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**First Regional Consultative Meeting for the World Summit  
on Sustainable Development**

(Geneva, 12-13 July 2001)

**REPORT**

1. The first Regional Consultative Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development took place in Geneva on 12-13 July 2001.
2. It was attended by delegations from: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America and Yugoslavia.
3. It was also attended by representatives of the European Commission.
4. Representatives of the Holy See participated under article 8 of the Commission's terms of reference.
5. Representatives of the following United Nations Secretariat units, United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and other organizations in the United Nations system attended: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and World Bank.
6. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: Baltic 21, European Environment Agency (EEA), International Energy Agency (IEA), International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE).

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7. The following non-governmental organizations also participated: Arctic Indigenous People, Biotica Ecological Society, Citizens Network for Sustainable Development, Consumers International, ECO-Accord, Elements International, European ECO-Forum, European Environmental Bureau (EEB), European Partners for the Environment, Friends of the Earth International, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE), Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED), Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), UNED Forum, World Business Council for Sustainable Development and World Resources Institute (WRI).

8. Mr. F. La Camera (Italy) was elected Chairman.

9. The Meeting adopted the agenda as contained in document CEP/AC.12/2001/1.

10. The Meeting was briefed on various initiatives and activities contributing to the regional preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 2 to 11 September 2002. It took note of the finalization of a regional assessment report on the implementation of Agenda 21 prepared jointly by UNECE and the UNEP Regional Office for Europe, with inputs from UNDP (Bratislava Office) and other international organizations and institutions as well as several experts and consultants.

11. A representative of Belgium presented the European Union's Strategy for Sustainable Development, adopted at the Gothenburg European Council of 15-16 June 2001. A representative of Romania presented the results of the Regional Rio+10 Assessment Conference for Central and Eastern European Countries organized on 27-28 June 2001 in Bucharest by the Government of Romania and the UNDP Romania Country Office, in coordination with and with the support of the Earth Council and the UNDP Capacity 21 Programme. A delegate from Finland reported on the Arctic Regional Meeting on Sustainable Development, which had adopted conclusions and recommendations for the World Summit. A representative of Canada reported on meetings between Canada and the United States, and among Australia, North America and New Zealand to discuss the preparations for the World Summit in Johannesburg.

12. A representative of UNDESA provided information about the Regional Round Table for Europe and North America held on 6-8 June 2001 in Vail, Colorado, United States.

13. A representative of ECO-Accord introduced and circulated a summary of the main recommendations adopted at a workshop of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of the newly independent States on preparations for the World Summit (Golitsino near Moscow, 2-3 July 2001). A representative of ANPED introduced and circulated a briefing note on environmental rights and justice: a new approach to sustainable development. A representative of ICLEI introduced and circulated a note on the European local government preparatory process, the outcome of the European Local Agenda 21 evaluation and a local-government perspective of the content of the draft ministerial statement. A representative of ICFTU introduced and circulated a joint paper of this organization and the Trade Union Advisory

Committee (TUAC) to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on issues that should be incorporated in the regional ministerial statement.

14. Information notes were available to the Meeting on UNDP Capacity 21 activities; the multi-stakeholder process coordinated by UNED-United Kingdom; the Initiative to Promote Access to Information, Participation and Justice in Environmental Decision-making (the ACCESS Initiative); and on the position of the Citizens Network for Sustainable Development.

15. The Meeting also noted the conclusions on sustainable development of the Ministerial Council Meeting of OECD of May 2001 and the preparations for a subregional meeting of Central Asian countries, the Caucasus, Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran (20-21 September 2001, Almaty, Kazakhstan).

16. The Meeting discussed the possible outcomes of the Regional Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Geneva on 24-25 September 2001, taking note with appreciation of possible elements for a ministerial statement prepared by the joint secretariat (CEP/AC.12/2001/3). The Meeting agreed on the need for a short, concise, visionary and innovative statement for adoption by the Ministers, which would highlight new ways forward in the UNECE region and send a strong political message to other regions. It also agreed that the statement would be accompanied by a lengthier Chairman's conclusion reflecting the variety of views of Governments and major groups on preparations for the World Summit.

17. Participants exchanged views on the contents of these documents and commented on the secretariat paper. Written proposals for the ministerial statement were circulated by the delegations of Belgium (on behalf of EU), Canada, Switzerland, the United States, the Nordic Council of Ministers, EEB, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, REC and the organizations referred to in paragraph 13 above.

18. It was generally held that the statement should address, in a balanced manner, regional and global priorities and that it should place on an equal footing social, economic and environmental conditions for sustainable development. It should take into account the major findings of the regional assessment, reconfirm commitments on sustainable development made at the Rio Conference and thereafter, and contain further commitments at both regional and global levels. The statement should, furthermore, express the region's views on the Summit agenda and propose initiatives in a few selected areas where the Summit could add specific value. It should also contain a provision for reviewing progress in implementing commitments made at the Regional Meeting.

19. In discussing priorities for action at the regional level, it was generally agreed that the statement should focus on issues such as: social cohesion and equity, employment and social security, gender equality, access to social services, and education for sustainable development; decoupling economic growth from environmental pressures; integration of environmental, including biodiversity, considerations into specific sectoral policies (e.g. energy, transport, agricultural, forestry and tourism policies); environmental health strategies covering safe water supply, food safety, reducing the risk linked to chemicals and genetically modified organisms, and nuclear safety; support to the transition and accession processes; implementation of regional and subregional agreements; and compliance and liability.

20. In discussing priorities for action at the global level, it was generally held that the emphasis in the statement should be on: poverty eradication and social development; protection and sustainable management of the natural resource base including global commons; ratification and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements; making globalization work for sustainable development, including the issues of trade and environment interrelationships, corporate responsibility and accountability, and information and communication technologies; strengthening institutions and democratic processes, including issues of democratic government, national and local sustainable development strategies, public participation, access to information and justice, and international environmental governance; financing sustainable development, including issues of domestic resources, trade liberalization, foreign direct investments, financial assistance including official development assistance; and promoting science for sustainable development, technology transfer and capacity building for research. It was also proposed that the idea of a “new global deal” on sustainable development could be explored.

21. On the basis of the discussions held on the first day, the Chairman proposed a structure for the ministerial statement. The participants discussed his proposal and offered specific amendments and additions. The Meeting agreed that a draft statement, consisting of an introduction and priority measures for action at the regional and global levels, should be prepared by a group of ‘friends of the Chairman’ assisted by the joint secretariat. The drafting group would consist of the Chairman, representatives of Belgium (on behalf of EU), either Canada or the United States, Hungary, the Russian Federation, Switzerland and Ukraine, and two representatives designated by NGOs and the business community. A preliminary draft ministerial statement to be prepared by the drafting group at its meeting on 27 July would be submitted to an open-ended drafting group meeting in Geneva on 3-4 September and, thereafter, to the second Regional Consultative Meeting to be organized in Geneva on 21-22 September.

22. The delegation of the Russian Federation stated that, while recognizing the need to ensure the effective involvement of all stakeholders in the preparation of the regional input for the World Summit, it considered that the participation of stakeholders’ representatives in the work of the drafting group should not be construed as a precedent for future decisions on major group participation. It also held that the decision on major groups’ participation was taken without prejudice to the UNECE rules of procedure or to other preparatory processes for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The delegation of the United States concurred.

23. The Meeting exchanged views on the organization of the debate at the Regional Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. It was generally agreed that the Ministers would concentrate on key policy issues, priorities and follow-up as proposed in the draft statement, which should represent a key political part of the regional input to the Summit. Prior to the adoption of the statement, two ministerial panels would be organized to discuss major issues related to sustainable development. These panels would address governance for sustainable development, and poverty and sustainable development in the UNECE region. The participants considered it important to ensure genuine ministerial representation at the Regional Meeting and active involvement of all major groups.