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**PROPOSALS OF THE EECCA REC NETWORK ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE BELGRADE
MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE AND ON FUTURE COOPERATION AFTER BELGRADE**

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PROPOSALS OF THE EECCA REC NETWORK ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE BELGRADE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE AND ON FUTURE COOPERATION AFTER BELGRADE

The given paper summarizes the joint proposals of the EECCA REC Network on preparations for the Belgrade "Environment for Europe" 2007 Ministerial Conference and future interaction and cooperation in the EECCA region after the Conference. It is aimed at providing of an input to preparation of document by the EAP Task Force secretariat as requested by the members of the Bureau of the EAP Task Force and the PPC at its meeting on June 16, 2006.

This documents is also based on the agreements reached and proposals made in the course of the recent Meeting of the UNECE Working Group of Senior Officials on the preparations for the Belgrade Ministerial (June 29-30, 2006, Geneva).

At the Kiev Conference the ministers agreed that overall coordination of efforts of international partners in providing support for reaching the overall and specific objectives of the Strategy is ensured by the EAP Task Force. The ministers had also pointed out that this process should be focused on those areas where the experience and the potential of the EAP Task Force, PPC and RECs would add value. In their Declaration they invited the RECs to support initiatives aimed at achieving the objectives of the Strategy.

In response to the appeal and commission of ministers the EECCA RECs started providing active facilitation of reaching objectives of the EECCA Environment Strategy through wide interaction with various partners both in EECCA countries and cooperating with the EAP Task Force and other international partners. Special attention in that respect is paid by the REC Network to the development of civil society and public participation in environmental decision-making.

The issue of preserving the existing mechanism of environmental cooperation between EECCA countries and donors and creating more effective interaction, as well as on the role of EECCA RECs in future was touched upon at the Conference of EECCA Ministers of Economy/Finance, Environment and Water and their partners from OECD countries on financing water supply and sanitation in EECCA, held on 17-18th of November 2005, in Yerevan, Armenia.

In order to implement the above decisions and in accordance with their mandates the EECCA made efforts in searching for effective ways for widening the scope of their activities in the region, as well as for strengthening and improving coordination with each other and with international partners. For this purpose series of meetings and consultations among RECs and with the governments of EECCA countries, EAP Task Force/PPC Secretariats and other stakeholders have been held. The outcomes and results of these meetings and consultations were summarized in the course of meetings of the International Coordination Committee of EECCA RECs (ICC) in June 2005 in Moscow and in May 2006 in Almaty. The results and outcomes of consultations and agreements formed the basis fore the given proposals.

It might be expected that the Belgrade conference would be a conference of delivery the countries of the UNECE region have identified a wide range of regional and global environmental goals and targets. In this regard serious resources will be required along with the need for institutional strengthening and capacity building.

It might also be expected that in Belgrade the major focus will be on the EECCA region and the region of South-East Europe (with regard to stabilization process and future EU enlargement).

Basing on the outcomes of UNECE WGSO meetings it might be expected that the work on preparations for the Belgrade Conference would focus on three main areas: assessment of progress since Kiev, capacity building and partnerships. Each area might cover both progress made and future commitments and plans.

There is a wide range of issues that should be considered in the context of the whole EECCA region, while other issues might be considered at the sub-regional level. It might also be expected that the issues of strengthening and developing civil society and public awareness raising will be also touched in the course of the Conference. In this regard the EECCA RECs plan to actively participate in the discussions during the second day of the Conference.

In the course of the discussion of future of the process and respective roles of the EAP Task Force, PPC and EECCA RECs in the course of the Bureau meeting on June 16, 2006 the Bureau members expressed their point of view that it was better to avoid consideration of institutional arrangements related distribution and sharing of secretarial functions. They proposed to concentrate efforts on the substance of work.

Following these decisions and recommendations the EECCA RECs developed their proposals on future interaction and input to the EfE process and its future. It is necessary to mention that EECCA RECs' Programmes of Work are (and will have in future) **of intersectoral nature oriented at implementation mechanisms**. They also have a corresponding structure. Such an approach makes it possible to provide for more flexibility for involving other sectors while maintaining overall target indicators. The existing EECCA RECs programmes of work have clear tasks, target groups, as well as connection with other sectors and processes both at national, regional and global levels.

Therefore EECCA RECs activities might be continued in order to strengthen implementation of the existing areas (programme components) and development of new ones through combining of efforts with the EAP Task Force and the PPC for reaching maximum synergies and obtaining actual results.

It is indicative that during rather short period of time since their establishing (no more than 5 years) EECCA RECs were recognized and supported in their work by the government authorities, interstate programmes, various target groups. The issues of RECs' activity were reflected in the decisions of all major forums on environment and sustainable development. At the national level some EECCA RECs were recognized as focal points for numerous activities by respective ministries of environment.

In this regard in future the EECCA RECs might deepen their specialization and the development of priority areas for their respective sub-regions. Thus, CA REC might continue its leadership and implementation of successful programmes of supporting cooperation in the water sector, as well as in the field of sustainable production and consumption. REC Caucasus might focus its efforts on the development and implementation of programme of development of mountain areas and biodiversity conservation. The Russian REC – to continue its support for implementation of Kyoto mechanisms, addressing issues of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, environmental enforcement and compliance. REC Moldova – to continue implementation of successful programmes on supporting LEAPs, etc.

From the point of view of EECCA RECs a joint Programme of Work of the EAP Task Force, PPC and EECCA RECs might become the most promising instrument for reaching synergies and providing further support for EECCA countries in addressing priority environmental issues of the region. In this regard, the introduction to the programme should contain a clear description of the mechanism of cooperation, functions and responsibilities of EECCA RECs, as well as the EAP Task Force and PPC secretariats. Financial issues should be an important aspect of the programme. It should also reflect a principle of joint fundraising and work with donors in thematic fields where the EAP Task Force/PPC and EECCA RECs implement joint projects.

Such a programme might be jointly developed by the EAP Task Force/PPC and EECCA RECs and submitted for consideration first by the Joint EAP Task Force/PPC meeting in autumn of 2006 (thematic fields of activity), and then – in spring of 2007 for its further approval at the Belgrade Ministerial. Such joint programme might be developed, for example, for the period 2008-2012.

Possibilities for the development of such a programme were discussed in the course of brainstorming sessions and consultations with the EAP Task Force/PPC in February-March 2006 when a detailed SWOT analysis of all institutions was developed and potential fields of joint activities discussed.

Following the outcomes and the results of these consultations possible thematic fields of the joint programme might include both topics covered by both EAP Task Force PPC and EECCA RECs at present (jointly or individually), and the new ones. They might include the following:

- strengthening and harmonization of environmental legislation in EECCA with the account of European legislation and EU directives;
- support of public participation in environmental decision making;
- support of reforming environmental policy (including strengthening of environmental enforcement and compliance assurance);
- water supply and sanitation (especially in rural areas of EECCA);
- strengthening environmental finance and investments; protection and integrated management of water resources and facilitation of the EECCA component of the EU Water Initiative;
- climate change and implementation of Kyoto protocol;
- further development and strengthening of local environmental planning and Local Agenda 21;
- remediation of degraded lands;
- environmental education and education for sustainable development;
- addressing transboundary issues (including mountain areas, sub-regional issues and regional seas);
- sustainable production and consumption;
- facilitation of the EECCA Environment Strategy implementation.

Of special importance is the need for further development of a mechanism for coordination of cooperation and implementation of activities of the EAP Task Force, PPC and EECCA RECs. In this regard an important role should be played by the renewed ICC that is aimed at implementing coordinating and consultative functions. The issues of the development of ICC mechanisms might be considered and discussed by ministers at Belgrade as it was mentioned during the last WGSO meeting.

It also seems expedient to organize joint (or back to back) EAP Task Force/PPC and ICC meetings (at least from time to time) for more correlated and effective solution of problems and identification of priorities as well as for reaching synergies. It might be necessary to develop specific proposals on coordination of activities of the EAP Task Force/ PPC and ICC of the EECCA RECs. The new status of the widened and renewed ICC should be taken into account (as in future it might perform the functions of an interregional secretariat of the EECCA RECs based on thematic principle).