

MID-TERM REVIEW OF SPAIN - CONCLUSIONS OF THE WPEP (10 JANUARY 2008)

Further to the 2004 OECD Environmental Performance Review (EPR) of Spain, the Spanish delegation gave a presentation by Ms Cristina NARBONA (Minister of Environment) and valued the opportunity for a mid-term review by the WPEP. It was followed by statements from the reviewing countries (Czech Republic, Mexico and United States), questions and comments by all WPEP delegations and answers by the Spanish delegation. Mr. Mario AMANO (OECD Deputy Secretary-General) opened the review session. The Conclusions by the WPEP are as follows.

Good progress has been achieved for practically all the issues covered by the 2004 OECD Review recommendations. Ten environmental laws have been passed since 2004. This has allowed improved access to information and public participation (in line with the Aarhus Convention), including creation in 2006 of a body specific to that purpose. Since 2007, environmental responsibility and the Polluter Pays Principle have a legal basis, pursuant to (and going beyond) EU requirements. The 1972 law on atmospheric pollution was replaced and a National Health and Environment Action Plan is being prepared. Strategic environmental assessment has a legal framework since 2006. Legislation on biodiversity protection has also been updated, meeting EU as well as UN requirements. The Nature 2000 network includes 28% of the Spanish territory and urban sprawl into protected areas is now regulated; furthermore, the Spanish government is taking measures to restrain urban sprawl in coastal areas. Waste management legislation has been revised to introduce the producer responsibility principle for all specific types of waste. The National Hydrological Plan was revised to substitute inter-basin transfers from the Ebro River by programmes on water saving, improving water efficiency and quality, reuse, and desalination; since 2005 new hydraulic works require a previous social, economical and environmental assessment; and new basin plans are being prepared. Co-operation with regional authorities has been strengthened. A network of cities committed to climate change mitigation has been created. After a long period of increase, GHG emissions fell about 4% in 2006, even though GDP grew by 3.9 %. Strategies on Sustainable Development and on Climate Change (supported by regional and local authorities, plus the cities network) have been approved, and different measures have been taken to reduce GHG emissions (e.g. a technical construction code; a bonus/malus system to enhance purchase of energy efficient vehicles). International co-operation has developed and Spanish ODA has been increased to 0.5% of GNI. Spain is committed to the Millenium Development Goals targets (e.g. a Fund for drinking water supply was created for Latin America) and entered into new bilateral agreements on climate change and waste management. A network of institutions specialised in climate change was created in Latin America, which should give birth to the first international adaptation strategy in the UN context.

However, meeting commitments in the area of climate change will prove difficult by 2008-12. There is support to develop use of renewables (e.g. wind), and industry is committed in emissions trading through national allocation plans. To comply with Kyoto targets, other tax neutral reforms should be envisaged, specially for transport. There is a need to pursue further reforms in the water sector. Spain is experiencing the worst drought of its history, for which efforts to increase supply and reduce demand are necessary. Progress was achieved in full cost recovery of water services for households, in spreading efficient irrigation technologies, in reuse of most water in agriculture and in establishing desalination plants, but water prices in agriculture do not recover all costs for which Spain intends to ask for temporary derogations in implementing the EU Water Framework Directive, in well-grounded cases.