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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

**COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Second regional meeting on education for sustainable development  
Rome, 15-16 July 2004

**REPORT OF THE MEETING**

1. The second regional meeting on education for sustainable development was held from 15 (afternoon) to 16 July 2004, in Rome.
2. The meeting was attended by delegates from Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan.
3. The following specialized agencies were represented at the meeting: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
4. The following intergovernmental organization was represented: Council of Europe.
5. The Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC-CEE) and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) were represented, as were the following non-governmental organizations: European ECO-Forum and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

**I. OPENING AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

6. The meeting was opened by Mr. Paolo Soprano, Director, Ministry of Environment and Territory of Italy, who delivered a welcome speech. He appreciated the fact that the meeting brought

together representatives of both sectors, environment and education, as well as international organizations, including UNESCO, and NGOs. In particular, he welcomed the representative from the UNESCO Office Bangkok, who had come to the meeting to learn from the experience of UNECE.

7. Delegates heard about the national and international activities on environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) that the Italian Ministry of Environment and Territory was leading. In 2005 Italy would also host the Third World Environmental Education Congress.

8. The Task Force adopted its agenda (CEP/AC.13/2004/6).

## **II. DRAFT UNECE STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

9. The Chair, Mr. Jon Kahn (Sweden), delivered introductory remarks. He reported that the drafting group had met four times and had prepared a draft strategy (CEP/AC.13/2004/8) taking into account comments provided by member States and stakeholders, including regional environmental centres, international and non-governmental organizations. The strategy was meant to serve as a flexible framework and its implementation could be adapted to each country's priorities, specific needs and circumstances. Therefore, the document reflected the main considerations expressed by member States and stakeholders and was based on a general consensus.

10. The draft strategy was well received and the Task Force noted that the paper had improved significantly.

11. The Task Force discussed, amended and approved the strategy for submission to the Committee on Environmental Policy at its eleventh session (October 2004) for comments and endorsement. It was agreed that the document, as amended, would be finalized by the Chair with the assistance of the secretariat.

12. The representative of UNESCO expressed her appreciation for the work on education for sustainable development undertaken within the UNECE region and stressed that the provisions of the strategy were inspiring. She confirmed that the document provided a solid basis for the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it was a contribution to, and in line with, the Framework for a draft implementation scheme for the Decade developed by UNESCO and should be used as a foundation for the regional implementation of the Decade.

13. The drafting group had also prepared two background documents: one on past and ongoing international processes on education for sustainable development (CEP/AC.13/2004/8/Add.1), and another to clarify some terms used in the strategy (CEP/AC.13/2004/8/Add.2). These documents were not discussed and will not be revised. They are for information only.

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2015) was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, at its fifty-seventh session (December 2002).

14. The Russian-speaking delegates criticized the strategy's Russian translation. To remedy its deficiencies, they held an editorial meeting and recommended changes for incorporation into the final version.

### **III. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE STRATEGY'S IMPLEMENTATION**

15. The Task Force discussed the practical aspects of implementing the strategy in the region, based on a discussion paper prepared by the secretariat (CEP/AC.13/2004/9). The Task Force agreed that efficient communication, sharing information and good practices, raising public awareness and capacity-building were key tools to facilitate the strategy's implementation. As a start, following the decision taken at the first meeting of the Task Force, the delegation of Italy encouraged delegates to provide the secretariat with information on regional experiences in ESD that could be posted on the UNECE web site.

16. The representative of UNESCO underlined that UNECE was a pioneer in driving the ESD process and could set an example for other regions. Since the strategy had been developed through a participatory process involving governments and various stakeholders, it was highly important to learn from this particular experience.

17. The representative also felt that the success of the strategy's implementation would very much depend on how it was communicated within the region and worldwide. As a first practical step, she called on delegates to inform their national UNESCO commissions. It was also suggested that parliamentarians should be informed about the process.

18. The Task Force discussed the proposal on a joint high-level meeting of Environment Ministries and Education Ministries or equivalent State bodies responsible for education in UNECE member States that could be convened in 2005 to adopt the strategy. Discussion was based on a note prepared by the secretariat. Once the Committee on Environmental Policy had endorsed the strategy, it might wish to submit it for adoption by a joint high-level meeting. In coordination with UNESCO, the meeting would formally launch the Decade in the UNECE region. There was general support for holding such a meeting. The Task Force also endorsed the proposed date, candidatures for officers and agenda of the meeting.

19. The representative of UNESCO informed delegates about the High-level Panel on the United Nations Decade of ESD that would take place on 20 July 2004. The Panel was expected to give guidance to UNESCO on the draft International Implementation Scheme, the Decade and the related launch activities.

20. Delegates also provided information in relation to the implementation of ESD in the region. They shared experiences and good practices. Among the successful examples of subregional cooperation were the Central Asian intergovernmental process on environmental education, the Programme Baltic 21-education for sustainable development and the Mediterranean subregional process on EE and ESD.

21. European ECO-Forum informed delegates about the results of a study on the priorities and needs of education for sustainable development in Bulgaria, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom. The study was sponsored by the United Kingdom Department for Environment, Food and

Rural Affairs. European ECO-Forum also introduced a project proposal to research effective practice and policy implications in the UNECE region.

22. The delegation of Sweden provided information about the outcomes of the International forum on education for sustainable development "Learning to Change Our World", which had taken place in Gothenburg (Sweden) on 4-7 May 2004. The delegation of Greece informed the Task Force about the side event on education for sustainable development that its Government had organized in cooperation with the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development, UNESCO and UNECE during the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York on 28 April 2004. The representative of IUCN reported on its World Conservation Congress, to be held in Bangkok on 17-25 November 2004, which would address ESD among other issues.

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