



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
LIMITED

ECE/EX/2008/L.12
19 June 2008

ENGLISH
Original: ENGLISH, FRENCH
AND RUSSIAN

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Twenty-fourth meeting
Geneva, 1 July 2008
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

**DECISION ON MATTERS RELATING TO
THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Extension of the mandate of the Working Group
on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Note by the secretariat

1. The Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP), at its tenth session in 2003, renamed its Ad Hoc Working Group on Environmental Monitoring as the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA) and adopted its updated terms of reference for the period up to the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007). In its activities, WGEMA focused on contributing to the fourth assessment report on the state of the environment for the Belgrade Conference “Environment for Europe” (October 2007) that the European Environment Agency (EEA) was preparing as well as on strengthening environmental information and observation capacities in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.
2. Its major achievements included the preparation of publication of *Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia* and *Guidelines for the Preparation of Indicator-based Environment Assessment Reports in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia*¹; and *Guidelines for Strengthening Environmental*

¹ Published in the United Nations publication ECE/CEP/140 – Sales # E.07.II.E.9.

Monitoring and Reporting by Enterprises².

3. The Belgrade “Environment for Europe” (EfE) Conference discussed the fourth pan-European assessment report, the set of WGEMA guidelines and recommendations, and a paper on policy issues³ prepared by the secretariat on the basis of WGEMA documentation. The Ministers in Belgrade endorsed the Recommendations and the Guidelines prepared by WGEMA and invited UNECE to continue its efforts, in cooperation with EEA and other partners, to make monitoring an effective instrument in environmental policymaking in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and South-Eastern Europe (SEE).

4. The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its fifteenth session held in April 2008, reviewed the WGEMA report on the implementation of its programme of work (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2007/3 and Add.1) and, in view of the group’s accomplishments and the decisions by the Belgrade EfE Conference, agreed to recommend the extension of the mandate and revised terms of reference, and invited the Conference of European Statisticians to consider cooperating with the WGEMA on methodological issues of environmental indicators (ECE/CEP/2008/2).

5. The revised terms of reference highlight specific tasks emanating from decisions by the Belgrade Conference. In compliance with the Belgrade Ministerial Declaration, the capacity-building activities of WGEMA, including those on the modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks and information systems, will target SEE countries that are not EEA members in addition to countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. WGEMA is made explicitly responsible for promoting the implementation of recommendations and guidelines on environmental monitoring and assessment adopted by EfE Ministerial Conferences. Its members will be officials responsible in the UNECE countries for environmental monitoring and assessment. It will involve in its activities experts from statistical agencies, compliance control authorities and sanitary services, as well as representatives of major groups, especially business and industry, the scientific community and environmental citizens’ organizations.

6. The Committee will review WGEMA’s activities in two years on the basis of the Group’s report on its activities. WGEMA is expected to prepare its work programme using main directions identified in document ECE/CEP/2008/6 as basis at its upcoming meeting on 4-5 September 2008.

7. The UNECE Executive Committee is invited to approve the extension of the mandate of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment with its revised terms of reference.

² Published in the United Nations publication ECE/CEP/141 – Sales # E.07.II.E.17.

³ Making Monitoring and Assessment an Effective Tool in Environmental Policy (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/11).

ANNEX**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE WORKING GROUP
ON ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT**

1. In the light of the decision of the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, October 2007), the Committee on Environmental Policy renews the mandate of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. The Working Group should help strengthening environmental information and observation capacity, including monitoring networks, in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and the Russian Federation, as well as in interested countries of South-Eastern Europe to make monitoring and assessment an effective instrument in environmental policymaking, and to improve international environmental reporting.
2. The Working Group will promote the coordination of multilateral and bilateral efforts in the above areas, and in particular towards preparations for the Ministerial Conferences “Environment for Europe”. It should contribute:
 - (a) To the development of assessment reports on the state of the environment by the European Environment Agency (EEA);
 - (b) To an appraisal of monitoring and assessment requirements within the framework of the “Environment for Europe” process as well as national and international monitoring and assessment requirements, including obligations under the relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).
3. The Working Group should promote implementation of recommendations and guidelines on environmental monitoring and assessment adopted by Ministerial Conferences “Environment for Europe”. It should use relevant results of the work of and cooperate with other international forums and networks, such as EEA, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Statistics Division, the World Health Organization, European Centre for Environment and Health, relevant MEAs, especially those of UNECE, the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and give priority to the following specific areas:
 - (a) Modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks and information systems;
 - (b) Improvement of data collection, transfer and use;
 - (c) Enhancement of international comparability of environmental information;
 - (d) Promotion of the use of indicator-based mechanisms for periodic environmental assessments and evaluation of the effectiveness of environmental policies and decision-making;
 - (f) Improvement of environmental assessments, including ecosystem-based assessments, outlooks and reporting;
 - (g) The strengthening of environmental monitoring and reporting by enterprises.

4. Donors will be invited to provide support for the Working Group's activities.
5. The Working Group will be open to all UNECE member States and include EEA. In its operation it will be guided by the relevant procedures established by the UNECE Executive Committee.
6. Members of the Working Group are officials responsible in the UNECE countries for environmental monitoring and assessment. The Working Group will involve in its activities experts from statistical agencies, compliance control authorities and sanitary services, as well as representatives of major groups, especially business and industry, the scientific community and environmental citizens' organizations.
7. The UNECE will provide secretariat assistance and conference facilities to the Working Group at the United Nations Office at Geneva, in accordance with UNECE rules and practices.
8. The Committee on Environmental Policy will review the present terms of reference in two years after the adoption by the Committee of the Working Group's work programme.
