

## **CEP: Decisions on Finance, Conventions, Energy and Health**

The Sixth Session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), was held in Geneva from 20–24 September 1999.

The session commenced with an open-ended informal consultation with representatives from countries in transition, in which the participants shared experiences gained in their countries on integrating environmental considerations into sectoral policies.

The Committee adopted the report of its fifth session, which includes its long-term programme of work. Delegates were informed of the decisions taken by the Economic Commission for Europe at its fifty-fourth session, and in particular, those, which are relevant to the Committee on Environmental Policy.

Following the outcome of the first Meeting of the Signatories to the Aarhus Convention, who indicated the

need to examine the links between the ECE Conventions, and given the interest expressed by other bodies of ECE Convention in cooperating with one another, the Committee decided on further steps to support ECE multilateral environmental conventions (see below).

The Committee was informed about the results of the first meeting of the Signatories to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

The Committee adopted the following decisions:

- *Peer review of the environmental performance review (EPR) of Ukraine.*

The EPR recommendations were adopted.

- *Matters arising from the fifty-fourth session of the Commission of concern to the Committee*

In accordance with the recommendation made by the Commission, the Committee accepted to take up a leading role on issues related to sustainable development. In that respect, closer links between the Committee and other Principal Subsidiary Bodies' programmes and relevant secretariats were encouraged to ensure integration of environmental concerns to the maximum extent possible. The Committee agreed to further integrate the social, economic and environmental dimensions in developing future cross-sectoral activities, in particular of an operational nature (workshops, seminars on specific subjects). The Committee encouraged a closer examination of how relations with the business community could be further developed to mutual benefit.

- *Financial assistance to countries with economies in transition and countries' contributions to the ECE Trust Funds*

a) The Committee accepted new guiding principles for financial assistance to representatives of countries in transition to attend ECE meetings according to a proposal put forward by the Bureau.

b) The Committee took note of the current balance of the TFACT and encouraged countries to make further contributions to allow the continuation of the activities undertaken and the participation of delegations from countries in transition, which otherwise would be undermined.

- *Regional environmental conventions and protocols*

a) Support of ECE multilateral environmental agreements: Based on a proposal by the secretariat, the Committee endorsed a two-step approach to address the project on cooperation between the ECE multilateral agreements to enhance their effectiveness. A background paper (first step) would be prepared in order to facilitate the discussion at a round table (second step) to be held at the seventh session. Delegations agreed to provide their comments to an outline of the background paper by 30 October 1999. The Committee considered the involvement of the governing bodies of the conventions in the elaboration of the paper and preparations for and participation in the round-table as crucial. To this end, it requested its Chairman and the secretariat to invite the governing bodies to participate actively in this project.

b) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in

Environmental Matters: The Meeting approved the report of the Meeting of Signatories to the Aarhus Convention as amended by the corrigendum to the report and by a proposal from the Netherlands. The Committee endorsed a proposal to hold a second meeting of the signatories to the Convention in Spring 2000 and noted with appreciation the offer of Croatia to host the meeting. It was agreed that the question of whether or not to set up a fourth task force on access to justice should be referred to the second Meeting of Signatories.

c) It was agreed that the relevant outcome of the Third European Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health should be considered by the Meeting of Signatories at its second meeting, including the possibility of elaborating under the Convention a protocol on strategic environmental impact assessment, and that the secretariat should undertake the necessary preparatory work to facilitate the discussion.

d) Other ECE multilateral environmental agreements: In view of the expected entry into force, early in 2000, of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, the CEP decided to schedule the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties for mid-2000. The venue would be decided upon by the open-ended group, established to prepare the first meeting of the conference of the parties, on the basis of replies to a letter from the Chairman of the meeting of the Signatories and the Executive Secretary of the ECE and taking into account the outcome of its first meeting. Offers to host the meeting were put forward at the Committee's session by the Republic of Moldova and the European Commission.

d) The Committee requested the secretariat to provide short updating notes on the activities of the conventions and the work of the Regional Advisor.

- *Peer review of the environmental performance review (EPR) of Croatia*

The recommendations of the EPR were adopted.

- *Report of the EPR Expert Group*

The Committee decided:

a) To re-establish an Ad Hoc ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (EPR Expert Group) for a period of two years, with the terms of reference included in an annex.

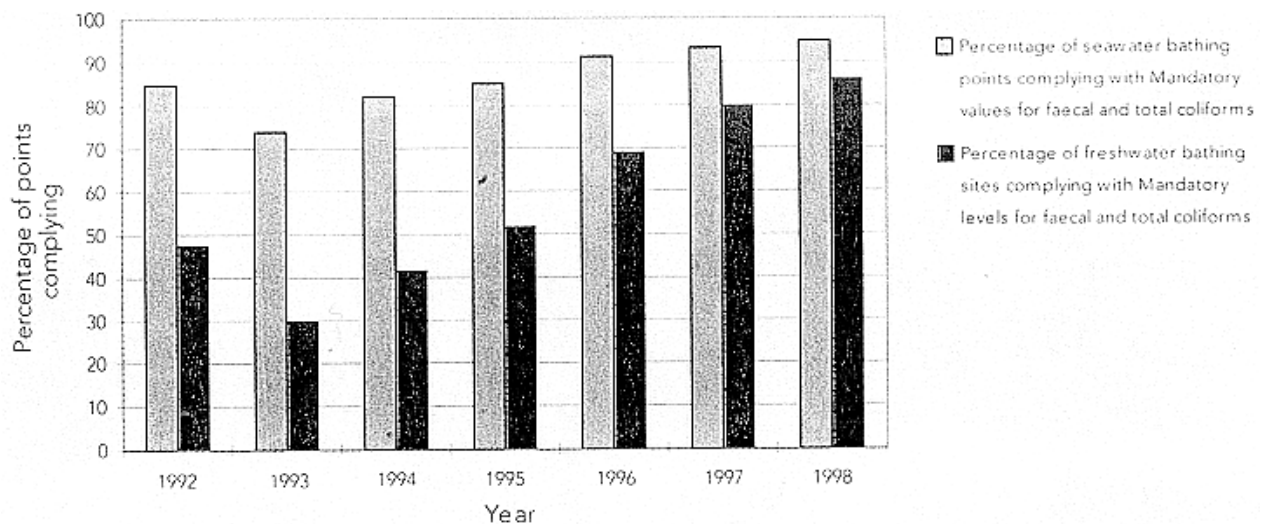
b) To refer the issues raised by the Committee during its discussion of the EPR to the EPR Expert Group for consideration at its first session.

c) To include Uzbekistan in the list of countries for Environmental Performance Review by ECE.

d) To include "assessment meetings" as a useful option in the process of future reviews.

e) To request the secretariat to prepare a report on how the EPR process could benefit from contacts with small and medium-sized enterprises, for consideration by the Committee at its seventh session.

f) To explore the possibilities for organising systematic discussions in the work programme of the Committee, for the ECE region as a whole or for groups or neighbouring countries, of the general problems facing environmental administrations in countries in transition



Percentage of sea and freshwater sampling points throughout the EU complying with the mandatory levels for total and faecal coliforms (1992–1998)  
 Courtesy: European Environment Agency

between the countries concerned, and with the participation of environmental administrations of interested traditional market economies.

g) To continue the association of international organisations with the organisation of such meetings and, more generally, with the EPR process as a whole.

h) To authorise the implementation of reduced reviews in accordance with the conditions spelled out in document CEP/1999/6, paras. 20–22.

i) To thank the EPR Expert Group for having fulfilled its mandate in an excellent manner.

- In the course of the discussion, Albania requested the resumption of its EPR project. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia announced its willingness to apply for inclusion in the list of future EPR projects. Bulgaria suggested that a reduced EPR be undertaken in that country during the second quarter of the year 2000.

- “Environment for Europe” Process

Energy and the environment

a) The Committee recommended that the progress reporting to the next Environment for Europe Ministerial in 2002 in Kiev/Ukraine will be based on the periodical progress reporting of the PEEREA. The Energy Charter Secretariat will be invited to submit the PEEREA progress reporting to the Committees on Environmental Policy and Sustainable Energy. This progress reporting to the Environment for Europe process shall be in full accordance with the energy decisions from the Aarhus declaration and made in close cooperation with the ECE and other relevant international organisations and institutions. To ensure coherence with the preparations for the Kiev conference, the future EXECOM will be invited to follow the work of the working group on the implementation of the PEEREA.

The Committee welcomed a proposal for an ECE/OECD Workshop on Enhancing the Environment by Reforming Energy Prices and invited the secretariat to re-issue the

Workshop programme as contained in document CEP/1999/5 with the proposed amendments. The Committee invited the IEA to contribute actively to the Workshop. Furthermore, it decided to consider the outcome of the Workshop at its seventh session.

b) Follow-up to the Strategy to Phase Out Leaded Petrol  
 The Committee decided to set up a small working group of interested countries, organisations, and IFIs, to review progress on the basis of an ECE questionnaire, and to assist those countries facing problems in meeting their obligations in the Strategy to phase-out leaded petrol. The group would meet in conjunction with the seventh session of the Committee.

c) Local initiatives towards sustainable consumption patterns

The Committee adopted the proposal on further action on sustainable consumption patterns and welcomed the interest of the Committee on Human Settlements, expressed at its sixtieth session, to develop jointly a project on urban transport patterns and land-use planning. The Committee on Environmental Policy decided to establish a joint steering group for the project and invited delegations to designate environmental experts for participation in this steering group by 30 October 1999. The Regional Environmental Centre (REC) expressed its interest in participating in this work. The Committee invited the steering group to draft a well-focused work programme and report on it to the Committee at its seventh session.

d) Integrating environmental considerations into sectoral policies

The Committee stressed its opinion that integrating environmental concerns into sectoral policy will play a major role in the Kiev Conference in 2002. The issue, however, must be further clarified and substantiated in the preparations in order to give Ministers a solid base for discus-

sion. The ECE secretariat was invited, in close cooperation with other relevant organisations, in particular the EAP Task Force and taking into account work carried out so far, to further elaborate document CEP/1999/3 in view of the comments made at the meeting with interested country experts. The Committee requested the Bureau and the secretariat to organise an open-ended brainstorming meeting in Spring 2000 and report back to the Committee at its seventh session.

e) Establishment of the ad hoc working group of senior officials for the preparation of the fifth Ministerial Conference

The Committee:

- Established an ad hoc preparatory working group of senior officials chaired by the host country and adopted its mandate and amendments.
- Endorsed a draft decision on the “Environment for Europe” process to be taken by the UN/Economic Commission for Europe at its next session.
- Took note of the initial proposals regarding possible issues to be considered by the Kiev Conference put forward by the delegation of Ukraine and invited member countries to reflect on them to facilitate discussions at

the first meeting of the working group of senior officials.

• *Major cross-sectoral cooperation:*

a) Transport and the environment

The Committee took note of the Report on the second session of the Joint Meeting on Transport and Environment and the planned meeting of the Chairpersons of the Bureau of the Committees on Environmental Policy and Inland Transport.

b) Health and environment

The Committee:

- Requested the ECE and WHO/EURO secretariats to fulfil their obligations from the London Conference to prepare the overview report of existing legal instruments in the field of transport, health and environment by 1 January 2000.
- Recommended that member countries and NGOs be fully involved in further elaboration of recommendations.

Expressed a strong view that the three sectors, transport, health and environment, should participate on an equal footing in future work. □