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ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE  
ENVIRONMENT POLICY COMMITTEE  
TASK FORCE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION  
PROGRAMME FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE ANNUAL MEETING  
OF THE TASK FORCE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION  
PROGRAMME FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE  
(EAP TASK FORCE)

23-24 October 2008, Astana (Kazakhstan)

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### **Opening formalities**

1. The co-Chair of the EAP Task Force, Mrs Eldrid Nordbø (Norway) and the First Deputy Minister of Environment Protection Mr Zeinulla Sarsembayev (Kazakhstan) opened the Annual Meeting of the EAP Task Force. Mr Sarsembayev welcomed participants on behalf of the Kazakh Government. During the annual meeting, Mr Andrey Korchevsky, vice co-Chair (Kazakhstan), presided over discussions in the place of Ms Violeta Ivanov, the EECCA co-Chair of the EAP Task Force, who was not able to attend.
2. Delegations from 16 countries were present, as well as representatives from UNECE, EBRD, non-governmental organisations, business circles and the Regional Environmental Centres (see Annex 1 for the list of participants).
3. The EAP Task Force adopted the draft Annotated Agenda of the meeting<sup>1</sup> [ENV/EPOC/EAP/A(2008)2].

### **Adoption of the Draft Summary Record of the Extraordinary Meeting of the EAP Task Force**

4. The EAP Task Force adopted the Draft Summary Record of the Extraordinary Meeting of the EAP Task Force, held on 7-8 February 2008 at OECD Headquarters [ENV/EPOC/EAP/M(2008)1], without amendment.

### **Special Session on Capacity Development for Better Environmental Management**

5. The delegates took note of main conclusions of the Special Session, conducted on 23 October 2008 (see Annex 2 for a summary of the outcomes of the Special Session).

### **Implementation of the Task Force's Programme of Work**

#### ***Progress achieved by OECD Secretariat in 2008 and proposed work in 2009***

6. The delegates took note of the progress in implementing the EAP Task Force programme of work in 2008, as set out in the document [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2008)2], and endorsed the proposed draft Programme of Work and Budget of the EAP Task Force for 2009 [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2008)3]. The Secretariat took note of specific comments provided by delegations and agreed to use them in further developing and implementing proposed activities.
7. Delegates took note of the budget estimates for the proposed programme. The Netherlands and Switzerland announced that they would be providing grants to support implementation of the work programme in 2009. Delegates were informed that over half of the planned budget was still required to be raised for the OECD part of the work programme.

#### ***Role of EECCA RECs in implementing the work of the EAP Task Force***

8. The Task Force noted that EECCA RECs have not received funds to implement the part of the EAP Task Force work programme that has been assigned to them. Participants in the meeting considered that while this impeded implementation of the EAP Task Force's programme, it was also linked to the broader issue of financing EECCA RECs. It was suggested that donors should meet to discuss financing of EECCA

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<sup>1</sup> More information about the EAP Task Force meeting, background documentation and presentations are available at the following link: [http://oecd.org/document/52/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34291\\_41423412\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1.00.html](http://oecd.org/document/52/0,3343,en_2649_34291_41423412_1_1_1_1.00.html)

RECs in a more co-ordinated manner, possibly back-to-back with next meeting on the reform of the Environment for Europe process that will be held in Geneva, 27-29 January 2009. The Secretariat was requested to inform the EC of this discussion.

9. During the discussion, it was agreed that project on transboundary water management would be removed from the proposed programme for 2009.

#### **EBRD session: Update on progress and future activities**

10. EAP Task Force delegates took note of a presentation by Mr Ulf Hindstrom, Senior Banker, EBRD, on the EBRD's activities in Kazakstan and in support of environmental sustainability since the former Project Preparation Committee (PPC) was internalised inside EBRD at the beginning of 2008. Delegates welcomed the progress made by the EBRD since the Belgrade Conference and recommended to maintain close co-operation between the EAP Task Force and the EBRD. The EAP Task Force also invited the EBRD to continue participation in the annual meetings of the EAP Task Force and its Bureau, when there was a common interest.

#### **Links to the overall "Environment for Europe" process**

##### *i. Reform of the "Environment for Europe" process*

11. The EAP Task Force took note of a presentation by Ms. Natalia Golovko of UNECE Secretariat on discussions regarding the "Environment for Europe" reform process. The new plan for the reform of the Environment for Europe Process will be discussed at the CEP Special session, which will take place on 27-29 January 2009.

##### *ii. EAP Task Force outputs that will be available by the time of the Astana Ministerial Conference*

12. The Task Force took note of a document [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2008)4] prepared by the Secretariat listing the reports that the EAP Task Force will produce by the time of Astana "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference. Many delegates considered that the Task Force could provide a valuable input to the Astana Efe Ministerial Conference, depending on the agenda of the meeting. The Task Force agreed that the Bureau should discuss and decide on the procedure for informing the CEP of the EAP Task Force's possible contribution to the next Efe Ministerial meeting.

#### **Dates and location of the next EAP Task Force meeting**

13. The EAP Task Force delegates agreed to hold their next annual meeting on 15-16 October 2009 at OECD Headquarters in Paris, provided that this was before the dates of the annual CEP meeting. The EAP Task Force also noted that the Bureau of the EAP Task Force will convene immediately after the Annual Meeting, and that the next meeting of the Bureau will take place on 26 June 2009 in Paris.

#### **Other Business**

14. Mrs Eldrid Nordbø informed that Task Force that she was stepping down as co-Chair of the EAP Task Force. The Task Force elected Mr Jürgen Keinhorst from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety as the new co-Chair of the EAP Task Force. Mrs Nordbø will continue to serve as a Bureau member. Delegates expressed their deep appreciation for Mrs Nordbø's contribution to EAP Task Force work.

15. Mr Edwin Koning (Netherlands) re-iterated the invitation of Dutch government to representatives from OECD and EECCA countries to attend the High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (22-23 January 2009, Amsterdam).

16. The Task Force noted that the EAP Task Force work will be presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Istanbul in March 2009.

17. Delegates expressed their gratitude to the Kazakh government for hosting the meeting

**Annex 1**  
**Annual Meeting of the EAP Task Force**  
*23-24 October 2008, Astana, Kazakhstan*

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## Annex 2

### Summary of the outcomes of the EAP Task Force's Special Session on Capacity Development for Better Environmental Management (23 October 2008)

The purpose of the Special Session was to discuss achievements, emerging trends and challenges of capacity<sup>2</sup> development for environmental management in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). An Issues Paper [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2008)6] was prepared by the Secretariat in support to discussions. Mr. Alzhan Braliev, Deputy Minister of Environment Protection of Kazakhstan, chaired the meeting. The current Annex summarises the outcomes of the discussions during the Special Session.

This regional dialogue was organised against the background of a changing aid architecture whereby donors are gradually replacing project financing with support to broad, country-owned national/sectoral programmes and channelling aid through General Budget Support (GBS). Most importantly, such a change means that environment and other sectoral ministries need to demonstrate how their activities contribute to national priorities and to fully integrate sectoral programmes into national development programmes and budgets. Another important implication is the necessity to adopt capacity assessment and development approaches that would correspond to national priorities rather than supply from donor countries, as often was happening in the past. Within this context, peer learning may play an important role in facilitating transition to a full use of new aid and capacity development approaches.

**Capacity development needs, practices, and drivers.** Three presentations illustrated capacity development needs and recent practices in EECCA, including : (i) on priorities for capacity development in Kazakhstan as identified in the country's Second Environmental Performance Review (by Ms Catherine Masson, UNECE Secretariat); (ii) on innovative approaches to institutional development in Kazakhstan (by Mr. Andrey Korchevsky, member of the Sustainable Development Council of the Government); and (iii) on the use of "institutional development plans" in Moldova (by Ms Tatiana Plesco, senior expert, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources).

The presentations and following plenary debates supported the thesis that changes in institutional frameworks for environmental management are largely driven by government-wide reforms, with international processes and bilateral cooperation playing a catalytic and supportive role. There has been noticeable progress in adoption of strategic planning that helped formulate national development objectives and transpose them into intra-agency action plans. Within this process, medium-term expenditure frameworks (MTEF) help to consolidate funding from various domestic and foreign sources.

The experience from Moldova showed that despite the introduction of a structured approach for capacity assessment and development within the strategic planning framework, countries do not have tools tailored to environmental management that would help them assess capacity and connect objectives with budgets. In conjunction with development of such tools, there is a need to promote the understanding that "capacity" stretches beyond competence of individuals and availability of material resources.

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<sup>2</sup> Capacity can be defined as the ability to set objectives, perform tasks and produce outputs. The notion of "capacity" is quite comprehensive and includes (i) individual competences; (ii) the organisational capacity; (iii) partnerships/network of organisations; and (iv) the enabling environment (legal and policy frameworks, and work approaches). The sum of individual and organisational capacity, together with partnership arrangements and the enabling environment, will characterise the quality of "institutional frameworks".

Moreover, the new status of non-governmental players has to be recognized and their capacity considered within a larger framework of nation-wide capacity development for environmental management. Private sector representatives suggested that some institutional development initiatives could benefit from joint learning platforms, *e.g.* when new regulatory instruments are introduced.

Participants underlined that several systemic factors reduce the effectiveness of the environmental sector's functioning in EECCA. Lack of institutional memory, which originates in frequent reorganizations and staff exodus, is one of the main reasons of institutional stagnation, alongside with fragmentation of policies and responsibilities for environmental management. Also, in some cases obsolete legislation and rigid management stifle change, even though many countries have conducted comprehensive reforms of their legal basis.

Scarce resources affect the entire region but to a different degree. In many low-income countries of EECCA the initially low resource basis is further eroded by short-term development models and allocation of government resources to urgent issues. In some middle-income countries the recognition of the cross-cutting character of the environmental issues and the value of proper environmental management for economic development is growing. This triggers higher allocation of resources, though not always to the Ministries of Environment.

The use of European directives as benchmarks plays a positive role, as it did in countries of Central Europe. At the same time, EECCA countries need to concentrate more on the substance of the EU's environmental policies (*i.e.* desired outcomes and policy instruments) rather than on transposing the language of the *acquis communautaire* in a fast-track manner.

Certification according to the ISO 14001 standard can be another important driver for a continuous improvement of institutional capacity, as the case of Kazakhstan shows. This innovative approach enabled the Ministry of Environment Protection to clarify, for instance, internal training needs and to establish a system of continuous competence development. Currently, the Ministry is considering avenues for extending this experience to other governmental agencies.

Finally, some aspects of the political economy of institutional development were touched upon. Participants stressed that limitations of incremental change in EECCA, where systems of environmental management have seen a decade of small-scale re-design without demonstrably improved outcomes. Reforming one instrument, *e.g.* permitting, will be counterproductive if related instruments remain obsolete. Furthermore, the social and cultural environment very often determines what is acceptable in terms of reform.

**Aid flows and instruments.** A case study from Kyrgyzstan, presented by Mr Oleg Peceniuk, Director of "Independent Environmental Expertise" NGO, showed that the magnitude of aid to the environmental sector might equal resources allocated to spending ministries. Very often, however, the use of these financial resources outside strict accountability rules considerably reduces the effectiveness of aid. Thus, products delivered by projects (typically policy recommendations or technical studies) may not be used in full, if used at all. Project coordination remains a problem, though many countries signalled that formal mechanisms of donor coordination were established by countries themselves, and the donor community.

At the same time, a system of monitoring of aid effectiveness is not yet in place. Some participants noted that further promotion of the OECD/EAP Task Force's work on public environmental expenditure management (PEEM) could have a valuable contribution towards the improvement of GBS effectiveness.

The use of GBS, however, raises concerns among environmental authorities of EECCA. Environmental sector is often low on government's agenda. At the same time, the decision making process

is not always based on solid evidence. Hence, opportunities for using economic arguments in favour of higher environmental spending are limited. A sector-wide approach, particularly when implemented together with programme-oriented budget planning, might increase the effectiveness of aid (as well as of regular public spending) but it will take time to materialise. In general, a clearer understanding of GBS and its implications is needed in environmental ministries of EECCA.

Participants expressed the view that a package of aid instruments would work best to develop capacity in an effective and efficient way. Thus, in addition to GBS, Finland intends to use a complementary “Institutional Development Instrument” that will enable twinning between Finnish government authorities and their counterparts in developing countries. The design of this instrument was presented by Martti Poutanen from the Finnish Ministry of Environment. Several participants from OECD countries noted, however, that a wide application of the twinning instrument might result in shortage of human resources in OECD environmental ministries as the work load would increase. Some countries already experience this problem and tend to hire consultants for implementing twinning projects.

**Using a common framework for capacity assessment.** The 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, which constitutes a roadmap for aid restructuring, reiterates the need for country ownership and accountability for capacity development results. In this vein, the identification of capacity development targets should be guided, first of all, by the need to facilitate the achievement of national development objectives. At the same time, sound analysis in comparison with good international practices and other countries’ achievements could support the process of capacity development.

The EAP Task Force has traditionally played a role in devising such frameworks and ensuring progress monitoring. Thus, within the previous cycle of work, a rating scheme was developed by the EAP Task Force Secretariat in consultation with EECCA countries that aimed to monitor progress in the reform of environmental policies, legislation, and organisational capacity as part of the Environmental Partnerships Strategy. The post-Belgrade work programme offers the opportunity to improve the design of the regional benchmarking approach and the process associated with its use.

Ms Angela Bularga from the OECD/EAP Task Force Secretariat presented the proposed elements of work in this area. These include a methodology for capacity self-assessment by countries, policy dialogue in support to the drafting of capacity development programmes, and regional benchmarking.

Both EECCA and OECD countries found the proposed work beneficial, since the identification of capacity development priorities will help focus domestic and donor efforts. Countries agreed to contribute towards the development of the capacity assessment framework and asked the Secretariat to present an update on progress during the next Task Force meeting.

Further information about the Special Session, in particular all presentations, can be found at [www.oecd.org/env/eap](http://www.oecd.org/env/eap)