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**PREPARATION FOR AND FOLLOW-UP TO WORLD
AND REGIONAL CONFERENCES**

Note by the Executive Secretary

Summary

As recalled in the Executive Secretary's report E/ECE/1402, the role given to the regional commissions in the preparations for and follow-up to major United Nations conferences has been emphasized by ECOSOC and the Commission itself has "strongly supported UNECE's role as a regional arm of the United Nations" and "expressed its satisfaction with the ability of UNECE to offer a region-wide forum on social and economic issues..." (E/2000/37). Most recently, the General Assembly, in its resolution 57/270 B of 3 July 2003, called upon "the regional commissions, within their respective mandates, to further strengthen and enhance the effectiveness of their activities and improve their coordination with the entire United Nations system with regard to the implementation and review of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, in order to ensure the achievement of the internally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration." The same resolution invited the regional commissions, "in collaboration with other regional and subregional organizations and processes, as appropriate, to contribute, within their mandates, to the review and follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits..."

The present note provides information with regard to the preparations for and /or follow-up to a number of global and regional conferences.

I. FOLLOW-UP TO WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (JOHANNESBURG, AUGUST 2002)

1. The eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the first session after the World Summit on Sustainable Development, was held in May 2003. The Commission concluded its session with an agreement on its programme and organization of work for the next 15 years. The Commission will now function on the basis of two-year "implementation cycles", including review and policy years. In the review year it will evaluate progress made in implementing sustainable development goals and identifying obstacles and constraints, while in the policy year it will decide on measures to speed up implementation and mobilize action to overcome these obstacles and constraints.

2. It was agreed that for the first two-year cycle (2004-2005), the Commission on Sustainable Development would focus on water, sanitation and human settlements. At its twelfth session therefore, to be held in April 2004, the CSD will review the progress achieved in the implementation in these thematic areas. The CSD also invited the regional commissions to consider organizing regional implementation meetings in collaboration with other regional and subregional organizations.

3. In line with the above, the UNECE decided, at its Ad Hoc Informal Meeting of 2 September 2003, to hold the first Regional Implementation Forum to provide substantial inputs to the review year and to contribute to the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Forum, which will be of a day and a half duration, will take place on 15-16 January 2004.

4. The Commission also decided that a preparatory meeting would be desirable; such meeting was held on 1 December 2003 in the context of an Ad Hoc Informal Meeting of the Commission. At that meeting it was decided that there would be three thematic sessions corresponding to the above-mentioned themes as well as a general segment during which the interlinkages between the three substantive sessions could be addressed as well as the role of the UNECE region in the global context, with particular reference to the support given by UNECE member States to developing countries in their progress towards sustainable development.

5. The Regional Implementation Forum will not have a negotiated outcome; rather the Chairperson's conclusions will be made available and submitted to the CSD secretariat as the regional input to the CSD session. Since the preparation of this document preceded the Regional Implementation Meeting, it could not include results of the meeting which will be included in the Executive Secretary's introductory statement.

II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE FIFTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE "ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE" (KIEV, MAY 2003)

6. The Environment for Europe (EfE) process provides a political framework for cooperation in the field of environmental protection in Europe. The important role of the UNECE in overseeing, in close cooperation with relevant agencies, the work carried out in the framework of this process has been acknowledged by the Ministers for Environment involved in EfE Conferences and the UNECE continues to serve as the secretariat for the Ministerial Conferences.

7. The fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” concluded on 23 May, in Kiev, Ukraine, with the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, which underlined the importance of the EfE process as a tool to promote environmental protection and sustainable development in the region, thus contributing to wider peace and security. During the Conference, three Protocols to UNECE Conventions were adopted and opened for signature:

- Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention);
- Protocol on Civil Liability and Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters to the UNECE Conventions on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Waters and International Lakes; and
- Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention).

8. The Kiev Conference also adopted Guidelines for Strengthening Compliance with and Implementation of MEAs in the UNECE region, and an Environment Strategy for Countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and applauded the efforts of the Central Asian States to develop the Central Asian Initiative on Environment, Water and Security, “Invitation to Partnership.”

9. The Kiev Conference reaffirmed its support to the Environmental Performance Review Programme of UNECE and decided that the programme should continue. It expressed its support of the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and its activities

10. The Kiev Conference invited UNECE, through its Committee on Environmental Policy and in consultation with other principal subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, and in cooperation with other relevant organizations and institutions, to monitor the implementation of the Kiev Declaration, and to reflect the relevant commitments of the Kiev Declaration in its programme of work.

11. At its tenth meeting in October 2003, the Committee on Environmental Policy exchanged views on the outcome of the Kiev Conference and considered how to reflect the relevant commitments of the Kiev Declaration in its work programme. It reaffirmed that in monitoring the outcomes of the Kiev Conference in consultation with other Principal Subsidiary Bodies and in cooperation with other relevant organizations and institutions, it will carry the overall responsibility of supporting effective implementation of the Kiev decisions. In particular it will continue and focus on the Environmental Performance Review Programme, on strengthening environmental monitoring and assessment, on elaborating a strategy on education for sustainable development, on implementing the Environment Strategy for the Eastern Europe the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) as well as developing a Communication Strategy.

III. PREPARATIONS FOR, AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS), GENEVA, DECEMBER 2003 AND TUNIS, NOVEMBER 2005

12. This item was reported on in document E/ECE/1402, including information on the Pan-European Regional Ministerial Conference, organized in Bucharest in November 2002 by the Romanian Government, UNECE and the WSIS Executive Secretariat. Since the Bucharest Conference, UNECE has continued to play a coordinating role vis-à-vis the other regional commissions in the provision of inputs to the WSIS process at both the Second and Third Preparatory Committee sessions (PrepCom-2, PrepCom-3 and its extensions), which took place in Geneva on 17-28 February, 15-26 September, 10-14 November, and 5-6 December 2003.

13. UNECE has also contributed to the work of the UN ICT Task Force and especially its activities to support the WSIS process which brings together stakeholders from throughout the region.

14. UNECE continued contributing to the WSIS process and cooperating with the other regional commissions at the Geneva phase of the WSIS (10-12 December 2003). In addition, UNECE worked closely with the WSIS Executive Secretariat and assisted in organizing a range of events for the Summit.

15. During the WSIS in Geneva, UNECE organized parallel events covering a variety of topics:

- Workshop on “Monitoring the Information Society: Data, Measurement and Methods”, co-organized by UNECE, UNCTAD, UNESCO, ITU, OECD and Eurostat, 8-9 December 2003;
- Forum on “Challenges of Trust and Mutual Recognition in Global e-Business”, 8 December 2003;
- Side event on “Information and Communication Technology for Environmental Democracy”, organized by UNECE under the auspices of the Aarhus Convention, 10 December;
- Panel discussions on “National Strategies for the Information Society and the Role of Regional and Global Organizations”, jointly organized by the UN regional commissions, UNCTAD, UNDP, UN ICT Task Force and World Bank, 10-11 December;
- Roundtable entitled “From Bucharest to Tunis: Roundtable on Regional Cooperation on Gender and ICT”, co-organized by UNECE, UNDP, UNIFEM, the ITU Working Group on Gender and non-governmental organizations, 11 December 2003.

16. The mandate for actions regarding the WSIS process on the road to the second phase of the Summit in Tunis (16-18 November 2005) and beyond is contained in section 11 of the WSIS Declaration of Principles, and in paragraph 62 in particular, which underscore the importance of the regional dimension in the development of the Information Society: “regional integration

contributes to the development of the global Information Society and makes strong cooperation within and among regions indispensable. Regional dialogue should contribute to national capacity building and to the alignment of national strategies with the goals of this Declaration of Principles in a compatible way, while respecting national and regional particularities” (paragraph 62).

17. The regional dimension of the Information Society is referred to repeatedly in the WSIS Plan of Action. Section C11, paragraph 26(c) provides the most explicit mandate for regional organizations, “invit[ing] international and regional organizations to mainstream ICTs in their work programmes and to assist all levels of developing countries, to be involved in the preparation and implementation of national action plans to support the fulfilment of the goals indicated in the declaration of principles and in this Plan of Action, taking into account the importance of regional initiatives.”

18. In view of the recognition of the regional dimension in the development of the Information Society, the secretariat will prepare proposals regarding activities the UNECE could undertake in preparation for the next phase of the WSIS and will submit them to the Commission for its consideration.

IV. FOLLOW-UP TO THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON AGEING (BERLIN, SEPTEMBER 2002)

19. During the year that followed the Ministerial Conference on Ageing, most of the work performed by the UNECE secretariat related to its follow-up focused on settling the modalities for review and appraisal of the implementation of the documents adopted by the Conference. The centerpiece of the future follow-up work will be a collaborative arrangement with the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, a Vienna-based intergovernmental organisation affiliated with the United Nations. The Centre will establish, with funding by the Federal Government of Austria, a separate unit which will assist the UNECE secretariat in the follow-up work, and specifically with the data collection and analysis related to the implementation of the documents adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Ageing. A memorandum of understanding between UNECE and the Federal Government of Austria on these arrangements will be signed in January 2004.

20. The extra-budgetary activities related to ageing undertaken by UNECE’s Population Activities Unit are being more tightly integrated with the follow-up process. The result of this has been the publication of three reports on the socio-economic status and living arrangements of older persons in the Baltic States. Concise reports for other countries, based on the 2000 round of population and housing censuses, will be prepared in collaboration with the European Centre and the US Census Bureau.

21. In conformity with points made at the fifty-eighth annual session, UNECE is playing an active role in networking and facilitating information exchange related to the follow-up to the Ministerial Conference on Ageing through the organization of seminars and round tables. For example, an expert seminar on indicators on sustainable ageing will be held on 14-16 April 2004 in Madrid, at the invitation of the Spanish Government. The UNECE has also participated in and contributed actively to various other regional forums and debates related to ageing (for example

the Fifth European Congress of Gerontology, and the drafting of a regional research agenda on ageing).

22. The UNECE is also regularly providing input into the global follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, by working closely with the division entrusted with facilitating the global follow-up within the Department for Social and Economic Affairs, and participating in the interregional and expert meetings organized within the context of the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.

V. FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF
LANDLOCKED AND TRANSIT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ON TRANSIT
TRANSPORT COOPERATION, (ALMATY, AUGUST 2003)

23. The Conference was convened as a follow up to General Assembly Resolution 56/180 of 21 December 2001 on "Specific Actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries". The Millennium Declaration also provided a strong momentum for the Conference.

24. The purpose of the Conference was to review the current situation of transit transport systems affecting landlocked developing countries and to formulate appropriate policy measures and a programme of action to improve them. Landlocked developing countries are recognized to be among the poorest developing countries. Their lack of access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from world markets have traditionally led to higher transport costs and to lower international trade, imports and exports, thereby contributing to their greater poverty. The UNECE region includes a number of landlocked and transit developing countries.

25. The Executive Secretaries of both UNECE and UNESCAP participated in the Conference, the opening session of which was chaired by President Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan. In her statement, the UNECE Executive Secretary recalled the UNECE long standing experience in facilitating international transport and trade through its normative work in these two areas and offered, within the UNECE limited resources, policy advice and technical assistance in implementing the results of such work. The Development Account Project on Capacity Building for the development of Euro-Asian transport links, to be implemented in cooperation with ESCAP should also contribute to improving the transit transport systems.

26. In the framework of the Conference, the UNECE secretariat organized a parallel event on Trade and Transport Facilitation.

27. The outcome of the Conference is contained in the Almaty Declaration and the Almaty Programme of Action. The Declaration stresses, inter alia, the importance of the simplification, streamlining and standardization of transit procedures and documentation and the application of information technology for improving transit systems, and calls upon the relevant UN bodies and other international organizations, including regional commissions, to assist, upon request, landlocked and transit developing countries in those areas, in accordance with their respective mandates.

28. The Almaty Programme of Action underlines the need for partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries and donor countries and IFI's as well as the private

sector. It also identifies a set of priority areas for action, including transit policy issues, infrastructure development, international trade and trade facilitation, and international support measures. Within each of these priorities, it identifies a number of specific actions for the various actors involved. In particular, the Programme of Action calls upon landlocked and transit developing countries to accede to and implement the relevant international agreements and conventions on transport. It also calls on international organizations to promote accession to and implementation to those legal instruments, to organize training seminars and to provide technical assistance to those countries for such implementation. Finally, the Programme of Action contains a series of follow up activities, including an invitation to regional commissions to consider further expanding their programmes to support landlocked and transit developing countries in their efforts to improve their transit transport systems. It also calls for sub-regional follow up meetings and a comprehensive review by the General Assembly. The Secretary-General is also invited to report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Programme at a periodicity to be decided by the Assembly.

29. As a follow up to the Conference, the UNECE could, within its present resources, continue or undertake the following activities:

- (i) Continue to promote the accession to and implementation of international legal instruments, norms and standards on transport and trade in UNECE landlocked and transit developing countries;
- (ii) Continue to promote, in cooperation with UNESCAP, the SPECA Programme and intensify its activities related to transport and border crossing facilitation;
- (iii) Ensure an efficient implementation of the Development Account Project on Capacity Building for Developing Interregional Transport Linkages, including Euro-Asian Transport Links in cooperation with UNESCAP.
- (iv) Provide advice and assistance on the implications of accession to the UNECE legal instruments on transport to non-UNECE landlocked and transit developing countries on their request, either directly or through other UN regional commissions
- (v) Participate in training activities organized by other relevant bodies and organizations with this aim

30. Subject to availability of additional funds, other special programmes for landlocked and transit developing countries could be developed and activities implemented. In the light of the Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action, the Commission may wish to provide guidance to the secretariat in this respect in order to ensure an efficient follow up to the Conference.

VI. PREPARATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN POPULATION FORUM AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (CAIRO, SEPTEMBER 1994)

31. As a preparatory meeting for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994, the UNECE convened, in collaboration with other organizations, the European Population Conference (EPC) in Geneva in 1993, which adopted a final document, the EPC Recommendations. In preparation for the Twenty-first Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in 1999, which was a global Cairo+5 event, the UNECE also held, in collaboration with other organizations, the Regional Population Meeting (RPM) in Budapest in 1998, which adopted a final document, the RPM Conclusions.

32. In the context of the tenth Anniversary of the ICPD, the UNECE along with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is preparing the European Population Forum 2004 (Geneva, 12-14 January 2004). The purpose of this expert meeting will be, inter alia, to consider important, newly emerging population changes in the UNECE region, examine challenges they pose and identify best policy responses to them. The Forum will also examine the implementation of the ICPD-related regional and global agreements of the 1990s in the region, particularly in countries in transition. Also, it will consider how the UNECE region can further the implementation of these agreements in the future.

33. The Forum's programme will include keynote addresses on "Population and development in the UNECE region during the last decade" and "Policy challenges of Europe's demographic changes: cross-cutting issues". It will also feature panel discussions and general debate on the following four themes: "Global population and development trends: the European view", "Childbearing and parenting in low fertility countries: enabling choices", "Morbidity, mortality and reproductive health: facing challenges in transition countries" and "International migration: promoting management and integration".

34. The programme of the Forum has been prepared by its co-organisers in consultation with representatives of several UNECE member States, regional intergovernmental organizations and institutions, academia and research and national and international NGOs. The co-organisers have also received advice from an ad hoc Advisory Group for the EPF 2004 on various substantial issues pertaining to the event.

35. The Forum will bring together noted experts from executive and legislative branches of government, academia, research, intergovernmental organisations and institutions, civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector. All participants will take part in the Forum in their personal capacity.

36. The Government of Switzerland will host the Forum. The UNECE Executive Secretary, the Swiss Foreign Minister and the UNFPA Executive Director as well as high-level personalities from the Council of Europe and the European Commission will address the Forum and take part in its proceedings and deliberations.

37. The Forum will not negotiate or adopt documents. Rather, its outcomes will include a Chair's summary of deliberations, a report on the Forum to be prepared by the secretariat and the proceedings containing background papers for the meeting. The Chair's summary and the report will be communicated to the UN Secretary-General by the Swiss Government, host of the EPF, for circulation.

38. Most of the cost of organizing and holding the Forum will be covered from the extrabudgetary contributions received by the UNECE secretariat from the UNFPA and the Swiss Government. Extrabudgetary staff preparing the Forum is being supported from these contributions. In addition, the background papers and the participation in the Forum of their authors as well as of panellists and experts from countries in transition are being financed from these contributions.

VII. FOLLOW-UP TO BEIJING

39. In 2005, the Commission on the Status of Women will hold a special session for the ten-year Review of the Beijing Platform for Action in March 2005. The regional commissions are expected to provide contributions to the global 10-year review, in line with the role assigned to them by the General Assembly in the review of progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

40. In view of the above and in order to coordinate the regional and global preparations for Beijing +10, the Special Advisor to the Secretary General on Gender Issues (OSAGI) and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW/DESA) convened a meeting with the Gender Focal Points of the five regional commissions (Paris, June 2003). On this occasion, an agreement was reached on the structure of the questionnaire to be sent by the New York secretariat to all Member States for the national reports that they will have to produce for the 10-year review. It was also agreed that the regional commissions would make a synthesis of the reports of their respective member States in order to highlight the regional and subregional situations, practices and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. These regional reports will be part of the official documentation for the review by the Committee on the Status of Women.

41. In terms of events, the understanding was that it was up to each regional commission to fix the format of their regional meeting. Based on past experience for the UNECE region, particularly the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meetings for Beijing (Vienna, November 1994) and Beijing +5 (Geneva, January 2000), it is proposed to organize an ECE Regional Forum for Beijing +10, to take place during the last quarter of 2004. The format, similar to the one recently agreed for the Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development, would have the following characteristics:

- (i) Themes: The Forum would not address the 12 areas of concern covered by the Beijing Platform for Action but a selected number of them, depending on their particular relevance to the region. The following areas are proposed for the UNECE region:
(a) Women in the Economy; (b) Women in public life and decision-making; and
(c) Trafficking of Women.
- (ii) Preparations: The preparations would be shared among the regional organizations with specific expertise and experience in the areas addressed: UNECE, European Commission and UNDP for theme (a); UNIFEM and International Parliamentary Union (IPU) for theme (b); Council of Europe, OSCE and International Organization for Migration for theme (c). According to this scheme, the UNECE would provide a substantive contribution to one area and would play a catalytic role for the others. Furthermore the UNECE secretariat would work in close cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Division for the Advancement of Women in order to ensure linkages between the regional and global levels of the review.
- (iii) NGO participation: As in the previous meetings of this kind, the NGOs will be actively involved in the Forum. Prior to it, they may organize their own meeting so as to coordinate their presence at the Forum. In this respect, the UNECE secretariat will cooperate with the NGO Working Group for Women in the UNECE region, a Geneva

based platform established in 1993 for the regional preparation of the Beijing Conference and which played the same role for the UNECE meeting on Beijing +5 in January 2000. European networks of women NGOs will also be actively involved in the process in order to ensure a real and well-balanced representation of civil society from the UNECE countries, with the expected support of funding agencies, both public and private.

- (iv) Documentation: In addition to the regional synthesis report mentioned above, a substantive background note would be prepared for the specific themes addressed, highlighting the positive developments and best practices as well as the remaining gaps, challenges and areas for further action in each of these themes.
- (v) Expected outcome: No negotiated text is expected. The outcome would take the form of Chairperson's conclusions which would highlight the main points raised and views expressed during the deliberations of the Forum. These conclusions would subsequently be transmitted to the Commission on the Status of Women and would constitute, together with the regional synthesis report, the contribution of the UNECE region to the 10-year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

VIII. FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT (MONTERREY, MARCH 2002)

42. The International Conference on Financing for Development adopted the Monterrey consensus, in which developed, developing and transition economy countries pledged to undertake important actions in domestic, international and systemic policy matters. In December 2002, the General Assembly set in motion a detailed follow-up intergovernmental process, as called for in the Consensus, to monitor implementation and to carry forward the international discussion of policies for financing for development.

43. The first General Assembly follow-up to the Conference was the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development held on 29-30 October 2003. The five Executive Secretaries participated in the roundtables along with government representatives and representatives from the private sector and civil society. The summary by the President of the General Assembly of the High level Dialogue on Financing For Development is contained in document A/58/555 and Corr.1.

44. At the present time, a draft resolution on Financing for Development is being considered by the General Assembly. It "invites the regional commissions, with the support of regional development banks, as appropriate, and in cooperation with the United Nations funds and programmes, to use the opportunity of their regular intergovernmental sessions, and to hold special meetings within existing resources, as necessary, to address the regional and interregional aspects of the follow-up to the Monterrey Conference and thus help to bridge any gaps between the national, regional and international dimensions of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and serve as inputs to the High-level Dialogue as well as to the spring meeting of the Economic and Social Council".

45. Updates on this will be provided to the Commission.