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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring

REPORT ON THE MEETING

1. The fourth session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring was held in Geneva on 4-5 September 2003.
2. The meeting was attended by delegations from: Albania; Armenia; Austria; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Belgium; Bulgaria; Czech Republic; Denmark; Finland; Georgia; Germany; Hungary; Italy; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Poland; Republic of Moldova; Romania; Russian Federation; Slovenia; Spain; Tajikistan; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Turkmenistan; Ukraine; United States of America; Uzbekistan; and Yugoslavia.
3. It was attended by representatives of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC)/Institute for Environment and Sustainability and the European Environment Agency (EEA).
4. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Meteorological Synthesizing Centre East of EMEP (EMEP/MSCE) attended. The following Regional Environmental Centers (RECs) were represented: REC Caucasus, REC for Central Asia, REC Moldova and REC Russia. The European non-governmental organization ECO-Forum (represented by Eco-Accord) also attended.
5. Mr. Yu. Tsaturov (Russian Federation) chaired the meeting.
6. The Working Group adopted the agenda of its fourth session and the report of its third session as contained in documents CEP/AC.10/2003/1 and CEP/AC.10/2002/15, respectively.

I. FOLLOW-UP TO THE KIEV MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

7. The Chairman informed the Working Group about the presentation that he had made at the fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Kiev, Ukraine, 21-23 May 2003) and the Conference’s results on environmental monitoring and assessment (CEP/AC.10/2003/3). He referred, in particular, to the endorsement by the Ministers in Kiev of the Recommendations on Strengthening National Environmental Monitoring and Information Systems in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (ECE/CEP/109) and the Guidelines for the Preparation of Governmental Reports on the State and Protection of the Environment (ECE/CEP/113), which had been prepared by the Working Group. He also stated that the Kiev Ministerial Conference, in its Declaration, had supported the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and had stressed the need to further develop the cooperation framework provided by it.

8. A representative of OECD reported on the Environmental Partnership Strategy for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) adopted by the Kiev Conference and about plans to implement it with the international bodies concerned. He drew the attention of the Working Group to the Strategy’s key environmental monitoring and information management objective, and invited the Working Group to come up with concrete action to achieve it. The representatives of RECs and ECO-Forum reported on their plans to contribute to the Strategy’s implementation, including its monitoring and information component.

9. Delegations from countries with economies in transition to a market economy reported on their national initiatives to follow up “Kiev” decisions on environmental monitoring and assessments. They indicated their countries’ expectations from the Working Group, which would include the preparation of a strategy to guide and harmonize national monitoring and assessment efforts, assistance in the preparation of indicator-based environmental reports and the development of methodologies for specific types of monitoring (air emissions, waste-water discharges, drinking water quality, chemicals and waste).

10. All speakers recognized the rationale for continuing and even widening the scope of the Working Group’s activities. They underlined its particular role in the future as facilitator to achieve the environmental monitoring and information management objectives of the EECCA Environmental Strategy. In view of the importance of environmental assessments, as recognized by the Ministers in Kiev, many members of the Working Group held the view that the assessment component had to be explicitly reflected in the title of the Working Group. In this regard, some delegations favoured a focus on state-of-the-environment assessments alone, while many others preferred to cover also assessments of the effectiveness of environmental protection measures, as had been stressed by Ministers in Kiev. A number of speakers highlighted the role that the Working Group should play in appraising national and international monitoring and assessment requirements, including obligations under multilateral environmental agreements.

11. Several speakers held the view that the Working Group should cooperate closely with environmental NGOs and the private sector. Many delegations thanked the Government of Denmark and the European Commission for the financial support provided to the Working Group and stressed the need to ensure the continuation of donor support. Some EECCA delegations proposed that their Environment Ministers should send letters to the European Commission requesting financial support for the Working Group.

12. The Working Group took note of the information provided, and revised its terms of reference and changed its name to Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment on the basis of document CEP/AC.10/2003/4, for submission to the Committee on Environmental Policy and adoption. i

II. PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH ASSESSMENT REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

13. Representatives of EEA informed the Working Group about meetings organized in various UNECE countries to promote the Kiev Assessment and about plans to publish the Russian version by the end of 2003. They reported on plans to start consultations in 2004 on the post-Kiev assessment report to be finalized by the end of 2006 or 2007, depending on the precise dates of the next Ministerial Conference. They stressed the willingness of EEA to cooperate closely again with the Working Group in the report's preparation.

14. The Chairman informed the Working Group about the brainstorming meeting that had been organized jointly by UNECE and EEA on 3 September 2003 in Geneva with the participation of selected experts in their personal capacity. The issues that had been raised included the following:

(a) Wider use of the *Kiev Assessment* in EECCA by, for instance: uploading data sets collected for the report on national web sites; the organization by Environment Ministries, once the report had been published in Russian, of broad national discussions, with all governmental bodies concerned, business and industry, and NGOs, of the report's findings and the application of recommendations and guidelines developed by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring to improve data collection and reporting in EECCA; the preparation by Environment Ministries of proposals for submission to their national Governments on improving environmental management and increasing environmental expenditures;

(b) Strengthening further the monitoring and reporting capacities of EECCA countries by, inter alia: improving the collection of primary data in such areas as pollution sources, air and water quality, and chemicals; strengthening national monitoring networks and adapting these to policy requirements, including international commitments (e.g. Millennium and Johannesburg goals); harmonizing EECCA approaches, methods and concepts, including data quality assessment protocols, with those applied in countries with developed market economies; improving environmental reporting using internationally agreed indicators following the EEA Environmental Signals; building sustainable networks of governmental and non-governmental organizations to promote the sharing of environmental data within EECCA and beyond; improving the use of modern information technologies for data handling and reporting via the Internet; and achieving objective 6.1 of the Environmental Partnership Strategy for EECCA;

(c) Improving the international comparability of environmental information in priority areas by, for instance: streamlining and harmonizing environmental data flows in the UNECE region, starting with national environmental reporting according to international obligations; making data sharing and accessibility arrangements between international organizations and institutions collecting environmental data in the UNECE region; developing a region-wide core set of environmental indicators to use as a basis for data flows; the preparation

by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring of a strategic framework document to improve both national and pan-European environmental monitoring and assessment that would include, among other things, a concept of a sustainable monitoring network;

(d) The needs, when preparing the next environmental assessment report, in particular: to agree, first, on a set of indicators for which country data would be collected; to involve EECCA experts in addition to consultants in data collection; to limit data collection to the report's actual requirements to avoid the burdensome collection of primary data of no use for the assessment report itself; to avoid presenting average subregional indicators when these would hide substantive differences among countries within the same subregion; to avoid comparisons (e.g. urban air pollution) when different methodologies, standards or physical and meteorological conditions prevail; to deviate from the structure that was used in the first three reports by making it "lighter" and better targeted; to assess countries' progress in achieving environmental targets with indicators; to use the results of countries' environmental performance reviews; to use the results of the assessment of progress in the implementation of the Environmental Partnership Strategy for EECCA; to consider selecting two or three areas (e.g. local environmental health, chemicals or waste management) for in-depth analysis in EECCA countries.

15. The Working Group took note of the information provided and invited EEA to inform it, at its fifth session, about developments in the preparations for the post-Kiev assessment report.

III. STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION AND OBSERVATION CAPACITY IN EASTERN EUROPE, THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

16. A representative of EEA reported on the overall progress in the implementation of the Tacis project on strengthening environmental information and observation capacity in the 12 EECCA countries. The secretariat introduced its note on progress made in individual activities under the work plan (CEP/AC.10/2003/5) and presented some preliminary ideas about follow-up activities in 2004 in areas such as electronic environmental reporting and indicators.

A. Tools and guidelines

17. In the absence of the Chairman of the Task Force on Tools and Guidelines, the secretariat informed the Working Group about the outcome of the Workshop on Environmental Networking and Information Systems held in Obninsk, Russian Federation, on 2-3 June 2003 to train EECCA focal points for environmental information technology in using the electronic tools and guidelines developed by EEA. The secretariat reported also on progress in the delivery of computer equipment, software and other support to the designated EECCA institutions, in the development of an electronic database containing details of the officials responsible for the main environmental data flows and information systems, and in the establishment of an electronic catalogue containing descriptions of environmental data sources in EECCA, including governmental agencies, reports and databases and providing electronic links to many of them.

18. Representatives of the secretariat of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters reported on the activities of a task force, established by the Meeting of the Parties, to facilitate the

implementation of the Convention by preparing draft recommendations to make the use of electronic information tools more effective to provide public access to environmental information.

B. Air emission inventories

19. The delegation of Kazakhstan and EMEP/MSC-E informed the Working Group about the outcome of two national workshops on emission inventories and modelling held in Almaty (Kazakhstan) on 26-28 May 2003 and the preparations for two subsequent international workshops to be held in the same city on 8-10 October 2003. They reported on the preparation, in close cooperation with EMEP centres, of a report on air pollution monitoring and modelling and air emission inventories in Kazakhstan as well as the recommendations to Kazakhstan and other EECCA countries that are new Parties to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution for strengthening their capacities to monitor air pollution and comply with their data collection and reporting obligations under the Convention. The secretariat reported on a planned follow-up to this activity to be pursued in Central Asia from 2004 onwards.

C. Inland water monitoring

20. A representative of EEA reported on progress in the Tacis inland waters subproject, led by the European Topic Centre on Water (ETC/Water), on the following elements: the preparation of an overview of the inland surface water monitoring activities in EECCA; an inventory of existing water databases; establishing an EECCA water network of national coordinators and reference institutions within the project; assessing EECCA countries' river networks, evaluating them with EUROWATERNET criteria and selecting basic stations for EUROWATERNET in each EECCA country; assessing basic needs and preparing recommendations for improvements.

D. Waste inventories and classifications

21. The delegation of Georgia reported on the outcome of the first workshop held in Tbilisi on 7-8 July 2003 to assess the current situation in the Caucasian States with data collection and reporting on waste, and the use of indicators. It also informed the Working Group about the preparations for the second workshop (Tbilisi, 2-3 October 2003) intended to prepare recommendations to EECCA countries for improving national waste classification systems, routine waste data collection and reporting through the use of indicators on waste and material flows that are compatible with those applied in EEA countries.

E. Environmental indicators and reporting

22. A representative of EEA reported on the results of the EEA/UNECE Workshop on Environmental Indicators and Networking held in Geneva on 24-25 February 2003.

23. The secretariat circulated the publication on Environmental Monitoring and Reporting in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (ECE/CEP/118), introduced a review of the current situation with the use of environmental indicators in EECCA (CEP/AC.10/2003/6) and informed the Working Group about the outcome of the Workshop on Environmental Indicators for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia held near St. Petersburg (Russian Federation)

on 27-28 June 2003. The Workshop had prepared, on the basis of an EEA indicator list, a core set of environmental indicators for use in EECCA countries to improve national reporting and to facilitate international comparisons and the preparation of assessment reports for ministerial "Environment for Europe" conferences. The secretariat reported also on the preparation of a trial compendium to demonstrate the possibility of reporting in EECCA countries on indicators included in the core set that accounted for the interaction between economic and sectoral policy, on the one hand, and environmental policy, on the other.

24. The delegation of Armenia presented an extended outline of the state-of-the-environment report that this country was preparing following the above-mentioned UNECE Guidelines for the Preparation of Governmental Reports on the State and Protection of the Environment endorsed by Ministers in Kiev. It reported on a kick-off meeting held on 30 June–4 July in Yerevan to discuss the report's structure, the data collection arrangements, work-sharing among members of the national working group preparing the report, the time schedule, etc. National and international experts (Russian Federation, UNECE and UNEP/GRID-Arendal and GRID-Tbilisi) had participated in the meeting. The report would be published in Armenian and Russian by the end of the year and both these and the English version would be posted on the Internet.

F. Remote sensing

25. JRC, lead organization of the Task Force on Remote Sensing, informed the Working Group on the outcome of the Workshop on Remote Sensing Application for Environmental Monitoring, held on 19-20 May 2003 at JRC headquarters in Ispra (Italy). The Workshop had considered practical examples of remote sensing for environmental monitoring in Europe, evaluated the present situation with remote sensing in EECCA countries, and identified critical environmental issues in EECCA where remote sensing data could successfully supplement data collected from ground-level observations. The delegation of Azerbaijan reported on the preparations for the second workshop to be held on 25-26 September 2003 in Baku with the aim of preparing a pilot project proposal for environmental assessments of the Eurasian region using a key set of indicators derived from remote-sensing data.

G. Ensuing discussion and decisions

26. Many delegations raised questions and made comments on the reports submitted. These concerned, in particular, the involvement of individual EECCA countries in specific activities, the accuracy of countries' assessments in the review of the use of indicators in state-of-the-environment reports, criteria for the selection of a core set of indicators for EECCA and its comparability with OECD environmental indicators, the need to link the core set with environmental policy targets, advantages of using existing EMEP guidelines on air pollution reporting, the need of linking the water monitoring project with the Water Initiative, the EU Water Directive and other ongoing international projects, the necessity to verify the preliminary assessment made under the waste classification project with actual baseline conditions in EECCA regarding waste data collection, practicalities of using remote-sensing data for environmental assessments, and the breadth and scope of the analysis in the upcoming state-of-the-environment report in Armenia.

27. It was proposed during the discussion to develop a work plan for capacity-building for the period up to the next ministerial "Environment for Europe" conference. It would address the

main issues of the monitoring and information management component of the EECCA Environment Strategy, including strengthening monitoring networks, developing partnerships (on training, equipment, measurement techniques, etc.) and involving EECCA countries in EEA networks, step by step.

28. The Working Group:

- (a) Took note of the information and reports provided;
- (b) Thanked the lead and host institutions for their valuable inputs to the implementation of its work plan, and invited them and the secretariat to take into account the comments made during the discussion when finalizing planned activities;
- (c) Welcomed the core set of environmental indicators for EECCA, resulting from a joint effort of EEA and UNECE, and proposed to develop guidance on their practical application which would improve comparability and consistency, and facilitate international assessments;
- (d) Invited relevant international organizations and institutions to update the information in the inventory of major international environmental databases (CEP/AC.10/2002/19 and Add.1);
- (e) Invited the secretariat to prepare proposals for activities that the Working Group might undertake to facilitate the implementation of the environmental monitoring and information management provisions of the Environmental Partnership Strategy for EECCA.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

29. The fifth session of the Working Group was preliminarily scheduled to be held on 30 September-1 October 2004 in Geneva.

Note

ⁱ The revised terms of reference are annexed to the note by the secretariat submitted to the Committee on Environmental Policy at its tenth session (CEP/2003/27).