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High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON TRANSPORT,
ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. As a follow-up to the London Charter on Transport, Environment and Health, adopted at the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (London, 16 -18 June 1999), the secretariats of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and of the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Euro) convened a High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health (Geneva, 4 May 2001) to decide upon further steps needed to achieve transport that is sustainable for health and the environment. As a basis for the decision making, the High-level Meeting considered a Synthesis Report¹ jointly prepared by the two secretariats recommending in particular to start negotiations on a new international legal instrument, i.e. a Framework Convention on Transport, Environment and Health. It was recommended in parallel to further develop a number of existing international instruments and their implementation as well as to strive for a closer cooperation between other relevant organizations and projects.

¹ Overview of Instruments Relevant to Transport, Environment and Health and Recommendations for Further Steps; Synthesis Report (ECE/AC.21/2001/1 - EUR/00/5026094/1). (www.unece.org/poja or www.who.it/ht/teh.htm)

2. The High-level Meeting was also requested to decide on the proposal of the two secretariats to rationalize work at the international level in the fields of transport, environment and health².
3. The meeting was attended by delegates from the following 40 Member countries of UNECE and WHO/Euro, including nine Ministers or Deputy Ministers coming from the transport, environment and health sectors: Albania; Austria; Azerbaijan; Belgium; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Canada; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Israel; Italy; Kazakhstan; Latvia; Malta; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Republic of Moldova; Romania; Russian Federation; Slovak Republic; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; The Former Republic of Macedonia; Turkey; Ukraine; United Kingdom; United States of America; Yugoslavia. The meeting was also attended by representatives from the following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Trade Organization (WTO), European Commission, European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT), European Environment Agency (EEA), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Regional Environmental Center (REC), European Cyclist Federation (ECF), International Road Federation (IRF), International Road Transport Union (IRU), European Federation for Transport and the Environment (T&E), International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE).
4. The meeting adopted its agenda and elected as Chairman Mr. Heinz SCHREIBER, Director General, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Austria.
5. Participants were welcomed by Ms. Danuta HÜBNER, United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Executive Secretary of the UNECE as well as by Dr. Marc DANZON, Director of the WHO/Euro.
6. The opening speeches were followed by a ministerial panel discussing the issue of transport sustainable for health and the environment: key challenges and future actions. This panel was chaired by Mr. Jan PRONK, Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, Netherlands. Mr. Luybomil IVANOV, Deputy Minister of Transport and Communications, Bulgaria; Mrs. Ana STAVLJENIC-RUKAVINA, Minister of Health, Croatia; Mr. Michael VIT, Deputy Minister of Health, Czech Republic; Mr. Antoly NASOMOV, First Deputy Minister of

² Conference Room Paper, 25 April 2001, Rationalization of Work at the International Level in the Fields of Transport, Environment and Health

Transport, Russian Federation; Mrs. Jozica MAUCEC ZAKOTNIK, State Secretary of Health, Slovenia; Mr. Marko SLOKAR, State Secretary of Environment and Spatial Planning, Slovenia; Mr. Ivan ZAYETS, Minister of Environment, Ukraine and Mr. Olesandr MOMOT, Deputy Minister of Transport, Ukraine participated in the panel.

7. Participants in the Ministerial panels expressed, in principle, support to the recommendation of starting the negotiation of a Framework convention on transport, environment and health. They also stressed that the transboundary nature of many of the environment and health impacts of transport requires stronger international co-operation and greater integration of sectoral policies. Other issues highlighted by the panelists included: the importance of supporting countries in transition in their efforts to improve the environmental performance of vehicles and fuels, the need for enhanced international co-operation on issues affecting European transport corridors, the need to increase capacity in implementing the principles of sustainable development, the threat posed by transport infrastructure development to biodiversity, as well as the growing problem of greenhouse gases emission from transport and the importance of promoting modes of transport that increase physical activity through walking and cycling.

8. In summing up the discussions of the ministerial panel, Mr. Pronk, referred to the “shameful figures” in current transport patterns in terms of health and the environment which had been taken up by the Ministers as well as by Ms. Hübner and Dr. Danzon. As to the necessary action to tackle these challenges, the panel recommended a two-track approach consisting of implementation of the existing instruments and of simultaneously initiating new forward-looking and more effective action. Much emphasis was put on promoting integration of transport, environment and health concerns, through legally binding action.

II. FURTHER STEPS FOR MAKING TRANSPORT SUSTAINABLE FOR HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT AND RATIONALIZATION OF FURTHER WORK: CONCLUSIONS OF THE CHAIRMAN

9. The meeting commended the UNECE and WHO/Euro secretariats on the joint Synthesis Report, Overview of Instruments Relevant to Transport, Environment and Health and Recommendations for Further Steps (ECE/AC.21/2001/1- EUR/00/502609/1) as well as on the proposal to rationalize the further work as contained in Conference room paper of 25 April 2001.

10. In the plenary session the delegations informed the meeting on their position with respect to the recommendations of the above documents. In parallel to the plenary session, a drafting group was established to prepare conclusions for adoption by the meeting.

11. Prior to the adoption of the “Decisions and Recommendations by the High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health”(see annex), the Chairman resumed the main points made in the plenary session as follows:

- (a) The commitments made by the Ministers in Vienna and in London should be honored.
- (b) There is a broad support for more effective work towards achieving transport sustainable for health and the environment.
- (c) New political action is seen as a necessity for moving issues forward.
- (d) There is still insufficient agreement on what is the most adequate action to be taken.
- (e) No time should be wasted (no slow-track solutions).
- (f) A two-track approach is to be favored of focusing on existing instruments and yet taking further steps.
- (g) On the basis of the background information available it is not possible, at present, to agree on whether to start negotiations of a Framework convention on transport, environment and health. Thus further clarifications are needed.
- (h) There seems however to be agreement on the merits of an overarching international framework to foster integration of transport, environment and health.
- (i) In addition to the existing UNECE instruments to be implemented and/or further developed as listed in the Synthesis report, particular attention should be given to the:
 - Agreement Concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions for Periodical Technical Inspections of Wheeled Vehicles and the Reciprocal Recognition of such Inspections, of 13 November 1997 (Entry into force: 27 January 2001);
 - Agreements and Recommendations related to the international carriage of dangerous goods.
- (j) There is an agreement on the need to rationalize the existing international institutional mechanisms established under the Vienna and London follow-up processes and on prioritization of the related work as laid out in the Conference Room Paper of 25 April 2001.
- (k) Final decisions on the recommendations and proposals made by the secretariats should be taken at a second High-level Meeting to be convened in summer 2002 prior to the Rio + 10 World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2-11 September 2002).

Annex

**DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
ADOPTED BY THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON TRANSPORT,
ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH
(Geneva, 4 May 2001)**

The High-level Meeting,

RECOGNIZING the efforts already undertaken by transport, environment and health sectors both at national and international levels for achieving transport sustainable for health and the environment;

NOTING that these efforts have led in 1997 to the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Joint Action on Transport and Environment, and in 1999 to the London Charter on Transport, Environment and Health;

AWARE of the need to reinforce the cooperative efforts as well as to take further steps to create the impetus needed for achieving these goals;

RECALLING the relevant provisions of the London Charter on Transport, Environment and Health by which WHO and UNECE had been invited, jointly and in cooperation with other international organizations, to provide an overview of relevant existing agreements and legal instruments on transport, environment and health with a view to improving and harmonizing their implementation and developing them further; these organizations were invited also to recommend which further steps are needed for making transport sustainable for environment and health, covering also “ *the possibility of new non-legally binding actions and the feasibility, necessity and content of a new legally binding instrument on transport, environment and health focusing on bringing added value to, and avoiding overlaps with existing agreements*”;

RECALLING that the London Declaration further requested *inter alia* that “ *the decision on negotiation of such an instrument shall be taken as soon as possible after the submission of the report, at a meeting of Ministers of Transport, Environment and Health of Member States or their representatives, convened for that purpose by WHO and UNECE*”;

HAVING APPRECIATED the preparation of the comprehensive Synthesis Report: "Overview of Instruments Relevant to Transport, Environment and Health" which presents in general the major trends in transport developments as well as the impacts of transport on human health and the environment, and which then focuses on a number of key challenges and reviews the relevant international response to date in these areas, concluding by recommendations on next steps to be taken;

WELCOMING the cooperative and consultative arrangements made during the London follow-up process by the WHO/Euro and UNECE secretariats using joint meetings and informal working groups to allow interested member States and international organizations to provide guidance during this process;

RECOGNIZING the considerable work undertaken by the WHO/Euro and UNECE secretariats without supplementary resources and in addition to the existing programmes of work as well as the considerable input from a large number of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations;

1. **WELCOMES** the assessment of priorities for further work identified in the Synthesis Report, especially (a) the integration of the transport, environment and health sectors, in particular in relation to decision-making processes, monitoring and impact assessment, (b) transport-related environment and health problems in urban areas, applicable to a great extent to sensitive areas, as well as to transport corridors with heavy traffic and major transport infrastructure, and (c) the needs and role of pedestrians and cyclists participating in transport;

2. With a view to increasing visibility, quality and impact of these and other future activities in the fields of transport, environment and health as well as to ensure cost-effective use of limited resources available both at national and international levels; **ENDORSES** the approach on rationalization of the existing international institutional mechanisms established under the Vienna and London follow-up processes and on prioritisation of the related work as laid out in the Conference Room Paper of 25 April 2001; **REQUESTS** the appropriate bodies to take up the matter at their next sessions with the aim of finalizing the recommendations at the High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health in 2002;

3. **CALLS UPON** the Contracting Parties to existing international agreements and legal instruments related to transport, environment and health, particularly those identified in the Synthesis Report, to further enhance implementation of those instruments and to further develop them with a view to achieving transport sustainable for the environment and health;
 4. **INVITES** the concerned international organizations to further enhance cooperation as well as coordination of all activities in the fields of transport, environment and health, particularly those identified in the Synthesis Report, as well as in the London Charter and Vienna Programme of Joint Action;
 5. **DECIDES** that further preparatory work to be able to decide whether to start negotiations of a Framework Convention, including the specific task of identifying the possible elements of such an instrument, shall be carried out at the international level by a tripartite task force to be established within the framework of the London and Vienna follow-up processes, as soon as possible. NGO's and other stakeholders will be invited as observers to the meetings of this task force. A progress report on this tripartite process should be submitted to regional ministerial meetings (such as the regional preparatory meeting for the Johannesburg summit in September 2001). Further decision should be taken at the second High-level Meeting on Transport, Environment and Health to be convened in 2002, prior to the Johannesburg summit;
 6. **INVITES** the WHO/Euro and the UNECE secretariats to review all possibilities for ensuring the secretariat services required for the effective implementation of these decisions and recommendations, including seeking extra-budgetary funding and redeployment of resources.
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