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Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy

Report by the Chair

Report by the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy*

I. Achievements over the past twelve months

1. In the reporting period, the Environment subprogramme under the general governance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Environmental Policy and the other governing and subsidiary bodies under the Environment subprogramme continued to support countries to enhance their environmental governance and transboundary cooperation as well as strengthen implementation of the UNECE regional environmental commitments and advance sustainable development in the region.

Advancing sustainable development and environmental governance in the region

2. The 23rd session of the Committee on Environmental Policy was held in Geneva from 14 to 17 November 2017. Agenda items included sustainable development in the region; work of UNECE multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) in support to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; follow up activities to the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 08-10 June 2016), including preparing the mid-term review of the Conference main outcomes; work related to environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting; peer reviews of the environmental performance of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Mongolia; developments in a number of cross-cutting activities (such as: education for sustainable development; transport, health and environment; environment and security; environment and health; and green building); the Programme of Work of the Environment subprogramme for 2018-2019 and a number of other programmatic documents; mainstreaming a gender perspective in environmental activities; preparations for the third session of the United Nations' Environment Assembly (UNEA); and procedural matters of the work of the Committee.

3. Delegates discussed the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the role of the Committee, based on the background document presenting information on the role of the Committee in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (ECE/CEP/2017/15). The discussion and the exchange of experience focused on SDGs which will be the subject of an in-depth review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2018: SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 15 (life on land) and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). Following the positive response from delegates, the Committee decided to continue such exchange of experience and good practice at its future meetings.

4. In an effort to strengthen the cooperation between UNECE sectoral committees the UNECE Committee on Sustainable Energy (represented by its Chair), the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (represented by its Chair), and the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (represented by the secretary) took part in discussions of the Committee to exchange information and experience in adapting their work to support the 2030 Agenda.

5. As a result of the discussions, the Committee recommended to the UNECE Executive Committee to consider asking other sectoral committees to map their activities that support the achievement of relevant SDGs and their targets, with a view to assist, in a more informed and efficient manner, the identification of possible areas where cooperation between the

* This document was not formally edited.

UNECE sectoral committees might be enhanced to support countries' efforts in an integrated manner in line with the 2030 Agenda.

6. To address the need for monitoring progress towards SDGs, the Committee considered modalities of work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in view of a target established by Ministers in Batumi for making the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) fully functional across the pan-European region in 2021. The Committee adopted the renewed mandate and terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators for 2018–2021 (already approved by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians at its meeting in October 2015), as presented in the annex to document ECE/CEP/2017/12, and requested the secretariat to submit the renewed mandate to the UNECE Executive Committee for approval.

7. Chairs and Vice-Chairs of UNECE MEAs together with the Committee members and observers continued reviewing efforts under each treaty to define its role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. An important role of the Committee in promoting the UNECE MEAs that are unique tools supporting the delivery of the 2030 Agenda was highlighted.

8. The third environmental performance reviews (EPRs) of Bulgaria and Tajikistan were published. The third EPR of Tajikistan was launched in 2017 in Dushanbe. At its 23rd session, Committee adopted the recommendations of the third EPRs of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also adopted the recommendations in the Environmental Performance Review of Mongolia. Mongolia was the second country outside the UNECE region to undergo an EPR carried out by UNECE. The review was organized in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Committee welcomed the requests from Romania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine to undergo their third EPRs. It also welcomed the information provided by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the implementation of recommendations contained in its Second EPR, conducted in 2011. Delegates greatly appreciated the first experience of integrating the relevant SDGs and targets in the EPRs conducted in 2017. A preparatory mission for the third EPR of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was carried out in February 2018. The review mission for the third EPR of Kazakhstan took place in March 2018. In March 2018 Uzbekistan sent a request to undergo its third EPR.

9. The Committee expressed appreciation to countries and organizations supporting financially and in-kind activities carried out under the UNECE Environment subprogramme. At the same time, the Committee expressed concern about the difficulties arising from the fact that due to Umoja being not fully operational the secretariat has not been able to report on the extrabudgetary funds in the Environment subprogramme during the last three years.

UNECE multilateral environmental agreements – highlights

10. The UNECE MEAs continued their work focusing on improving the implementation and compliance by Parties. Meetings of the governing bodies under five MEAs were organized in 2017, namely, the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (June 2017); the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) (September 2017); and the session of the Executive Body for the Air Convention (December 2017).

11. An overview of selected highlights for the reporting period related to the UNECE MEAs is presented below:

(a) *Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention)*;

As a follow-up to the “Towards Cleaner Air - Scientific Assessment Report 2016” under the Air Convention, an ad hoc policy review group of experts was established and tasked with formulating a policy response to the Scientific Assessment Report. The recommendations of the ad hoc group were discussed in 2017. They also fed into the initial discussions on the update of the Long-Term Strategy for the Convention. As a result of continued capacity-building activities under the Air Convention, Parties in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe improved their emissions reporting in 2017;

(b) *Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)*

The deposit by Chad of the instrument of accession to the Water Convention on 22 February 2018 marked a key milestone in the process of globalization of the Convention. As other countries, in particular African countries, are following suit, this opens new opportunities to strengthen cooperation, prevent conflicts and promote regional integration worldwide. A strategy to promote implementation of the Convention at the global level has been prepared for its adoption in October 2018 at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The Convention has also already had important impacts outside the UNECE region. Notably, it has supported the development and adoption of a Convention for the prevention of conflicts related to the management of shared water resources in Central Africa, negotiated in the framework of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In July 2017, the entry into force of the Dniester Treaty between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, which was supported by UNECE in cooperation with partners, most of all Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), is a vivid demonstration of the usefulness of the Convention;

(c) *Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention)*;

In 2017, the Convention fostered its sub-regional approach under its Assistance Programme: two sub-regional workshops on industrial accident prevention were held for South-Eastern Europe (Zagreb, Croatia, 21 - 23 February 2017) and for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Minsk, Belarus, 11 - 13 April 2017), leading to enhanced information exchange and a determination of next steps to foster transboundary cooperation. The implementation of the Project on Strengthening Industrial Safety in Central Asia proceeded with the organization of two National Expert Group Meeting in Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek, 16 - 18 May 2017) and Kazakhstan (Astana and Borovoe, 20 - 22 June 2017). Furthermore, the Convention strengthened its presence in Central Asia through the holding of a training of trainers and a subsequent training on environment & emergencies and industrial hazardous activities (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 23-24 and 25-26 October 2017), organized jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Joint Environment Unit, and in cooperation with the Central Asian Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Situations. The Working Group on Implementation embraced its new mandate, as per the amended Terms of Reference (ECE/CP.TEIA/32/Add.1) adopted by the Conferences of the Parties at its ninth meeting (Ljubljana, Slovenia, 28-30 November 2016), and increasingly engaged with Assistance Programme beneficiary countries, with the objective of providing guidance and more rigorously monitoring the implementation of the Assistance Programme. Furthermore, in 2017 the guidance on land-use planning, the safety of hazardous activities and related safety

aspects, developed jointly with the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA, was published.

(d) The Parties and stakeholders to the *Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention)* celebrated the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention, acknowledging its considerable impact on environmental law and the environment. 2017 also marked the entry into force of the Convention's amendment, adopted in 2004, which, among others, aligned the scope of its application with the European Union directive, provided a formal basis for the review of compliance and reporting. Three subregional workshops and several national events were held to promote the Convention's implementation in Central Asia. In June 2017, the Meeting of the Parties adopted guidance documents to improve the implementation of the Convention, including on nuclear energy related-activities. Further work started to clarify the Convention's application to the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants.

(e) The Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention's *Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA)* highlighted the potential of SEA for promoting the achievement of SDGs and targets, and for supporting good governance and the transition to green economy. Extensive capacity building efforts continued to assist countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus to adopt legislation (in 2017 Georgia adopted the Environmental Assessment Code; the Republic of Moldova adopted the Law on SEA; Ukraine adopted the Law on EIA) and to initiate its consistent application to government plans and programmes. The European Union confirmed a substantial amount of further funding for supporting greener decision-making in the countries under EU4 Environment project 2018–2022, including through the application of SEA, that will allow UNECE to assist the countries to sustain and to build on the achievements this far.

(f) *Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs)*

Due to their cross-cutting nature and wide substantive scopes, the Convention and its Protocol are effective tools for furthering the SDGs, and in particular SDG 16. Parties to both treaties, numerous non-governmental organizations and different stakeholders took joint commitments to promote environmental democracy and its key components, namely, access to environmental information, public participation and access to justice, throughout implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. In this regard, they adopted the Budva Declaration on Environmental Democracy for Our Sustainable Future (ECE/MP.PP/2017/16/Add.1 - ECE/MP.PRTR/2017/2/Add.1) at the joint High-Level Segment held under the auspices of the two treaties' Meetings of the Parties in Budva (Montenegro) on 14 September 2017. In addition, more than 20 decisions were adopted by the respective governing bodies to assist individual Parties to comply with and implement the agreements and to promote a number of multilateral activities.

Programme of work of the Environment subprogramme

12. The Committee adopted the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2018–2019 (ECE/CEP/2017/7), and the list of publications contained therein, which is submitted to the UNECE Executive Committee for approval (ECE/EX/2018/L. 6). Further, the Committee approved both the biennial performance report of the Environment subprogramme for 2016–2017 (ECE/CEP/2017/8) and the biennial performance plan of the Environment subprogramme for 2018–2019 (ECE/CEP/2017/9). Also, the Committee has reviewed the proposed strategic framework of the Environment subprogramme for 2020–2021 (ECE/CEP/2017/10).

II. Major activities planned for 2018 and beyond

13. The Environment subprogramme will continue its work to support countries to enhance their environmental governance and transboundary cooperation as well as strengthen implementation of the UNECE regional environmental commitments and advance sustainable development in the region. An overview of planned activities is contained in the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2018-2019 (ECE/CEP/2017/7). The 24th session of the Committee will be organized in Geneva from 29 to 31 January 2019.

14. The mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference will be organized as a part of the 24th session of the Committee in line with the provisions in document ECE/CEP/2017/16 and in accordance with the Committee's discussions at its twenty-third session and further recommendations by the Bureau in that regard.

15. The work on environmental monitoring and assessment will continue to support countries in enhancing their environmental monitoring and information capacity, including in advancing the development of SEIS across the pan-European region and preparing indicator-based state-of-the-environment reports and thematic assessments.

16. The third EPRs of Kazakhstan and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will be prepared and peer reviewed in January 2019. The preparatory mission for the third EPR of Uzbekistan will be carried out in the second half of 2018 and for the third EPR of Romania in the first half of 2019. The three EPRs, the recommendations of which were adopted by the Committee at its 23rd session, i.e. the third EPRs of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the EPR of Mongolia, will be published in 2018. The countries will be invited to consider organizing launch events in their capitals.

17. The implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) will continue in accordance with the "Batumi Framework for the future implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD" (adopted at the High-Level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries in Batumi, Georgia, 08 June 2016). The fourth mandatory reporting of national implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD will be initiated, and participating member States will submit their national reports to the secretariat by November 1, 2018; the summary evaluation report will be finalised in 2019, its format and timeline harmonised towards the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Action Program on ESD. The series of annual capacity-building workshops will also continue with the support of the Swiss Government.

18. The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) will continue its activities to implement its five Priority Goals. In addition, it will work on the preparation of the Fifth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Vienna, October 2019). Further, the organization of THE PEP Relay Race workshops will continue.

19. The UNECE MEAs will continue their work focusing on improving the implementation and compliance by Parties. Meetings of the governing bodies under several MEAs will be organized in the second half of 2018 – first half of 2019, namely the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention (Geneva, 4-6 December 2018), the intermediary session of the Meetings of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA (Geneva, 5-7 February 2019), the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention (Astana, Kazakhstan, 10-12 October 2018). Also, activities will continue to promote MEAs and advise countries beyond the region, as relevant.

20. In 2018, the work under the Aarhus Convention will focus on promoting transparency and effective public participation in international decision-making on chemicals; on addressing challenges of a systemic nature with regard to access to environmental

information and on promoting access to justice in cases on the right to environmental information. The Global round table on PRTRs will be organised jointly by UNECE and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and other partners, in Geneva on 7-8 November 2018. The event will be focused on the role of PRTRs for promoting informed decisions in the context of achieving SDGs. It is expected to foster sharing of good practices, challenges and opportunities related to development of PRTRs between Governments and different stakeholders thereby helping country's officials to develop relevant expertise in this area.

21. A potential constraint for the efficient and smooth implementation of the Committee programme of work is the unpredictability of incoming funding, in particular for those activities that rely solely or to a great extent on voluntary contributions.

III. Any proposed change to the subsidiary structure of the Committee

22. After the approval by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians at its meeting in October 2015, the Committee also adopted the mandate and terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators for 2018–2021 at its 23rd session in November 2017, as presented in the annex to document ECE/CEP/2017/12. The Committee requested the secretariat to submit the renewed mandate and terms of reference to the UNECE Executive Committee for approval.

23. The mandate and terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators for 2018–2021, as contained in document ECE/EX/2018/L.7, are submitted to the UNECE Executive Committee for approval.

IV. Follow-up to the 2017 session of the Economic Commission for Europe

24. In accordance with Commission Decision A (65), the Environment subprogramme, the Committee and its related subsidiary bodies, as well as other governing and subsidiary bodies under the subprogramme, will continue working within current mandates in an efficient way, producing concrete results that have a clear value-added for the region and beyond. In line with its objective, the Environment subprogramme fosters a country needs-based approach and focuses on developing the capacity of Caucasian, Central Asian and Eastern and South-Eastern European countries in environmental policy and management, including for the effective implementation of environmental legislation.

25. Concerning resources for the Environment subprogramme, Commission Decision A (65) stipulated that, in allocating regular budget resources, full account should be taken of the increasing number of instruments administered by the subprogramme and the Environment Division so that they could continue, without a reduction in their resources and capacities, to do their work and service all the subsidiary bodies in an efficient way in the future, while fully recognizing the obligation of UNECE to service the MEAs.

V. Intersectoral activities: new activities and/or progress in existing intersectoral activities

26. The Environment subprogramme is supporting the cross-sectoral work under the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, the Pan-European Programme

on Transport, Health and Environment (THE PEP), the Protocol on Water and Health and the EPR Programme. Under the Water Convention the work is on-going on the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus. Under the Industrial Accidents Convention, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA work has continued on land-use planning and industrial safety. Under the Environment for Europe (EfE) process together with UNEP, OECD and other partners, the Environment subprogramme is supporting the implementation of the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy. Furthermore, the subprogramme is also actively participating in the activities under the European Environment and Health Process. Due to lack of funding, the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) partnership with other organizations has suffered. At present, UNECE is wrapping up one last project with OSCE. The Memorandum of Understanding on *ENVSEC* came to an end and was not extended. Currently, partner organizations are reviewing the organizational setup and are discussing the most appropriate form of cooperation. The subprogramme also follows the developments in the area of green building and greening the forestry sector.

27. Highlights of the progress achieved under each of the above are as follows:

(a) In the reporting period, the work under the UNECE Steering Committee on *ESD* focused on the promotion of SDG 4 and its target 4.7 in the region, via the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for *ESD*. At its 13th meeting (Geneva, 03-04 May, 2018) the Steering Committee took stock of national implementation of the Strategy through informal reporting (15 member States and one organisation have submitted informal reports). The capacity-building workshop was held in April 2018 in Yerevan, Armenia, with the support of the Swiss Government. UNECE continued its cooperation with the UNESCO-led Global Action Programme on *ESD* as a key partner in the Partnership Network on the first priority action area on advancing policy, and participated in the first meeting of the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (Nicosia, Cyprus, 22–24 November 2017) that steers the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy on *ESD*, which has close relation with the UNECE Strategy for *ESD*. At its 23rd session, the Committee took note of the information provided and welcomed the progress of work under the UNECE Strategy for *ESD*, while noting the difficult situation with regard to mobilizing voluntary contributions sufficient to enable the continuation of the regional intergovernmental platform and other activities to share experience and good practice with a view to advancing *ESD* across the region;

(b) Led jointly by the UNECE Environment and Sustainable Transport Divisions and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, *THE PEP* is a unique policy framework to encourage national Governments and municipal authorities to consider health and environmental impacts in transport policy and planning. In the reporting period, the work under *THE PEP* focused on follow up to the outcomes of the Fourth High-level meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Paris, April 2014). This included the conclusion of the second phase of the work of *THE PEP* Partnership on jobs in green and healthy transport, which focused on green jobs deriving from cycling. Member States initiated a third phase, which is expected to provide its results at the Fifth High-level Meeting (Vienna, Austria, October 2019). The Partnership on cycling promotion has shared the first draft of a pan-European masterplan for cycling promotion and shared it for comments by *THE PEP* Steering Committee. *THE PEP* Relay Race workshop took place in Mannheim, Germany on 21 September 2017, back to back with an international conference organized on the occasion of the bicentenary anniversary of the invention of the antecedent of the bike.

(c) The work under the *Protocol on Water and Health* requires the health, environment and water communities to strengthen their cooperation to improve human health and environmental outcomes. Recent work under the Protocol has also promoted cooperation and integration of policies with other sector: for instance, work under the Protocol to promote equitable access to water and sanitation supports intersectoral analysis of the equity gaps,

bringing together not only the water and health sectors but also finance, education, municipal authorities and water supply and sanitation suppliers;

(d) Environmental mainstreaming in priority sectors is among key focus areas of the third cycle of *EPRs*. *EPRs* increasingly include chapters on the integration of environmental issues in energy, industry, agriculture, transport, forestry, housing, health, and other sectors. At its 23rd session, the Committee expressed its appreciation of the close cooperation of the UNECE Sustainable Energy, Forests, Land and Housing, Statistics and Sustainable Transport Divisions with the *EPR* Programme, as these divisions provide their expertise at various stages of the *EPR* process. The integration of relevant *SDG* targets into *EPRs* conducted in 2017 was an opportunity to further enhance intersectoral collaboration within UNECE;

(e) The work on the assessment of the *water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus* in selected transboundary water basins brought together the Water Convention, the Sustainable Energy subprogramme and other partners. In that regard, the partners are carrying out inter-sectoral assessments of the *water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus* in a number of transboundary basins, in line with the integrated approach of the 2030 Agenda. In the past year, work has been carried out in the Drina and Drin river basins and in the North Western Saharan Aquifer;

(f) Bodies under the Industrial Accidents Convention, the Committee on Housing and Land Management, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA continued to work together: a joint workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety was held (Mechelen, Belgium, 16-17 May 2018), the video “The benefits of enhanced cooperation between land-use planning and industrial safety” was launched, and the Guidance on land-use planning, the siting of hazardous activities and related safety aspects¹, was prepared under the Industrial Accidents Convention, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, adopted by the respective treaty bodies and published in March 2018.

(g) Within the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, the environment and statistics communities cooperated closely to support target countries in enhancing their environmental statistics and data including in view of reporting requirements on environment-related *SDGs*.

(h) The UNECE Environment subprogramme continued to help countries in their transition to a *green economy*. All UNECE environmental MEAs have activities promoting, fostering and enabling putting into practice a green economy approach. The cross-sectoral activities, such as THE PEP and ESD, also contribute to advancing the green economy approach. Review and assessment activities, such as *EPRs* and Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (including the establishment of SEIS across pan-European region) help countries to assess the progress in greening their economies. Greening the economy is also promoted under the EfE process (1991-present), to which the UNECE provides the secretariat. Specifically, the Batumi Conference in 2016 endorsed the voluntary Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and welcomed the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E), which consists of voluntary commitments to operationalize the Strategic Framework. Two years after the Batumi Conference, 27 countries and 13 organizations had have joined BIG-E with 122 commitments. At its 23rd session, the Committee invited countries and organizations participating in the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy to continue implementing their commitments and announcing new commitments, and sharing their experience and good practice at Committee meetings.

(i) At its 23rd session, the Committee decided to remain a strong partner of the European Environment and Health Process, without UNECE joining the secretariat of the Process at

¹ Available as a publication ECE/CP.TEIA/35 at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48236>

present, and to consider the issue again should there be extrabudgetary resources made available by interested countries for additional work by UNECE on the process.

(j) Through the *ENVSEC*, which included five partner agencies until 31 December 2017², UNECE worked to promote cooperation between neighbouring countries on the management of natural resources in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. At its 23rd session, the Committee took note of the information provided with regard to the Environment and Security Initiative.

(k) Concerning *green building*, at its 23rd session, the Committee took note of the activities of the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management, in particular the progress of work on energy efficiency in buildings.

VI. Technical cooperation activities

28. The Regional Adviser develops, raises funds for and implements technical cooperation activities and provides policy advice in close collaboration with the secretariats of the UNECE MEAs.

29. The work undertaken by the Regional Adviser in the reporting period resulted in the implementation of the transboundary water cooperation projects in Drin basin (Western Balkans) and in the Dniester basin (Republic of Moldova and Ukraine), and continuation of the green economy project in Kazakhstan.

30. Further support was provided to promote transboundary EIA and SEA in Central Asia by co-organizing sub-regional capacity building workshop and raising awareness on Espoo Convention and Protocol on SEA among decision makers in the Central Asia region.

31. The work undertaken by the Regional Adviser also focused on providing advice to the countries of Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe on implementation of the recommendations arising out of their EPRs. Two workshops were organised to assist the implementation of EPR recommendations related to energy and transport sectors. A meeting was also organised to discuss lessons learned from the integration of relevant SDGs into EPRs.

32. Technical cooperation projects were implemented in more than 15 countries in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, leading to concrete results, such as the development and submission of national self-assessments and action plans, organizing sub-regional workshops on industrial accidents prevention for South-Eastern Europe (Zagreb, 21-23 February 2017) and for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Minsk, 11-13 April 2017) under the Industrial Accidents Convention, enhanced sub-regional information-exchange and cooperation, and fostering progress in the ratification of or accession the ECE multilateral environmental agreements.

VII. Cooperation with other organizations

33. The Environment subprogramme is working with a number of organizations in and outside the United Nations system with the aim of combining efforts, ensuring mutual benefits and avoiding overlap and duplication. Cooperation takes place through information and communication technology tools, internal coordination meetings and the organization of joint events, as well as involving relevant partner organizations in various activities. Among

² ENVSEC partner organizations included United Nations Environment Programme, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNECE and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe.

the many organizations involved in the work of the Committee and of other governing bodies under the Environment subprogramme, the following should be mentioned:

United Nations Regional Commissions

34. The UNECE Water Convention is cooperating with the other regional commissions, in particular the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to exchange experiences in areas of common interest such as the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus. The Aarhus secretariat is providing continuous advisory support to ECLAC, notably assisted in the development of a regional instrument on environmental rights in the ECLAC region and cooperates on the establishment of PRTRs. UNECE has also continued its joint efforts with ESCAP to promote the cooperation on transboundary air pollution in North-East Asia as part of Air Convention's outreach activities. The EPR of Mongolia was prepared in cooperation with ESCAP.

United Nations Environment Programme

35. The Environment subprogramme has long-standing cooperation with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through many joint activities and partnerships.

36. The work of UNECE and UNEP is complementary: UNECE provides the regional political platform, expert and intergovernmental bodies and policy expertise; UNEP brings its global policy leadership, specific technical expertise and country and regional policy and programmatic engagement. Such a symbiosis enables the two organizations to address in an effective way the existing and emerging environmental concerns across the UNECE region.

37. UNEP is a key partner in the EfE process. In particular, UNEP contributes to the preparation of the mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Batumi Conference (scheduled for January 2019). The UNECE secretariat jointly with UNEP works on mid-term review reports on progress achieved in implementing the Strategic Framework and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and on activities to support countries in their efforts to green their economies and achieve sustainable development.

38. At its 23rd session, the Committee welcomed the information provided by UNEP about developments in preparing the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and invited UNEP to continue informing the Committee about relevant development under the Assembly.

39. The United Nations Development Account (UNDA) 11th Trench - 615.2b Enhancing sustainable public procurement for the regional transition to inclusive green economy in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) is being jointly implemented by UNECE and UNEP.

40. UNEP also continued to be actively engaged in the UNECE EPR Programme, including by providing an expert to draft a chapter in all but one country reviews mentioned in the chapters I and II above.

41. UNEP and the UNECE Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme continued to support countries in Europe and Central Asia in establishing a Shared Environmental Information System and in strengthening national capacities in environmental monitoring and assessment. The two organizations have begun to implement jointly a UNDA 11th tranche project on improved environmental monitoring and assessment in support of the 2030 Agenda in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

42. UNEP is participating in the implementation of THE PEP, including in the preparation of joint studies and the membership in one of the partnerships, and the UNECE Strategy for ESD.

43. The United Nations Environment Programme is also actively contributing to the implementation of many UNECE MEAs. The secretariat of the Aarhus Convention cooperates closely with UNEP on global promotion of Principle 10, of the participatory international decision-making, of access to justice and of PRTRs. Since 2013, the secretariat of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA has promoted greening the economies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in partnership with United Nations Environment Programme, OECD and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), with funding from European Union's Greening the Economies in Eastern Neighbourhood (EaP-GREEN) Programme. In 2018-2020, it will continue to assist the same countries in cooperation with the UN Environment, UNIDO, OECD and the World Bank under the European Union's follow-up programme EU4Environment.

44. As regards the Air Convention, there is an ongoing active exchange of information between the Convention and relevant UNEP MEAs and subregional initiatives, including the East Asia Acid Deposition Network and the Asia Pacific Clean Air Partnership (e.g. at the Asia-Pacific Clean Air Partnership Forum in March 2018) and with regards to the resolutions on air quality of the first and the third meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly (2014 and 2017, respectively).

45. Together with the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit, the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention co-organized a training of trainers, and a subsequent training on environment & emergencies and industrial hazardous activities (Almaty, 23-24 October 2017), in cooperation with the Central Asian Centre for Emergency Response and Disaster Risk Reduction. This training provided future trainers with the methodology and skills necessary to train many more women and men on environmental emergencies.

World Health Organization (WHO)

46. UNECE and WHO/Europe continue to jointly provide secretariat services for the Protocol on Water and Health and THE PEP. A publication on the links between THE PEP and the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals is soon to be released. WHO/Europe also leads the Air Convention's Joint Task Force on the Health Aspects of Air Pollution, which is currently contributing to the update of the WHO Air Quality Guidelines. The UNECE Environment subprogramme is also actively working with WHO/Europe in the European Environment and Health Process and the EPR Programme, where WHO provides an expert to draft a chapter in some country reviews. In 2018, WHO has hosted the Inter-agency coordination meeting on Industrial Accidents, which resulted in the agreement on synergies and future joint activities between the organizations members of the Group (comprising the EU, OECD, WHO, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)). Among others, the Inter-agency coordination group discussed its contribution to the 2019 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction produced by UNISDR, in view of its coverage of technological hazards, included in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. With funding from the European Investment Bank, the secretariat to the Protocol on SEA and WHO will prepare joint guidance on health in SEA.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

47. The UNECE Strategy for ESD is implemented in close cooperation with UNESCO, the lead agency for the Global Action Programme, as a key partner in the Partnership Network for its implementation, including the joint activities carried out in the framework of the first priority action area on advancing policy. For the reporting period UNESCO also continued to participate in the work of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD and its Bureau. Furthermore, UNESCO contributes its expertise in transboundary groundwaters to a

close cooperation with the Water Convention. Moreover, UNECE and UNESCO are the custodian agencies for SDG indicator 6.5.2 and have jointly carried out in 2017-2018 the first data gathering exercise, establishing a baseline for this indicator. This work was carried out in the framework of a broader UN-wide cooperation on SDG 6 monitoring which led to the joint production of a UN-Water synthesis report on SDG 6.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

48. UNDP country offices are a main partner in the EPR Programme as they are actively involved in the country missions for the reviews, providing both substantive and logistical support for all reviews mentioned above except that for Bulgaria. Also, UNDP is supporting organization of activities on the national level, in particular implementation of the UNECE MEAs and other environmental policy instruments.

United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD)

49. Cooperation with the UNSD continues on the monitoring and reporting of SDG indicator 6.5.2 for which UNECE will act as custodian agency, together with UNESCO.

Other partners

50. At present, the long-standing cooperation with the European Environment Agency (EEA) focuses on the establishment of a regular environmental assessment and reporting process in the UNECE region, including the establishment of SEIS across the pan-European region by 2021.

51. Other important partners outside the United Nations system are OECD (for the EPRs – including by providing an expert to draft a chapter of the EPR of Kazakhstan, the Protocol on PRTRs, the EfE process, and in conjunction with the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI)), OSCE (for the ENVSEC Initiative and different activities under the UNECE MEAs), the European Commission and the Regional Environmental Centers (RECs). Since 2016, UNECE has been a member to the Bureau of the GREEN Action Programme Task Force (formerly known as the Environmental Action Programme (EAP) Task Force). Trilateral meetings are held between the OECD, UNECE and UNEP to coordinate activities related to greening the economy and other activities, such as those relevant to the UNECE MEAs work.

52. The European ECO Forum and its members are active partners in the work of the Committee, MEAs, ESD, THE PEP and in the EfE process.

53. The Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health are cooperating, among others, with UN-Water, WHO and its Regional Office for Europe, the European Investment Bank, Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNESCO, international river basins commissions, such as the Rhine, Danube, Okavango (OKACOM), Niger commissions, the International Network of Basin Organizations, OSCE, OECD, the RECs, the Global Water Partnership, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Alliance for Global Water Adaptation, the African Network of Basin Organizations, the Economic Communities of Central African and West African States, the Southern African Development Community, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development, the African Development Bank, the Stockholm International Water Institute, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), Women Engage for a Common Future, the World Bank, World Wildlife Fund, Green Cross International, the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the

Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

54. The Air Convention continues its close cooperation with the European Union including in the implementation of capacity building activities in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe. The continuation of this project will run through 2021. Furthermore, the Convention regularly cooperates, among others, with the Arctic Council and WMO.

55. Under the EaP GREEN programme, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA support the implementation of strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment of national development activities and work together with the following international organizations providing comprehensive support to achieve the programme's objectives: (i) OECD serves as coordinator of the programme, and support the implementation of market-based approaches to promote green growth and the reform of environmentally-harmful subsidies, the greening of banks and small- and medium-sized enterprises, and the adoption of green growth indicators; (ii) UNEP contributes to mainstreaming sustainable production and consumption in national policies through strategic policy setting, as well as through work on sustainable public procurement and organic agriculture; and (iii) UNIDO assists the private sector actors in adopting cleaner production and resource efficiency. In 2017-2018, the Espoo Convention in cooperation with Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) prepared Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context for Central Asian countries that involved three subregional consultation meetings. As of 2018, the provisions of the Protocol on SEA will be promoted in Central Asia in partnership with OSCE.

56. The secretariat of the Aarhus Convention continuously pursues a close cooperation with a number of partner organizations. OSCE, UNEP, UNDP, UNITAR, RECs, and EEA participate in the capacity-building coordination framework under the Convention, which is serviced by the secretariat. Over 50 projects were reported by partner organizations to support the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and Principle 10 in the UNECE region and beyond.

Since 2002, the OSCE in partnership with UNECE has been supporting the establishment, operation and networking of Aarhus Centres that assist the governments in implementing the Aarhus Convention. The network reached now a total of 60 Centres in 14 countries.

In the margins of the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and of the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Budva, Montenegro, 11-15 September 2017), in order to build capacities of Parties and raise awareness of the Convention's and Protocol's requirements, the secretariat organized and supported five thematic meetings, seminars and trainings with OSCE (and Aarhus Centres), UNEP, the REC for Central and Eastern Europe (REC CEE), the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Cartagena Protocol) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, OECD, and UNITAR as partner organizations.

In the reporting period the secretariat collaborated on the preparation of a joint Aarhus Convention-Cartagena Protocol issue of the "Biosafety Protocol News" newsletter. In addition, Parties to the Cartagena Protocol from outside the ECE region report how the Aarhus Convention and related guidelines on genetically modified organisms are beneficial for their implementation of article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol.

UNECE has worked with UNEP, OSCE, REC CEE and other partner organizations in supporting cooperation of judiciary, judicial training institutions and other independent review bodies in the pan-European region (in support of target 16.3 of SDG 16).

Cooperation between the secretariat and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council was further enhanced in the reporting period. The secretariat cooperated, in particular, on the

preparation of a study by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights “Promotion, protection and implementation of the right to participate in public affairs in the context of the existing human rights law: best practices, experiences, challenges and ways to overcome them” (A/HRC/30/26); and on the preparation of the civil society space report to be submitted to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-eighth session, as requested in Council resolution 32/31 (para. 18). The secretariat further provided substantive input and advisory support during expert consultations on children’s rights (Geneva, 22–23 June 2017) and on human rights and the environment (Geneva, 17 October 2017) for the preparation of two reports of the Special Rapporteur (A/HRC/37/58 and A/HRC/37/59). Also it cooperated on the preparation of the documents on implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes.

Furthermore, the secretariat also: pursued cooperation with UNEP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on environmental human rights defenders; cooperated with partners within the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals to assist Governments to implement different international obligations related to chemicals management; provided substantive support to a webinar organized by the World Bank (WB) on its Environmental and Social Framework Draft Guidance Note for Borrowers (28 November 2017); cooperated with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) on the preparation of its review of “Extractive Mining Industries Strategy”, the “Moldova Country Strategy for 2017–2022” and the “Slovak Republic Country Strategy 2017–2022”.

Upon the request from ECLAC the Aarhus Convention secretariat provided ongoing advisory support, including by engaging relevant experts, for the negotiations of a regional agreement on access to information, participation and justice in environmental matters in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The secretariat cooperated with OECD Nuclear Energy Agency and other relevant partner organizations as to build capacities of Governments in the area of stakeholder involvement in nuclear decision-making.

In connection with implementing the Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Aarhus Convention in International Forums (Almaty Guidelines), the secretariat cooperated with UNFCCC and WHO on the application of the principles of the Convention in the climate change-related decision-making and the European Environment and Health Process. In addition, it cooperated with UNEP on the subjects of stakeholder engagement in the UNEA, UNEP access to information policies and with UNDESA on the processes related to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Secretariat cooperates closely with OECD, UNEP, GEF and UNITAR as to build capacities of Governments in the area of chemicals management, including through electronic tools for PRTRs (PRTR:Learn; OECD Centre for PRTR Data, OECD Resource Centre for Release Estimation Techniques; and PRTR.net.).

Furthermore, it serviced a region-wide inter-agency capacity-building coordination mechanism for the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and a global international coordinating Group for the Protocol.

57. Since 2016 UNECE has been an observer to the Inter-State Council on Industrial Safety under Commonwealth of Independent States, and has regularly attended the meetings of the Council, which recognized achievements under the UNECE Project on Strengthening Industrial Safety in Central Asia, and supported future work by its members towards the preparation of national self-assessments and action plans under the Industrial Accident Convention’s Assistance Programme.