

**EAP Task Force
СРГ ПДООС**

**Regional Meeting on Progress in Achieving the Objectives of the
EECCA Environment Strategy**

Kiev, 18-19 May 2006

Summary of the Meeting Outcomes

This Note reflects the main conclusions of the Regional Meeting.

1. The OECD/EAP Task Force Secretariat organised on 18-19 May 2006 the Regional Meeting on Achieving the Objectives of the EECCA Environment Strategy. The meeting took place in Kiev and was hosted by the Ukrainian Ministry of Environment. Some 50 participants represented 11 Ministries of Environment of the EECCA region (there was also one Ministry of Finance present), 6 international organisations (EEA, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, WHO, World Bank), the 4 EECCA RECs, and 6 NGOs from the EECCA region.

2. The main objectives of the meeting were (i) to discuss the structure and content of the 2007 EECCA Strategy Progress Assessment Report (EECCA Report) that is being prepared as an input to the Sixth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference; (ii) to discuss the process of preparing the EECCA Report, in particular how EECCA countries can provide and validate country-focused information; and (iii) to discuss the impacts of the EECCA Environment Strategy as well as ways to improve the efforts to achieve the Strategy’s objectives.

3. Mr. Gritsenko, Deputy-Minister of Environment (Ukraine) opened the meeting, welcoming participants, reminding them about how the EECCA Environment Strategy was approved in Kiev three years earlier, and hoping for a productive meeting.

4. Representatives of EECCA Ministries of Environment discussed the impact of the EECCA Strategy. They were asked to rate the impact of the Strategy on two dimensions: a) impact on the development of partnerships with Western partners, and b) impact on the implementation of actions. Most participants rated the impact as “medium” in the two dimensions; some participants rated the impact as “low” (particularly on the “actions” dimension). Several participants raised the question of the need for a more robust methodology to rate impacts. EECCA countries’ perception of the impact of the Strategy seems to be more positive than that of other partners (as expressed in other forums) – this would seem to suggest that there are different expectations among different partners on what the Strategy can deliver.

5. The OECD/EAP TF Secretariat introduced the concept, process and structure of the EECCA Report (as outlined in the Document 3 of the Regional Meeting). EECCA Ministries of Environment supported the overall process of preparing the report, as well as the overall structure of the report and that of the thematic chapters and country profiles. It was suggested that in the country profiles two case studies (one on partnerships and one on actions taken) could substitute the proposed “short list of main achievements”. The representative from the European Environment Agency (EEA) informed the participants of the preparation of the Fourth Pan-European Assessment (Belgrade Report) and the links with the EECCA Report.

6. The fourteen thematic sessions (organised in two parallel working groups) were structured around presentations delivered by representatives of an international organisation and ensuing discussions. The thematic sessions helped to identify: (i) a number of preliminary messages, (ii) examples of actions taken by EECCA countries, and (iii) suggestions to improve the EECCA Questionnaire. Overall, the discussions showed that there are actions being taken in EECCA countries of which international organisations are not always aware. Brief summaries of the discussions held in the fourteen thematic sessions are presented in Annex A.

7. The information collection process was also discussed. The OECD/EAP TF Secretariat introduced the information needs and identified three types of information sources to be used: (i) existing reporting processes (such as those related to the Conventions and the EECCA Partnerships Database); (ii) reports available or under preparations (such as UNECE EPRs or the World Bank mainstreaming reports); and (iii) a dedicated EECCA Questionnaire. EECCA Ministries of Environment supported the overall process of information collection.

8. The overall size of the EECCA Questionnaire was deemed appropriate, as there were no major interventions asking for a significant reduction in length. Several participants provided suggestions (both during the thematic sessions and this plenary session) on specific questions to be deleted, added and reformulated. The OECD/EAP TF Secretariat invited EECCA Ministries of Environment and other meeting participants to provide further suggestions in written form before 31 May 2006.

9. The following issues were clarified and agreed upon: (i) EECCA Governments will provide the official response to the EECCA Questionnaire to the OECD/EAP TF Secretariat before 30 September 2006; (ii) EECCA Governments will try to involve national stakeholders in formulating the official response, according to established procedures and relationships with stakeholders; (iii) EECCA RECs will assist the OECD/EAP TF Secretariat in the information collection process; (iv) EECCA Governments will not be paid for the information provided to the OECD/EAP TF Secretariat; (v) the OECD/EAP TF Secretariat will further discuss with NGOs their involvement in providing information for the report; (vi) the OECD/EAP TF Secretariat will explore the possibility of organising further consultations with EECCA countries to discuss the country profiles.

Table 1. Timetable associated to the EECCA Questionnaire

31 May	Written comments from EECCA countries to the draft EECCA Questionnaire
22 May-9 June	Consultations of OECD/EAP TF Secretariat with international organisations
20 June	Final EECCA Questionnaire sent to EECCA Ministries of Environment and/or EECCA Ministries of Foreign Affairs
20 June-30 Sept	EECCA countries to fill in the EECCA Questionnaire, including consultation with national stakeholders
30 September	Cut-off date for EECCA Ministries of Environment to send official response (EECCA
November	OECD/EAP TF Secretariat to organise consultations with EECCA countries to discuss country profiles developed on the basis of the information provided through the Questionnaire
31 January	OECD/EAP TF Secretariat to send draft EECCA Report to countries for review

Note: The EECCA Questionnaire was finally sent out to EECCA countries on 6 July. Therefore the effective period set for EECCA countries to fill the EECCA Questionnaire is 7 July-30 September.

10. The OECD/EAP TF Secretariat briefly introduced the activities that are carried out under the Work Programme on Overall Facilitation of the EECCA Environment Strategy. This includes three types of activities: (i) analysis and facilitation of partnerships (EECCA Partnerships Database, EECCA Partnerships Report, OECD Report on Effective and Efficient Partnerships, Policy Dialogues for Institutional Strengthening); (ii) progress assessment (EECCA Report); and (iii) communication activities (Snapshot of Activities by International Organisations, website, newsletter). The OECD/EAP TF Secretariat invited EECCA countries to express their interest in receiving support for the organisation of a Policy Dialogue on Institutional Strengthening, building on the experience gained with the Georgia Pilot. EECCA Ministries of Environment were also requested to review and update their partnership information in the Partnership Database (www.eecca.net).

11. The meeting documentation (documents distributed previous to the meeting, presentations delivered during the meeting and summaries of the discussions that took part during the thematic sessions) is available through www.oecd.env/eap.

Annex 1. Summary of Working Group Sessions

This annex presents some of the main messages and actions taken identified during the working group sessions, but it does not cover the whole discussions taking place during those sessions. It is meant to illustrate some of the messages and actions taken by EECCA countries, but not all of them or necessarily the most significant ones. While the annex will be used as an input in the drafting of the EECCA Report, not all the messages and examples will necessarily be reflected in the final version of the report.

Working Group A

1. Integrated Water Resources Management.

Messages. In the area of water resources management there is little planning and little integration. New legislation has focused on establishing the framework for bilateral cooperation, not on river basin management. Although tools are available, they are rarely used. A river basin management approach has not been adopted. Achieving *integrated* water resources management requires buy-in from line ministries. The integrated aspect may only be achieved in the context of decentralization. Barriers to achieve IWRM include (i) political willingness to reform tariffs and enhance public participation, (ii) non-transparent information, (ii) low capacity, particularly as regards integration aspects, (iii) a mismatch between national and regional legislation, (iv) and an uncompleted transition to a “water services” mentality. The focus in the future should be on IWRM planning, decentralization, pricing, and institutional strengthening.

Actions taken. Kazakhstan has advanced with IWRM planning. The Caucasus countries have started cooperating in the Kura-Araks basin. Moldova has improved river basin management in the Prut. The Russian Federation has passed a Water Code, establishing the priority of water body protection over water use and a river basin management approach.

2. Biodiversity Conservation

Messages. Biodiversity conservation faces major obstacles: donor funding for biodiversity is rapidly decreasing, biodiversity is not seen as a priority by countries, and public awareness is low. Actions planned in EECCA Strategy are too ambitious, but economic instruments may offer opportunities. While monitoring capacities seem to vary across countries, lack of information should not be an excuse for inaction. The focus in the future should be on enforcement of legislation and on ensuring protection of current protected areas (rather than on increasing the area under protection). There is also a need for closer coordination among disconnected biodiversity-related processes.

Actions taken. Several supporting activities by international organisations but no evidence of impact at country level. Central Asian countries are developing an Econet. Uzbekistan has enacted new legislation. Several EECCA countries are party to the Tehran Convention for the Caspian Sea. The Kyrgyz Republic has included biodiversity issues in the national development plan.

3. Integration of Environmental Issues in the Agriculture and Forestry Sectors

Messages. There is a need to identify win-win opportunities, but there are also trade-offs. In most countries interaction between environment and agriculture ministries takes place merely at the communication level. Integration is a big challenge, but it may be easier to achieve in forestry than in agriculture because of easier perception of trade-offs. The institutional set-up is important, as it will affect division of responsibilities and information flows. The focus in the future should be in building capacities for environmental management in sectoral ministries and at farm level.

Actions taken. The Kyrgyz Republic has made progress in the forestry sector, with new legislation, issues included in the national development plan, and a Swiss-supported program. Uzbekistan is paying attention to agrochemical management. Armenia is planning an agricultural tax and subsidy reform for 2009.

4. Waste and Chemicals Management

Messages. Waste is a high priority for many countries. Progress is taking place (legal framework and some basic information for waste mgt in place, waste and chemical mgt plans being developed, new sanitary landfills being built). New information is uncovering the real size of challenge (including past environmental liabilities), which is increasing. There is across the region a better understanding of the links production/consumption and waste generation/waste treatment. The focus in the future should be on (i) continuing efforts on safe disposal, (ii) paying attention to hazardous waste, (iii) using waste as a resource, (iv) promoting public awareness/involvement, (v) engaging the private sector, and (vi) exploring the use of economic instruments.

Actions taken. The Kyrgyz Republic is working on a waste-to-energy project. Azerbaijan has built a sanitary landfill, with German support. Belarus is working on Extended Producer Responsibility. Belarus, Moldova and Georgia are engaged in projects dealing with Persistent Organic Pollutants. Uzbekistan has developed new legislation. Georgia is working on a cleaner production initiative, with TACIS support.

5. Air Pollution Control

Messages. Overall, there is no evidence of accelerated progress. National policy frameworks have been updated in recent years, but implementation mechanisms are not well covered. Information is still a problem – including methods, equipment and emission inventories. There has been no much progress on inter-sectoral coordination, and even regress in some cases (driven by deregulation efforts). The focus in the future should be on: (i) enforcement -- including the ban on leaded petrol, (ii) developing a step-by-step approach to reform of standards, (iii) strengthening monitoring and skills, (iv) fixing the tax for imported vehicles – currently counterproductive, (v) balancing the attention given to transport and stationary sources, and (vi) increasing the fines for polluters.

Actions taken. Moldova has made some progress on improving monitoring methods. Uzbekistan is working on indicators. Tajikistan is witnessing joint work with traffic inspectors. The Kyrgyz Republic will include air pollution issues in the new national development plan. Azerbaijan celebrates an air pollution month. The city of Moscow has introduced monitoring of fine particulate matter.

6. Integration of Environmental Issues in the Transport Sector

Messages. Some progress is taking place – including differentiation of fuel taxes, reform of emission standards for cars, and phasing-out leaded fuel. There is an increasing interest in public transport issues. The actions planned in the EECCA Environment Strategy are too ambitious. It is important to ensure that EECCA countries benefit from the pan-European process on Transport/Health/Environment. The focus in the future should be on: improving fuel quality, paying attention to traffic circulation, enhancing public awareness; and increasing attention to public transport.

Actions taken. The city of Tbilisi has invested in new buses and enacted a partial ban on minibuses. Tbilisi. “Ecological check points” have been established in various countries, including Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The city of Moscow is working on a park and ride system, restricting entry of transit vehicles to the central part of the city. Chisinau is developing a new city plan.

7. Integration of Environmental Issues in the Energy Sector

Messages. Energy-environment issues should be addressed in the context of the development process. There is a broad menu of possible measures available. Most countries have policies in place, but lack of progress in implementation. A key objective is to improve the energy efficiency of economic sectors and households, including through the deployment of energy-saving technologies. New opportunities include waste-to-energy projects in a CDM context. There are social concerns about tariff reform. Energy-environment issues are different in energy-rich and energy-poor countries. The focus in the future should be on: providing environmental training for energy experts; promoting public audits of energy investments; and increasing attention to renewables.

Actions taken. Armenia is working on energy efficiency, with World Bank-support, has identified opportunities for the use of wind power, and has signed an agreement with Japan to work on waste-to-energy initiatives. The Kyrgyz Republic will receive Danish support to develop CDM projects. Russian Federation ratified the Kyoto protocol. There is good communication between Moldova and Romania regarding EIA on transboundary projects. In the Russian Federation, the design of the Trans-Siberian pipeline was modified to reduce its possible harmful impact to the environment (primarily on Lake Baikal), in part thanks to NGO activism.

Working Group B

1. Environmental Legislation, Policies and Institutions

Messages. Progress has been achieved in developing environmental policies, reforming policy instruments and streamlining environmental legislation. At the same time, environmental authorities remain weak in the EECCA region. Frequent reorganisations and /or fragmentation of functions amongst several institutions without a clear division of responsibilities for their implementation have caused a lack of continuity in environmental policy-making. Across the region, coordination of environmental policy actions needs to be strengthened (i) horizontally (not only between different sectoral authorities but also between different divisions of the same ministry) and (ii) vertically (between national and sub-national levels). There is strong need for strengthening institutional capacities of environmental and other sectoral authorities, including having a sufficient number of staff to carry out environmental responsibilities, in particular at the sub-national level. Donor-funded projects need further coordination in order to avoid overlaps, save limited resources and ensure that the country priorities are addressed.

Actions taken. Belarus has developed a second generation NEAP. Belarus and the Russian Federation are in the process of drafting the Environmental Code. Azerbaijan is revising the procedures for Environmental Impact Assessment. Armenia has reformed the system of pollution charges. While some countries noted an increasing importance attributed to policy implementation and law enforcement, progress seems to be slower and more difficult in the implementation of integrated permitting (Georgia) and innovative instruments (Belarus, Uzbekistan).

2. Management of Environmental Information

Messages. The state of monitoring and information management in the EECCA region remains critical. In most of the EECCA countries there is an urgent need to identify data priorities in environmental monitoring, to modernise monitoring equipment and to improve data quality and regular environmental reporting.

Actions taken. Attention is being paid by Environment Ministries to the development and maintenance of websites (the Ministry of Environment of Turkmenistan is the only one without a website), but in some cases there are problems with access. Armenia and Azerbaijan are making active efforts in establishing /

upgrading monitoring networks. Exchange of environmental data and information is improving – in Belarus and Ukraine interagency monitoring commissions have been established. Russia has introduced voluntary company reporting.

3. Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making

Messages. At state level, understanding of public participation in decision making has improved. But institutional frameworks and capacity of environmental authorities at local level remain weak. Financing available for public participation initiatives is insufficient. In some EECCA countries, the number of NGOs seems to be decreasing as a consequence of stronger state control.

Actions taken. Several projects related to the implementation of the Aarhus Convention for developing capacities in government agencies and NGOs have been launched in the Caucasus, Belarus and Ukraine. Environment ministers in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine have recently launched regular meetings with the public. Public advisory councils involving NGOs have been established in Belarus, Kyrgyz Republic and Ukraine. Water consumers associations are being involved in river basin councils in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The public has been involved in the development of LEAPs/Agenda 21 in Caucasus, Moldova and Central Asia.

4. Education for Sustainable Development

Messages. Existing training materials on environmental education are inadequate, particularly in national languages. There is weak (and sometimes a lack of) co-operation between the Ministries of Environment and Ministries of Education. Environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD) are not priority issues for many EECCA countries.

Actions taken. Progress has been achieved in the development of legislation and programmes on environmental education in Moldova and Kazakhstan. Educational modules for middle school teachers have been introduced in Kazakhstan. The Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan have established co-ordination committees for ESD. An action plan for the implementation of an ESD strategy is being developed in the Russian Federation. Relevant inter-agency commissions have been established in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

5. Water Supply and Sanitation

Messages. The situation of drinking water quality and attendant health impacts is alarming, especially in rural areas and in the poorest EECCA countries. In addition, a substantial proportion of the collected wastewater is discharged into water bodies without any treatment, affecting the quality of the raw water and causing adverse environmental impacts. In order to solve the problems, there is a need to shift attention from policy-making to implementation. Water tariffs remain too low to cover operational and maintenance costs. Decreasing investments prevent maintenance and renewal of WSS infrastructure. Governance is weak especially at local level. Financial and strategic planning needs to be strengthened, particularly in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Actions taken. Institutional and legal reforms have been undertaken in EECCA, though the measures are partial and progress is very uneven, with some progress at national level and little progress at municipal level. In rural areas the institutional set-up needs to be created almost from scratch. Some countries, such as Armenia, have made progress in introducing metering policies. Collection of water billed charges and tariffs policies has improved across the region. Some municipalities in the Russian Federation have positive experiences with the implementation of performance contracts.

6. Transboundary Issues

Messages. Overall little progress has been made by EECCA countries in the accession and ratification of the UNECE Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution, its protocols and related implementation's mechanisms. Human resources limitations and insufficient progress in reforming the national legislation constitute main barriers to achieve progress. EECCA countries have expressed more interest in participating in recent conventions and protocols (such as those. on Industrial Accidents, EIA and SEA. There is a need to assess benefits of individual UNECE conventions and protocols and to apply step-by-step approach adapted to available financial and human resources.

Actions taken. Good examples of participation in convention-related work include the application of mechanisms for dispute resolution in the Bystroe Canal—Danube Delta and riverbasin co-operation in the Chu-Talas between Kyrgyz Republic and Kazakhstan. These two countries are also involved in a pilot project focused on applying the provisions of the EIA convention to the transboundary impacts of a goldmine. A number of related actions have been taken under the umbrella of the Caspian Sea and Aral Sea programmes, the Environment and Security Initiative and the Carpathian Convention.

7. Financial Resources

Messages. The political profile of environmental issues remains low, and so does public financial support for environmental protection. At the same time, economic growth generates new opportunities to mobilise internal resources. Attracting and making the best use of financial resources continues to be crucial to support environmental protection across the board. Main obstacles to achieve these goals are (i) lack of reliable data, (ii) weak programmatic frameworks, (iii) inadequate systems of environmental charges, inefficient environmental funds and misuse of public resources, and (iv) persistence of policy and institutional obstacles in the financing of environmental projects. Environment should be mainstreamed in the governments' agenda and the institutional capacity to make use of different financial instruments and mechanisms (e.g. funds available under the new EU neighbourhood programmes and the Kyoto Protocol) should be improved.

Actions taken. Some countries – such as Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine – have showed progress in the management of public resources by implementing result oriented-budgeting, developing medium-term expenditure frameworks and better controlling budgetary resources. Innovative approaches in environmental financing have been developed in few countries – like debt-for-environment-swaps initiatives in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan and CDM-related initiatives in Armenia.