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Environment for Europe Bulletin

A Daily Report of the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference

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**HIGHLIGHTS FOR
WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2011**

OPENING PLENARY

The Seventh Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" opened Wednesday 21 September 2011, at the Independence Palace in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Umirzak Shukeyev, First Deputy Prime Minister, Kazakhstan, welcomed participants and introduced the Green Bridge Partnership Programme, a proposed partnership to enhance cooperation among Asia, Europe, and the Pacific and to encourage transfer of clean technology, joint investments, exchange of experiences, and the preservation of common ecosystems. Conference Chair Nurgali Ashim, Minister of Environmental Protection, Kazakhstan, highlighted the main themes of the Conference: sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems; and greening the economy. Jan Kubiš, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), read a statement by Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations Secretary-General, noting the contributions of the UNECE process as a platform for pan-European cooperation on environment and sustainable development and highlighting the UNECE's work on environmental assessments, institutional mechanisms for cooperation, multilateral environmental agreements, and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Kubiš noted that while significant progress had been achieved in the water sector, progress remains uneven across the UNECE region and water resources are still under great stress. Challenges include poor management practices, overexploitation, unsustainable consumption, inadequate infrastructure investment, and low efficiency in water use. He underscored the importance of information in choosing effective and efficient actions to promote sustainable water management and the green economy and urged participants to establish a regular process of environmental assessments and a shared information system. Kubiš recommended that the Conference consider developing a regional roadmap for greening the economy and a toolbox of best practices to be shared within the region and with other regions.

Sylvie Lemmet, Director, United Nations Environment Programme Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (UNEP/DTIE), introduced a video message by Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP. In his message, Steiner underlined the importance of water resources management for agriculture and food security. He said present levels of freshwater consumption by agriculture would lead to unsustainable demand by 2050. He emphasized that in the transition towards a green economy there is no trade-off between environmental sustainability and economic progress. He further stated that the green economy offers opportunities in the pan-European region for better use of energy resources, for reducing primary energy

demand, and for job creation for young people. He expressed hope that this Conference will contribute shared objectives and perspectives to the Rio+20 conference in 2012.

Delegates adopted the agenda (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/1) without changes. Chair Ashim drew attention to the organization of work of the Conference (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/7).

THE "ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE" PROCESS: 20 YEARS OF PAN-EUROPEAN COOPERATION

Beldrich Moldan, former Minister of Environment and Senator, Czech Republic, delivered a keynote address "From Dobříš to Astana: 20 years of pan-European cooperation", highlighting some achievements of the EfE process in his country and in the pan-European region as a whole. He emphasized, *inter alia*: the participatory nature of the process and the involvement of civil society; the increased cooperation in the UNECE region to mainstream environmental protection; and the adoption in 1998 of the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention); the important institutional role played by the UNECE in shaping the EfE process; and the reform process of the EfE, started in 2009, to strengthen EfE's effectiveness ensure it remained appropriate to the changing political and economic contexts, and to the environmental priorities of the region.

Chair Ashim presented the "Green Bridge" Partnership Programme (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/6), stating that despite the many international environmental programs, the measures taken by government lag behind as a result of market failures and environmental constraints. He proposed the adoption of the Green Bridge Partnership Programme to stimulate opportunities for the green economy. He underscored the unique contributions of the Green Bridge, including, *inter alia*: to promote new cooperation: to fill gaps in existing short-term or piecemeal actions; to focus on green business; and to initiate a practical, long-term systemic effort to transfer existing best management practices and ensure more synergistic efforts. He stressed the importance of initial launching support for this initiative and referred to Kazakhstan's commitment to contributing to this initial support.

Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director, European Environment Agency (EEA), presented the key findings of "Europe's Environment Assessment of Assessments" (EEAoA) report (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/8). Lamenting the fact that the report is not yet suitable for policy-making, due to inadequacies in the water-related reports and a lack of green economic assessments, she emphasized the need for improved data collection and coordinated monitoring practices as well as a consistent definition of "green economy". She identified the main challenges as: gaps in the number of assessments; failure to address policy demands; and lack of coordination

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which leads to competition for scarce resources. McGlade introduced the Shared Environmental Information Site (SEIS), an integrated web-enabled, environmental information system, as a network of public information and highlighted the Eye on Earth web service for use across technological platforms.

Ville Niinistö, Minister of Environment, Finland, presented the Second Assessment of Transboundary Lakes, Rivers, and Groundwaters in the UNECE region (ECE/ASTANA CONF/2011/9), which emphasized variable institutional frameworks and increased transboundary agreements. He cautioned that new national legislation can absorb human and financial resources and limit attention to transboundary agreements. The assessment includes case studies of 25 Ramsar sites, aimed at linking water catchment planning with site management and promoting an ecosystem based approach. He noted that more comprehensive research on the impacts of climate change is needed at the sub-regional and basin level.

Andrzej Kraszewski, Minister of Environment, Poland, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, noted that the EfE process serves as a model for the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration by encouraging strong participation and broad stakeholder engagement in protecting the environment and sharing lessons learned. He emphasized that ensuring safe access to drinking water is high on the agenda of the EU and welcomed the Astana Water Action initiative. He recommended the adoption of regular environmental assessments. He expressed appreciation for the proposed Green Bridge Partnership Programme, but asked for clarification on its governance structure.

George Khachidze, Minister of Environmental Protection, Georgia, said the EfE is an efficient cooperation framework for UNECE member countries and welcomed initiatives on environmental cooperation and capacity building in the pan-European region. He highlighted his country's initiatives to promote a greener economy in the water, energy, and transport sectors, among others.

Keit Pentus, Minister of Environment, Estonia, welcomed the Second Assessment of Transboundary Lakes, Rivers, and Groundwaters and urged its recommendations be implemented as soon as possible. She said regular assessments are needed in the future.

László Borbély, Minister of Environment and Forests, Romania, described the EU Water Initiative, which covers 12 countries and focuses on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals related to water and sanitation and integrated water resources management.

Lawrence Gumbiner, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Environment and Sustainable Development, United States, underscored the importance of water and sanitation as development and security issues. He recommended ongoing environmental monitoring and assessment efforts. He welcomed the establishment of the Green Bridge Partnership.

Guido Herz, Ambassador of Germany to Kazakhstan, Germany, welcomed the Green Bridge Partnership as contributing to increasing integration across the European-Asian region and boosting green growth. He recommended this initiative include supra-regional projects and an exchange across borders.

Alberto Pieri, Ambassador, Embassy of Italy in Kazakhstan, Italy, noted that the most important success of the EfE was to set up a regular reporting activity on the state of the environment in the region. He described a joint Italy-Kazakhstan initiative as an example of public-private sector cooperation in the Caspian Sea.

Mykola Romanov, First Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Ukraine, presented his country's priorities in environmental management until 2020, *inter alia*: integration

of environmental policies; reducing biodiversity loss through eco-networks; and new water legislation and river basin management to reduce pollution from pesticides and chemicals. He emphasized the importance of partnership with the business community to ensure transition to a greener economy.

Bayanbek Kadyrov, Director, State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry, Kyrgyzstan, underscored the importance of mountain ecosystems and lamented that these ecosystems did not receive adequate attention in the Second Assessment of Transboundary Lakes, Rivers, and Groundwaters. He urged participants to provide financial support to the Green Bridge Partnership.

Olga Ponizova, Executive Director, Eco-Accord, recalled success stories of environmental cooperation in the UNECE region, such as the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Aarhus Convention, and welcomed the Second Assessment of Transboundary Lakes, Rivers, and Groundwaters as a tool for accountability in environmental matters. She lamented the declining support for the participation of civil society organizations in the EfE process and called for greater transparency in the third assessment report.

Ms. Gulsara Yedilbayeva, Executive Director of the Kazakhstan Association of Enterprises for Sustainable Development, World Business Council for Sustainable Development Branch in Kazakhstan, highlighted initiatives by the business community to modernize industrial production such as waste recycling and ISO certification, and underscored the need for effective economic incentives, infrastructure development, and environmental monitoring to promote the green economy.

Nikolay Pomoshchnikov, Head of the Subregional office for North and Central Asia, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, welcomed the Green Bridge Partnership as promoting cross-regional cooperation to promote green growth and said the Asia-Pacific region is prepared to partner with Europe under the initiative.

Jens Wandel, Deputy Regional Director and Director of the Bratislava Regional Centre, United Nations Development Programme, called attention to key starting points in ensuring green growth: reversing dysfunctional policies; including fossil fuel subsidies; targeting support to vulnerable groups and financing direct green growth investment; and green public procurements.

Talaibek Makeev, Executive Director, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (Carec), applauded the progress that has been made over twenty years of environmental dialogue and suggested the world revisit its sustainability goals to prioritize greening the economy. He pledged Carec's support towards raising awareness and disseminating messages which will properly communicate a green economy.

Goran Svilanović, Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, stressed the importance of the environment as a key component of peace and security. He linked greening the economy to improved governance and resilience to climate change and called for the incorporation of the Green Bridge Partnership Programme into the Rio+20 process.



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HIGHLIGHTS FOR THURSDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2011

On the second day of the Seventh Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" held in Astana, Kazakhstan, delegates convened in plenary sessions to hear keynote addresses on sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems and sustainable management of water and greening the economy. Delegates then gathered in roundtables to discuss ecosystem valuation and payments for ecosystem services, lessons learned from transboundary basin cooperation, integrated water management, policy tools such as pricing and standards, and investments in water management.

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND WATER-RELATED ECOSYSTEMS

PLENARY SESSION: Session Chair László Borbély, Minister of Environment and Forests, Romania, opened the morning session by noting water management policy challenges and gaps. He focused on payments for ecosystem services as an important instrument for ensuring a good water environment for human health. He highlighted the Protocol on Water and Health and the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board, created in 2010, to attract high-level political interest on health impacts related to environmental policy.

Sándor Fazekas, Minister of Rural Development, Hungary, stressed the importance of high level attention to EU water policies and emphasized ecosystem approaches, climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, and the importance of international cooperation within and beyond the EU border. He emphasized that transboundary water challenges represent both a joint responsibility and a joint opportunity.

Nurgali Ashim, Minister of Environmental Protection, Kazakhstan, emphasized the tragedy of the Aral Sea and efforts to cope with it, including Central Asia legislation and strategies on sustainable development. He proposed the Green Bridge Partnership Programme as a mechanism to promote the transition from unsustainable policies to the green economy.

Gheorghe Șalaru, Minister of Environment, Republic of Moldova, highlighted his country's transboundary cooperation initiatives with Romania in the Prut and Danube river basins and with Ukraine in the Dniester river basin. He highlighted the policy dialogue as an important tool for sustainable water policies and recommended investments in water supply and sanitation.

Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future, identified the three greatest regional water challenges as: poor management of transboundary water; leading to resources degradation as in the Aral Sea; deterioration of rural water supply and lack of access to safe drinking water, contributing to severe health problems especially in children; and water pollution from mining, with a risk of irreversible radioactive pollution of groundwater. She urged governments to ratify and implement the Protocol

on Water and Health, to allocate funds for water sanitation investments for small communities, and to fill the policy gap on mining pollution issues.

Letitia Obeng, Chair, the Global Water Partnership, stated that water should be an early focus for adaptation to climate change and integrating adaptation and water management plans will lead to better preparation and responses.

Saghit Ibatullin, Chairman, Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, described the challenges and progress made in saving the Aral Sea and introduced the Berlin Initiative, an international model in long-term solutions to water challenges. The Berlin Initiative includes three main components: regional cooperation; strengthening transboundary river basin management; and pilot projects.

Sibylle Vermont, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Switzerland, stated that 19 countries and four organizations committed to 72 actions under the Astana Water Action. Most actions fall under integrated water resource management (IWRM) and are increasingly implemented through national strategies. She asked participants to ratify the amendment to make the UNECE Water Convention a global convention open to non-UNECE members. She recommended the inclusion of finance ministries as critical partners in future actions and commitments.

ROUNDTABLES: Delegates convened in three parallel roundtables to discuss sustainable water management related questions such as: policies that proved to be effective to value and protect water-related ecosystems, including payments for ecosystem services; policies that proved to be effective in addressing water related human health issues; priorities and challenges in adapting water management to extreme weather events and to climate change; and lessons learned from transboundary basin cooperation.

In Roundtable 1, moderated by Sibylle Vermont, Switzerland, delegates noted that ecosystem services are undervalued, stressed the need to incorporate ecosystem valuation in national economic accounts and highlighted payments for ecosystem services as a useful policy instrument. Several delegates emphasized transboundary cooperation as essential to sustainable water management, and acknowledged the role played by the UNECE Water Convention in providing the framework for such cooperation.

Delegates further stressed participatory local level water management, with some referring to the challenges faced by post-Soviet countries to move from highly centralised water management systems to more participatory ones. Some interventions emphasized synergies among international biodiversity related conventions and the UNECE Water Convention. Several delegates expressed appreciation for the Astana Water Action as an inspiring document that could create positive competition among countries.

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On water and health issues Jan Kubiš, Executive Secretary, UNECE, said the root causes of the problems lie, *inter alia*, in the policy environment, resource allocation, and country capacity. He noted that the main value of the Protocol on Water and Health is its requirement for a holistic view and setting of targets. He stressed the UNECE Water Convention's role as a conflict prevention instrument in Central Asia and other regions.

In Roundtable 2, moderated by Hugo Von Meijenfheldt, Deputy-Director General for the Environment, the Netherlands, delegates called for more multi-sectoral perspectives on water issues, including synergies among water, health, and climate change. Participants recognized the EU Water Framework Directive as a policy tool that takes into account water related ecosystem services and intends to achieve a balance between different water use and sectoral use. Countries underscored the need for implementation of existing regulations and international conventions, including the Protocol on Water and Health, while also emphasizing coordination and cooperation.

Roundtable 3 was moderated by Chyngyzbek Uzakbaev, Deputy Chairman, Committee of Water Resources and Melioration, Kyrgyzstan. Mladen Zirojević, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina, stressed their desire to become actively involved in the implementation of the EU water legislative framework. Most delegates agreed that while transboundary cooperation should be a major priority, it should be approached with patience and mutual respect between neighbouring countries. Participants identified other challenges, *inter alia*: development of harmonized legal frameworks across borders; improved water use through policy instruments such as taxation; improved water recycling practices; capacity building especially for water quality and quantity monitoring; and intensification of education and awareness campaigns.

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND GREENING THE ECONOMY

PLENARY SESSION: In his opening remarks to the afternoon plenary, session Chair Bruno Oberle, State Secretary, Director of the Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland, cautioned participants about current levels of natural resources consumption. He stressed justice and participation as two key pillars in ensuring sustainable management of water for the green economy.

Ville Niinistö, Minister of Environment, Finland, highlighted, *inter alia*: investments in renewable resources, payments for ecosystem services, green technology, and education and training. He emphasized the importance of managing water resources to promote adaptation to climate change and dissemination of best practices.

Rinat Gizatulín, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Russian Federation, presented the achievements of the Russian Federation on sustainable management of water resources and the green economy, including a 10% reduction in water use and a water payment system disaggregated by category of water user and water location.

Anna Golubovska-Onisimova, President, "MAMA-86," Ukraine, highlighted, *inter alia*: water accounting as a core part of economic planning; support to education and sustainable consumer choices; and implementation of IWRM and water conservation policies as crucial elements for the transition to the green economy.

Simon Upton, Director, Environment Directorate, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, stated that water scarcity can be a threat to economic development. He highlighted efficiency of water use, water pricing to reflect scarcity and provide incentives, water financing, and water allocation among competing uses.

Mykola Melenevskiy, President, International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, outlined the river basin management planning process. He stressed the importance of investments from the hydropower, navigation, and agricultural sectors in the water sector.

Tulegen Sarsembekov, Deputy Chief, Department of Technical Assistance, Eurasian Development Bank described the transboundary nature of Central Asia's rivers, stressing the importance of legal mechanisms for the joint use of water and transboundary rivers and to address ecological and social issues.

The keynote speakers from Finland, the Russian Federation and the Eurasian Development Bank supported the Green Bridge Partnership Programme.

ROUNDTABLES: After the afternoon plenary, delegates participated in three parallel roundtables to tackle: which policy mixes and practical tools, such as IWRM, pricing, standards and water users associations, can be most effective to improve water efficiency in agriculture, households and industrial operations; and encouraging investments to take into account impacts on water quantity and quality, energy and resource efficiency and vulnerable populations.

Roundtable 1 was moderated by Gheorghe Constantin, Chair, European Union Water Initiative Working Group for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Romania. Delegates debated social equality and access to water in relation to water pricing, noting that water prices are also determined by subsidies and not driven by environmental or sustainability objectives. One participant emphasized practical policy tools for adaptation to climate change, modernization, and public-private partnerships, while another described how a well-designed water pricing system can ensure quality, affordable water services. Participants highlighted environmental impact assessments and corporate social responsibility as important policy tools. Most delegates emphasized the importance of training, research and technology development.

Roundtable 2 was moderated by Zaal Lomtadze, Chair of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy, Georgia. Some delegates described how strong laws and regulation can facilitate good water quality, contributing to low prices. In contrast, participants from economies in transition described the challenges of ensuring safe drinking water for their populations and the negative health impacts. Some delegates highlighted weak monitoring frameworks in post-Soviet countries and the lack of data for decision-making. Participants also emphasized the important role of business. A representative from Coca-Cola offered examples on how the private sector can partner with governments and communities to provide clean drinking water.

Roundtable 3 was moderated by Marek Gromiec, International Expert in Water Resources Management. Most delegates agreed that IWRM, pricing, standards and water user associations should be approached collaboratively among neighbouring countries to enhance effectiveness, with one delegate calling for accelerating IWRM into agriculture, hydropower generation, and industry. Many participants stressed the introduction of tariffs, while others noted that these should be affordable to less affluent sectors of society. Some delegates stressed banning the use of asbestos in the manufacture of water pipes and reducing fertilizer and pesticide use.

One participant called for the application of the land stewardship principle and for the removal of perverse subsidies. Delegates agreed that good governance, efficient legislation and wide cooperation should guide the process towards a green economy.



SUMMARY OF THE SEVENTH “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE: 21-23 SEPTEMBER 2011

The Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference convened at the Palace of Independence, in Astana, Kazakhstan, from 21-23 September 2011. The Environment for Europe (EfE) process, started in 1991, is a unique partnership of member states within the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region, UN organizations represented in the region, other intergovernmental organizations, regional environmental centers, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other major groups.

The main themes for the Conference were “Sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems” and “Greening the economy: Mainstreaming the environment into economic development.” The high-level meeting, attended by over 1400 delegates, addressed effective policies to protect water-related ecosystems, linkages between human health and water, water management, adaptation to climate change, cooperation in transboundary basins, water efficiency, and effective green economy policies in the transport, housing, energy, agriculture and education sectors. Outcomes of the meeting were a Ministerial Declaration “Save water, grow green!” and the Astana Water Action. The Conference results were presented in the form of a Chair’s summary.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” PROCESS

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was established in 1947 to encourage economic cooperation among member states. It currently has 56 members, including some from outside the European region. The Commission provides a forum for communication; brokers international legal instruments addressing trade, transport and the environment; and supplies statistics and economic and environmental analysis. It has five legally-binding Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs): the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution; the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention); the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention); the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents; and the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention).

The First Ministerial Conference in the “Environment for Europe” (EfE) process was held in 1991 at Dobříš Castle, Czech Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia). Environment



The Palace of Independence, venue of the Conference

Ministers from 34 European countries, the United States, Brazil, Japan, various UN bodies, governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions were present. The conference addressed ways to strengthen cooperation to protect and improve the environment, and long-term strategies toward an environmental programme for Europe. The conference set guidelines for pan-European cooperation and requested the Commission of European Communities to prepare, in cooperation with UNECE, a report describing the state of the environment in Europe (“Europe’s Environment: The Dobříš Assessment” of 1995).

The Second EfE Ministerial Conference convened in Lucerne, Switzerland, in April 1993. A Ministerial Declaration set out the political dimension of the EfE process, which aimed to harmonize environmental quality and policies on the continent, and to secure peace, stability and sustainable development. The Lucerne Conference endorsed the broad strategy contained in the Environmental Action Programme

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for Central and Eastern Europe and set up a Task Force to implement the Programme. A Project Preparation Committee was established, to improve coordination between international financial institutions and donors wanting to invest in environmental protection in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

The Third EfE Ministerial Conference convened in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 23 to 25 October 1995. In the Ministerial Declaration from the meeting, ministers reaffirmed their commitment to cooperation in the field of environmental protection in Europe. They underlined the urgent need for further integration of environmental considerations into all sectoral policies, to ensure that economic growth occurs in accordance with principles of sustainable development. The meeting also recommended the European Environment Agency (EEA) should carry out further work on the pan-European state of the environment assessment.

The Fourth EfE Ministerial Conference convened in Aarhus, Denmark, from 23 to 25 June 1998. The report on “Europe’s Environment: The Second Assessment” was presented at the meeting. Based on the reports’ findings, ministers decided to strengthen support within the EfE process for the newly independent States and those CEE countries that were not part of the European Union’s accession process. The Conference adopted the Aarhus Convention, and two new Protocols to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution on Heavy Metals and on Persistent Organic Pollutants, which were adopted and signed by 33 countries and the European Community. Ministers also adopted a Declaration on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, and endorsed several documents including the Pan-European Strategy to Phase Out Leaded Petrol, a Resolution on Biological and Landscape Diversity, and a Policy Statement on Energy Efficiency.

The Fifth EfE Ministerial Conference convened in Kiev, Ukraine, from 21 to 23 May 2003. Ministers endorsed the Guidelines for Strengthening Compliance with, and Implementation of, MEAs in the UNECE region. Governments of the Carpathian region adopted a Convention on Environment Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians, which was opened for signature on 22 May 2003 and signed by the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia and Ukraine. Ministers requested the EEA to prepare a fourth assessment report for the next ministerial conference, building on new partnerships, especially with UNECE and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). They expressed support for the UNECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and its activities.

At the Kiev Conference, three new Protocols to UNECE Conventions were adopted and opened for signature: the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, to the Espoo Convention; the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters, to the Water Convention; and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, to the Aarhus Convention.

The Sixth Ministerial Conference convened in Belgrade, Serbia, from 10 to 12 October 2007. Ministers and high-level officials from 51 UNECE member states and the European Commission, international organizations, non-government organizations and other stakeholders discussed progress achieved in the implementation of environmental policies since the Kiev Conference in 2003, capacity building and partnerships, and the future of the EfE process. Ministers committed to intensify efforts to achieve the Millennium



The meeting opened with a dazzling laser light show

Development Goals and to put in effect the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. They agreed to reform the EfE process in order to ensure that it remains relevant and aligned with the needs of the UNECE region, the evolving political and economic landscape, and the environmental priorities of the region.

Preparations for the Seventh Ministerial Conference were carried out by the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (UNECE/CEP), following a Reform Plan that was adopted by the Committee in January 2009. Several preparatory meetings took place between 2009 and 2011.

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

The Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference started on the afternoon of Wednesday 21 September with an opening event, followed by a plenary session on 20 years of pan-European cooperation under the framework of the EfE process. Thematic segments were held from 22-23 September, with keynote addresses in plenary followed by roundtable discussions. On the afternoon of Friday 23 September, the Chairs of each thematic segment presented reports on the roundtable discussions to the plenary. At the closing plenary on Friday afternoon, delegates adopted the Ministerial Declaration and the Astana Water Action.

This report provides a summary of the Conference proceedings, arranged according to the Conference agenda, and highlights the main points of the Ministerial Declaration.

OPENING PLENARY

On Wednesday, the First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Umirzak Shukeyev, welcomed participants and introduced the “Green Bridge”



First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Umirzak Shukeyev

Partnership Programme, a proposed partnership to enhance cooperation among Asia, Europe, and the Pacific and to encourage transfer of clean technology, joint investments, exchange of experiences, and the preservation of common ecosystems. Conference Chair Nurgali Ashim, Minister of Environmental Protection, Kazakhstan, highlighted the main themes of the Conference: sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems, and greening the economy.

Ján Kubiš, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), read a statement by Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General, noting the



Ján Kubiš, Executive Secretary, UNECE

contributions of the UNECE process as a platform for pan-European cooperation on environment and sustainable development and highlighting the UNECE's work on environmental assessments, institutional mechanisms for cooperation, multilateral environmental agreements, and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Kubiš noted that while significant progress had been achieved

in the water sector, progress remains uneven across the UNECE region and water resources are still under great stress. Challenges include poor management practices, overexploitation, unsustainable consumption, inadequate infrastructure investment, and low efficiency in water use. He underscored the importance of information in choosing effective and efficient actions to promote sustainable water management and the green economy and urged participants to establish a regular process of environmental assessments and a shared information system. Kubiš recommended that the Conference consider developing a regional roadmap for greening the economy and a toolbox of best practices to be shared within the region and with other regions.

Sylvie Lemmet, Director, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, UNEP, introduced a video message from UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. In his message, Steiner underlined the importance of water resources management for agriculture and food security. He said present levels of freshwater consumption by agriculture would lead to unsustainable demand by 2050. He emphasized that in the transition towards a green economy, there is no trade-off between environmental sustainability and economic progress. He further stated that the green economy offers opportunities in the pan-European region for better use of energy resources, for reducing primary energy demand, and for job creation for young people. He expressed hope that the Astana Conference will contribute shared objectives and perspectives to the Rio+20 conference in 2012.

Delegates adopted the agenda (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/1) without changes. Chair Ashim drew attention to the organization of work of the Conference (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/7).



Participants heard a video message from Achim Steiner, Executive Director, UNEP

THE "ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE" PROCESS: 20 YEARS OF PAN-EUROPEAN COOPERATION

On Wednesday afternoon, Bedřich Moldan, former Minister of Environment and Senator, Czech Republic, delivered a keynote address "From Dobříš to Astana: 20 years of pan-European cooperation", highlighting some achievements of the EfE process in his country and in the pan-European region as a whole. He emphasized, *inter alia*: the participatory nature of the process and involvement of civil society; increased cooperation in the UNECE region to mainstream environmental protection; adoption of the 1998 Aarhus Convention; the important institutional role played by the UNECE in shaping the EfE process; and the EfE reform process, started in 2009, to strengthen EfE's effectiveness. He presented an award to UNECE for its key role in the EfE process.

Chair Ashim presented the "Green Bridge" Partnership Programme (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/6), stating that despite the many international environmental programmes, government measures lag behind as a result of market failures and environmental constraints. He proposed the adoption of the "Green Bridge" Partnership Programme to stimulate opportunities for the green economy. He underscored the unique contributions potential of the "Green Bridge" to, *inter alia*: promote new cooperation; fill gaps in existing short-term or piecemeal actions; focus on green business; and initiate a practical, long-term systemic effort to transfer existing best management practices and ensure more synergistic efforts. He stressed the importance of initial support to launch this initiative and referred to Kazakhstan's commitment to contributing to this initial support.



Conference Chair Nurgali Ashim, Minister of Environmental Protection, Kazakhstan

Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director, EEA, presented the key findings of "Europe's Environment Assessment of Assessments" report (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/8). Stating that the report is not yet suitable for policy-making due to inadequacies in the water-related reports and a lack of green economic assessments, she emphasized the need for improved data collection and coordinated monitoring practices as well as a consistent definition of "green economy". She identified the main challenges as: gaps in the number of assessments; failure to address policy demands; and lack of coordination which leads to competition for scarce resources. McGlade introduced the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) - an integrated, web-enabled, environmental information system to create networks of public information - and highlighted the Eye on Earth web service for use across technological platforms.

Ville Niinistö, Minister of the Environment, Finland, presented the Second Assessment of Transboundary Lakes, Rivers and Groundwaters in the UNECE region (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/9), which emphasized variable institutional frameworks and increased transboundary agreements. He cautioned that new national legislation could absorb human and financial resources and limit attention to transboundary agreements. The assessment includes case



Ville Niinistö, Minister of the Environment, Finland

studies of 25 Ramsar sites, aimed at linking water catchment planning with site management and promoting an ecosystem based approach. He noted that more comprehensive research on the impacts of climate change is needed at the sub-regional and basin level.

On behalf of the European Union and its Member States, Andrzej Kraszewski, Minister of the Environment, Poland, noted that the EfE process serves as a model for the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration by encouraging strong participation and broad stakeholder engagement in protecting the environment and sharing lessons. He emphasized that ensuring safe access to drinking water is high on the agenda of the EU and welcomed the Astana Water Action. He recommended the adoption of regular environmental assessments. He expressed appreciation for the proposed “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme, but asked for clarification on its governance structure.



Andrzej Kraszewski, Minister of the Environment, Poland

George Khachidze, Minister of Environmental Protection, Georgia, said the EfE is an efficient cooperation framework for UNECE member states and welcomed initiatives on environmental cooperation and capacity building in the pan-European region. He highlighted his country’s initiatives to promote a greener economy in the water, energy and transport sectors, among others.

Keit Pentus, Minister of Environment, Estonia, welcomed the Second Assessment of Transboundary Lakes, Rivers and Groundwaters and urged its recommendations be implemented as soon as possible. She said regular assessments are needed in the future.



Keit Pentus, Minister of Environment, Estonia

László Borbély, Minister of Environment and Forests, Romania, described the EU Water Initiative, which covers 12 countries and focuses on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals related to water, sanitation and

integrated water resources management (IWRM). Lawrence Gumbiner, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Department of State, Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science, United States, underscored the importance of water and sanitation as development and security issues. He recommended ongoing environmental monitoring and assessment efforts. He welcomed the establishment of the “Green Bridge” Partnership.

Guido Herz, Ambassador of Germany to Kazakhstan, welcomed the “Green Bridge” Partnership as contributing to increasing integration across the European-Asian region and boosting green growth. He recommended this initiative include supra-regional projects and an exchange across borders.

Alberto Pieri, Ambassador of Italy to Kazakhstan, noted that the most important success of the EfE was to set up a regular reporting activity on the state of the environment in the region. He described a joint Italy-Kazakhstan initiative as an example of public-private sector cooperation in the Caspian Sea.

Mykola Romanov, First Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Ukraine, presented his country’s priorities in environmental management until 2020, *inter alia*: integration of environmental policies; reducing biodiversity loss through eco-networks; and new water legislation and river basin management to reduce pollution from pesticides and chemicals. He emphasized the importance of partnership with the business community to ensure transition to a greener economy.

Bayanbek Kadyrov, Director, State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry, Kyrgyzstan, underscored the importance of mountain ecosystems and lamented that these ecosystems did not receive adequate attention in the Second Assessment of Transboundary Lakes, Rivers and Groundwaters. He urged participants to provide financial support to the “Green Bridge” Partnership.

Olga Ponizova, Executive Director, Eco-Accord, recalled success stories of environmental cooperation in the UNECE region, such as the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Aarhus Convention, and welcomed the Second Assessment of Transboundary Lakes, Rivers and Groundwaters as a tool for accountability in environmental matters. She lamented the declining support for the participation of civil society organizations in the EfE process and called for greater transparency in the third assessment report.



Olga Ponizova, Executive Director, Eco-Accord

Gulsara Yedilbayeva, Executive Director, Kazakhstan Association of Enterprises for Sustainable Development, highlighted initiatives by the business community to modernize industrial production such as waste recycling and ISO certification, and underscored the need for effective economic incentives, infrastructure development and environmental monitoring to promote the green economy.

Nikolay Pomoshchnikov, Head of the Subregional office for North and Central Asia, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, welcomed the “Green



A Tree Planting Ceremony was held at the Ethno-memorial Complex

Bridge” Partnership Programme as promoting cross-regional cooperation to stimulate green growth and said the Asia-Pacific region is willing to partner with Europe under the initiative.

Jens Wandel, Deputy Regional Director and Director of the Bratislava Regional Centre, UN Development Programme, called attention to key starting points in ensuring green growth: reversing dysfunctional policies, including fossil fuel subsidies; targeting support to vulnerable groups and financing direct green growth investment; and green public procurements.

Talaibek Makeev, Executive Director, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (Carec), applauded the progress that has been made over twenty years of environmental dialogue and suggested the world revisit its sustainability goals to prioritize greening the economy. He pledged Carec’s support towards raising awareness and disseminating messages that will properly communicate a green economy.

Goran Svilanović, Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, stressed the importance of the environment as a key component of peace and security. He linked greening the economy to improved governance and resilience to climate change and called for the incorporation of the “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme into the Rio+20 process.



Goran Svilanović, Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND WATER-RELATED ECOSYSTEMS

This thematic segment was addressed on Thursday morning in plenary and in roundtables. Final outcomes were presented on Friday afternoon.

Plenary session: In the Thursday morning plenary, thematic segment Chair László Borbély, Minister of Environment and Forests, Romania, opened the session by noting water management policy challenges and gaps. He focused on payments for ecosystem services as an important instrument for ensuring a good water environment for human health. He highlighted the Protocol on Water and Health and the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board, created in 2010, to attract high-level political interest on health impacts related to environmental policy.

Sándor Fazekas, Minister of Rural Development, Hungary, stressed the importance of high level attention to EU water policies and emphasized ecosystem approaches, climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, and the importance of international cooperation within and beyond the EU border. He stressed that transboundary water challenges represent both a joint responsibility and a joint opportunity.

Nurgali Ashim, Minister of Environmental Protection, Kazakhstan, emphasized the tragedy of the Aral Sea and efforts to cope with it, including Central Asian legislation and strategies



Sándor Fazekas, Minister of Rural Development, Hungary

on sustainable development. He proposed the “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme as a mechanism to promote the transition from unsustainable policies to the green economy.

Gheorghe Şalaru, Minister of Environment, Republic of Moldova, highlighted his country’s transboundary cooperation initiatives with Romania in the Prut and Danube river basins, and with Ukraine in the Dniester river basin. He highlighted policy dialogue as an important tool for sustainable water policies and recommended investments in water supply and sanitation.



Gheorghe Şalaru, Minister of Environment, Republic of Moldova

Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future, identified the three greatest regional water



Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future

challenges as: poor management of transboundary water, causing resources degradation as in the Aral Sea; deterioration of rural water supply and lack of access to safe drinking water, leading to severe health problems especially in children; and water pollution from mining, contributing to a risk of irreversible radioactive pollution of groundwater. She urged governments to ratify and implement the Protocol on Water and Health, to allocate funds for water sanitation investments for small communities, and to fill the policy gap on mining pollution issues.



Letitia Obeng, Chair, the Global Water Partnership

Letitia Obeng, Chair, Global Water Partnership, said water should be an early focus for adaptation to climate change, and integrating adaptation and water management plans will lead to better preparation and responses.

Saghit Ibatullin, Chairman, Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, described the challenges and progress made in saving the Aral Sea and introduced the Berlin Initiative, an international model in long-term solutions to water challenges. The Berlin Initiative includes three main components: regional cooperation; strengthening transboundary river basin management; and pilot projects.



Saghit Ibatullin, Chairman, Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea

Sibylle Vermont, Chair of the Bureau of the Water Convention, Switzerland, presented the Astana Water Action (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/5). Developed under her guidance, the initiative is a collection of possible actions that can be carried out by governments and other stakeholders over the 2012-2015 period, for improving the status of water

and water-related ecosystems through sustainable management. Vermont said 19 countries and four organizations had committed to 72 actions under the Astana Water Action. Most of these actions fall under IWRM and are increasingly implemented through national strategies. She asked participants to ratify the amendment to make the UNECE Water Convention a global convention open to non-UNECE members, and recommended the inclusion of finance ministries as critical partners in future actions and commitments.



Sibylle Vermont, Chair of the Bureau of the Water Convention, Switzerland

Roundtables: Following Thursday morning's plenary session, delegates convened in three parallel roundtables to discuss questions related to sustainable water management. Each roundtable addressed the same issue to bring different perspectives to the topics of: policies that proved to be effective to value and protect water-related ecosystems, including payments for ecosystem services; policies that proved to be effective in addressing water-related human health issues; priorities and challenges in adapting water management to extreme weather events and to climate change; and lessons learned from transboundary basin cooperation.

In Roundtable 1, moderated by Sibylle Vermont, Switzerland, delegates noted that ecosystem services are undervalued. They stressed the need to incorporate ecosystem valuation in national economic accounts and highlighted payments for ecosystem services as a useful policy instrument. Several delegates emphasized transboundary cooperation as essential to sustainable water management, and acknowledged the role played by the UNECE Water Convention in providing the framework for such cooperation.

Delegates further stressed participatory local level water management, with some referring to the challenges faced by post-Soviet countries to move from highly centralized water management systems to more participatory ones. Some interventions emphasized synergies among international biodiversity-related conventions and the UNECE Water Convention. Several delegates expressed appreciation for the Astana Water Action as an inspiring document that could create positive competition among countries.

On water and health issues Ján Kubiš, Executive Secretary, UNECE, said the root causes of the problems lie, *inter alia*, in the policy environment, resource allocation and country capacity. He noted that the main value of the Protocol on Water and Health is its requirement for a holistic view and setting



Roundtable 1 in session



Roundtable 2 in session

of targets. He stressed the UNECE Water Convention's role as a conflict prevention instrument in Central Asia and other regions.

In Roundtable 2, moderated by Hugo Von Meijenfeldt, Deputy-Director General for the Environment, the Netherlands, delegates called for more multi-sectoral perspectives on water issues, including synergies among water, health, and climate change. Participants recognized the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) as a policy tool that takes into account water-related ecosystem services and intends to achieve a balanced approach between different water uses. Countries underscored the need for implementation of existing regulations and international conventions, including the Protocol on Water and Health, while also emphasizing coordination and cooperation.

Roundtable 3 was moderated by Chyngyzbek Uzakbaev, Deputy Chairman, Committee of Water Resources and Melioration, Kyrgyzstan. Mladen Zirojević, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina, stressed their desire to become actively involved in the implementation of the EU water legislative framework. Most delegates agreed that while transboundary cooperation should be a major priority, it should be approached with patience and mutual respect between neighbouring countries. Participants identified other challenges, *inter alia*: development of harmonized legal frameworks across borders; improved water use through policy instruments such as taxation; improved water recycling practices; capacity building especially for water quality and quantity monitoring; and intensification of education and awareness campaigns.

On Friday afternoon, Chair László Borbély, Minister of Environment and Forests, Romania, reported on the main findings of both the plenary and roundtable sessions under the thematic segment sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems.

Final outcome: Participants, *inter alia*:

- called for the use of payments for ecosystem services and a common UNECE method for valuing ecosystems services;
- recognized IWRM as a development tool to address fragmented sectoral planning and implementation processes; promote efficiency, environmental sustainability and social equity; and tackle adaptation, resilience and vulnerability;



Roundtable 3 in session

- underscored the importance of groundwater, coastal waters and wetlands in river basin management;
- called for ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health;
- emphasized the need for strong links between water, environment and finance ministries;
- stressed that climate change impacts need to be addressed and adaptation should be promoted;
- noted the role of National Policy Dialogues in bringing together different sectors; the role of the WFD in improving the status of water; and the potential to open the UNECE Water Convention and its Amendments to non-UNECE members.

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND GREENING THE ECONOMY

This thematic segment was addressed on Thursday afternoon in both plenary and roundtables. Final outcomes were presented on Friday afternoon.

Plenary session: In his opening remarks, thematic segment Chair Bruno Oberle, State Secretary, Director of the Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland, cautioned participants about current levels of natural resources consumption. He stressed justice and participation as two key pillars in ensuring sustainable management of water for the green economy.

Ville Niinistö, Minister of Environment, Finland, highlighted, *inter alia*, investments in renewable resources, payments for ecosystem services, green technology, and education and training. He emphasized the importance of managing water resources to promote adaptation to climate change and dissemination of best practices.

Rinat Gizatulín, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Russian Federation, presented the achievements of the Russian Federation in sustainable management of water resources and the green economy, including a 10 per cent reduction in water use and a water payment system disaggregated by category of water user and water location.

Anna Golubovska-Onisimova, President, "MAMA-86," Ukraine, highlighted, *inter alia*: water accounting as a core part of economic planning; support to education and sustainable consumer choices; and implementation of IWRM and water conservation policies as crucial elements for the transition to the green economy.



Thematic segment Chair Bruno Oberle, State Secretary, Director of the Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland



Rinat Gizatulín, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Russian Federation



L-R: Ruslan Bultrikov, Vice-Minister of Environmental Protection, Kazakhstan; Monika Linn, Conference Secretary, UNECE; and thematic segment Chair Bruno Oberle, State Secretary, Director of the Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland

Simon Upton, Director, Environment Directorate, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, stated that water scarcity could be a threat to economic development. He highlighted efficiency of water use, water pricing to reflect scarcity and provide incentives, water financing, and water allocation among competing uses.



Simon Upton, Director, Environment Directorate, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Mykola Melenevskiy, President, International

Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, outlined the river basin management planning process. He stressed the importance of investments from the hydropower, navigation, and agricultural sectors in the water sector.

Tulegen Sarsembekov, Deputy Chief, Department of Technical Assistance, Eurasian Development Bank described the transboundary nature of Central Asia's rivers, stressing the importance of legal mechanisms for the joint use of water and transboundary rivers and to address ecological and social issues.

The keynote speakers from Finland, the Russian Federation, and the Eurasian Development Bank supported the "Green Bridge" Partnership Programme.

Roundtables: After Thursday afternoon's plenary, delegates participated in three parallel roundtables to tackle: which policy mixes and practical tools, such as IWRM, pricing, standards and water users associations, can be most effective to improve water efficiency in agriculture, households and industrial operations; and how to encourage investments to take into account impacts on water quantity and quality, energy and resource efficiency and vulnerable populations.

Roundtable 1 was moderated by Gheorghe Constantin, Chair of the European Union Water Initiative Working Group for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Romania. Delegates debated social equality and access to water in relation to water pricing, noting that water prices are also determined by subsidies and not driven by environmental or sustainability objectives. One participant emphasized practical policy tools for adaptation to climate change, modernization and public-private partnerships, while another described how a well-designed water pricing system could ensure quality and affordable water services. Participants highlighted environmental impact assessments and corporate social responsibility as important policy tools. Most delegates emphasized the importance of training, research and technology development.



L-R: Tatiana Efinova, OECD; Nino Sharashidze, UNECE; and Roundtable Moderator Gheorghe Constantin, Chair, European Union Water Initiative Working Group for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Romania



L-R: Angela Sochirca, UNECE; Roundtable Moderator Zaal Lomtadze, Chair of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy, Georgia; and Angela Bularga, OECD

Roundtable 2 was moderated by Zaal Lomtadze, Chair of UNECE/CEP. Some delegates described how strong laws and regulation can facilitate good water quality, contributing to low prices. In contrast, participants from economies in transition described the challenges of ensuring safe drinking water for their populations and the negative health impacts. Some delegates highlighted weak monitoring frameworks in post-Soviet countries and the lack of data for decision-making. Participants also emphasized the important role of business. A representative from Coca-Cola offered examples on how the private sector can partner with governments and communities to provide clean drinking water.

Roundtable 3 was moderated by Marek Gromiec, international expert in water resources management. Most delegates agreed that IWRM, pricing, standards and water user associations should be approached collaboratively among neighbouring countries to enhance effectiveness, with one delegate calling for accelerating IWRM into agriculture, hydropower generation and industry. Many participants stressed the introduction of tariffs, while others noted that these should be affordable to less affluent sectors of society. Some delegates stressed banning the use of asbestos in the manufacture of water pipes and reducing fertilizer and pesticide use.

One participant called for the application of the land stewardship principle and for the removal of perverse subsidies. Delegates agreed that good governance, efficient legislation and cooperation should guide the process towards a green economy.

On Friday afternoon, thematic segment Chair Bruno Oberle, State Secretary, Director, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland, reported on the main findings of both the plenary and roundtable sessions.

Final outcome: Participants, *inter alia*:

- unanimously agreed that water and water ecosystems are critical assets that provide the basis for human life and economic activity;



L-R: Sonja Koepfel, UNECE; Roundtable Moderator Marek Gromiec, international expert in water resources management; and Giovanni Gabassi, UNECE

- recognized that many sectors depend on water for their outputs and that demands on water exceed supply in many parts of the UNECE region, which poses difficult choices about water allocation;
- recognized that effective water policies can stimulate innovation, investment, job creation and new business models that can contribute to greening the economy;
- appreciated the role of the WFD and the UNECE Water Convention as important frameworks that recognize the importance of basing water management on hydrology rather than on administrative boundaries;
- recognized pricing as the key instrument for managing water resources. At the same time, participants noted that prices should be complemented by other policy mixes, including tariffs, though the specific policy mix will depend on country situations;
- proposed that tariffs cover the operational and maintenance costs of providing water services to ensure that water utilities are financially viable;
- stressed that social implications, particularly affordability, should be considered when establishing tariffs and recommended providing targeted support for poor and vulnerable groups through progressively increasing tariff structures or payments for water through social security payments or vouchers;
- agreed that promoting more efficient water use requires greater innovation and called for governments to promote innovation through appropriate policy mixes and, where appropriate, through public-private partnerships;
- stressed the role of information and of trained professionals in strengthening the management of water resources.

GREENING THE ECONOMY: MAINSTREAMING THE ENVIRONMENT INTO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This thematic segment was addressed on Friday morning in both plenary and roundtables. Final outcomes were presented on Friday afternoon.

Plenary session: Thematic segment chair Ruslan Bultrikov, Vice-Minister of Environmental Protection, Kazakhstan, introduced the theme of the session on mainstreaming the environment into economic development. Milan Hovorka, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Czech Republic, stated that participants must be both bold and realistic in implementing policy mixes to meet the promise of the green economy. He recommended the implementation of market-based instruments to facilitate efficient resource allocation and called for innovation, common sense and shared responsibility.

Gerald Farthing, Deputy Minister of Education, Manitoba, Canada, stressed three roles of technical and vocational education in the transition to a green economy: ensuring that students become ecologically literate; defining industrial needs in a green economy; and insisting that policymakers support such education.

Jochen Flasbarth, President, Federal German Environment Agency, shared Germany's experience in following a green economy path, which led to the creation of 630,000 jobs and helped Germany to overcome the global financial crisis. He recognized that some countries are still in transition,



Gerald Farthing, Deputy Minister of Education, Manitoba, Canada



Jochen Flasbarth,
President, Federal German
Environment Agency,
Germany

He presented measures taken in Uzbekistan to improve and modernize the water and agricultural sectors, including public investments for the reconstruction of irrigation and drainage infrastructures and use of improved crops and technology. He stressed that transition to the green economy can reduce the threats to economic development caused by unsustainable water demand.

Jan Rączka, President, National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management, Poland, presented a Polish experience in the housing sector to describe the challenges and the possible solutions for energy saving and greener economy. He concluded that: there is a need to secure politicians' support for environmental goals; sectoral policies must be coordinated to address environmental challenges from a cross-cutting perspective; and market mechanisms can be used effectively to achieve environmental goals.

Janis Brizga, Head, Board of Green Liberty, European ECO Forum, stated that current approaches are not resulting in sustainable development that addresses both supply and demand. He recommended that UNECE develop a



Martina Bianchini, Vice
President, European
Union Government
Affairs and Public Policy,
Dow Chemical

policy framework and institutional mechanisms to define and implement the green economy and play a role in Rio+20.

Martina Bianchini, Vice President, European Union Government Affairs and Public Policy, Dow Chemical, said that resource efficiency is paramount for business and stressed three important considerations for a policy mix: decoupling economic and ecological growth; ensuring a lifecycle approach; and paying attention to cost effectiveness.

but suggested that they have the advantage of key decisions remaining ahead of them.

Kamalitdin Sadikov, Deputy Chairman, State Committee for Nature Protection, Uzbekistan, highlighted Uzbekistan's environmental challenges as: high energy consumption; water resource pollution; water loss in irrigation systems; reduced fertility; and land degradation.



Kamalitdin Sadikov,
Deputy Chairman, State
Committee for Nature
Protection, Uzbekistan

Viera Feckova, International Finance Corporation, Kazakhstan, stated that there are business cases for resource and water efficiency, but that they need to be better understood by the private sector.

Roundtables: Delegates convened in three parallel roundtables on: policies to achieve a green economy; resource efficiency to improve sustainability and competitiveness in local, regional and global markets; the role of research, innovation and investment in the transition towards a green economy; and the contributions of the EfE process to the development of the Rio+20 Green Economy outcomes.

Roundtable 1 was moderated by Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director, EEA. Several delegates described the mix of policy measures adopted in their countries to support integration of environmental objectives into economic development, such as regulatory measures, economic instruments and voluntary standards in the agricultural, energy and transport sectors. Some stressed the ineffectiveness of certain voluntary standards, while others emphasized sustainable consumption and consumers' right to safe and equitable products. Many recognized that effective policy solutions would differ for different countries and regions. Many participants underscored the need for novel partnerships beyond public-private partnerships, which have been only partially satisfactory. All participants agreed that worker and consumer education is a key factor in the transition to a green economy. On the contribution of the EfE to Rio+20, delegates recognized that developing country perspectives must be carefully considered.

Roundtable 2 was moderated by Jan Dusik, Deputy Director, Regional Office for Europe, UNEP. Participants discussed how to bring the results of the EfE process to Rio+20 and demonstrate that Europe is not only talking about the green economy, but also working on it. Several participants expressed support for a regional "green economy roadmap" that incorporated national perspectives. Participants discussed components of policy mixes, including: market-based instruments such as subsidies, taxes and fees; regulatory frameworks, including efficiency standards and tradable permits; labeling; and certification. Several participants advocated education as an important element of the policy mix, noting that education can encourage sustainable consumption and build knowledge bases for future innovation. Finally, representatives from small and transitional economies cautioned that such nations may not have the same options as more developed countries, and would appreciate inclusion in regional initiatives to develop innovative policies and create an investment climate for the green economy.

Roundtable 3 was moderated by Deltcho Vitchev, Director, Renaissance Finance International. Delegates agreed that "business as usual" could not continue and discussed policy



L-R: Simone Hofner, UNECE; Stefan Speck, EEA; Roundtable 1 Moderator Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director, EEA; Angela Sochirca, UNECE; and Oksana Rott, UNECE



L-R: Giovanni Gabassi, UNECE; Roundtable 2 Moderator Jan Dusik, Deputy Director, Regional Office for Europe, UNEP; and Rie Tsutsumi, UNEP

mixes that would accelerate the transition to greener economies, *inter alia*: changing taxation and subsidies; investing in education that strengthens capacities of decision makers at all levels; equalizing the playing field and achieving consensus about competitive rules; preparing regulatory acts such as environmental accounting and reporting, improved corporate responsibility and compliance with international standards; and developing monitoring mechanisms and measurements. One participant argued for a shift from national GDP figures towards a human development index. All agreed on the importance of reaching common targets which should be demonstrated at Rio+20, and suggested that high footprint economies should become green while low footprint economies should be allowed to grow.

On Friday afternoon, thematic segment chair Ruslan Bultrikov, Vice-Minister of Environmental Protection, Kazakhstan, reported on the results of the roundtables.

Final outcome: Participants agreed that, *inter alia*:

- there is no one-size-fits-all approach and a mix of regulatory and market-based instruments is needed;
- transition to a green economy should engage stakeholders, including consumers and businesses, through education and information-based policy tools and labeling;
- governments should focus on creating green markets;
- investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy is relevant regardless of national economic structures;
- energy subsidies should be replaced by more targeted sectoral policies;
- specific mechanisms for payments for environmental services should be further developed;
- the “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme could be a practical mechanism for green technology transfer, investment and cooperation;
- a UNECE-wide platform could be created to share good practices and concrete achievements among countries;
- the notion that competitiveness and sustainability are not mutually exclusive should be emphasized to promote the involvement of the business sector in the green economy;
- technical and vocational training is important;
- targets and indicators for the green economy should be emphasized, and ways to discard the GDP concept should be identified at Rio+20;
- gaining the support of politicians, managing the expectations of powerful groups, and coordinating sectoral policies is critical;
- research and innovations are key for increasing resource efficiency;
- financing decisions should include sustainability criteria;
- an internationally agreed roadmap for the green economy should be one outcome of Rio+20, including a political commitment and a toolbox with concrete instruments, with a clear distribution of responsibilities.

CLOSING PLENARY

Adoption of the Conference outcomes: Chair Ashim presented the Ministerial Declaration, which was adopted by the Conference.

In the **Ministerial Declaration**, ministers and heads of delegation from 44 countries in the UNECE region and the representative of the European Commission, *inter alia*:

- reaffirm the important value of the EfE as a unique pan-European forum;
- reiterate the importance of the involvement of civil society in decision-making to improve the environment;
- invite countries to ratify the UNECE Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health;
- stress the need to include water in national development plans;
- encourage the provision of incentives for water efficiency and revenue generation to finance water services aiming at full recovery of water prices, while making provisions for vulnerable social groups;
- endorse the Astana Water Action;
- agree to take the lead in the transition to a green economy and to make substantive contributions to the discussions on green economy within the context of sustainable development, poverty alleviation and the UNCSD (Rio+20);
- invite UNECE to conduct its third cycle of the UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews, which may include environmental governance and financing in a green economy context;
- decide to establish a regular process of environmental assessment, and develop the SEIS across the region;
- welcome and support, as appropriate, the “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme, and encourage its further development; and
- invite the UNECE/CEP to convene, in 2013, a mid-term review to assess progress of the implementation of the outcomes of the EfE Conferences.

Bedřich Moldan, Former Minister of Environment and Senator, Czech Republic, reminded participants of the 20-year history of the EfE process and urged participants to look forward towards shaping the outcomes of Rio+20.

Andrzej Kraszewski, Minister of the Environment, Poland, on behalf of the EU and its Member States, welcomed the outcomes of the Conference and the development of the SEIS across the whole UNECE region. Tomáš Chalupa, Minister of Environment, Czech Republic, called upon participants to continue the construction, initiated at this Conference, of the bridge between EfE and Rio+20. Delegates from Belarus, ECO Forum, United States and Canada expressed appreciation for the outcomes of the Conference.

Sibylle Vermont, Chair of the Bureau of the UNECE Water Convention, Switzerland, presented delegations that committed to the Astana Water Action with a seed and a teabag, both of sage, as appreciation for their commitment and encouragement for future implementation.



Sibylle Vermont, Chair of the Bureau of the Water Convention, Switzerland, recognized delegations committed to the Astana Water Action

Closing remarks: Ján Kubiš expressed appreciation that 20 years after it was initiated, the EfE is a living, participatory process. He invited all delegates to the Rio+20 preparatory meeting for the UNECE region in Geneva in December 2011. Chair Ashim thanked ministers and delegates for the fruitful and productive discussions. He gave the meeting to a close at 5:25pm.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Water in the Green Economy in Practice: Towards

Rio+20: This conference is organized under the International Decade for Action, Water for Life 2005-2015, by UN-Water and other UN entities. It will focus on cases related to the use of specific “tools for change” to help move toward a green growth model. The conference will build on the results and conclusions of a side event held during the Second Session of the UNCS D Preparatory Committee (PrepCom II), titled “how the green economy depends on water,” including a call to develop a UN Green Economy Road Map and a toolbox or a best practices guide for actions to evolve into a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Participation is by invitation only. **dates:** 3-5 October 2011 **location:** Zaragoza Spain **www:** http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/green_economy_2011/

Workshop on IWRM as a Tool for Adaptation to Climate Change: This three-day workshop on Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) as an adaptation tool to climate change will gather professionals of UN-Water members and partners, and is organized by the UN-Water Thematic Priority Area on Water and Climate Change and the Cap-Net network. The workshop is specifically targeted for professionals that are not experts on water or adaptation to climate change issues, and need to increase their knowledge on the subject. **dates:** 4-6 October 2011 **venue:** WMO Headquarters **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** ssandstrom@wmo.int **www:** <http://www.unwater.org/events.html>

Sharing Green Economy Best Practices Towards Rio+20: Poland's Ministry of the Environment is organizing this high-level conference, aimed at consultation between EU member States and key countries in the process of preparing for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCS D, or Rio+20). The conference will include presentation of the EU Environment Council's report of 10 October 2011 and other examples of green economy initiatives, from 10 EU member States and 10 other key countries in the UNCS D process. The discussion will serve as a basis for developing specific solutions, which may be adopted during the UNCS D. **dates:** 11-12 October 2011 **location:** Warsaw, Poland **contact:** Agnieszka Kozłowska-Korbicz (Ministry of the Environment) **phone:** +48 22 57 92 855 **e-mail:** agnieszka.kozlowskakorbicz@mos.gov.pl **www:** <http://uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&type=13&nr=321&menu=46>

Management of Water in a Changing World: Lessons Learnt and Innovative Perspectives: The focus of this international conference on IWRM is to present the scientific results and world-wide experiences of IWRM implementation in order to discuss lessons learnt. Another main aspect is to exchange innovative perspectives beyond current IWRM practices with national and international experts. This conference serves as a platform for participants from research, industry, politics and administration to discuss joint approaches and promote sustainable use of water resources in a changing world. **dates:** 12-13 October 2011 **location:** Dresden, Germany **contact:** Ralf Ibisch **phone:** +49 (0) 561 804 6152 **fax:** +49 (0) 391 810 9699 **email:** ralf.ibisch@ufz.de **www:** <http://www.bmbf.iwr2011.de/index.php>

WaterMed 2011: WaterMed is a fair and conference dedicated to water technologies - industrial, wastewater and drinking water - in the Mediterranean area. **dates:** 19-21 October 2011 **location:** Milan, Italy **contact:** Rosy Doronzo **phone:** +39-026-630-6866 **fax:** +39-026-630-5510 **www:** http://www.watermed.com/en_wtm/index_wtm.asp

Global Forum on Environment: Making Water Reform Happen: The objective of the Global Forum on Water is to gather a broad range of senior policy makers and leaders in the water sector to debate and discuss the key messages emerging from the recent OECD work on water. This work focuses on the policy issues related to pricing and financing, multilevel governance, public-private partnerships and managing water resources in agriculture. While participation in this event is by invitation only, persons interesting in requesting an invitation are kindly asked to complete an online registration form and return it by email to water@oecd.org or by fax +33 (0) 1 44 30 61 79. **dates:** 25-26 October 2011 **location:** OECD Conference Centre, Paris **email:** water@oecd.org **www:** http://www.oecd.org/document/57/0,3746,en_2649_34285_47429177_1_1_1_1,00.html

International High Level Conference “Strengthening transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia: the role of international water law and the UNECE Water Convention”: **dates:** 26-27 October 2011 **location:** Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan **contact:** Aida Litvinenko **phone:** +7-7272-986380/81/83/85 **fax:** +7-7272-507717 **email:** litvinenko@ec-ifas.org and mospanov@inbox.ru

Fourth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health: The main objectives of the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health are: to review the implementation of the programme of work; to provide guidance on its further development, in light of its mandate, and taking into account changing conditions. **dates:** 1-2 November 2011 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** Francesca Bernardini **phone:** +41 22 917 24 63 **email:** francesca.bernardini@unece.org or protocol.water_health@unece.org

Seventh Compliance Committee of the Protocol on Water and Health: The seventh meeting of the Compliance Committee will be held back to back with the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Water and Health. The main objectives of the seventh meeting will be to: discuss and further refine the consultation procedure offered to facilitate the implementation of the Protocol; discuss the opportunities and means for a cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and consider awareness-raising on the compliance procedure. **dates:** 3 November 2011 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** Francesca Bernardini **phone:** +41 22 917 24 63 **email:** francesca.bernardini@unece.org or protocol.water_health@unece.org

Bonn 2011 Conference: Water, Energy, and Food Security Nexus: The Bonn 2011 Process culminates in an international conference on water, energy and food security. The conference, organized by the German Federal Government, represents an important aspect of Germany's contribution to Rio+20. The concept of a “green economy” will form a key focus of conference discussions on approaches to sustainable development and poverty reduction. Participants will include around 400 decision-makers and decision-shapers from the spheres of politics, academia, the United Nations, civil society and the private sector. Participation is by invitation only. **dates:** 16-18 November 2011 **venue:** German Bundestag **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** Ms. Imke Thiem **phone:** 49 6196 79-1547 **email:** bonn.conference2011@giz.de **www:** <http://www.water-energy-food.org/en>

International Conference on Groundwater Resources Management: Adaptation Measures to Water Scarcity Science and Policy Responses: This Conference is jointly organized by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization and the University of Irvine, California. The four themes of the conference are: the role of groundwater in adapting to the impacts of global and climate changes; strengthening groundwater management for sustainable development; innovative methods and technologies for groundwater management; and groundwater education, cooperation and governance. The Conference results will be presented at the 6th World Water Forum and Rio+20. **dates:** 30 November - 3 December 2011 **location:** Irvine, California, USA **contact:** Lucilla Minelli **email:** l.minelli@unesco.org **www:** http://www.unesco.org/water/water_events/Detailed/2168.shtml

UNCSD regional meeting for ECE: The UNECE will convene a regional preparatory meeting for the ECE region, in preparation for Rio+20. **dates:** 1-2 December 2011 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** UNECE Secretariat **email:** Monika.Linn@unece.org **UNCSD Secretariat email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&type=13&nr=113&menu=46>

International Conference "Europe-Asia transboundary water cooperation": The Conference is being organized by the UNECE, at the invitation of the Government of Switzerland, in the framework of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), which is currently chaired by Switzerland. The conference aims to debate the current state, the progress achieved and the remaining challenges for cooperation on waters in this border region; exchange experiences and showcase good practices of transboundary cooperation from different basins within the European and Asian region; increase awareness and understanding of the UNECE Water Convention and its work; and identify options for the way forward. **dates:** 15-16 December 2011 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** Katri Veldre, UNECE Water Convention secretariat **phone:** +41 22 917 1911 **fax:** +41 22 917 0107 **email:** katri.veldre@unece.org

Eye on Earth Summit: Hosted by Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in partnership with UNEP, Eye on Earth is a global summit devoted to greater access to environmental and societal data. **dates:** 12-15 December 2011 **location:** Abu Dhabi **contact:** Marjie Heurter **phone:** +97126934516 **fax:** +97124463339 **email:** marjie.heurter@ead.ae **www:** <http://www.eyearthsummit.org>

6th World Water Forum: The World Water Forum is a tri-annual process that mobilizes creativity, innovation, competence and know-how in favour of water. The Sixth Forum aims to be "the Forum of solutions and commitments". **dates:** 12-17 March 2012 **venue:** Parc Chanot - Palais des Congrès et des Expositions de Marseille **location:** Marseille, France **email:** secretariat@worldwaterforum6.org **www:** <http://www.worldwaterforum6.org/en/news/>

UNCSD/Rio+20: This meeting will mark the 20th anniversary of the UN Commission on Environment and Development, which convened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. **dates:** 4-6 June 2012 **location:** Rio De Janeiro, Brazil **contact:** UNCSD Secretariat **email:** uncsd2012@un.org **www:** <http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

Ramsar COP 11: The 11th meeting of the contracting parties (COP 11) to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat. **dates:** 19-26 June 2012 **location:** Bucharest, Romania **contact:** Ramsar Secretariat **phone:** +41-22-999-0170 **fax:** +41-22-999 0169 **email:** ramsar@ramsar.org **www:** <http://www.ramsar.org>

GLOSSARY

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
EEA	European Environment Agency
EfE	Environment for Europe
WFD	European Union Water Framework Directive
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
SEIS	Shared Environmental Information System
UNECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
UNECE/CEP	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Committee on Environmental Policy
UNEP	UN Environment Programme



VIPs and Heads of Delegations attending the Conference