

**CSD 18: Regional Discussion Session for the UNECE region,  
Monday, 3 May 2010, 4:30 to 6:00 pm, ECOSOC Chamber**

**Presentation of the Outcomes of the Fourth Regional Implementation Meeting  
on Sustainable Development**

***Introduction***

- The fourth Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Regional Implementation Meeting on Sustainable Development was held on 1 and 2 December 2009 in Geneva. The meeting attracted more than 220 delegates from across the UNECE region representing governments, intergovernmental organizations, UN agencies and major groups. Participants commended the very active involvement of the major groups in the meeting, both in terms of numbers as well as their role and engagement in the discussions.
- The meeting assessed the region's progress in implementing sustainable development commitments in the thematic clusters of CSD-18, addressed cross-cutting issues and linkages between them, and reported on the implementation of decisions of the Commission's seventeenth session.
- Overall, the meeting found that progress differed significantly from one subregion to another, and was affected by economic, infrastructural and historical aspects that must be taken into account in the regional and global review.
- The special importance of sustainable consumption and production as it relates to the other thematic clusters was stressed by many participants. Sustainable consumption and production should therefore be considered as a cross-cutting issue under the other thematic clusters.

***Main messages in the areas discussed***

***Transport***

- Transport is one of the major contributors to the regions' economic development, supporting trade, employment and development. But, the sector also has a significant effect on the environment: CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, consumption of fossil fuels, air and noise pollution, and on health and safety.
- To address these environmental and social challenges requires a holistic approach: transport should be *avoided* where possible( for example through better urban planning, with people living closer to their work, use of teleconferencing and other technical solutions). A *shift* to cleaner modes of transport is required (from cars to public or non-motorized transport), and the different transport modes need to become cleaner (cleaner cars and buses). ) Efforts of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) to put sustainable mobility at the top of the international agenda were welcomed.

- The importance of developing transport infrastructure and services conducive to sustainable development was highlighted. There is a disparity in the success of transport sustainability efforts between the subregions, with countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and in South-Eastern Europe facing major infrastructure, management and funding challenges. Exchange of experience and technology transfer to less developed countries in the region with respect to these issues is therefore important.

### ***Chemicals Management***

- The chemical industry has significant economic importance for many ECE countries, with Western Europe, the Russian Federation, the United States of America and Canada ranking among the biggest chemical producers in the world.
- Increasing chemical manufacturing and use, product development and production and food production with the requisite increases in chemical fertilizer and pesticide usage pose challenges for sound chemicals management.
- The on-going development of new chemicals and products (eg. nanomaterials), legacy chemicals (e.g. lead in paints, asbestos), obsolete POPs and pesticides as well as hazardous waste sites need to be addressed through scientific, technical and policy responses.
- The meeting agreed that all countries need to reinforce their capacities in managing risks posed by chemicals and hazardous waste. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) provides an important international framework for strengthening such capacities and narrowing the capacity gap between the developing and developed countries.
- The broad, cross-sectoral scope of sound chemicals management means that there is no single solution for financing its implementation. Various funding partners and solutions are necessary. Participants acknowledged the urgent need to explore the role of the private sector with respect to financial support for the sound global management of chemicals.
- Public access to information on chemicals is crucial. Companies should make publicly available their data on the health and environmental effects of chemicals produced or imported. For the ECE region, the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) entered into force on 8 October 2009. It is the first such international legally binding instrument to enable access to information and information-sharing on chemicals, and could serve as a model for other regions.

### ***Waste management***

- Waste and hazardous waste have a significant impact on environment, human health and security. The amount of waste is continuing to grow in the UNECE region, although the rate of increase differs from country to country.

- Waste management policies should implement the “3R approach”: Waste prevention should be the first and optimal solution. Waste that could not be prevented should be recycled and to facilitate this approach, waste separation should take place. Energy recovery in the waste recycling process could be another means of effective resource use. Disposal should be restricted to waste that can not be reused or recycled. Legislative and regulatory measures are required to restrict landfilling of recyclable, particularly biodegradable, waste and to limit waste combustion. Ultimately, a policy shift is required towards a resource efficient economy, with a shift from waste management to sustainable material management.
- There is an urgent need to deal with specific types of waste: The ever increasing generation of electronic waste poses considerable problems. Long-term strategies are needed to deal with radioactive wastes from different uses. Plastic waste disposal, including in the oceans, poses a very significant problem not only for human health but also for the food chain and wildlife wellbeing.
- Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia face particular difficulties in ensuring separation of waste. They require assistance to improve national legislation and to develop national hazardous waste minimization and management plans. Technical assistance, particularly in the form of experience-sharing and the transfer of up-to-date technology for waste management, is of special importance for the subregion.

### ***Mining***

- Mining is an important economic sector in a number of ECE countries. However, it has considerable impact on the environment and society. The main environmental concerns are related to the water use and quality, to waste rock dumps, to tailings storage areas, and to hazardous materials. The main social concerns are related to land acquisition, indigenous people and cultural heritage, and labour and working conditions.
- Good practice in mining requires multi-stakeholder consultation and dialogue, needs to make information accessible to decision-makers and the broad public, as well as commit to corporate social responsibility. The development of effective and efficient approaches is required for the funding of closure, especially ensuring environmental safety of closed mines.
- Several activities have been undertaken at ECE to address specific problems related to mining activities, which could be of interest beyond the region: *Safety guidelines and good practices for tailings management facilities* were developed in 2008 under the ECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. The guidelines support efforts by Governments and stakeholders to limit the number of accidents at tailings management facilities and the severity of their consequences for human health and the environment. Recognizing the many benefits associated with the coal mine methane recovery, ECE, with support from the Environmental Protection Agency of the United States and in close cooperation with the Methane to Markets Partnership, launched a programme in 2004 to promote best practices and provide technical assistance in planning, designing and financing coal mine methane projects.

### ***10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns***

- Discussions on this theme built upon the outcomes of the preparatory meeting on sustainable consumption and production for the fourth regional implementation meeting. This informal regional meeting, held on 30 November 2009, had been organized by the United Nations Environment Programme with the support of ECE.
- Decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, by enhancing the efficiency of resource use and protecting ecosystems, is the key for sustainable development. It requires modifying current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption (SCP). The challenge is to “do more and better, with less”, by reducing pollution and resource use. SCP actions can be a powerful lever to turn environmental and social challenges into business and employment opportunities.
- Promoting and implementing SCP requires a balanced mix of instruments and incentives (regulatory, voluntary, economic, fiscal, etc). Priority areas to work on SCP are: sustainable production processes, environmentally sound products, education for sustainable development, financial frameworks, and strategies at the different governmental and intergovernmental levels in order to integrate SCP policies into sustainable development strategies at all levels. A number of priority sectors were identified: mobility/transport; housing and construction; food; waste management; sustainable cities and sustainable tourism.
- Many countries in the region have been active in the Marrakech Process. Within this process, several topics have received particular attention due to the creation of task forces such as those on education for sustainable consumption, sustainable lifestyles, sustainable tourism, sustainable products, sustainable buildings and construction, and sustainable procurement. This was considered a good indication of what many countries regarded as the key sectors, topics or policy instruments that should be addressed under the 10-Year Framework of Programmes.

### ***Cross-cutting issues and interlinkages***

- Mining, transport, sustainable consumption and production and waste management are major stages in the life cycle of materials as well as areas with many potential impacts on human health, employment, and the environment. In this respect, participants noted that sustainable transport played an important role in ensuring effective communications, trade and migration, while having the lowest possible impact on the environment. Also, the safe production and use of chemicals is vital to protecting human health and worker safety.
- Poverty eradication, protecting and managing natural resources and changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption were considered the three main cross-cutting sustainable development concerns that required urgent action if the planet’s human and environmental capital was to be protected.
- Participants also emphasized the importance of improving education, especially given its cross-cutting nature. They also noted the important role of the ongoing

national and regional work on education for sustainable development in addressing the issues under the thematic clusters. A number of participants stressed the important role of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.

- Finally, participants considered that coherence should be maintained between the work of the Commission and a number of important global multilateral environmental agreements and processes, and that further cooperation and coordination between international institutions and multilateral environmental agreements should be promoted.

***Progress in implementing the decisions of the Commission's seventeenth session***

- The meeting exchanged information on the national and international activities being undertaken to implement CSD-17 decisions. Successful examples were presented, such as research in the area of agricultural systems and sustainability, national-level sustainable development work with key stakeholders such as farmers, forest managers, non-governmental organizations and local governments, as well as international initiatives.