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

Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring  
(First session, 20-21 September 2001)

**REPORT ON THE MEETING**

1. The first session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring was held in Geneva on 20-21 September 2001.
2. The meeting was attended by delegations from: Armenia; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Hungary; Italy; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Latvia; Monaco; Netherlands; Poland; Republic of Moldova; Romania; Russian Federation; Spain; Sweden; Tajikistan; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Ukraine; Uzbekistan; and Yugoslavia.
3. It was attended by representatives of the European Commission (EC) and the European Environment Agency (EEA).
4. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the European ECOForum also attended.
5. Mr. Yu. Tsaturov (Russian Federation) chaired the meeting.
6. The Working Group adopted the agenda as contained in documents CEP/AC.10/2001/1 and Corr.1.

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## **I. PROGRESS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WORKING GROUP**

7. The Chairman presented the results of the consultation that he convened in Obninsk (Russian Federation) on 22-23 January 2001 (CEP/AC.10/2001/3). The Working Group took note of this information and thanked the Chairman for this initiative.
8. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the report (ECE/AC.22/2001/3) on the progress made in the UNECE region since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Conference) in 1992, to be submitted to the Regional Ministerial Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (24-25 September 2001). The EC representative informed the Working Group about sustainable development and related processes in the European Union (EU), including the EU Sustainable Development Strategy adopted in June 2001 in Gothenburg. The representative of the European ECOForum reported on the preparation of sustainable development assessment reports by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia and by a large group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of the Russian Federation.
9. The Working Group was also informed about the enlargement process, indicator and reporting activities in EEA, the latest developments in the WMO Global Atmosphere Watch Programme, the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme, a capacity-building programme of UNEP on environmental information for countries in transition, and environmental studies done by NGO members of the European ECOForum.
10. The EC representative informed the Working Group about progress made in the preparation of a 1.5-million-euro Tacis environmental monitoring project for newly independent States (NIS). The Working Group expressed concern over delays in launching this project, which was considered to be crucial for the Working Group's activities. It invited the Tacis staff responsible for the project or project implementing agency, if designated by that time, to brief the Working Group, at its second session, on project development and practical links established with the implementation of specific activities of the Working Group.
11. The Working Group took note of the progress made in establishing a network of national coordinators for the Working Group's activities. It welcomed the creation by the secretariat of a web site on the activities of the Working Group  
[http://www.unece.org/env/europe/environmental\\_monitoring.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/europe/environmental_monitoring.htm).

## **II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PLAN**

11. The Chairman introduced a note (CEP/AC.10/2001/4), prepared in cooperation with the 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 financial aspects. The participants discussed this note section by section, where appropriate together with individual papers on the Kiev assessment report, environmental indicators, monitoring of hazardous substances, water

monitoring, tools and guidelines, and remote sensing.

A. Kiev assessment report

13. The representatives of EEA introduced a draft list of content for the Kiev assessment report (CEP/AC.10/2001/5) and draft guidelines for data collection based on written comments received from national coordinators. In the ensuing discussion, participants made comments and proposals regarding the consistency in country coverage of the report, topics to be addressed, issues to be analysed in individual chapters, use of existing international databases for data collection, data availability at national level, and measures to be taken in NIS to ensure the supply of necessary data and information for the report.

14. The following additional topics were proposed: health and environment, poverty and environment, use of natural resources, mountains, marine environment, storage of chemicals, environmental impacts of space exploration and of the extraction of mineral resources such as oil and gas, water resources and desertification in Central Asia. Specific proposals were made for the content of chapters on climate change, the depletion of the ozone layer, forestry, transport, energy and air pollution.

15. Delegations from NIS presented their views on the possibilities for providing data and information from their countries for the report. It was generally held that their participation in the report's preparation would require strengthening substantively existing monitoring and information systems in many NIS, improving inter-agency coordination and cooperation, reviewing and revising environmental indicators, as well as ensuring both logistical and financial support in all NIS. The NIS delegations welcomed the intention of EEA to rely, in data collection, on existing international databases. They expressed concern, however, that many of these databases did not sufficiently cover NIS and that substantive additional data should be collected in NIS to meet the data requirements for the Kiev report. It was noted that EEA would translate its data collection guidelines into Russian soon.

16. The Working Group invited EEA to finalize the table of content for the Kiev report and the guidelines for data collection in the light of the discussions held and the comments and proposals made.

17. The Working Group discussed possible additional measures to be taken to facilitate data reporting for the Kiev report and to improve, at the same time, environmental monitoring and reporting in selected areas, particularly in NIS. It agreed, in particular, that it should assist individual NIS, at their request, in reviewing their specific situations and providing tailor-made recommendations to their Governments.

1. Monitoring of hazardous substances

18. The delegation of Poland introduced its paper on monitoring hazardous substances (CEP/AC.10/2001/6). It proposed that a task force should be established to review the state of

national and international hazardous-substance monitoring systems, and to 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. This delegation stated, however, that, owing to budget constraints, Poland would not be able to lead the task force as it had originally proposed, and invited other delegations to consider an opportunity to lead the proposed activity.

19. During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to a project launched recently by UNEP/Chemicals aimed at establishing an international network on monitoring chemicals in the environment under the Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the drawing-up of a protocol on pollution release and transfer registers (PRTR) to the Aarhus Convention, developments in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on PRTR, and an international POPs elimination programme launched by NGOs.

20. The Working Group supported the proposal to establish a task force on monitoring hazardous substances and invited delegations to consider leading the task force so that the Working Group could take a decision on the matter at its next session. It also invited UNEP/Chemicals to prepare for the same occasion a paper on progress made in its networking on chemicals monitoring and on the role and the involvement of UNECE countries in this project.

## 2. Environmental indicators for countries in transition

21. The secretariat introduced a paper (CEP/AC.10/2001/7 and Corr. 1) based on the results of an inter-agency consultation on environmental indicators for countries in transition held in London on 1 March 2001 at the initiative of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The Working Group was also informed that neither EBRD nor the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe had so far succeeded in raising the necessary funds for the proposed activity.

22. In the ensuing discussion, participants stressed the need to assist NIS to better understand the indicators that were used within EEA, OECD and other international organizations and institutions, and to introduce in their national practice internationally agreed indicators that would improve both national environmental reporting and pan-European assessments. It was, furthermore, pointed out that the work on the indicators for the Kiev report provided an opportunity for improving and streamlining the development and use of environmental indicators in NIS.

23. The Working Group invited EEA and the secretariat to prepare, on the basis of the indicators for the Kiev report, a proposal for a core set of internationally comparable environmental indicators which could be recommended for use in NIS.

## 3. Air emission monitoring and inventories

24. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the secretariat on

monitoring activities coordinated by the Steering Body of the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP) under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution.

#### 4. Waste data and classifications

25. The Working Group stressed the need for improving the collection of data on the generation, use, disposal and environmental effects of wastes in NIS, and for harmonizing the waste classifications in these countries with those applied within EEA. It invited EEA to prepare proposals on launching possible practical activities in this regard, for consideration by the Working Group at its next session.

#### B. In-depth study of the monitoring situation in specific areas

26. The Director of the European Topic Centre on Inland Waters (United Kingdom) under EEA introduced a proposal for establishing a task force led by this Centre to assess information and monitoring systems for inland waters in NIS and to 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 (CEP/AC.10/2001/8).

27. Delegations from several NIS supported the proposal and expressed their readiness to designate national institutions as focal points for the proposed task force. Support was also expressed for the creation of a coordinating body for the project within NIS and for establishing cooperative links with the International Water Assessment Centre under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. Some delegations indicated that a project proposal should be elaborated in much more detail and that sources of financial support should be identified.

28. The Working Group welcomed the proposal by the European Topic Centre on Inland Waters and decided to consider possible action in the light of the development of the Tacis environmental monitoring project, which might be the main source of financing for the task force's activities.

#### C. Tools and guidelines

29. The delegation of the Russian Federation introduced a paper, prepared in cooperation with EEA, on information technologies to improve the use and exchange of data on available sources of environmental information and activities (CEP/AC.10/2001/9).

30. Delegations of NIS and Denmark supported the creation of a task force on information technologies and expressed their readiness to designate experts to participate in the activity. The delegation of Denmark also pledged financial support for the task force. A representative of EEA reconfirmed the preparedness of the Agency to support and participate actively in the task force.

A representative of UNEP proposed to coordinate the activity with the development by UNEP of a global, Internet-based information system (www.unep.net) and with a task force on electronic tools under the Aarhus Convention.

31. The Working Group decided to establish a task force, with the Russian Federation as lead country, to develop practical tools and instruments, using modern information technologies, to improve the use and exchange of relevant information in NIS, and to harmonize NIS approaches with those applied within EEA networks. It invited delegations to inform the secretariat by 31 October 2001 about their designated experts who would participate in the task force's activities.

#### D. Remote sensing

32. A representative of EEA introduced a discussion paper on the possibilities for using remote sensing to complement existing ground-based monitoring systems (CEP/AC.10/2001/10). A representative of the European Union's Joint Research Centre presented its views and described its recent Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) initiative.

33. The Working Group invited the Joint Research Centre to submit proposals on the role and contribution of remotely sensed information to monitoring and reporting on environmental problems across Europe, for consideration by the Working Group at its next session.

### III. OTHER BUSINESS

34. The Working Group thanked the Government of Denmark for the financial assistance that it had provided for the participants from a number of countries in transition.

35. The Working Group agreed to synchronize its further sessions with the major phases of the Kiev report. It took note of the following provisional meeting dates: second session on 28 February-1 March 2002, third session on 28-30 August 2002, and fourth session in February 2003.