UNITED NATIONS **E**

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

CEP/AC.10/2002/21
24 June 2002

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring
(Third session, 29-30 August 2002)
(Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda)

OUTLINE FOR THE SUMMARY OF THE KIEV REPORT

Submitted by the European Environment Agency (EEA)

1. The Working Group, at its second session, decided to consider at its next session the preliminary findings of the Kiev Assessment. To facilitate the discussion, EEA has prepared the present draft outline of the summary of the Kiev report indicating some of the messages the report might provide.

2. EEA has recently produced summaries for its indicator reports, such as Environmental Signals 2002. The most recent and successful summary model uses three columns: the first describes the policy challenges, the second gives the main conclusions and main facts and figures, and the third contains a selection of the most important indicators. This model seems very suited for use in the summary of the Kiev report in the sense that most policy challenges (the first column) can be elaborated and discussed in an early stage, before the full assessment is ready. The current outline of the summary is thus limited to an indication of the main policy challenges.

I. PAN-EUROPEAN POLICY CHALLENGES - GENERAL

3. With the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development nine months before the Kiev Ministerial Conference, the follow-up on any policy matters agreed at the Summit will be at the centre of attention. But apart from these, the implementation of the principles of sustainable development in actual policy-making remains a continuous challenge for the UNECE region. It has several facets:

(a) The use of sustainable development principles in the design of policies, such as the use of sustainable reference thresholds as leading objectives, priority-setting on the basis of the needs of current and future generations, preventive approaches instead of end-of-pipe measures;

(b) The exploitation of integration principles:

- Operationalization of key concepts such as eco-efficiency and energy efficiency for achieving the integration of the environment in economic and sectoral policies;
- The use of economic instruments, including ecological tax reform and re-orienting subsidies, as part of the approach towards preventing problems;
- The identification and exploitation of solutions that provide win-win situations for the environment, the economy and society on all scales (from debt-for-nature swaps to local environment and health solutions);
- The enhancement of corporate environmental and social responsibility and accountability;
- The mutual reinforcement of planning instruments from the various spheres, such as physical planning or health planning;

(c) The cooperation with stakeholders.

4. Moreover, the level of political awareness and the degree of implementation vary over Europe. In Central and Eastern Europe and the newly independent States (NIS), the remainder of the heavy bureaucratic structure of administrations poses a specific challenge for integration and sustainable development policies. This requires new approaches, which may also include paying attention to private/government partnerships.

5. In most European countries there are no indicator-based mechanisms for periodically evaluating the effectiveness of policies to support decision-making. In addition, due to their financial situation, Central and East European countries and NIS are facing numerous difficulties in maintaining and improving their environmental information systems and monitoring programmes, which should contribute to these evaluations.

II. PROGRESS IN MAKING THE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS WORK

6. The United Nations Convention on Climate Change. With the ratification by the European Community and 15 member States in May 2002 and by the Russian Federation expected later this year, the Kyoto Protocol can enter into force. For the West European countries, not yet on track to reaching the targets, this will mean extra efforts in reducing greenhouse gases. Especially the Southern European countries have been late in starting programmes to reduce or stabilize their emissions. Many countries rely on emission trading to reach their emission limits. For the Central and East European countries, which have experienced emission reductions since 1990 due to economic restructuring, emission trading provides an opportunity to put measures in place that should be able to limit emissions also in a period with fast growth in production and consumption. Eco-efficiency, and especially energy efficiency improvements, will be a key concept.

7. The Vienna Convention the Montreal Protocol. Implementation is clearly a success in Europe, where the use of ozone-depleting substances has fallen faster than required under the Montreal Protocol. Besides the prevention of smuggling and dumping and the discouraging of the use of HCFCs as replacements, the main action in Europe will be helping developing countries.

8. The Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. In general well under way, though specific issues persist. In Southern Europe further reductions in acidifying substances and ozone precursors will be needed to reach the emission targets. It seems that air quality in cities is improving overall, although WHO standards are breached in some places. The transport sector (with growing emissions, see below) and the use of coal will require policy attention. Because coal will continue to be used in large-scale processes (power plants and industry), investments will be necessary in capital-intensive clean fossil fuel technology, for which barriers in financing need to be overcome. Regarding the use of coal for domestic heating (large in Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and the Russian Federation) policies will be needed on fuel quality, fuel substitution, and maybe technical solutions.

9. The Basel Convention. Apart from reducing transboundary movements of hazardous waste, the Convention also aims at minimizing the creation of waste. Although data are scarce, progress towards this second goal seems mixed, with growth in hazardous waste generation in several countries.

10. The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. In Europe, the production of most of the "dirty dozen" has been phased out already. For many other substances data availability is still poor. Available studies show that important risks of exposure exist. The United States is still at the forefront of data provision with the establishment of the Toxic Release Inventory.

11. The UNECE Transboundary Water Convention (or water in general). Water quality has generally improved in (Western) Europe, in particular because discharges of waste water have decreased as waste-water treatment has improved and industrial and agricultural production in the east has fallen. The transboundary river conventions such as the Rhine and Elbe conventions have certainly contributed to improving river water quality by reducing pollution loads. Similar improvements are seen in some of the large lakes e.g., Lake Constance. However, small and large-scale problems persist in specific areas (see also "priority areas" below): Eutrophication is endangering groundwater and coastal waters in large parts of the region. Health problems related to poor-quality drinking water and bathing water occur regularly in some NIS and Balkan countries.

12. Unsustainable trends in water abstraction occur in Southern Europe and the eastern NIS, where much more efficient water use, especially in agriculture, is needed to prevent water shortages and other adverse effects of water overexploitation. In addition, possible climate change may affect water resources and demand. In the whole of Europe management of risks of accidents is to be improved, as illustrated by the Baia Mare accidental spill in the Danube.

13. The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity/Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy: [to be filled in; little consistent progress information yet; refer to the role of the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Vienna, April 2003)].

14. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification: [to be filled in; little progress information yet. Probably limited to the degree of development of national action programmes].

15. Concluding remarks on the effectiveness of the conventions compared to progress in environmental issues without international agreements.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITY ISSUES AND AREAS

A. Topics showing unsustainable developments

16. Transport, Especially in Western Europe transport problems have risen to the top of the environmental/sustainability agenda. Congestion immediately endangers economic development; improvements in vehicle and fuel technology to reduce fuel use, emissions and noise have been outstripped by continued growth in transport.

17. Fisheries. Since Europe's Environment: the Second Assessment overfishing has not diminished. Although the European Union has been actively stimulating a reduction of the fleet, the simultaneous advances in technology and design have meant that pressures on fish stocks have not diminished. In many seas the current harvest is not sustainable [to be detailed by fish stock and sea].

18. Chemicals. The amount of chemicals entering the economy is likely to continue to increase. Eliminating the emissions of hazardous chemicals remains difficult.

19. Energy. Although some positive trends can be discerned in energy production and consumption, this sector remains the focus of policy attention because of the continuous growth of energy use and the high carbon dioxide emissions due to the large share of fossil fuels in energy consumption.

B. Areas with an accumulation of problems

20. [to be completed when more information is available]:
Mountains
Regional seas (Caspian Sea, Black Sea, Aral Sea, Adriatic Sea, North Sea, Baltic Sea and others).
River basins (the Volga, Ural and some other rivers).
Industrial zones (in the Urals, Kola Peninsula, Norilsk region, etc).

IV. PROGRESS IN MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

21. Since the Aarhus Conference in 1998 the concept of integrating the environment in sectoral and other policies has become well known in the whole of Europe, and attempts to implement

ithave been made largely through national environmental strategies or action plans. Practical implementation is in many countries hampered by bureaucratic policy-making and rivalries between ministries; additionally the ministries and institutions involved often lack resources. Sustainable development policies run the same risk.

22. At the same time, the use of a number of typical integration tools is widespread: almost all countries use environmental taxes, and several countries are giving more attention to stimulating business initiatives, for instance by encouraging environmental management systems. The Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context has brought environmental impact assessment (EIA) to the international level. However, transboundary EIAs are very scarce, but most countries have included EIA in their national legislation. Apart from setting and living up to a common international standard for EIAs, the implementation of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for plans and programmes is the main challenge. Many countries indicated that guidance (legally, administratively and technically) would be needed for implementation.

23. In general there is a need for strengthening the environmental regulation implementation capacity of the national and - especially - local environmental administration in Central and Eastern Europe. Environmental permitting or environmental enforcement in small and medium-size enterprises are priorities given today's level of staffing, resources and capacities.

24. More aspects can be included here using the main criteria:

(a) Progress in institutional integration (cooperation between institutions and stakeholders leading for example to integrated legislative measures);

(b) Progress in market integration measures (e.g. implementation of cost-benefit analyses schemes, internalization, e.g. eco-tax; removal of perverse subsidies, etc.);

(c) Progress in management integration measures (e.g. introduction of environmental management systems, SEA, EIA, “green” procurement, eco-labelling, environmental agreements, etc.), and also internal assessment tools. This group may also include the practical measures taken as a result of management integration: education campaigns, changes in processes and products.