

NEWS MAY 24 PAN-EUROPEAN LETTER ECO'S ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE ER

ECO-Forum International
Conference
May, 23 Review

THE BRIGHT FUTURE?

We support the Environment for Europe process to continue in the Pan-European region – these are the words repeated by almost all speakers in the morning session of the Future of the Environment for Europe process on 23 May. Many speakers highlighted the need for greater concentration on EECCA countries in the framework of this process. The Declaration's chapter on the Future was fully agreed by the time of the session, so just a few countries highlighted their position about the wordings they would prefer.

So what is in the Declaration about the Future of EfE process? The conferences will be held “regularly” every four or five years. The Kiev Conference did not agree on the next place and date for the ministers to meet.

Ukrainian Minister Shevchuk proposed to postpone the decision until October 2003.

During whole preparatory process, ECO-Forum insisted on the need to shorten the period between ministerial meetings and to hold annual meetings. At the session on the Future, Victoria Elias, the Chairperson of European ECO-Forum, highlighted:

“We have been discussing the issue of the frequency of future Ministerial meetings. We all have witnessed these days how packed the agenda was. EfE is so rich, leads to so many initiatives, that it justifies more frequent meetings. To have discussions that lead to real leadership from Environment Ministers confirming prepared decisions and starting new initiatives, we think there is a need for annual, or in any case more frequent ministerial meetings.”

Russian Federation highlighted the general satisfaction with the process but emphasized that it is desirable to hold Ministerial meetings every 3 years. Russia also proposed to hold regional meetings between ministerial conferences. A number of countries highlighted the need to link EfE with the redesigned Commission on Sustainable Development.

ECO-Forum raised other issues on the future of the process:

“We are concerned that the Environment for Europe process in practice focuses on the European continent, Caucasus and Central Asia is suffering from political disagreements with UNECE countries that do not



belong to this region. This problem needs to be resolved. We call upon a true Pan-European process, connecting EECCA and other parts of Europe, responsibly picking up Johannesburg challenges and implementing common decisions and agreements.”

ECO-Forum also stressed a number of features to be streamlined in the EfE. Victoria Elias stated that the EfE should continue to work at two levels:

“First: the region as a whole, to promote progress towards sustainable development. In particular, we call upon governments to start, in the framework of the EfE work on a pan-European regional strategy to phase out unsustainable production and consumption patterns, develop further the region-wide Strategy on Education for sustainable development, to implement legally-binding and other agreements without any delay, bring ethical values back to the EfE agenda.”

The Second Level is assistance to individual countries and sub-regions. We welcome the adopted Environmental Strategy for EECCA as well as other subregional partnership initiatives and call for their further development and implementation with full involvement of all countries of

the region and all interested stakeholders, especially ECOs.”

NUCLEAR ISSUES OUT OF THE DECLARATION

The Declaration of Kiev Conference was agreed and adopted by acclamation by the Ministers. The European Union, Norway, Sweden and ECO-Forum were the only speakers who criticised the text.

Since nuclear energy did **not** survive in the final text, the European Union made a Statement on this issue. It says that nuclear safety is a matter of paramount importance. EU will provide technical and financial assistance to enhance safety of nuclear installations and will continue to support phasing out of those installations that cannot be economically upgraded.

Norwegian Minister made a brilliant statement, saying “I regret that 120 km from Chernobyl we could not agree to work on phasing out unsafe nuclear installations. What kind of message is this from Kiev?”

John Hontelez on behalf of European ECO-Forum stressed “*We know that different types of reactors exist in the region, and that management can make a difference in reducing risks. But environmental organisations and large parts of the public in the region are convinced that sufficiently safe nuclear reactors do not exist. And besides that, it is irresponsible to continue producing, day by day, nuclear waste, for which after*

50 years of research still no final solution has been found!”

The sentences on mechanisms of Kyoto protocol in para.24 of the Declaration were deleted from the text. The Declaration contains a reference to Johannesburg text on Kyoto. Norway commented “*We had hope that we will urge very rapid and soon ratification of Kyoto Protocol and now we have to go back to Johannesburg Plan”.*

John Hontelez stressed that the Declaration reflects the growing political division in the UNECE regions and the most worrying element is the statement in para.4. “*This paragraph undermines the notion of necessity of multilateral agreements on the international and regional agreements and will help countries that do not like to join the Kyoto Protocol, the Biodiversity Convention and other crucial, badly needed, international agreements, to simply say: Well: in Kyiv we agreed, as UNECE countries, that we can do our own thing, as we like and how much we like! This message is the opposite of what we expect from Environment Ministers.”*

NEW NON-LEGALLY BINDING GUIDELINES FOR INVESTORS

REC for CEE presented today Guidelines for direct investments into hazardous activities. It is a non-legally binding document, which nevertheless provides strict recommendations to investors who intend to invest

into hazardous industry and other types of activities in CEE and EECCA. Similar approaches can be used in other regions as well.

Guidelines describe corporate rights and obligations, relations between countries accepting investments and donors, suggest principles of environmental policy for companies and public participation. However it would be a problem to make companies meet the requirements, which are not legally binding. But on the other hand companies should be interested to follow this guidelines to improve their own image. It is important to inform them about the new document and this side event during the Ministerial conference was the first step in doing this.

European ECO-Forum
NEWSLETTER, May 2003
Published by European ECO-Forum
Co-ordination Unit,
e-mail: eco-forum@eco-forum.org
<http://www.eco-forum.org>
Editorial board: Olga Speranskaya, Julia Trombitcaia, Victoria Elias
Co-ordination Unit of the European ECO-Forum is supported by Danish Ministry of Environment and Energy, Danish Environmental Protection Agency
