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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring

(First session, 27-29 June 2001)

(Item 2 of the provisional agenda)

CONSULTATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Note by the Chairman

1. The consultation on environmental monitoring was held in Obninsk near Moscow (Russian Federation) on 22-23 January 2001 at the invitation of the Chairman of the UN/ECE Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring. Its aim was to better organize the activities of the Working Group and to prepare its first session. Denmark and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provided financial support for the consultation.
2. Messrs. Ch. Adam (European Environment Agency (EEA)), P. Bosch (EEA), V. Cheljukonov (Russian Federation), M. De Cort (European Commission, Environment Institute), P. Cocirta (Republic of Moldova), T. M. Iversen (Denmark), M. Kokine (UN/ECE), S. Kolotusha (Ukraine), A. Konoplev (Russian Federation), T. Lack (European Topic Centre on Inland Waters), Ch. Schlueter (Germany), V. Shershakov (Russian Federation), D. Stanners (EEA), G. Strongylis (European Commission), Mr. Yu. Tsaturov (Russian Federation), D. Zimin (Russian Federation) and J. Zurek (Poland) attended.
3. The consultation was preceded by a round table on "Russia and the Pan-European Environmental Assessment Report of 2002". Participants discussed environmental monitoring and information in the Russian Federation, exchanged views on the structure and content of the pan-European report, and considered the possibilities for using the preparation of the pan-European report to improve environmental monitoring and information systems in the Russian Federation. During the round table Messrs. D. Stanners and P. Bosch, Yu. Tsaturov (Federal

Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring of the Russian Federation), O. Novosselova and A. Shekhovtsov (Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation), V. Chiburaev (Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation), Z. Volkova (Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation), V. Rodin (State Committee of the Russian Federation on Statistics) and V. Golubev (State Committee of the Russian Federation on Construction, Housing and Municipal Services) made presentations.

4. The participants shared information on the latest developments of relevance to the Working Group, including developments in EEA, the European Commission's Environment Institute, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the UN/ECE environmental conventions and the Arctic monitoring programme. They considered a new 1.5-million-euro Tacis environmental monitoring project to be of high importance for the Working Group's activities. They proposed that Tacis staff from the European Commission responsible for the project or project implementing agency(ies), if designated by that time, should be invited to brief the Working Group, at its first session, on project development.

5. The participants were informed about the designation of Working Group members – national focal points in UN/ECE countries – in response to the circular letter of 6 December 2000 from the UN/ECE secretariat. It was proposed that the upcoming meeting of EEA national coordinators should facilitate the designation process and help to avoid possible duplication among national focal points and national coordinators.

6. The participants welcomed the creation by the UN/ECE secretariat of a web site on the activities of the Working Group (http://www.unece.org/env/europe/environmental_monitoring.htm).

7. The Chairman of the Working Group introduced a note, prepared in cooperation with the UN/ECE secretariat, on practical steps to implement the work plan of the Working Group. The note contained proposals on the organization of the Working Group's sessions, the development of individual elements of the work plan, the creation of specific task forces and expert groups, the involvement of other international networks, and on financial aspects. The participants discussed this note section by section, where appropriate together with papers prepared by EEA on the Kiev assessment report, on water monitoring, on tools and guidelines, and on remote sensing, as well as with written proposals by Poland on the monitoring of hazardous substances and by the Russian Federation on the "Information environment".

8. The discussions held in Obninsk facilitated the preparation of a document on practical steps to implement the work plan, for consideration by the Working Group at its first session (CEP/AC.10/2001/4).

9. The consultation's participants considered that, without the active participation of NIS experts from newly Independent States (NIS), the Working Group would fail to achieve its goals. They stressed that extrabudgetary funds should also be raised to support the activities of the proposed task forces and possible additional expert groups. The participants welcomed the

confirmation by Mr. Iversen that Denmark would cover the travel and subsistence costs of experts from NIS and those central European countries that were not covered by existing EEA networks, so that they could take part in the Working Group's activities.