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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

Fiftieth session  
(Provisional agenda item 6(a))

**COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENT  
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

(Commission decision F (49))

Report by the Executive Secretary

1. The programme of work adopted by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its first session in May 1994 contains a programme activity 01.3 "Promotion of Sustainable Development". At its special session held on 31 October-1 November 1994, the Committee took note of the preliminary analysis of problems and bottlenecks in the ECE activities in the field of environment and sustainable development as identified by the secretariat in document CEP/R.1, and invited the Bureau of the Committee with the assistance of the secretariat to revise this document on the basis of comments from delegations, for submission to the Commission with a recommendation contained in paragraph 8 (b)(i) to (iv) of ECE/CEP/8. The revised report on problems and bottlenecks will be submitted to the Commission at its fiftieth session under document symbol ECE/CEP/12 (paragraphs 3 and 4 of decision F (49)). The Committee at its first session took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the resource implications of the ECE Action Plan to implement Agenda 21.

2. The Senior Governmental Officials, the central coordinating body for the further development of the "Environment for Europe" process, oversees the follow-up to the Lucerne 1993 Conference and supervises the substantive preparations for the Ministerial Conference to be held in Sofia (Bulgaria) in October 1995. An outline has been agreed upon for the Environmental Programme for Europe (EPE) to be developed on the basis of the "Europe's Environment 1993" report prepared by the European Commission in cooperation with the ECE. The drafting of individual EPE chapters is underway with financial assistance

from the EC/PHARE. The preparations of draft guidelines is under completion on access to environmental information and public participation in environmental decision-making. At their fourth session to be held on 13-15 February 1995, the Senior Governmental Officials are expected, in particular, to draw up a provisional agenda for the Sofia Conference and an outline for the draft ministerial declaration. An Environmental Policy Section has been established in the Environment and Human Settlements Division to support the follow-up to the Lucerne Conference. Some member Governments made contributions to the TFACT and/or the Trust Fund on Environmental Performance Reviews and "Environment for Europe" earmarked for the preparations for the Sofia Conference. Several member Governments, UNEP and the European Community provided or pledged support in cash or in kind to the host country for the organization of the Conference (paragraphs 5, 6 and 8 of decision F (49)).

3. Following a Workshop on environmental performance reviews, organized in cooperation with OECD in May 1994, the Committee on Environmental Policy at its first session decided to pursue its cooperation with OECD for the pilot OECD reviews of Poland, Belarus and Bulgaria, and to undertake a pilot ECE review of Estonia under the capacity-building process within the ECE. The ECE secretariat cooperated with the OECD secretariat at all stages of the pilot OECD review of Poland in 1993-1994. It participated in the OECD pre-mission to Bulgaria in December 1994 and two members of the secretariat are expected to be included in the OECD review team for Bulgaria (April 1995). A pre-mission to Estonia was held in October 1994 and an ECE review mission to this country will be held on 9-21 May 1995 with the participation of experts from the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ukraine and members of the ECE secretariat (including consultants). Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden made or pledged contributions for the ECE review programme. At its second session in May 1995, the Committee will consider the issue of the transfer of responsibility for the pilot reviews from OECD to the ECE and the peer review mechanism for the Estonia pilot review (paragraph 7 of decision F (49)).

4. At its special session in autumn 1994, the Committee on Environmental Policy urged delegations to ensure that the role of environmental representatives was sufficiently prominent in the preparatory process for the Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment and stressed the need to elect a PrepCom vice-chairman representing environmental interests and involving environmental non-governmental organizations. A secretariat report prepared for the fourth session of the Senior Governmental Officials "Environment for Europe" covers integration of environmental policy with transport policy (paragraphs 9 and 10 of decision F (49)).

5. Seven member countries have ratified or acceded to the 1991 Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context. Six member countries have ratified or acceded to the 1992 Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents. Eight member countries have ratified or acceded to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (paragraph 11 of decision F (49)).

6. Under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution a new protocol for the further reduction of sulphur emissions was adopted and signed by 26 Parties to the Convention in Oslo in June 1994. That Protocol contains provisions for differentiated obligations among countries, taking into account environmental damage and cost-effective, optimized abatement strategies for the region as a whole. On the occasion of the session in Oslo, a ministerial declaration was adopted, spelling out the determination of Ministers and Senior officials for the Environment from ECE countries and the European Community, inter alia,

- To make every effort to accelerate the negotiations on a second step to the 1988 Protocol concerning the Control of Emissions of Nitrogen Oxides or their Transboundary Fluxes to further reduce the emissions of nitrogen compounds, including ammonia, and if appropriate, volatile organic compounds, in view of their contribution to photochemical pollution, acidification and eutrophication, and their effects on human health, the environment and materials, by addressing all significant emission sources;
- To negotiate an international agreement for the control of those persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals from anthropogenic activities which pose a risk to human health and the environment, including the sensitive Arctic environment;
- To ratify without undue delay the Protocol concerning the Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds or their Transboundary Fluxes to ensure its early entry into force, and to develop the necessary further steps.

The Protocol on the control of emissions of nitrogen oxides was signed in Sofia in 1988 and has been in force since 1991. It has 25 Parties, the Protocol concerning the Control of Emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds or their Transboundary Fluxes was signed in Geneva in 1991. It has so far been ratified by 11 Parties to the Convention (paragraph 12 of decision F (49)).