

NEWS
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LETTER
ECO'S ENVIRONMENT
FOR EUROPE
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ECO-Forum International
Conference
May, 19 Review

**UKRAINIAN PRIME
MINISTER'S VISIT TO
NGO PRE-
CONFERENCE**

*Questions and answers were not on
the agenda*

Ukrainian Prime Minister Victor Yanukovich came to greet the participants of ECO-Forum International Conference at the end of the day on the 19th May. He underlined his desire to work together with citizens organizations to address environmental problems. This is a long range process that can not be finalized in a short time period. He stressed that there is a need to work in partnership in defining and addressing issues on nature protection. He apologized for the inconveniences with the premises and explained that there was no time to finish all preparations for the conference.

**OUR
EXPECTATIONS
ABOUT THE KIEV
CONFERENCE**

Ondrej Velek, Environmental
Partnership, Czech Republic

Now the negotiations of the PRTR Protocol are over. It is very important to achieve the commitment of Governments to continue the work on PRTRs within the existing Working Group or some other body to be established. It is also important to come up with some network of people who will be committed to promote PRTRs. This is what we are trying to achieve with the 'Virtual Classroom' - a Web-based project supported by the Dutch Government.

Muazama Burkhanova, The Fund to
Support Civil Initiatives, Tajikistan

We have worked a lot on EECCA Environmental Strategy. I would like that this Strategy gets a real shape in Kiev. We do not need another paper - we need to start concrete actions.

John Hontelez, European
Environmental Bureau, Belgium, ECO-
Forum CB member

It is an ongoing struggle, in all parts of the UN-ECE region, to put or keep environmental issues high on the political agenda. Environmental Ministers need international cooperation and international agreements to strengthen their position at home. The Protocols most of them are going to sign here are important but not enough. The Environment for Europe process needs new challenges, and phasing out unsustainable consumption and production patterns, in the entire region, is the most important of these challenges. The Ministers should decide here on how to set up a region-wide strategy, with a very clear timetable.



Fé Sanchis-Moreno,
TERRA, Spain

I expect that countries will sign the Protocols on SEA and PRTR and commit themselves to ratify and implement them immediately after Kiev. In this way people will have better opportunities to be aware, to know and to participate in decision-making processes. Such participation would help governments to make better decisions. And will also help people share the responsibility to protect the environment.

Anna Tsvetkova, Mama-86, Ukraine

We expect to find understanding from the side of Governments of the need to sign the Protocol on Civil Liability, despite all difficulties encountered during the negotiation process. We also hope that the process of ratification of this Protocol will not be delayed as it happened with the Protocol on Water and Health. I also have expectations connected with the Water Partnership. This shall be a real step in the implementation of all kind of declarations, for instance the Johannesburg Declaration and the Millennium Declaration.

Fikret Jafarov, Association For
Sustainable Development, Azerbaijan

I have worked a lot on the EECCA Environmental Strategy and I expect that it will provide public with equal rights and real partnership with governments. I also expect that Kiev will help us strengthen the cooperation with developed countries to address environmental problems in EECCA region.

ECOs DEMANDS FROM KIEV-2000 to KIEV-2003

What did we achieve during many years of lobbying and negotiating? Victoria Elias, Chair of ECO-Forum Coordination Board, made analyses of what happened with the demands of Environmental Citizens' Organisations expressed in Kiev Strategy Meeting in 2000 on the road to Kiev-2003. Many things were achieved since then. The Aarhus Convention entered into force and the three protocols were developed. However many things did not survive or were not touched on the road to Kiev-2003. The Protocols are very important, however, ECOs have more ambitious agenda in relation to all three laws. We did not get the amendment on GMOs, although the work in this area is going on. No progress was achieved to introduce the 5-year freeze on GMOs that ECOs demanded for many years already. A lot of question marks can be placed in relation to whether there was a proper review of the technical assistance provided for the settlement of environmental problems. International efforts are still needed to remove environmentally harmful energy subsidies and to integrate environmental considerations into energy sector. No progress was made to start work on the Charter on Environmental Policy Integration. However, our proposal on the NGO-Ministerial Round-Table was supported. The process on the development of the Framework Convention on Transport, Environment and Health is stopped. We had demands that the support be given to solve water problems in EECCA and we finally have the Water Initiative to address these issues. We did not manage to bring

the ethical dimension back to the Environment for Europe process. Still a long way to go...

UKRAINIAN NGOs EVALUATE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The Ukrainian NGOs made an unprecedented attempt to evaluate the state of the environmental policy in Ukraine ahead of the Kiev "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference. A year ago they established working groups to draft a comprehensive assessment of environmental policy and legislation, environmental management, the impact of economic activities, the role of environmental NGOs and many other issues. As Ukrainian NGOs mention such public assessment from the very beginning was a difficult task since public always takes a critical view on governmental policies.

The 133-page assessment report indeed showed many shortcomings and gaps. As Tetyana Tymochko (All-Ukrainian Environmental League), the speaker on environmental management, says, the authorities often lack the knowledge on the environment and the basic management skills. Tymochko proposed a Common system for Educating Civil Servants of environmental authorities as a tool to address poor governance. Many speakers stressed that it is very important to make such public assessments a permanent tool. Public authorities should feel concerned about the way citizens assess their activities. Opinion of other states and international community does not need to be a first priority.

During the discussion of the outcomes of assessment report Svitlana Kravchenko from EcoPravo-Lviv stressed that the main problem is not weak legislation but its poor implementation. However, we need to use actively the opportunities provided by the third pillar of the Aarhus Convention and to sue and use legal mechanisms to get laws implemented.

THE JOHANNESBURG OUTCOMES IN KIEV

The participants of the workshop on the role of the Environment for Europe process in the implementation of the WSSD outcomes stressed that the regional response to the implementation of Johannesburg decisions is crucially important. Olga Ponizova from ECO-Accord highlighted the opportunities for citizens' participation in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and in the regional follow-up.

John Hontelez from the European Environmental Bureau highlighted the issues from Johannesburg agenda which require actions from European Environment Ministers. The Ministerial Declaration should explicitly urge the countries which have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol to do so. An important message on good governance has a direct relevance for the UN ECE region. The Efe conference will contribute to the environmental governance through SEA and PRTR Protocols, and in a way through the Civil Liability Protocol. However, ECO-Forum has

concerns about the limits in these Protocols and requests that the improvement of protocols starts now. Jeffrey Barber from the Integrative Strategies Forum highlighted the need to focus on corporate accountability, in addition to corporate responsibility.

A clear way to implement Johannesburg outcomes on sustainable production and consumption (SPAC) patterns would be the commitment to work on the Pan-European Strategy to promote SPAC to be ready for next ministerial conference. It is important to agree on it in Kiev and not to leave this issue for UNECE for later. Even though the global target on renewable energy was not agreed in Johannesburg, the ministers should follow the agreement of like-minded countries and establish a regional target on renewables in Kiev. Fikret Jafarov from Association "For Sustainable Development" highlighted that NGOs did a great job before Joburg and Ministers should know about the results of this work. 5 Water, energy, Health, Agriculture, Biodiversity priorities identified in Johannesburg have crucial importance for multi-stakeholder cooperation in EECCA and should be included in the Ministerial Declaration.

Olga Ponizova from ECO-Accord stressed that the poverty issue, highly ranked in Johannesburg, is totally missing from the UN ECE agenda. At the same time, there are countries in EECCA where people do get less than 1 dollar per day. She also mentioned that the trade and environmental linkages need to be brought to the agenda of UNECE. Gevorg Arakelyan from Association for Sustainable Human Development stressed

the importance of creating the national councils for sustainable development as bodies empowered to address the issues of environment and sustainable development.

PROTOCOL ON PRTR: PUBLIC "RIGHT TO KNOW" TREATY

The workshop participants discussed the final text of the new PRTR Protocol to the Aarhus Convention. This is a new international agreement which aims at providing the public with information on a range of pollutants and their sources. Main focus is made on major sources of emissions and wastes, but information on diffuse sources of pollutants can also be included into PRTR system.

A delegation of environmental NGOs took part in the negotiations during the last two years and expressed its vision of the final text of the protocol. Olga Speranskaya from Eco-Accord pointed out that NGOs are well aware of both the ambition and the limitations of the protocol. Radioactive substances, water, energy, and resource use were not included into the list of items to be reported. Storage of pollutants, on-site transfers of pollutants, transfers of pollutants through products would not be reported. Dmitry Scrilnikov from ECO-Pravo-Lviv emphasised that ministers should make clear commitments to work further to improve the content of the protocol in the future.

However, the protocol has much to offer, and its implementation will be a significant step forward in reducing pollution and using cleaner and greener

technologies. PRTRs are already in place in some countries and have significantly contributed to pollution reduction measures.

Serhiy Vykhrist from ECO-Pravo Kharkiv expressed a concern about some points of the protocol, which are weaker than Aarhus convention. In his opinion countries could use these points as an excuse to weaken their own legislation. In their reply Olga Speranskaya and Dmitry Scrilnikov stressed that NGOs need to keep this possibility in mind and lobby their governments to go further than the requirements of the protocol as this new law provides minimum standards only.

Marie Kranendonk raised a question concerning the necessity to improve public capacity in using information provided by PRTRs. For a great majority of NGOs and other public stakeholders it could be a problem to understand and use these data. The need to develop information and awareness raising programs focused on authorities, NGOs and business was emphasised. Ondrej Velek from Czech republic also mentioned that Virtual classroom which is a new information and education web-site on PRTR issues could be of help. He stressed that PRTRs should be publicly accessible and prepared in a user-friendly format to better facilitate public attempts to get information pollutants and their sources.

DEBATES ON EECCA ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

The workshop on EECCA Environmental Strategy apparently was one of key issues of the day. The participants heard the presentation by Peter Liengel from Romania about the results of the survey among CEE NGOs concerning the role and impact of the Environmental Action Programme and the EAP Task Force in CEE. The outcomes of this survey showed that the vast majority of NGOs were not informed about EAP.

Olga Ponizova briefed the participants about the preparatory process for the EECCA Environmental Strategy. Most of Ukrainian speakers posed questions on the legitimacy of the Strategy arguing that it is not supported by Ukrainian organizations. They questioned whether ECO-Forum and the ministers know about the lack of support for the Strategy in Ukraine.

Facilitator Mara Silina tried to make the discussion focused asking the participants to highlight positive and negative issues about the Strategy. The opinions of NGOs were quite diverse. Many considered that the train is already gone: however, some claimed that there are ways to improve the situation while others believed that the only way to stop this train is to lie on its way.

The major negative points of the Strategy listed by the participants were the weak text, poor linkages with other pillars of sustainable development, mistrust in implementation of another 'paper', and allegations that the Strategy will serve as a channel for money to disappear in the pockets of officials. Ukrainian NGOs also mentioned that the process of drafting of the Strategy violated the Aarhus Convention. The good points about the Strategy were the opportunities for NGOs to act as partners, the participation of all 55 countries in the Strategy, the opportunities for public participation and local action. The discussion will continue in the coming days.

GREEN BACKPACK: SIMULATION

GAMES ARE NOT ONLY FOR KIDS

On the first day of International ECO-Forum Conference the participants discussed the issues of environmental education. Three years ago the delegates of ECO-Forum in Belarus established a group to work on these issues. Dmitry Kavtaradze, the leader of the group, says that his speech at the workshop was a kind of report on the activities during these years. In particular, he introduced to the participants the Green Backpack – a collection of educational materials and

simulation games, which are the education tools on environmental decision-making. The Green Backpack includes such topics as structure and functioning of eco-systems, biodiversity conservation, risk assessment, and models of environmental settlements. The materials are in form of posters and games that kids can understand easily. However, the Backpack is also a tool for education of high school students, university students, specialists with different backgrounds and administrative officials. On 20 May the project will be presented at a high school in Kiev. On 22 May the Environment Ministers participating in the Conference will also have an opportunity to find out about the project.

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