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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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

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

Extension of the mandate of the Expert Group
on Environmental Performance

Note by the secretariat

1. In 1993, at the Second Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, held in Lucerne, Switzerland, the Committee on Environmental Policy of the UNECE was entrusted to carry out the Environmental Performance Review (EPR) programme based on the model of the EPR programme of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 1997, after three reviews carried out in collaboration with OECD as a training exercise, the Committee started to conduct full fledged reviews on countries with economies in transition of Eastern Europe. In the period 1997-2000, peer reviews were conducted by the Committee for every EPR during its regular sessions. In 2000, the Committee decided to modify the Peer Review procedure, and to entrust the Expert Group on Environmental Performance, designated by the member countries, to carry out the expert review process prior to the peer review and final adoption of the EPR recommendations by the Committee.

2. It was decided that the Expert Group would comprise 10 to 14 members nominated for two years (i.e. the biennium). Each of its members is expert in a specific domain, so as to cover the total range of issues in the EPR chapters and represent a balanced geographical coverage of the UNECE region. As the first cycle of the EPR Programme is completed and the second cycle has

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started, the mandate of the Expert Group was extended accordingly in 2002 and 2005. In 2007, due to the preparation of the Belgrade Ministerial Conference, the Committee postponed the renewal of the mandate of the Expert Group to the fifteenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policies, in April 2008.

3. Since its inception, the Programme has reviewed 23 countries in its first cycle and 8 in its second cycle. Between 2005-2008, the Expert Group reviewed Kazakhstan (2008), Moldova (2005), Montenegro (2007), Serbia (2007) and Ukraine (2006). Another achievement of the Expert Group is the involvement in the preparation of a document for the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (Belgrade, 10–12 October 2007) on *Critical Issues in Implementation of Environmental Policies*, taking stock of the progress achieved in countries reviewed for a second time and analysing bottlenecks and providing recommendations.

4. The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its fifteenth session held in April 2008, reviewed the terms of reference of the Expert Group with a view to enlarging the participation of the Committee’s delegates in the Expert Group meetings on an ad hoc basis. The intention is to allow for a more in-depth participation of the Committee in the substance of reviews and to improve cooperation between member countries. The Committee readjusted the terms of reference of the Expert Group accordingly, and recommended the extension of its mandate up to 2010 in order to pursue work for the second cycle of reviews. The Committee also elected the 11 members of the Expert Group. The new terms of reference are annexed to this document.

5. The UNECE Executive Committee is invited to approve the extension of the mandate of the Expert Group with its revised terms of reference.

Annex

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

1. The core of the Expert Group should comprise 10 to 14 members, with due consideration to geographical balance among countries in the region. It is suggested that, when new members are chosen, due regard should be given to experts from countries that have recently been reviewed, as well as to those who have undergone or will soon undergo second reviews.
2. Participation in the meetings of the Expert Group will be open to CEP delegates, who would act as advisers to review the report and its recommendations.
3. The UNECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance is tasked to:
 - (a) Carry out the Expert Review process prior to the peer review to be undertaken by the Committee on Environmental Policy;
 - (b) Provide guidance to the secretariat and the Committee on all substantive and organizational matters arising in the implementation of the UNECE programme of Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs);
 - (c) Assist the secretariat in coordinating the UNECE EPR programme with processes under way in other international institutions that have a bearing on it, inter alia, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Asian Development Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development EPR programme and its work in the region of East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.
4. The guidance of the Expert Group to the secretariat and the Committee will include:
 - (a) Identification of opportunities and requirements for improving the conduct of the EPRs;
 - (b) Assessment of environmental trends relevant to the EPR process in countries in transition, including the organization of joint meetings, seminars and workshops at the regional and subregional levels, where these are demand-driven;
 - (c) Review and improvement of the data and information used for the EPR;
 - (d) Drawing up proposals on how to improve the adoption of the recommendations contained in the EPR country reports and their implementation.

5. The core members of the EPR Expert Group are elected by the Committee on Environmental Policy upon the recommendation of the Bureau. The secretariat will invite international institutions pursuing related work to participate in the work of the EPR Expert Group.
6. While taking decisions on an EPR report under review and its recommendations, the Expert Group shall take into consideration the inputs by the delegates of the Committee on Environmental Policy, who participate in the meeting.
7. The EPR Expert Group elects its Chair and Vice-Chair.
8. The EPR Expert Group will report annually on its activities to the Committee on Environmental Policy, and may raise any issue with the Committee that it deems necessary for the implementation of its mandate.