-of-society', regional, transboundary and collaborative systems of governance and decision-making. In support of the Roadmap's implementation, the secretariat prepared, in cooperation with the EIB and the European Union Joint Research Centre, a chapter on technological risk management for the forthcoming Regional Assessment Report for Europe and Central Asia of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), envisaged to be launched in 2022. In addition, the Convention continued its joint efforts under the leadership of the OECD and the auspices of a related Steering Group, to develop a brochure on Natech risk management, which will be issued in 2022.

29. Ongoing projects under the Assistance and Cooperation Programme were continuously implemented in 2021, notably on supporting countries of Central Asia in strengthening the safety of mine tailings (one focusing on Tajikistan specifically and another one benefitting all Central Asian countries), and the project on National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Central Asia (Phase I: Launch).

30. Furthermore, progress towards implementation of the Convention was fostered through the conduct of the following assistance activities:

- (a) Introductory meeting on reviewing national policies and legislation on industrial safety of Central Asian countries (10 March 2021);
- (b) Technical meeting to prepare for the on-site training in Tajikistan and to enhance capacity for governance and policy-making on tailings safety in Central Asia (23 April 2021);
- (c) On-site training and evaluation workshop on strengthening the safety and governance of mine tailings in Central Asia (2-4 June 2021);
- (d) Meeting between representatives of Azerbaijan and the Working Group on Implementation (21 September 2021);
- (e) Launch of the National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Serbia (Belgrade, 26 October 2021);
- (f) Sub-regional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for South-Eastern Europe (Belgrade, 27-29 October 2021);
- (g) Inaugural Meeting of the Inter-institutional Working Group on Tailings Safety and the Prevention of Accidental Water Pollution in Tajikistan (2 December 2021);
- (h) Technical mission to Montenegro (30 November – 1 December 2021);
- (i) Ongoing support to Ukraine in its accession process to the Convention.



31. Furthermore, the secretariat contributed significantly to the several events organized by partners, such as:

(a) Green Growth Knowledge Platform (set-up under the auspices of UNEP, OECD, UNIDO and the World Bank) webinar: How to strengthen mineral resource governance in 2021 (19 January 2021);

(b) Technical meeting (14 January) and high-level roundtable (20 January 2021) on extractive industries in the ECE region, organized under the auspices of DESA, in close cooperation with the Sustainable Energy Division;

(c) IOMC 5th Meeting of the Virtual Group on Targets, Indicators and Milestones (1 February 2021);

(d) Eighth meeting of the European Commission Expert Group on the Control on Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances (Seveso Expert Group) (16 February 2021);

(e) OSCE press conference “Tailings storage facilities: threats to transboundary waters of Ukraine” (2 March 2021);

(f) IOMC webinar “Chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response” (28 April 2021);

(g) Informal meeting of the Working Group on Civil Protection (Prociv) of the Council of European Union Member States (21 September 2021);

(h) Thirty-first meeting of the OECD Working Party on Chemical Accidents (online, 19 - 21 October 2021);

(i) XIX meeting of the CIS Inter-State Council on Industrial Safety (online, 22 October 2021);

(j) Regional Forum – Meeting of the Heads of Emergency Situations (Tashkent and online, 5 November 2021), organized by Uzbekistan and the Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction, in cooperation with the European Union and UNDRR;

(k) Inter-agency coordination meeting on industrial accidents, hosted by the OPCW (17 November 2021).

*The Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assistance (Protocol on SEA)*

32. In 2021, under the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment:

(a) A comprehensive activity funded by Italy was kicked-off to facilitate synergies, coordination and cooperation with relevant regional seas conventions and bodies to protect marine environment and coastal zones, focusing on the Mediterranean Sea and also covering the Arctic, Baltic and Caspian Seas and the North-East Atlantic marine regions. The activity is implemented in close consultation with representatives of the relevant treaties, including through annual joint meetings. The final report and proposals for future joint activities are due in December 2023.

(b) The secretariat continued to support legal compliance with and implementation of the two treaties through technical assistance and capacity building activities, with a focus

on strategic environmental assessment, in 11 countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine with funding from the EU4Environment programme; and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, in cooperation with OSCE and with funding mainly from Germany and Switzerland. A final sub-regional conference for Central Asia was successfully held in November 2021.

(c) The treaties' Implementation Committee considered 30 compliance issues, with a view to assisting Parties in their effective implementation of the treaties, including regarding the lifetime-extension of nuclear power plants, building on guidance on that topic adopted in December 2020.

(d) Switzerland moderated a workshop that illustrated the role and benefits of the Espoo Convention and, in particular, its Protocol for promoting sustainable infrastructure alongside with the transparency of the related information, consultation of relevant authorities and the public and international cooperation. The workshop's outcomes will feed into to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial conference's high-level debate on greening the economy and sustainable infrastructure.

*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)*

33. Due to their cross-cutting nature and wide substantive scopes, the Convention and its Protocol supported Parties' efforts for furthering a number of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 16 and also SDGs 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 15 and 17. At the twenty-fifth meeting (3 May 2021 (online) and 7 and 8 June 2021 (hybrid), Geneva), the Working Group considered numerous decisions in preparations for the seventh session of the Meetings of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (MOP7). The subjects addressed included: a proposal to set up a rapid response mechanism to ensure greater protection of environmental defenders; ways to promote electronic information tools and inclusive and effective public participation and access to justice; and participatory approaches to ensuring sustainable, inclusive and resilient development. Thematic sessions were held to address transparency and public participation in decision-making on geoengineering, biosafety and on genetically modified organisms.

34. The Task Force on Access to Justice at its fourteenth meeting (Geneva (hybrid), 15 and 16 February 2021) focused on promoting public interest litigation in environmental matters and on measures to promote effective access to justice in information cases and cases relating to air quality.

35. At its ninth meeting, the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making (Geneva, 1 and 2 March 2021) discussed participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups in decision-making. This also allowed for an exchange of practices facilitating more effective public participation without entailing additional significant resources on the part of public authorities. The thematic focus of the meeting was on decision-making in the extractive industries sector, on energy and climate and emerging technologies.

36. The seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, the fourth session of the Protocol on PRTRs, their joint High-level Segment and associated meetings took place in Geneva from 18 to 22 October 2021 in a hybrid format. The sessions resulted in a number of outcomes. Parties to both treaties and a wide range of stakeholders adopted the Geneva Declaration on Environmental Democracy for Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Development. The Meetings of the Parties also adopted respective decisions setting out priorities for future work by 2025 to advance the implementation of and compliance with the Convention and the Protocol. Among them the following:

- (a) Guinea-Bissau was welcomed as the first-ever country from outside the ECE region to accede to the Aarhus Convention.
- (b) The Aarhus Convention rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders has been established under the leadership of Austria and Ireland.
- (c) 20 decisions on compliance with the Aarhus Convention have been adopted to assist individual Parties to improve their legislation and practice in such areas as oil and gas extraction, gold mining, nuclear power plants, renewable energy, power lines, urban and spatial planning, access to justice, litter, forestry and the safety of environmental defenders.
- (d) Recommendations to promote the use of electronic information tools were adopted to support implementation of the Convention in light of countries' transition to digitalisation.
- (e) Several Parties offered to lead other key work areas under the Convention: Republic of Moldova - for access to information; Italy – for public participation in decision-making; Belgium—for access to justice; Austria—for genetically modified organisms; and France—for promotion of the Convention's principles in international forums.
- (f) A decision on the way forward for developing the Protocol was adopted by the treaty's Meeting of the Parties as to make pollutant release and transfer registers a useful tool for decision-making in various areas, such as public health, resource consumption, urban planning, emissions reduction.

### III. Major activities planned for 2022 and beyond

37. The Environment subprogramme will continue its work to support countries to enhance their environmental governance and transboundary cooperation as well as strengthen implementation of the ECE regional environmental commitments and advance sustainable development in the region. An overview of planned activities is contained in the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2022 (ECE/CEP/2021/5<sup>5</sup>). The special session of the Committee will be organized in Geneva from 9 to 12 May 2022, a key milestone on the way to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Nicosia, 5-7 October 2022).

38. In 2022, the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme will continue to support member States in advancing the environmental knowledge-base for effective reporting to policymakers, international forums and the public and continue to support policy development and its implementation, including the implementation of SDGs related to environmental monitoring and assessment. Within the framework of the programme, a light indicator-based pan-European environmental assessment will be finalized which together with the final review report on the establishment of a Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia (completed in 2021) will be forwarded to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference being held in October 2022. Within the framework of a new EU funded project "EU4 Water and Data" support to environmental monitoring, reporting and assessment in the countries of the EU Eastern Neighbourhood region will be provided. The twenty-fourth session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment will be held on 11-12 April 2022 and the nineteenth session of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators in October 2022.

---

<sup>5</sup> [https://ECE.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/ece.cep\\_.2021.5e.pdf](https://ECE.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/ece.cep_.2021.5e.pdf)

39. In 2022, the 3<sup>rd</sup> EPR of Azerbaijan will continue with the expert review by the Expert Group on EPRs and the peer review by the Committee on Environmental Policy. The 2<sup>nd</sup> EPR of Morocco will be published and launched. The country review mission for the 2<sup>nd</sup> EPR of Armenia will be organized in line with the international and national COVID-19 situations, as will be the preparatory mission and the country review mission for the 3<sup>rd</sup> EPR of Kyrgyzstan. Work on assessing the achievement of EPR-relevant SDG targets will continue in the reviewed countries. The 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of EPRs, adopted by the Committee in 2020, will be launched in Nicosia in October 2022. The 2022 EPR calendar covers selected findings on greening the economy and financing environmental protection from EPRs conducted since 2012, aiming to draw attention to the findings of the reviews and encourage the implementation of the EPR recommendations in 2022 and beyond.

40. The Bureau of THE PEP will meet at the beginning of March 2022 to operationalize decisions of the Steering Committee. Further, the first meeting of the ad hoc working group to develop a THE PEP strategy will meet early in 2022 to start its work. The Partnerships will continue their work in view of preparing, among others, a master plan on active mobility.

41. Up to the present, the implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) continues in accordance with the “Batumi Framework for the future implementation of the ECE Strategy for ESD” (adopted at the High-Level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries in Batumi, Georgia, 08 June 2016). The fourth mandatory reporting of national implementation of the ECE Strategy for ESD has been completed in 2019; the summary evaluation report was issued in 2021. The pre-final draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework was submitted for approval by the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Steering Committee (7-8 May 2021) and is currently being finalised by the Ad hoc group for Strategic Planning to be adopted in its final version at the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Steering Committee (30-31 May 2022). At its 16<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Committee was updated on the preparations for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries which will be held on 5–7 October 2022 in Nicosia, hosted by the Government of Cyprus. The capacity building workshop in Baku, Azerbaijan was held in online mode on 21-22 April 2021, which had been postponed from 2020 due to COVID-19.

42. The ECE MEAs will continue their work focusing on improving the implementation and compliance by Parties. Meeting of the governing bodies under MEAs take place in 2022, namely the third extraordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (Geneva, June 2022), the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health to the Water Convention (Geneva, 16-18 November 2022), the forty-second session of the Executive Body to the Air Convention (Geneva, 12–16 December 2022, tentatively).

43. 2022 will mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Water Convention, to be celebrated by a dedicated event (30 June 2022) and a publication highlighting 30 years of achievements. A global workshop on the source-to-sea approach and river basin management planning, linking governance and management of transboundary waters from the source (including mountain environment) to the sea (coastal and marine environment), will be organized (Geneva, 14-16 December 2022).

44. 2022 will be a crucial year for the Protocol on Water and Health, with the upcoming sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties. A new programme of work for the Protocol for 2023-2025 will be adopted, identifying regional priorities and aiming to tackle persisting challenges in the areas of water, sanitation, hygiene and health. Furthermore, 2022 will also be the year of the Protocol’s fifth reporting cycle, which is a rich data hub for the pan-European region, containing information on existing environmental and health legislation

and policies as well as data on several thematic aspects covered by the Protocol.<sup>6</sup> Reporting under the Protocol is a mandatory obligation for states Parties to the treaty, and other states also submit national summary reports on a voluntary basis, allowing for the identification of regional good practices and common trends.

45. While the Protocol is an intersectoral instrument by nature, bringing together the environment and health communities, the year of 2022 foresees the implementation of activities which will reinforce the nexus between water, food and energy. In particular, an international project will be launched, with the support of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA), which is designed to have a nexus approach to natural resource management and access to essential services and that will be carried out in close cooperation with the relevant ECE departments and with other international organizations and partners. In addition to this, a project funded by the Russian Federation will be launched in 2022, with the aim of strengthening capacity of Central Asian countries to set and/or implement water, sanitation and health targets under the Protocol, with a view to strengthening resilience against COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

46. In 2022, the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) will continue to support progress towards the implementation of the Convention's vision, as set out in its long-term strategy: to significantly increase industrial safety and reduce the risk of technological disasters by ensuring its full implementation, its wide recognition as a legal instrument for risk reduction under the Sendai Framework and its contribution to achievement of the SDGs. Policy-centred activities will support implementation of the Convention by all Parties, in particular, through the continued development of a study on risk assessment methodologies, for presentation at twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Geneva and online, 29 November–1 December 2022), the development of a draft guidance on natural-hazard triggered technological accidents (Natech), in cooperation with the OECD and other organizations, and the organization of a joint seminar on Natech risk management in the context of the above-mentioned Conference of the Parties, which aims to present and enrich the guidance with case studies. ECE will also pursue its close cooperation with UNDRR, in the follow-up to the European Forum and the lead-up to the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction (Bali and online, 23-27 May 2022). Dedicated support to beneficiaries of the Assistance and Cooperation Programme will be provided, through the continued implementation of project activities, notably to implement National Policy Dialogues on Industrial Safety in Serbia and launch such dialogues, as a means to strengthen governance and policy-making, in the five countries of Central Asia. In addition, needs-driven assistance activities will be continued, in cooperation with the Working Group on Implementation, among others to Ukraine to support the country in its process of accession.

47. In 2022, Parties to the Air Convention will finalize their work on the review of the Gothenburg Protocol. Parties are also expected to approve a report for policymakers on the cost of inaction on air pollution.

48. The secretariat will continue its capacity-building activities in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia through the organization of policy-oriented and technical sub-regional and national workshops to promote the ratification and implementation of the Convention and its key protocols in the sub-region.

49. The work under the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment will continue to further sustainable development goals by promoting the

---

<sup>6</sup> For more information see <https://ECE.org/reporting-parties-and-other-states>

ratifications and effective implementation of the treaties in accordance with the workplan for 2021–2023. In 2022, selected major activities will include the following:

(a) The EU4Environment funded capacity building activities in the six countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus will be further intensified with the launch and parallel implementation of five strategic environmental assessment pilots to green the beneficiary countries' selected public sectoral development or spatial/urban plans;

(b) In December, a thematic seminar will be organized on the role of environmental impact assessments in promoting circular economy at project and strategic levels, subject to decisions of the Bureau and lead-countries/organizations;

(c) Based on Parties' detailed reporting on their implementation of the Convention and the Protocol in the period 2019–2021, the secretariat will produce review reports that will illustrate progress made and good practice as well as identify possible weaknesses and compliance issues for the subsequent examination by the treaties' Implementation Committee;

(d) An activity funded by Italy will focus on promoting the application of strategic environmental assessment in development cooperation, involving the preparation of a comprehensive information document and the organization of a thematic seminar in consultation with the treaty bodies and Parties' authorities responsible for development cooperation.

50. In 2022, the work under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol will continue assisting countries in achieving environmental dimension of SDG 16 and other Goals. A number of multilateral activities are planned in this regard.

51. The Task Force on Access to Justice will have its fifteenth meeting back-to-back with the Judicial Colloquium on 26 - 28 April 2022 and will provide a platform for governments, members of the judiciary, international organizations, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to discuss practical measures to enable effective access to justice and further advance the implementation of the third pillar of the Aarhus Convention.

52. The twenty-sixth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to Convention is planned for June 2022. The Working Group will follow up on the implementation of decisions adopted at the seventh session of the Meetings of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (MOP7). In addition, thematic sessions on promoting effective access to information and Convention's principles in other international forums among other issues, will be held.

53. Third extraordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention are planned to be held back-to-back in June 2022 in Geneva. The MOP is expected to elect an independent Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders in accordance with adopted decision VII/9 on a rapid response mechanism to deal with cases related to article 3 (8) of the Convention.

54. Global Round Table on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers will be organized back-to-back with the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol in November 2022. The meetings will aim at taking stock of successes and challenges in implementing the Protocol on PRTRs and establishing PRTR systems in different countries.

55. The SPECA Governing Council welcomed the decision of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy regarding the theme of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference – applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism – and invited countries in the SPECA subregion to actively participate in the Nicosia Conference, including by joining efforts to promote sustainable tourism applying principles of circular economy.

The Governing Council also welcomed the ECE study on Applying Principles of Circular Economy to Sustainable Tourism in SPECA countries and invited countries to prepare in time for the Nicosia Conference a joint statement (or a declaration) committing to promoting sustainable tourism applying principles of circular economy.

#### **IV. Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the Committee**

56. The Bureau of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Conference of European Statisticians at its meeting in February 2021 approved the extension of the mandate and terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators until mid-2023. Subsequently, the Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-seventh session (Geneva, 3–5 November 2021) decided to extend the mandate and terms of reference of the Joint Task Force to allow the Joint Task Force to prepare a new draft mandate and terms of reference after the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022). The Executive Committee approved the extension of the mandate and terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, at its 119<sup>th</sup> meeting, 16 December 2021.

#### **V. Follow-up to the 2021 session of the Economic Commission for Europe**

57. In November 2021 the Committee on Environmental Policy took note of the outcomes of the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission and decided to include a standing agenda item on the follow up to the sessions of the Commission in the Committee's future agenda. The Committee and the Meetings of the Parties of relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements considered ways to follow up on the theme, as appropriate.

58. Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure and applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism are the two themes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. The two background documents are being prepared and their first drafts were considered by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-seventh session (November 2021). At the same session the Committee decided to advance the development of the catalogue of actions/measures on possible voluntary actions/commitments under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy on the two themes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. An ad hoc expert group led by Switzerland is being formed to prepare the catalogue. A pan-European environmental assessment is being drafted as input to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. Besides traditional environmental topics, the assessment addresses the Conference themes including on applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism.

59. Through the Geneva Declaration (Geneva, October 2021), Meetings of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and to the Protocol to PRTRs:

(a) committed to promote inclusive and effective access to information and public participation as to further sustainable infrastructure for achieving e.g. green and circular economy; and

(b) recognized that the treaties' implementation underpin the European Union Green Deal and other similar initiatives.

60. The Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention adopted recommendations aimed at promoting effective online public access to information on various subjects relevant for circular economy, such as: environmental management, sustainable consumption and

production, best available techniques, green procurement, product-specific data, environmental impact assessments, licensing and permitting processes. The Meeting mandated the Task Force on Access to Information to explore means to improve access to information relevant for circular economy, namely to product information, including through the latest digital solutions such as “product passports”, with a view to possible adoption of a new instrument by the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session in 2025 (decision VII/1). The Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs (October 2021) agreed to initiate the work on possible amendments to the Protocol aimed at strengthening PRTRs to e.g. promote circular economy and support monitoring and implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (decision IV/2).

61. The Task Force on Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus under the Water Convention brings together the concerned sectors representing the Parties and non-Parties to guide and oversee the activities implemented under the Convention in the nexus area. One output of a recent transboundary dialogue on the nexus in the North West Saharan Aquifer System, the riparian countries defined a “package” of nexus solutions to achieve cross-sectoral goals, including the circular economy. Similar work will be carried out in the next Programme of Work (PoW), with “operationalization” of nexus solutions and investments in specific basins. The Task Force serves as a venue for the exchange of experience in water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus between basins and countries across the world. It is a place for sharing knowledge on pathways to, and impact of, the circular economy in transboundary basins.

62. The Water Convention contributes to promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources through projects supporting intersectoral dialogues and assessments through the application of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus approach, in particular in the Drina and Drin River basins and with a new project “Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient transformation of the energy-water-land nexus in Central Asia” (IKI project) and initiatives specifically focused on water (e.g. the preparatory process for the Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action (New York, 22-24 March 2023), climate (e.g. the UN Climate Change Conferences), energy (energy and forestry, through cooperation with other ECE divisions (SED and ECE/FAO forestry) e.g. the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative). In addition, the new publication Solutions and investments in the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus provides a new tool based on experiences from around the world illustrating how countries can design and implement ‘nexus’ solutions and investments that create synergies and provide transboundary benefits.

63. The Executive Body to the ECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, at its forty-first session (December 2021), adopted a guidance document on reduction of emissions from agricultural residue burning. The document aims to support Parties in reducing emissions of air pollutants, including those that are also short-lived climate pollutants, from agricultural residue burning, thus reducing their negative effects on human health, environment and economy.

64. Within the framework of the Economic Forum of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), countries of the sub-region were briefed on the key principles of circular economy and the benefits it can bring to achieving sustainable development. A presentation by the outgoing Vice-Chair of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme highlighted the perspective of circular economy in sustainable and healthy mobility. The SPECA Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment considered the study on “Applying Principles of Circular Economy to Sustainable Tourism in SPECA countries”. The Working Group requested the United Nations secretariat to support the SPECA participating countries to:

(a) develop guidelines on the application of circular economy principles to sustainable tourism and other sectors in SPECA countries; and



(b) replicate and scale up existing approaches to build capacity and raise awareness of the benefits of circular economy through training workshops organized in cooperation with key stakeholders for government officials and tourism businesses.

65. The Governing Council of SPECA acknowledged the importance of circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources in achieving SDGs, supporting economic prosperity and resilience, addressing environmental challenges, mitigating climate change, and recover from the COVID-19 crisis. It also recognised the value of the Environment for Europe process as a unique pan-European platform for addressing environmental challenges, improving environmental governance, promoting environmental and cross-sectoral cooperation and information sharing among countries.

66. Within the framework of the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme, a regional conference on “Measuring and monitoring the circular economy and the use of data for policy-making” was organized in November 2021 by ECE with support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the European Environment Agency, the European Commission, Eurostat and ECE member States.

67. In March 2021, UNDP Uzbekistan, the Government of Uzbekistan, the European Union and ECE organized an international online forum "Building forward better": Green recovery of Uzbekistan after the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic". The purpose of the Forum was to initiate a dialogue between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, international development agencies, donors and investors, the private sector, and the civil community about the country's transition to a green economy and sustainable development of Uzbekistan. The ECE secretariat supports the development partners' efforts to assist the Government of Uzbekistan in advancing the green transition agenda. Under the leadership of UNDP Uzbekistan and World Bank, ECE participates in the coordination mechanism for the preparation of a Green Growth Strategic Framework and contributes to the discussion under the thematic groups.

## **VI. Intersectoral activities: new activities and/or progress in existing intersectoral activities**

68. The Environment subprogramme is supporting the cross-sectoral work under the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), the Protocol on Water and Health, the Programme on EPRs and the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme. Under the Water Convention the work is on-going on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus. Joint work under the Water Convention and the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment has been carried out to support sustainable water management planning through Strategic Environmental Assessment. Under the Environment for Europe (EfE) process together with UNEP, OECD and other partners, the Environment subprogramme is supporting the implementation of the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy. Furthermore, the subprogramme is also actively participating in the activities under the European Environment and Health Process.

69. In the reporting period, the work under the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) focused on the promotion of SDG 4 and its target 4.7 in the region, via the implementation of the ECE Strategy for ESD. 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Steering Committee held on 10-11 May 2021 in the hybrid mode, considered the pre-final draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, elaborated by the members of the Steering Committee's Ad hoc group for Strategic Planning, which contains an outline of the directions of its work up to 2030. ECE continues its cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to align its work to the global framework of actions on ESD.

70. THE PEP is intrinsically an intersectoral activity. The secretariat is a collaboration between ECE (Environment and Sustainable Transport Divisions) and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe.

71. Furthermore, THE PEP continued its cooperation with non-governmental organizations in preparing its work in the Partnerships; especially for the Partnerships on: Active Mobility; Sustainable Tourism Mobility; and Child- and Youth- Friendly Mobility.

72. National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on Integrated Water Resources Management under the European Union Water Initiative programme served as platforms for intersectoral cooperation and water reform drivers in 9 countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In 2022, NPDs will continue to advance the implementation of the water and health agenda and strengthen national and international water governance and cooperation. Work under the NPDs will contribute to country-level implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health and COVID-19 pandemic recovery, as well as the implementation of other relevant ECE conventions, in particular the Industrial Accidents Convention and the Espoo Convention.

73. The Industrial Accidents Convention continued its cooperation with the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, in organizing a sub-regional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for South-Eastern Europe (Belgrade, 27-29 October 2021). A similar workshop is envisaged to be held for Central Asian countries in 2022. In close partnership with the Water Convention, through their Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents, the Industrial Accidents Convention will be continuing cooperation with river basin organizations. The close cooperation in the organization of “Session 3: Disaster risk reduction through transboundary cooperation” at the “Global workshop on building climate-resilience through improving water management and sanitation at national and transboundary levels” (Geneva and online, 29-31 March 2021) under the auspices of the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health was a means to jointly advocate for a multi-hazard approach to disaster risk reduction. On capacity-building, cooperation with the Water Convention’s National Policy Dialogues for Integrated Water Resources Management has been further strengthened in relation to mine tailings safety in Central Asia, and now comprises the implementation of a joint project involving the four riparian countries of the Syr Darya river basin. The Industrial Accident Convention’s activities in the area of mine tailings safety, and beyond, will naturally contribute to the broader policy debate on sustainable infrastructure, in the framework of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. In this respect, cooperation will also continue to be pursued with ECE’s Sustainable Energy Division, in cooperation with the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) by contributing jointly to the Working Group on Extractive Industries, set up by the Secretary General, the technical secretariat of which is being co-led by ECE, UNEP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2022. Furthermore, the Convention initiated a new partnership with the Sustainable Transport Division, in particular the secretariat to the ECOSOC Sub-committees on the GHS and the Transport of Dangerous Goods, in the organization, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit and the OECD, of the UN/OECD Seminar in follow-up to the Beirut port explosion. In addition, the Convention’s activities will continue to support implementation of the respective implementation of the recommendations contained in the Environmental Performance Review (EPRs).

74. The secretariat continued servicing a region-wide inter-agency capacity-building coordination mechanism for the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and a global international coordinating Group for the Protocol and providing inputs to the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework.

75. The ECE Environment Division (Environmental Monitoring and Assessment programme) and ECE Statistical Division co-serve the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators. The Joint Task Force continues to assist countries with economies in transition to understand indicator methodologies and supports them in applying the methodologies to produce and share specific environmental indicators. In 2021 significant progress was achieved in revising the ECE Environmental Indicators and to align them with the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics to better meet the needs for monitoring and measuring progress of recent and emerging policy developments including a circular economy.

76. The essence of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol is to provide for intersectoral cooperation and consultations in assessing and addressing environmental, including health, impacts of projects, plans and programmes from across the economic sectors. In 2021, the EU4Environment programme (2019–2022) that funds the treaties' legal assistance and capacity building activities in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus continued to bring together representatives of ministries of environment and economy of the six beneficiary countries. After having actively contributed to the development of guidance on the applicability of the Espoo Convention to the lifetime-extension of nuclear power plants, the nuclear energy sector continued to closely follow the Implementation Committee's deliberations on the related compliance cases. In cooperation with WHO, efforts continued for finalizing a guidance document on the assessment of health and the involvement of the health sector in strategic environmental assessment. In 2022, a new intersectoral activity will focus on promoting the Protocol's application into development cooperation, in consultation with the treaty bodies and Parties' authorities responsible for development cooperation.

77. The ECE Programme on EPRs cooperates with other units within ECE and with other organizations (UNEP, WHO, OECD, EIB) in preparing EPR intersectoral chapters, looking at how environmental concerns are mainstreamed into priority sectors, such as energy and the environment, transport and the environment, industry and the environment, agriculture and the environment, and human settlements and the environment, as well as assessing the impact of the environment on human health. In addition, cross-sectoral capacity development activities are carried out upon demand from countries, such as the Workshop on strengthening national capacities in applying sustainable energy policies and practices, based on the recommendations of EPRs, organized jointly with the Sustainable Energy sub-programme on 30 June 2021 online.

## **VII. Technical cooperation activities**

78. Technical cooperation activities in the Environment subprogramme include activities carried out by the ECE Regional Adviser on Environment as well as a number of other activities undertaken under MEAs and policy programmes.

79. The Regional Adviser supports the implementation of the technical cooperation activities, contributes to fund raising efforts and provides policy advisory services to the countries in close collaboration with the secretariats of the ECE MEAs. The work aims at supporting ratification and implementation of the MEAs and strengthening cooperation on common environmental problems in the countries of Central Asia, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

80. The work undertaken by the Regional Adviser in the reporting period resulted in the finalization of the transboundary water cooperation projects in Drin basin (South-Eastern Europe) and in the Dniester basin (Republic of Moldova and Ukraine), and initial negotiations of UNDP and Global Environment Facility (GEF) project to be implemented in the Bug-Neman basin (Belarus and Ukraine).

81. Due to the COVID-19 and resulted travel restrictions, the work of the Regional Adviser supporting technical cooperation has been adapted to the new circumstances and workplan activities have been re-adjusted. The format of three sub-regional capacity building workshops, co-funded by the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC), have been changed from in-person to online mode. These include: Subregional Conference on Strategic Environmental Assessment in Central Asia, Subregional workshop on mainstreaming gender into environmental policies and Workshop on Strengthening national capacity in applying sustainable energy policies and practices based on the recommendations of the Environmental Performance Reviews (EPR). With savings from the travel fund, new activities requested by the Governments have been introduced in the workplan and implemented in 2021 with RPTC fund. These include:

- Support to the development of a roadmap for the implementation of recommendations of 3<sup>rd</sup> EPR of Tajikistan
- Strengthening capacities of Central Asian countries in integrating mine tailings safety and Natech risk management into their policy documents through provision of support in updating the self-assessment and action plan under the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents
- Support to the Resident Coordinators Offices (RCOs) and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) in 17 UN programme countries in mainstreaming environment and climate change issues in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks through provision of two parts training sessions
- Support in strengthening the capacity in integrating gender aspects into environmental policies and strategies in Serbia
- Sub-regional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for South-Eastern Europe (Belgrade, 27-29 October 2021).

82. To strengthen the engagement of ECE at the country level and to introduce overall ECE work at the country level, the Regional Adviser continued to work closely with the Resident Coordinators (RCs), RCOs and UNCTs in Uzbekistan, Serbia and Tajikistan by informing RCs and UNCTs of relevant ECE guidelines and products, participating in and contributing to UNCT and Results Group discussions and identifying potential joint activities with UNCT member agencies. This effort resulted in the joint organization of International Forum on Building Forward Better: Green Recovery from the pandemic and participation in the development of the Green Growth Strategic Framework in Uzbekistan in cooperation with UNDP and other development partners,

83. Technical cooperation projects were implemented in more than 15 countries in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

84. In 2021, under the Espoo Convention and in particular its Protocol on SEA, an extensive amount of technical cooperation activities continued to be deployed in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine the European Union (EU) funded “EU for Environment” programme has funded secretariat’s support towards the ratification and/or the effective implementation of the Protocol on SEA and the Convention by the beneficiary countries in the period 2019–2022 (with a budget of some 2.7 Mio USD) building on the outcomes of the previous EU funded support (2013–2018). In Central Asia, the secretariat continued to assist Kazakhstan in the alignment of its national legislation with the Convention and the Protocol in cooperation with the European Union’s Partnership for Action on Green Economy. To support the development of national strategic environmental assessment systems in all the five Central Asian countries, national awareness raising workshops were held, and detailed action plans based on needs assessment studies were finalized in cooperation with OSCE, with the funding from Germany, and co-funding from Switzerland and ECE. In November

2021, a final subregional conference was organized to share experience and discuss lessons learned.

85. In addition to technical cooperation activities carried out under international projects, the joint secretariat of the Protocol on Water and Health regularly provides technical assistance to Protocol Parties and other states active in its framework. In particular, the ECE secretariat supports national self-assessments aimed at establishing a baseline measure of the situation with equitable access to water and sanitation; in 2022 such self-assessment is planned to take place in Montenegro. ECE further provides continuous support to countries in the process of setting, implementing, monitoring and/or reviewing intersectoral targets on water, sanitation, hygiene and health under the Protocol, including through support of the EU-funded National Policy Dialogues.

86. The Industrial Accidents Convention will continue implementing ongoing Project activities, with a focus on Central Asia, seeking to strengthen policy-making and governance for industrial safety and disaster risk reduction, and transboundary cooperation. More specifically, Project activities aim to launch National Policy Dialogues on Industrial Safety through related missions to all five Central Asian countries, to align their national legislation with the Convention's requirements and improve policy coherence, to establish and maintain inter-institutional working groups on tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution, and to enhance cooperation at the national and sub-regional levels, the latter along the Syr Darya river basin.

## VIII. Cooperation with other organizations

87. The Environment subprogramme is working with a number of organizations in and outside the United Nations system with the aim of combining efforts, ensuring mutual benefits and avoiding overlap and duplication. Cooperation takes place through information and communication technology tools, internal coordination meetings and the organization of joint events, as well as involving relevant partner organizations in various activities. Among the many organizations involved in the work of the Committee and of other governing bodies under the Environment subprogramme, the following activities mark highlights of cooperation during the reporting period:

### *United Nations Regional Collaborative Platform*

88. A Regional Collaborative Platform has been established for Europe and Central Asia as part of the reform of the UN Development System. The Platform brings together more than 20 UN organizations in the region. Issue-based coalitions coordinate the UN response to cross-cutting challenges in the region. ECE, UNEP and UNESCO jointly lead the Issue-based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change, which brings together 18 UN agencies, funds and programmes. Through its co-chairing and leading some of the activities and major products developed by the Coalition, ECE collaborated and provided support to Resident Coordinators, Resident Coordinator Offices and relevant UN country team agencies in the region on the environmental dimension of country level work. Following up on its 2020 gap analysis on integrating the environment and climate change in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework processes, the Coalition developed and launched mainstreaming guidance.<sup>7</sup> A first training event on mainstreaming entry points was held in December 2021 with 11 country teams represented. 93 per cent of participants found the content useful and relevant. The guidance and training increased awareness and understanding of Resident Coordinator Offices and country teams on the importance of strengthening the environmental

<sup>7</sup> Information on the Coalition's work is available at <https://ECE.org/issue-based-coalition-environment-and-climate-change>.

dimension of UN Common Country Analyses, integrating environmental concerns across all outcomes in the Cooperation Frameworks, enhanced capacity in linking subregional and transboundary issues with national priorities, and facilitated experience sharing. The guidance has since been used in the Common Country Analysis development in Kyrgyzstan. A second training event on mainstreaming approaches and tools was organized for three subregions in January 2022.

89. In January 2021, following a webinar for UN country teams on measures to green the post-pandemic recovery, the Coalition completed its compendium of measures. The compendium equips Resident Coordinators and country teams for providing their advice and support and offering concrete measures to governments in “greening” recovery plans. In March 2021, the Coalition organized a peer-learning round table on “Partnerships for a sustainable recovery: Initiatives to accelerate the achievement of the environment and climate goals of the 2030 Agenda” during the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. These actions have resulted in increased awareness of the importance of integrating environmental and climate change issues into post-COVID recovery strategies and supporting a “rebuilding better” approach.

90. The Coalition also addressed several priority thematic issues identified by country teams. A webinar on “Air pollution from domestic heating in Serbia – impacts, challenges and solutions” in May 2021 and subsequent discussion among country team members resulted in the establishment of a dedicated sub-group to develop a joint UN programme on the issue. In September 2021, the Coalition issued a “Review of Good Practices on Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation for Risk-informed and Climate-smart Development”. In October 2021, the Coalition held a webinar on preventing water conflicts through transboundary water cooperation. The webinars and review provided Resident Coordinators and country teams with data, tools and policy recommendations on how to assist member States in improving environmental management.

#### *United Nations Regional Commissions*

91. The Aarhus secretariat is providing continuous advisory support to United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) with regard to the implementation of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazu Agreement) and cooperates on the establishment of PRTRs. It also cooperates with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on promoting environmental rights in Asia-Pacific region.

92. ECE has also cooperated with UNESCAP on disaster risk reduction; having presented, among others on activities under the Industrial Accidents and Water Convention, to the 2021 session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction / Disaster Resilience Week (Bangkok and online, 23-27 August 2021).

93. ECE and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) cooperated in preparing the 2<sup>nd</sup> EPR of Morocco.

#### *United Nations Environment Programme*

94. The Environment subprogramme has long-standing cooperation with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through many joint activities and partnerships.

95. The work of ECE and UNEP is complementary: ECE provides the regional political platform, expert and intergovernmental bodies and policy expertise; UNEP brings its global policy leadership, specific technical expertise and country and regional policy and programmatic engagement. Such a symbiosis enables the two organizations to address in an effective way the existing and emerging environmental concerns across the ECE region.

96. At its 27<sup>th</sup> session, the Committee welcomed the information provided by UNEP on the outcomes of the online meeting of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP and preparation of a resumed in-person meeting and invited UNEP to continue to inform the Committee of relevant developments under the Assembly.

97. UNEP is actively involved in the activities of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, including, but not limited, to the monitoring of SEIS establishment in Europe and Central Asia and the 7<sup>th</sup> pan-European environmental assessment, to be finalized in 2022. In addition, UNEP is engaged, as part of a common approach between ECE, the European Environment Agency (EEA) and UNEP, in supporting national, regional and global reporting on the state of the environment. Representatives of the three organizations meet at senior and operational levels as relevant. UNEP was also involved in relevant activities of the ECE-led UNDA project on environmental monitoring and assessment which was completed in 2021.

98. UNEP provided expertise for the 2<sup>nd</sup> EPR of Morocco, expert reviewing the chapter related to environmental monitoring and information.

99. The United Nations Environment Programme is also actively contributing to the implementation of many ECE MEAs.

100. Since 2013, the secretariat of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA has promoted the treaties' implementation and, in general, greening the economies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in partnership with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), OECD and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), with funding from European Union. In 2019-2022, it continues to assist the same countries in cooperation with the UNEP, UNIDO, OECD and the World Bank under the EU4Environment programme.

101. In 2021, the secretariat contributed and provided inputs to the UNEP Global Assessment of Air Pollution Legislation and the Global Air Quality Policy update report (for Europe and Central Asia).

102. The secretariat of the Air Convention together with WHO co-leads the Task Team on Air Pollution in the framework of the United Nations Inter-Agency Issue-Based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change for Europe and Central Asia.

*World Health Organization (WHO)*

103. ECE and WHO/Europe continue to jointly provide secretariat services for the Protocol on Water and Health and THE PEP. The ECE and WHO/Europe secretariats are in constant communication to coordinate the activities. ECE is also represented in the Bureau of the European Environment and Health Task Force, serviced by WHO under the European Environment and Health Process.

104. THE PEP was also represented at the side event "The Health Argument for Climate Action: The COP26 Health Programme", led by WHO headquarters, which took place on 9 November 2021 in person and online.

105. The ECE Environment subprogramme is also actively working with WHO/Europe in the European Environment and Health Process and the EPR Programme, where WHO provides an expert to draft a chapter in some country reviews.

106. The Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA secretariat cooperates closely with WHO for the implementation in particular of the Protocol that requires consultation of health authorities in SEA. In 2021, joint efforts continued to finalize draft guidance for the assessment of health impacts that was prepared with funding from the European Investment Bank (EIB).

107. WHO contributes to the work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators when relevant.

*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*

108. The ECE Strategy for ESD is implemented in close cooperation with UNESCO, the lead agency for the Global Action Programme, as a key partner in the Partnership Network for its implementation, including the joint activities carried out in the framework of the first priority action area on advancing policy. For the reporting period UNESCO also continued to participate in the work of the ECE Steering Committee on ESD and its Bureau.

109. ECE and UNESCO are the custodian agencies for SDG indicator 6.5.2.

110. UNESCO also contributed to the work under the Aarhus Convention to promote access to environmental information and cooperation with judiciary and other review bodies on these matters.

*United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*

111. UNDP offices and Resident Coordinators in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan supported the EPR Programme in substantive and logistics matters, including for the national launch of the 3<sup>rd</sup> EPR of Uzbekistan and the country review mission in Azerbaijan. Also, UNDP is supporting organization of activities on the national level, in particular, implementation of the ECE MEAs and other environmental policy instruments.

112. ECE and UNDP cooperate on the joint implementation of several GEF-funded projects in transboundary basins under the Water Convention, particularly in the Chu Talas, Dniester, Drin and Neman River basins.

113. ECE also cooperates with UNDP, for promoting the implementation of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, with funding from the EU4Environment programme.

114. Several activities supported by UNDP in Albania, Belarus and other countries aimed to advance the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs.

*United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD)*

115. Cooperation with the UNSD continues on the monitoring and reporting of SDG indicator 6.5.2 for which ECE acts as co-custodian agency, together with UNESCO.

116. UNSD participates routinely in the activities and meetings of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators and the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment.

*Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)*

117. The Protocol on SEA secretariat has worked closely with OSCE to assist Kazakhstan Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in reforming their national legislation in accordance with the Convention and the Protocol on SEA. In 2019-2021, OSCE and the secretariat also jointly implement a project for the development mainly of strategic environmental assessment systems in all the five Central Asian countries, with the funding mainly from Germany, and co-funding from Switzerland and ECE. In each country, national awareness raising workshops were held and detailed action plans based on needs assessment studies were finalized. In November 2021, a final subregional conference was organized to share experience and discuss lessons learned.

118. The Industrial Accidents Convention will continue its cooperation with OSCE and OECD in capacity-development to strengthen industrial and tailings safety in Central Asia.



119. The Aarhus Convention secretariat also maintained close cooperation with OSCE that supported the work of the Aarhus Centres and other capacity-building activities under the Convention and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Register.

*Other partners*

120. Under the European Union funded EU4Environment project 2019-2022 ECE (the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA secretariat) cooperates with the European Commission, OECD, UNEP, UNIDO, UNDP and the World Bank.

121. The Industrial Accidents Convention will continue fostering inter-agency cooperation with a range of international organizations, through the Inter-agency coordination group on industrial accidents and its contributions to the meetings under the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC). It will continue its close cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). It will further pursue joint implementation with OECD and the UNEP/OCHA Joint Unit, as well as the EU Joint Research Centre in the implementation of a joint Natural-hazard triggered technological accidents (Natech)-III project, to develop a guidance on Natech risk management. To foster synergies in advocacy and the implementation of assistance activities, regional partners will continue to be engaged, such as the Commonwealth for Independent States (CIS) Inter-State Council for Industrial Safety, and the Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction for Central Asia.

122. The European Environment Agency (EEA) is involved in the activities of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, including, but not limited, in the implementation of SEIS in Europe and Central Asia. EEA is engaged, as part of a common approach between the ECE, EEA and UNEP, in supporting national, regional and global reporting on the state of the environment. EEA has also provided financial support to the Working Group and Joint Task Force in the past. The cooperation with the EEA also focuses on supporting integration of environmental information systems in e-government and open data domestic frameworks and digitalization in the environmental field.

123. Other important partners outside the United Nations system are OECD (for the Protocol on PRTRs, the EfE process, and in conjunction with the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI)), the European Commission and the Regional Environmental Centres (RECs). OECD participates in the activities of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators and the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment on green growth-related work. OECD also contributed to the development of the pan-European environmental assessment. ECE is represented in the Bureau of the GREEN Action Programme Task Force, serviced by OECD under the Environment for Europe process. The Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA secretariat also cooperates with the Nuclear Energy Agency of OECD.

124. The European ECO Forum and its members are active partners in the work of the Committee, MEAs, ESD, THE PEP and in the EfE process.

125. The Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health are cooperating, among others, with UN-Water, WHO and its Regional Office for Europe, the European Investment Bank, Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNESCO, international river basins commissions, such as the Rhine, Danube, Okavango (OKACOM), Chu Talas, Niger, Senegal, Volta commissions, the International Network of Basin Organizations, OSCE, OECD, the Global Water Partnership, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation, the African Network of Basin

Organizations, the Economic Communities of Central African and West African States, the Southern African Development Community, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Stockholm International Water Institute, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Organization of American States (OAS), the World Bank, the World Wildlife Fund, Green Cross International, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

126. The secretariat to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA exchange information and cooperate regularly with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regarding transboundary environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment of nuclear energy-related activities, including through commenting draft guidance documents or attending meetings, workshops or capacity building events.

127. In 2021, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol kicked-off an activity funded by Italy to facilitate synergies, coordination and cooperation with relevant regional seas conventions and bodies to protect marine environment and coastal zones, focusing on the Mediterranean Sea and also covering the Arctic, Baltic and Caspian Seas and the North-East Atlantic marine regions. This activity involves close cooperation with the following bodies and secretariats: the Arctic Council and its Working Group for the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment; Helsinki Commission servicing the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention); the OSPAR Commission for the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention); and UNEP for the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the Barcelona Convention) and Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention).

128. The secretariat of the Aarhus Convention continuously pursues a close cooperation with a number of partner organizations, including OSCE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNDP, OHCHR, including Special Rapporteur on the environment; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; and Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes; EEA, CBD secretariat, secretariat of UNEP MAP and Barcelona Convention and secretariats of other MEAs; international financial institutions such as the World Bank Group, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank, and the European ECO Forum.

129. ECE has worked with UNEP, OSCE, OHCHR and other partner organizations in supporting cooperation of judiciary, judicial training institutions and other independent review bodies in the pan-European region (in support of target 16.3 of SDG 16).

130. Furthermore, the secretariat also pursued cooperation with UNEP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on environmental human rights defenders and cooperated with partners within the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals to assist Governments to implement different international obligations related to chemicals management.

131. Secretariat cooperates closely with OECD, UNEP, GEF and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) as to build capacities of Governments in the area of chemicals management.

132. Since 2016 ECE has been an observer to the Inter-State Council on Industrial Safety under Commonwealth of Independent States and has regularly attended the meetings of the Council.

133. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) participates in the activities of the Water Convention and the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, when relevant.

134. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) office in Romania supported the EPR Programme in logistics matters related to the 3<sup>rd</sup> EPR of Romania.

---