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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring

(First session, 27-29 June 2001)

(Item 3 of the provisional agenda)

PRACTICAL STEPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PLAN

Note by the Chairman of the Working Group^{1/}

I. Long-term goals

1. In accordance with its terms of reference (E/CN.4/74, annex III), the Working Group should serve as an instrument for ECE member States: (a) to provide recommendations, (b) to propose action plans, and (c) to strengthen international initiatives within the region in the area of environmental monitoring.

II. Short-term goals

2. In the short term (2000-early 2003), the Working Group should focus on contributing to the development of the third pan-European assessment report on the environment («Kiev assessment»). It is expected that the Working Group will:

^{1/} Prepared in cooperation with the ECE secretariat.

- (a) Take an active part in the clarification of the key pan-European issues to be addressed in the report;
- (b) Facilitate national data and information reporting to the European Environment Agency (EEA);
- (c) Review the draft report to be prepared by EEA;
- (d) Appraise the difficulties encountered and the needs, primarily of the newly independent States (NIS) and other countries in transition, in collecting and reporting data and information;
- (e) Make recommendations to Governments on how to improve monitoring and reporting on some of the key pan-European issues.

III. Method of work

3. To achieve these goals, it would be appropriate:

- (a) For the Working Group to hold its sessions in line with the major phases in the development of the Kiev assessment;
- (b) To establish a network of national coordinators for the Working Group's activities;
- (c) To entrust task forces, where necessary, with the development of individual elements of the work plan;
- (d) To establish close links with existing international monitoring networks in the ECE region and to involve relevant international organizations and institutions in the Working Group's activities.

A. Working Group sessions

4. The main issues for the future Working Group sessions would be:

<i>Second session (27February - 1 March 2002)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Review of the first analysis for the Kiev assessment; ▶ Consideration of the progress made in the implementation of other elements of the work plan.
<i>Third session (28-30 August 2002)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Review of the draft Kiev assessment report; ▶ Consideration of the progress made in the implementation of other elements of the work plan.

<i>Fourth session (February 2003)</i>	▶ Adoption of the report on the result of the work, including recommendations to Governments, for transmission to the Kiev Ministerial Conference «Environment for Europe».
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B. National coordinators

5. ECE Governments were invited to designate their representatives to the Working Group. The intention is to have the Working Group composed of *senior officials responsible in their countries for environmental monitoring and information*. Members of the Working Group from NIS and other ECE member countries that are not covered by existing EEA networks will be also responsible in their countries for the collection and transmission of data for the Kiev assessment. By the end of March 2001, twenty-four ECE countries including fifteen countries in transition had formally designated members for the Working Group.

C. Task forces

6. The Working Group may establish task forces to prepare analytical studies and reports and draft recommendations on individual elements of the work plan focusing on specific situation in NIS and other countries in transition. These specifics were described in the document on Gaps and Bottlenecks in Environmental Monitoring in Countries in Transition (NEA/ÅN.10/2000/5) submitted by the secretariat to the preparatory meeting last September. Such task forces would consist of experts designated by interested Governments and international institutions.

D. Involvement of international institutions

7. The Working Group includes EEA as active member. The Commission of the European Communities, the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the secretariats of relevant international environmental agreements, the Regional Environmental Center (REC) for Central and Eastern Europe and the European Eco-Forum were invited to participate among others.

IV. Activities

8. The Working Group may wish to consider the practical approach to the implementation of the elements of the work plan, as follows:

A. Task 1: Support to the development of the Kiev assessment report

9. Similar to the two previous assessment reports prepared for the Ministerial Conferences “Environment for Europe”, the Kiev assessment is expected to focus on prominent pan-European environmental issues and on the impact of the main economic sectors (see document CEP/AC.10/2001/5). Already at this initial stage of the report is preparation difficulties may reasonably be expected in collecting data and information on several elements in many NIS and several central European countries. Establishing task forces and other mechanisms may be envisaged to cope effectively with existing gaps and weaknesses in environmental monitoring and information in these countries. Such mechanisms would not only assist in supplying necessary data and information for specific chapters of the Kiev assessment but could also be instrumental in preparing proposals for improving the situation in NIS and other countries in transition, for consideration by the Working Group.

1. Sub-task 1.1: Monitoring of hazardous substances

10. The Kiev assessment report will analyse major problems in Europe with the accumulation or high concentrations of hazardous chemicals (heavy metals, POPs and, maybe pesticides in general). Multilateral agreements on hazardous substances (within UNEP and ECE) and recent European Union directives introduce obligations regarding the control of products containing hazardous substances and there is a need for monitoring these substances throughout their life cycle.

11. A task force with Poland as lead country will review the state of the hazardous-substance monitoring systems at national and international levels, and it will prepare proposals for improving and harmonizing these systems with a focus on the hazardous substances covered or soon to be covered by relevant international agreements (for details see CEP/AC.10/2001/6).

2. Sub-task 1.2: Environmental indicators for countries in transition

12. The Aarhus Ministerial conference called for the preparation of an indicator-based report for the Kiev conference. The work on the indicators for the Kiev report provides an opportunity

to improve and streamline the development and use of environmental indicators in countries in transition, particularly those not covered by EEA networks. It also challenges international organizations working on environmental indicators in the ECE region to better coordinate their activities and to improve their reporting on changes in environmental quality changes and the effectiveness of policies within their respective mandates.

13. In the light of the inter-agency consultation held at EBRD on 1 March 2001, a workshop on environmental indicators for countries in transition will be organized jointly by EEA, OECD, ECE, UNEP Global Resource Information Database (UNEP/GRID) in Arendal (Norway), EBRD and REC in mid-January 2002 back to back with the second session of the Working Group. At its fourth session in January 2003, the Working Group will consider a set of headline or core environmental indicators and guidelines for their use, for adoption and transmission to the Kiev Ministerial Conference according to the established procedure. Details will be provided in document CEP/AC.10/2001/7.

3. Sub-task 1.3: Air emission monitoring and inventories

14. Some important environmental areas, such as heavy metals and other toxic substances, particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), benzene, acidification, ground-level ozone and indoor air quality, are not properly monitored in many NIS and several countries of central Europe. The Steering Body of EMEP (Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe), under the ECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, could be invited to assess current air pollution monitoring and emission inventories in NIS and some countries in central Europe, and to put forward proposals on the type of action needed to improve the situation.

4. Sub-task 1.4: Waste data and classifications

15. The quantitative and qualitative data on the generation, use, disposal and environmental effects of industrial wastes are unreliable in a number of NIS and central European countries. Several countries where very hazardous waste used to be (or continues to be) dumped on landfill sites, especially in rural areas, do not draw up inventories of this waste.

16. The European Topic Centre on Waste (Denmark) could be invited to lead a task force to assess current data on the generation, use, disposal and environmental effects of industrial wastes interested in NIS and central European countries, and to prepare proposals for improving the

situation and for harmonizing of waste classifications with those applied within EEA.

B. Task 2: In-depth study of the monitoring situation in specific areas

17. Frequently in the ECE region, national surface-water monitoring systems are not coherent, as neither the data systems nor the methodologies are harmonized. Mechanisms are often lacking for exchanging data among various institutions and for making these data compatible. In many countries in transition, furthermore, the current systems of surface-water monitoring do not satisfy priority needs. The tasks and mandates of the authorities involved in water monitoring are not clearly defined.

18. A task force, led by the European Topic Centre on Water (United Kingdom) will assess information and monitoring systems for inland waters in NIS and other ECE countries not covered by the EEA network (EUROWATERNET) and it will make proposals for filling existing gaps in monitoring and information, establishing integrated national data banks for inland waters, and improving cooperation and data exchange between countries covered by EUROWATERNET and those not covered. Details will be provided in document CEP/AC.10/2001/8.

C. Task 3: Tools and guidelines

19. In many NIS, the use of up-to-date information technologies by environmental monitoring authorities needs to be expanded. These technologies may substantially improve environmental data handling, exchange and supply to public authorities and the public.

20. A task force, with the Russian Federation as lead country and active involvement of EEA and the European Commission's Environment Institute, will review the collection of initial meta-information on available sources of environmental information and activities in NIS and the availability and exchange of data, and will develop practical tools and instruments, using modern information technologies, to improve the use and exchange of information in NIS, and to harmonize NIS approaches with those applied within EEA networks. Details will be provided in document CEP/AC.10/2001/9.

D. Task 4: Remote sensing

21. Remote sensing is a unique instrument to complement existing ground-based monitoring systems. Remote sensing can be used to meet the demand for timely information and can provide

synoptic cross-boundary information. Data and information obtained through Earth observation (EO) can easily be used within geographic information systems for overlay and comparison with other georeferenced information. Despite these advantages EO has been used very little in the production of national environmental reports and has also been limited at the international level. For details, see document CEP/AC.10/2001/10.

22. The Working Group may wish to invite competent international institutions such as the EU Joint Research Centre or the Eurisy Association to submit proposals on the role and contribution of remotely sensed information to monitoring and reporting on environmental problems across Europe.

V. Organizational and financial aspects

23. EEA will be preparing, in consultation with the ECE secretariat, *documents and materials* on the Kiev assessment for consideration at the Working Group's sessions. The leaders of task forces will be preparing, also in cooperation with the ECE secretariat, *documents* on the implementation of elements of the work plan. The task forces will decide themselves on the working method, periodicity and venues of their meetings and their working language.

24. Lead countries and institutions are expected to make substantive *contributions in kind* (working time of their experts, making available meeting rooms and related facilities, etc.). The ECE secretariat will provide assistance in coordination, communication and reporting. The activities of the task forces will, however, require *donors*, to help finance the preparation of country case studies and to cover travel and subsistence costs for experts in NIS and some countries in transition.

25. The Government of Denmark has pledged some USD 220,000 to support the activities of the Working Group. These funds might cover, inter alia, the travel and subsistence costs of NIS representatives according to the rules of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy (ECE/CEP/74, para. 47 and annex IV). Some costs of task forces may also be covered.

26. It is of the utmost importance to link the new EC/TACIS project on environmental monitoring in NIS with the activities of the Working Group to ensure close coordination and complementarities. The EC/TACIS project's funds might support the implementation of individual tasks and sub-tasks of the work programme.

27. The Working Group is invited to consider the above-mentioned proposals and to take decisions. The members of the Working Group and international organizations and institutions are encouraged to submit their own proposals in writing through the ECE secretariat well in advance of the first session.