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COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials

“Environment for Europe”

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL SESSION

Introduction

1. In their Declaration, the Ministers at the fifth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference decided that the Working Group of Senior Officials would hold a special session in the autumn of 2003 to decide on the next host country and the date of the sixth Ministerial Conference. Further to this decision the special session of the Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials took place in Geneva on 22 October 2003 back to back with the tenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy.
2. The meeting was attended by delegates from Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.
3. Representatives of the Commission of the European Communities (EC) also attended, as did representatives from the United Nations Environment Programme’s Regional Office for Europe and the World Health Organization’s Regional Office for Europe.
4. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: European Eco-Forum, European Environmental Bureau and Women in Europe for a Common Future.
5. Also represented were the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe and the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia.

I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

6. The meeting was opened by the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy, Mr. Zaal Lomtadze, who invited delegates to adopt the agenda. The Working Group adopted its agenda as set out in document CEP/AC.11/2003/32.

II. ELECTION OF THE CHAIR

7. The Working Group of Senior Officials elected Mr. Sergii Poliakov, Minister of Environment of Ukraine, as its Chair, taking into consideration the decision of the fifth Ministerial Conference that the special session of the Working Group should be chaired by a representative of Ukraine.

8. Mr. Poliakov thanked the Working Group and stressed the importance of the outcomes of the Kiev Conference for the region. The documents adopted in Kiev provided solid ground for improving the environment. Since the environment had no borders, these developments should also contribute to cooperation in a wider context. He informed the Working Group that the Government of Ukraine, as a follow-up to the Conference, had decided to draft a national plan to implement the Kiev decisions through a broad interministerial process.

9. The Chair expressed his appreciation to the UNECE secretariat for its fruitful and efficient work during the preparation and convening of the Fifth Ministerial Conference. He also thanked Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the European Commission and the United Nations Development Programme for their financial support to Ukraine in the organization of the Conference.

III. DATE OF THE SIXTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE”

10. Pursuant to the decision at the fifth Ministerial Conference that future conferences should be held on a regular and predictable basis every four or five years, the Working Group of Senior Officials decided that the next Conference would take place in September or October 2007, and that the first meeting of an open-ended “Environment for Europe” preparatory group would convene in the autumn of 2005, back to back with a session of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

IV. VENUE OF THE SIXTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

11. The secretariat introduced the document on issues of concern for choosing the venue of the sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (CEP/AC.11/2003/33) and noted that the Kiev Conference had decided that “Environment for Europe” ministerial conferences should preferably be held in a host country. All UNECE member States had been invited to submit their proposals for hosting the sixth Ministerial Conference by 30 September 2003, including information on a range of logistical and organizational issues that would need to be addressed by the host country. The Government of Serbia and Montenegro had provided all the necessary information prior to the deadline.

12. The representative of Georgia noted that it had earlier orally submitted its candidacy, but had decided to withdraw for logistical reasons. He indicated Georgia's support for the candidacy of Serbia and Montenegro.

13. At the invitation of the Chair, the representative of Serbia and Montenegro officially presented its candidature. The presentation was well received, and the Working Group accepted the candidacy of the Government of Serbia and Montenegro. It therefore decided that the next Ministerial Conference would be held in Belgrade.

14. The delegation of Serbia and Montenegro expressed its appreciation to the Working Group for its decision.
