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1. AD HOC PROJECT FACILITATION MECHANISM AND WORKING GROUP ON WATER AND HEALTH

The first meeting of Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism (AHPFM) took place on 25 June 2008 in

Geneva, back-to-back with the first meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health (26-27 June 2008). The AHPFM meeting was attended by more than 30 participants, including national focal points to the Protocol on Water and Health, experts from health, environment and water management authorities, representatives of foreign ministries, donors, UNDP, WSSCC, WfW partnership, European ECO Forum, NGOs from EECCA region, and private sector.

The Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Rivers and

International

Lakes entered into force on 4 August 2005. At their first meeting(2007), Parties to the Protocol established an Ad Hoc Project Facilitation Mechanism to help mainstream international support for national action. The objectives of the mechanism are to identify priority activities of non-infrastructure intervention for funding; to assist EECCA and SEE countries and NGOs in drawing up project proposals and to present such proposals to the Ad Hoc Project Clearing House.

Participants of the AHPFM meeting discussed Draft Criteria for consideration of project proposals and Draft Guidelines for preparation of project proposals for the AHPFM. Some amendments included in the text of selection criteria related to eligibility of NGOs. In particular, UN organizations and international NGOs were added to para.11 of the Draft. The important criteria are the Protocol's ratification by the country and submission of project proposals by its national Focal Point.

The meeting discussed two pilot project proposals on targets setting presented by Moldova and

Ukraine.
Norway and

Israel expressed their readiness to support the Ukrainian pilot.
Switzerland considered funding

Moldova's pilot project. In September, governmental delegations from Norway and Switzerland will visit Ukraine and

Moldova to discuss these proposals in detail.
Georgia,
Kazakhstan,
Kyrgyzstan,
Azerbaijan and

Armenia expressed their interest to develop pilot project proposals. The meeting agreed that Parties to the Protocol and pilot proposals related to targets setting will have a priority for financial support via AHPFM.

The AHPFM meeting was followed by the first meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health. Participants addressed progress in the ratification process. 21 countries ratified the Protocol on Water and Health (Albania, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, the Republic of Moldova, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Switzerland and Ukraine). Representatives from Italy, Israel, Armenia, Georgia informed the meeting about the forthcoming ratification or progress towards ratification.

Parties and Signatories exchanged experiences and provided information on the progress made in establishing national and/or local surveillance, early-warning and response systems, as well as difficulties encountered in complying with their obligations under Article 8 of the Protocol. The Working Group reviewed the progress of the Task Force on Surveillance in conducting assessment of the current capacity for water-related disease surveillance and preparing the guidance documents on water-related disease surveillance systems.

During the discussion of AHPFM meeting outcomes, the European ECO Forum raised concern that NGOs working locally in EECCA region and contributing directly to improvement of the access to safe water would have no chance to receive support from AHPFM in countries-Signatories to the Protocol. Also, NGOs from the EECCA countries which are

Parties to the Protocol will need to wait until their country sets up targets. In addition, political instability in EECCA countries, lack of power of focal points and frequent staff changes create barriers for NGOs to access this funding. European ECO Forum stressed that these circumstances would delay participation of main stakeholders and real progress in implementation of the Protocol.

During the meeting, there was a request from the Joint Secretariat to ask European ECO Forum to develop information materials for raising broad public awareness on the Protocol in EECCA region. The European ECO Forum expressed its readiness to work on the text.

The documents of the meetings are available at

http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/documents_AHPFM.htm

http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/documents_WGWH.htm

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2. INDICATORS AND RELEVANT GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION OF THE UNECE STRATEGY FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the UNECE region, a Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was developed on request of the Fifth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" in

Kiev. In 2005 this Strategy was adopted at a High-level meeting in

Vilnius, together with a framework for implementation and explanatory notes (see <http://www.unece.org/env/esd/Strategy&Framework.htm>). The UNECE Strategy for ESD is a regional answer to the Decade for ESD (2005-2015) announced by the UN General Assembly in 2002.

For the success of the ESD strategy, an efficient evaluation tool is very important. It should illustrate the complex nature of the progress in ESD and measure the effectiveness of implementation of the Strategy. Such evaluation procedure has been developed and already tested in a pilot phase; it will be fully applied in further stages of the ESD implementation process. It includes comprehensive review of the Strategy's implementation, for which the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD has set up a region-wide reporting procedure. Progress in implementing ESD should be assessed in three implementation phases of the Strategy (Phase I ended in 2007, Phase II ending in 2010 and Phase III in 2015). Data as of 1 January 2006 are used as baseline data; thus, the differences in starting points for different countries with respect to the implementation of the Strategy will be taken into account.

Reporting mechanisms are quite complicated due to the complexity of the issue that should be described (ESD and its involvement). Moreover, they should not contradict to the basic aim of the Strategy which is to promote, not "to compare" individual countries of the region.

ESD is a rather new field of education, and its assessment is also a very new area of exploration. To create a system for ESD evaluation was a task for an international group of experts which started to work in 2006, and continues its cooperation (see UNECE Expert Group on Indicators <http://www.unece.org/env/esd/SC.EGI.htm>). The most important outcome of this work is the set of indicators that should “measure the effectiveness of the implementation of the Strategy”. Also, an informal guidance which includes various recommendations and remarks to explain instructions for reporting has been produced. Together with UNESCO, this group collected examples of good practices (see Good Practices in ESD at <http://www.unece.org/env/esd/GoodPractices/index.html>). All these documents were prepared for the first evaluation report ahead of the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (

Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007) and were used to assess the progress made in Phase I of the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD.

The current set of indicators reflects the situation in the field of educational assessment: it is the best available evaluation mechanism that is in accordance with the UNECE Strategy itself, with the availability of data and methodology, and is applicable under conditions of different understanding within countries, educational systems, cultures and languages.

The first reporting exercise that took place at the end of 2006 – beginning of 2007 ahead of the Belgrade Ministerial Conference was not obligatory; however 36 reports were submitted. Their evaluation proved that reporting was a useful tool for Governments. An important feedback was received from countries on the indicators’ workability and feasibility.

In response, a few indicators were revised by presenting them in a more explicit way with a few additional specifications. Also, given the complex nature of ESD and the differences in the interpretation of indicators in the different national contexts across the UNECE region, some additional tools, closely interconnected with each other, had to be developed. The most important ones are so-called descriptors that provide explanatory notes. Descriptors will facilitate the interpretation of the indicators/sub-indicators and will serve as a user-friendly tool for support and enhancement of reporting done by the Governments. Also, the Expert Group identified the need for explicit quality criteria for the successful implementation of ESD. Such criteria/thresholds are intended to provide countries with an understanding of an expected minimum level of achievement in each stage of the Strategy implementation.

During its last meeting in July 2008, the Expert Group on Indicators started to compile indicators, descriptors, criteria, good practices and other information/recommendation into a comprehensive “Guidance for Reporting”. This guidance should assist in the process of further evaluation of ESD efforts in individual ECE countries and in the region as a whole. It gives an oversight of the set of indicators, explains basic terms and methodology and provides inspiration by examples and good practices. The Guidance for Reporting will be finalized during the seventh meeting of the UN ECE Expert Group on Indicators on 15-18 September 2008. As the final outcome of this work, a handbook for ESD evaluation in the UNECE region is being envisaged.

For more information and relevant documents please go to <http://www.unece.org/env/esd/SC.EGI.htm>

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3. WHO/EUROPE STARTS ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH PERFORMANCE REVIEWS (EHPRs)

The WHO/Europe issued its first environment and health performance review which examines

Slovakia. Environment and health performance reviews (EHPRs) are country-based interdisciplinary assessments that WHO/Europe carries out at the request of Member States. EHPRs support Member States by providing policy advice and evidence-based recommendations on how to address environmental determinants of health.

EHPRs identify the most important environment and health problems, evaluate the public health impact of environmental exposures and review the policy and institutional framework taking into account the institutional set-up, the policy setting and legal framework, the degree and structural functioning of intersectoral collaboration, and the available tools for action. The reviews focus on risk factors that most affect the health of European children.

EHPRs are planned to be carried out for

Belarus,
Czech
Republic,
Estonia,
Finland,
Kyrgyzstan,
Lithuania,
Malta,
Montenegro,
Poland,
Serbia,
Spain, and the

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Six EHPRs are co-funded by the European Commission (EC), Directorate General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) as a contribution to the European Environment and Health process. Additional EHPRs will be implemented through bilateral agreements between WHO/Europe and some of its Member States during 2008-2009.

Final EHPRs reports will be collated into an overall report to be presented at the WHO Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 2009. For more information and Slovak EHPR see http://www.euro.who.int/envhealth/topics/20080714_1

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4. NEW PUBLICATION: SCP POLICY REVIEW OF WESTERN AND SOUTH CAUCASUS EECCA COUNTRIES

The publication "SCP Policy Review of Western and South Caucasus EECCA Countries" was prepared by Ukrainian NGO MAMA-86 based on the outcomes of the project "Elucidating National and Sub-Regional Progress On Sustainable Consumption and Production Policy in Western (Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine) and South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) Countries of the EECCA".

This Review of SCP policy is based on snap-shot surveys conducted by NGO experts from seven EECCA countries, coordinated by MAMA-86 and financed by the British Council in Ukraine and OxfamNovib (the

Netherlands). The project was initiated by MAMA-86, St James's Research, Eco-Accord and Georgian Environmental League in the framework of Partners for Environmental Cooperation in Europe (PECE) partnership early in 2007. The review also includes conclusions of the discussion during the communication bridge Kiev–Tbilisi–London–Amsterdam–Copenhagen–Geneva, organized in April 2008 by St James's Research, MAMA-86 and Georgian Environmental League between NGOs and experts on SCP from EEA, UNEP and ANPED.

The Review concludes that none of the countries from EECCA region has a distinct policy targeting SCP issues. The SCP terminology itself is not known; even SD term is mentioned rarely and, unfortunately, often understood as steady economy growth. Environmental issues are often forgotten or seen as an obstacle for it. International obligations on SD and SCP patterns are not translated into national policy.

The Review stresses that in the surveyed EECCA countries there are no economical incentives for introduction of SCP patterns for individual and corporate consumers. In practice, the integration of SCP principles is not regulated by the states and is exclusively an initiative of individual consumers and NGOs. At the same time the over-centralized systems of energy and water supply, district heating and waste collection does not only result into large losses in the transportation network, but also constraints the individuals decentralized initiatives.

The Review proves that integration of and harmonization with international standards in construction and communal services began to promote the introduction of SCP patterns. However, it mainly concerns urban areas, while the basic infrastructure in huge rural areas remains underdeveloped.

The publication concludes that environmental priority integration into economical policy has been and still is being induced permanently by the external factors, such as the decisions of the "Environment for Europe" process, UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio, 1992) and UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), multilateral and bilateral international co-operation. The participation of EECCA countries in Marrakech process is slow and inactive and citizens' groups are not informed. The Review stresses that the experience and knowledge of the national NGOs are still not used efficiently by international organizations and national governments.

The publication is available at:

http://mama-86.org.ua/files/scp2008_web.pdf(in English) and

http://mama-86.org.ua/files/scp2008_rus_web.pdf(in Russian).

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5. ANNOUNCING THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As part of the French presidency of the European Union, the French National Committee of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development is organising an international conference in Bordeaux, France, on 27-29 October 2008 to bring together French and international stakeholders in education, training and information relating to sustainable development.

In the lead-up to the Decade's mid-term world conference to be held in Bonn, Germany, in March 2009, the Bordeaux event will review the progress made during the 2005-2008 period and draw up the strategies to be implemented for the 2009-2014 period.

The conference will focus on the actions carried out in

France and other European countries. It will also take into account the processes developed in French-speaking and non French-speaking nations, with a more particular emphasis on countries in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

For more information about submission of papers and posters see the conference website <http://www.decennie-france.fr/> Closing date for registration is September 15, 2008.