



# Environment for Europe Bulletin

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A Daily Report of the 8th Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference - Greener, Cleaner, Smarter!  
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**GREENER, CLEANER, SMARTER!**  
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## **EIGHTH ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE: THURSDAY, 9 JUNE 2016**

The Eighth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference reconvened on Thursday, 9 June 2016, in Batumi, Georgia.

In the morning, participants convened in plenary and two parallel sessions of a multi-stakeholder roundtable on greening the economy in the pan-European region. The roundtables focused on green economy opportunities and challenges; paths to sustainability; green incentives; and cooperation.

In the afternoon, participants reconvened in a plenary and two parallel sessions of a multi-stakeholder roundtable on air quality and human health, with a focus on pollutants and policies; sectors and funding; public awareness and participation; and cooperation.

### **GREENING THE ECONOMY IN THE PAN-EUROPEAN REGION**

Marc Chardonens, Director, Federal Office of the Environment, Switzerland, opened the session, noting Switzerland's support for the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/6) and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/13) as tools to commit to a green economy while contributing to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

In a live video-link, Bertrand Piccard, Aviation Pioneer and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador, described his round-the-world flight on the airplane Solar Impulse, demonstrating the potential of solar energy. He highlighted the 'Future is Clean Initiative,' which brings together over 400 organizations involved in promoting clean technologies.



**Graeme Maxton, Secretary General, the Club of Rome, and author**

Graeme Maxton, Secretary General, the Club of Rome, and author, explained how the current economic system ignores externalities and increases unemployment, inequalities and negative impacts on the Earth and atmosphere. He urged participants to exercise political will to shift towards a green economy that reduces the ecological footprint.

In a series of video testimonials, BELARUS, SWITZERLAND, ITALY, HUNGARY, SWEDEN, GEORGIA, and others shared their commitments and national actions towards a green economy.

Cristiana Pasca Palmer, Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests, Romania, reflected on how to transition to a green economy, stressing the environment as a resource and engine for green growth. She recommended, *inter alia*: mapping natural resources and ecosystems; engaging citizens and the private sector, including through incentives; and identifying practical public measures and policies that suit country contexts.



**Bertrand Piccard, Aviation Pioneer and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador**



**Cristiana Pasca Palmer, Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests, Romania**

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Andrei Kovkhuto, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Belarus

Andrei Kovkhuto, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Belarus, presented national programs and strategies to develop a green economy, particularly in the energy and transport sectors.

Alexandra Carvalho, Secretary-General of Environment, Portugal, on behalf of the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy, UNECE, said the Framework aims to reduce environmental risks, enhance ecological progress and promote human well-being and social equity. She described the Framework's regional architecture, which builds on the SDG framework to create a clear, predictable and coordinated mechanism to deploy financing and measure national efforts over time.

The Conference endorsed the Framework by acclamation. Chair Chardonnens launched the BIG-E, noting that 34 countries and organizations had already submitted voluntary commitments. TAJIKISTAN and BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA submitted their voluntary commitments after the launch, bringing the total to 36 countries and organizations.

The plenary session concluded with a video on greening the economy produced by European Eco Forum.

### **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE ON GREENING THE ECONOMY**

Two parallel sessions of a multi-stakeholder roundtable on greening the economy in the pan-European region took place. Interventions addressed: opportunities and challenges; paths to sustainability; green incentives; and cooperation.



L-R: Moderator Slaven Dobrović, Minister of Environment and Nature Protection, Croatia, and Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary, UNECE

**Session 1:** UNECE Executive Secretary Bach and Dobrović, Minister of Environment and Nature Protection, Croatia, moderated the session.

Participants shared national examples of actions and commitments for sustainable development, citing challenges to further progress, including limited financial resources, policy fragmentation and fossil fuel subsidies. The WORLD BANK raised the challenge of ensuring inclusivity of populations dependent on natural resources.

On opportunities, countries named, *inter alia*: identification of positive effects to help 'sell' the green economy concept, such as green job creation; increased engagement with investors; research and development of circular economic models; use of regional cooperation instruments like EPR and ESD; opportunities to improve resource productivity; platforms to share experience; and improvement of societal awareness and acceptance.

SWITZERLAND announced a pledge of 100,000 Swiss Francs to the Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP) to promote BIG-E implementation in the pan-European region and beyond. SLOVAKIA invited participants to continue to share best practices in a September 2016 conference in Bratislava on 'Transition to Green Economy.'

On paths to sustainability, participants drew attention to the water, energy and food nexus as both a challenge and opportunity, calling for increased resource efficiency.



Delegates posed for a photo after endorsing the BIG-E



L-R: Parallel Session 2 Moderators Jan Dusík, Director, Regional Office for Europe, UNEP, and Cristiana Pasca Palmer, Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests, Romania

Participants challenged policymakers to integrate accounting, regular review and long-term analysis as necessary steps to a successful green economy.

**Session 2:** Palmer, Romania, and Dusik, UNEP, moderated the session.

On challenges and opportunities, participants acknowledged that foundational changes, rather than marginal changes, are needed in economy and society, stressing that adjustments and different approaches will need to account for different interests and mentalities among countries. Delegates noted the positive effects of job creation and innovations in transformation.

On paths to sustainability, delegates reflected on successful approaches for efficient use of natural resources, highlighting, among others: reuse and recycling; strengthened producer responsibility; eco-labeling; new business models, such as collaborative consumption; the role of art in promoting sustainable value chains in the fashion industry; and transitions away from fossil fuels.

On green incentives, participants reported on national initiatives related to policy and regulatory instruments to encourage green investments, *inter alia*: mandatory green public procurement; natural resource tax and removal of environmentally harmful subsidies. Some noted contradictions between green economy goals and policies that maintain fossil fuel subsidies or facilitate unsustainable consumption and production systems.

On cooperation, delegates recommended mapping and monitoring progress and engaging stakeholders, including through partnerships with business, inter-ministerial cooperation and awareness raising.

### **IMPROVING AIR QUALITY FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN HEALTH**

In the afternoon, Kestutis Trečiokas, Minister of Environment, Lithuania, Session Chair, referring to the relevant documentation (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/5, ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/7, ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/12 and ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/INF/2), highlighted linkages among clean air, climate and energy policies as well as with the 2030 Agenda.

A video on improving air quality for a better environment by Israel artist Ilana Yahav was shown.

Andrei Kovkhuto, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Belarus, shared national actions to address air pollution and improve air quality, including efforts to reduce motor vehicle transport, improve traffic management,

increase public transport, and promote bicycle use. He said Belarus has completed its third EPR and is preparing to join several UNECE Protocols, including Protocols addressing acidification, heavy metals, ozone, and persistent organic pollutants.

Zsuzsanna Jakab, Regional Director for Europe, World Health Organization (WHO), stressed the “enormous burden” air pollution places on both health and national economies. She highlighted the role of interventions in the energy and transport sectors in extending the length and quality of life, saying the 2030 Agenda provides a unifying framework to mobilize actions across sectors and stakeholders.

Nino Khatiskatsi, Deputy Mayor, Tbilisi, Georgia, shared an integrated management framework to address air pollution, detailing strategies to support healthy living spaces ecological transport, green building refurbishment projects and awareness raising campaigns.

Jan Olssen, Sweden, presented the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA) (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/7), urging endorsement to intensify collective efforts and utilize solutions to address long-term risks. He shared a statement from the Nordic Council of Ministers to welcome and support the BACA, recognizing its benefits on regional and national scales.

Local youth representatives then delivered gifts and balloons to countries that committed to actions on clean air during a BACA launching ceremony.

Session Chair Trečiokas invited, and received, endorsement for BACA by acclamation.

### **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLE ON AIR QUALITY AND HUMAN HEALTH**

Two parallel sessions convened on a multi-stakeholder roundtable on improving air quality for a better environment and human health. Interventions addressed: pollutants and policies; sectors and funding; public awareness and participation; and cooperation.

**Session 1:** Maria Krautzberger, President, German Environment Agency, and Simon Upton, Director of Environment, OECD, moderated the session. Upton emphasized that an OECD study on the economic consequences of outdoor air pollution concluded that, unless action is taken, outdoor air pollution could cost one percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), around US\$ 2.6 trillion annually.

On pollutants and policies, participants discussed, *inter alia*: transport, industries, agriculture, open burning of plastic and waste as a source of pollutants. They highlighted particulate matter, ozone depleting substances (ODS), black carbon and toxic pollutants in the air, such as pesticides, as threats to human health.

Several noted that monitoring systems and pollutant registers are lacking and emphasized the importance of transparency and free access to information on pollutants and the need for public awareness.

On sources of funding, delegates discussed both national schemes and the need for international financing support. EUROPEAN ECO FORUM emphasized the application of the polluter pays principle.

On public awareness and participation, delegates stressed the need for full engagement of an informed and empowered public, with a special focus on vulnerable groups, such as children.



The dais during the session on 'Improving Air Quality for a Better Environment and Human Health'

All interventions emphasized the importance of international cooperation, stressing the transboundary nature of air pollution. Several delegates reported on actions to fulfill their obligations under international agreements.

THE CONVENTION ON LONG-RANGE TRANSBOUNDARY AIR POLLUTION reminded participants that annual contributions from parties are necessary to the Convention's work, stressing it does not receive outside financing.

**Session 2:** Ostap Semerak, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Ukraine, and Dusik, UNEP, moderated the session.

Participants identified particulate matters, ODS and methane as particular types of air pollution that pose high risk. On sectors, participants identified several sources of concentrated air pollution, including transport, agriculture and indoor air pollution from local heating.

Several countries shared national strategies utilizing financial instruments to address pollution through taxes on pollution, rewards for energy efficiency and subsidies. The CZECH REPUBLIC highlighted its State Environmental Fund, which receives financial resources from regional funds,

state budgets and fees collected by polluters. He identified the need to develop a strong linkage with the private sector as a challenge.

On awareness raising, participants discussed communication efforts, underscoring the importance of engaging the public. Several identified education and modernization as making a positive contribution. The US shared a flagship program, 'Air Now,' that provides access to data on air quality to users through an online platform.

Countries addressed complex transboundary effects of air pollution and linkages to climate change. Within this context, many countries shared commitments and actions under a range of instruments and platforms, including BACA, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, relevant UNECE Conventions and Protocols, and the Rio Conventions. Some highlighted efforts to address air pollution under the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) and at UNEA-2.

**ENB+ SUMMARY:** A summary of the Eighth Efe Conference will be available on Monday, 13 June 2016, online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/unece/efe8/>



Group photo of children and heads of delegation