

NEWS MAY 21 LETTER FOR EUROPE E R

PAN-EUROPEAN

ECO'S ENVIRONMENT

FOR EUROPE

ECO-Forum International Conference
May, 20 Review

DRAFT RESOLUTION OF SIGNATORIES TO THE PRTR PROTOCOL

*The need to enhance public rights of access
to information through PRTRs is deleted*

Today, May, 20, delegations from the UN ECE region discussed the draft resolution of signatories to the PRTR Protocol. Canada, supported by the EU, was the first country that strongly opposed the need to enhance the right of the public to have access to information through the establishment of coherent, integrated, nationwide PRTRs.

ECO-Forum and REC were fighting for a stronger text in this non-legally binding document, emphasizing the need to retain "rights" in the text. They stressed that the PRTR Protocol is a "Public Right to Know" instrument, which

aims to provide the public with information on polluters and pollution sources. Keeping the word "rights" in the text is more consistent with the goal of the Protocol.

ECO-Forum was fighting to keep the wording of two other paragraphs (P10 and 11) within the Resolution: in paragraph 10, countries request a Meeting of Parties (MOP) at the first session to explore possible means to integrate information on pollution inputs, products, use of water, energy and other resources in pollutant release and transfer registers. ECO-Forum's reference to some countries' experience in providing reports on one or more of these elements (e.g., this year, the UK is beginning to collect energy-use data on a voluntary base), and its suggestion that it would be worth while looking at how to integrate such information, was not accepted by countries.

ECO-Forum made a similar request concerning on-site transfers and destination of all transfers wastes in order to achieve a more comprehensive scope for a PRTR system. There was much debate during negotiations about on-site transfers and destination of transfers, although the protocol sets aside these items for the moment. ECO-Forum considers that their exclusion is anomalous since equivalent off-site transfers and international transfers are included. In any event, the first MOP is many



years away, and undoubtedly a lot of experience will be gained in the meantime.

Canada, supported by the EU, the Czech republic, Switzerland and Norway opposed t keeping these paragraphs in the text of the Protocol. In their opinion it could re-open discussions already taken place during negotiations. Thus, it became unclear whether countries are ready to work further on developing a National PRTR system beyond the requirements of the protocol.

EPI – COMPLICATED BUT IMPORTANT TOPIC TO DISCUSS WITH THE MINISTERS

Environmental Policy Integration (EPI) is the issue to be discussed at the Round-Table of NGOs and Ministers, scheduled for 22 May at the Kiev "Environment for Europe" Conference. Preliminary discussions on EPI among NGOs show that it is a complicated but important issue. "If NGOs do not raise this issue, nobody will," Mara Silina from European Environmental Bureau stresses.

The EPI Round-Table will last 2.5 hours. This is not much time for 200 NGO representatives to raise all issues important to

integrating environmental considerations in all sectors and levels of the economy. NGOs prepared case studies on EPI which includes positive and negative aspects, concrete progress or lack of progress in the UN-ECE region on EPI..

The discussion at the Round-Table will focus on EPI instruments, agriculture as an example of EPI, and institutional barriers. This last issue is an opportunity to put the concerns of many if not all NGOs on the table, about the status and powers of Environment Ministers. Alexander Karpov from St.Petersburg Society of Naturalists stresses that ministers are equally interested in the status of this issue. ; However, they are not empowered to increase their competence. Therefore, we need to attract the attention of Western Europeans to analyse how their investments contribute to or prevent EPI.

Karine Danielyan from the Association for Sustainable Human Development stresses that we already have a number of instruments, tools and programs to be used, but are facing a crisis of implementation. It is important to answer why these instruments do not work and find what needs to be done to reverse the trend.

ADOPTION OF SEA PROTOCOL IS NOT ENOUGH!

The Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment will be signed at the extraordinary meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention on EIA. The

goal of the Protocol is to provide framework for assessing the impact of various activities on the environment at the very early stage of decision-making. This will allow to prevent negative consequences of future specific projects based on strategic decisions.

The idea of the SEA Protocol is a result of dissatisfaction in relation to Articles 7 and 8 of the Aarhus Convention, which address the participation of civil society in strategic decision-making on the environment. However, in the drafting process the opportunities for public participation were significantly reduced in the document.

Today ECO-Forum developed a Statement to the Ministers. Non-governmental organizations, in general, support the Protocol and urge UNECE countries to sign and promptly ratify this agreement. ECO-Forum also urges countries to reform their national legislation to ensure more effective implementation of SEA Protocol.

At the same time, NGOs regret that its scope of application does not cover financial and budgetary decisions, as well as does not properly address the decision-making on policies and legislation. Those countries where current legislation is stronger than the Protocol shall not step back. ECO-Forum calls on UNECE member states to support financially public participation in strategic environmental assessment. It is also crucial to renew the work on Articles 7 and 8 of the Aarhus Convention.

PROTOCOL ON CIVIL LIABILITY MUST BE SIGNED IN KIEV

The Protocol on Civil Liability is finalized; however, there are doubts that it will be signed on 21 May by the Environment Ministers of UNECE countries. Some delegations may come to the conference without proper powers needed for signing. ECO-Forum's expert Sergey Vyhrst said that the discussion in the European Parliament of the EU Directive which addresses many issues covered by the Protocol in some ways delayed the process.

The urgent need to draft a legally binding document to provide immediate and adequate compensation for the damage caused by accidents on trans-boundary waters became evident after the cyanide spill in Baia Mare in January 2000. From the very beginning, ECO-Forum insisted that the scope of application of such instrument includes the accidental release of bacteria, viruses and GMOs. However, the majority of negotiators proffered a multi-staged approach, and the Protocol remains in the limited frameworks of the Water Convention and the Industrial Accidents Convention.

The Statement of European environmental organizations on Civil Liability Protocol regrets that the scope of application does not cover GMOs, viruses and bacteria. Moreover, the Protocol does include detailed provisions on access to information and access to justice. In particular, it lacks the

provision on mandatory active dissemination of information on industrial accidents. Despite the shortcomings of the new agreement, ECOs welcome this binding instrument and urge all Governments to sign it in Kiev and ensure rapid entry into force.

GREEN PACK: EDUCATION FOR EUROPE

An attractive way to present environmental concepts

Today, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC-CEE) with different partners launch-ed a Project **the “Green Pack”**: **“Education for Europe”** that has been presented by Robert Atkinson (the UK) and Klímen Mindjov (Czech Republic). The Project has been mainly sponsored by Toyota Company –the fact that got diverse reaction from the participants of the conference.

The “Green Pack” is a very attractive and simple way to present the major environment concepts that could be easily explained to the pupils aged from 12-16. It includes a hand book for teachers, CD, video tape, dilemma games and other materials that help to stimulate discussions and creative thinking among the pupils and to educate on environment components (air, water, soil, biodiversity), threats and pressures on environment (noise), human activities (transportation), global challenges (climate change) and values (citizens’ rights).

The project helps to introduce different environmental issues into school curriculum without separate course because it is realized with the relevance on existing curriculums. Today this project has already involved about 200.000 gymnasium students in Poland and has also been introduced in Hungary and Bulgaria.

The participants of the Conference has greatly greeted the Project and outlined the necessity to introduce it into other Eastern European and Caucasus countries.

ROAD FROM KIEV TO BUDAPEST

The first ECO-Forum meeting on Health and Environment brought non-governmental organizations together to discuss two important issues: the forthcoming WHO Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health to be held in 2004 in Budapest, and the ways to organize NGOs work on health, environment and sustainable development.

The 2004 Budapest conference will focus on one main issue: children’s health and the environment. In this way, Budapest will differ from the previous WHO conference (in London in 1999) which tried (and mostly failed) to develop action on twelve themes.

So far the NGO preparatory process for Budapest is not really developed: no funding

is available, but there are hopes that this will change. The new European Environment and Health Network will seek to coordinate inputs of NGOs, but this network is just starting to develop. At the same time, the REC for CEE is taking a lead in planning operational matters for the event.

NGO participants generally agreed that the process has the potential to be an important event and that NGOs should strengthen their involvement and shape the agenda of Budapest-2004. Children’s health is clearly a very broad issue and is open to many interpretations.

The participants raised a number of key issues to be answered on the road to Budapest. In particular, public health quality varies enormously across Europe - Western Europe, accession countries and the EECCA region are all facing different problems; at the same time, there are some common features as well. The quality and amount of information on environment and health links remains unsatisfactory. There needs to be a cultural change amongst both environment and health professionals if they wish to have genuine collaboration.

For documents on Budapest-2004 see www.eehc.dk

**UK ENVIRONMENT
FOR EUROPE FUND
WORTH 2 MLN.
POUNDS**

The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is launching the new UK ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE FUND to coincide with the Kiev Environment for Europe Conference. Its goal is to promote environmental protection and sustainable development in Eastern and Central Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It specifically focuses on the out-comes of Kiev-2003. The Fund will be worth 2 million pounds in 2003/2004. Round table consultation meeting with stakeholders was held today to maximize the effectiveness of the Fund.

European ECO-Forum
NEWSLETTER, May 2003
Published by European ECO-Forum
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Co-ordination Unit of the
European ECO-Forum is
supported by the grant from the
Danish Ministry of Environment
and Energy, Danish
Environmental Protection Agency