



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

from : General Secretariat
to : Delegations

Subject : Outcome of the 6th Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe"
(Belgrade, 10 to 12 October 2007)

Delegations will find annexed information from the Presidency on the above subject, which will be dealt with under "other business" at the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 30 October 2007.

**6th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”
Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007**

Note by the Presidency

Environment Ministers and Heads of Delegations from 50 countries participating in the “Environment for Europe” process and the representatives of the European Commission attended the 6th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” in Belgrade, 10-12 October 2007, with a broad participation of UN Agencies, International Organisations and Institutes, Regional Environmental Centres and NGOs. The Ministerial Conference convened for three days and was concluded on 12 October, with the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on the future of Efe process and Ministerial statements on education for sustainable development and on biodiversity.

In preparation for the 6th Ministerial Conference a number of preparatory meetings were held from 2005 to 2007 by UNECE/Committee on Environmental Policy, Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO), the Executive Committee of WGSO and the Drafting Group for preparing the Ministerial Declaration.

During the Ministerial Conference, there were keynote presentations, round-table discussions and interventions from States, UN organizations and nongovernmental organizations. The issues addressed during the Ministerial discussions were: assessment and implementation, education for sustainable development, biodiversity, progress and perspectives in implementation of the environment strategy for countries of EECCA, perspectives of SEE and the future of the process. The European Environment Agency also presented the fourth Assessment Report on the State of Environment; the findings show the progress that has been made in the region, but also the areas where work must be further pursued and therefore deserve utmost attention in our deliberations for our future work.

The EU played a key role throughout the whole process that led to the Belgrade Ministerial Conference, towards finding solutions adapted to the needs of the region.

The Council adopted conclusions prior to the Belgrade Conference at its meeting on 23 July 2007 which underlined the value of the Efe process, but also recognised clearly the need for change.

The main achievements of the EU as a result of long and difficult negotiations, are, inter-alia, the following, as reflected in the Ministerial Declaration:

- The need for further environmental improvements in countries of the UNECE region and the recognition of the important value of the EfE process as a unique Pan-European forum for tackling our environmental challenges;
- The need for the continuation of a more focused and needs-driven EfE process, reflecting the changing political and socio-economic landscape;
- The recognition that a strong political commitment from countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and their partners in the region to tackling environmental issues is also needed to achieve sustainable progress;
- Reaffirmation of the commitment to work towards the achievement of the targets in the Kiev Resolution on Biodiversity and to continue to cooperate with PEBLDS and to support the implementation of the Pan-European Ecological Network;
- The need to address the urgent challenge of climate change. All parties should actively and constructively participate in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Indonesia in December 2007 with a view to achieving a comprehensive post-2012 agreement;
- The need for further integrating policies on climate change, the environment, sustainable development and energy in the region;
- The recognition that further efforts are needed to improve energy efficiency in order to meet environmental and sustainable energy objectives;
- The need to promote sustainable use of resources and sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns, including through development of national programmes, strategies and implementation plans, subregional and regional partnerships, involving stakeholders;
- Support for the implementation of the SAICM (Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management) and partnerships to reduce environmental pollution from heavy metals and recognition of the other ongoing work in the United Nations on chemicals and heavy metals;
- A strong commitment by all countries involved in the UNECE region to support effective use of financial resources from all sources, including domestic budgets and donor support, where available, to strengthen institutional capacities at national and local levels, and to promote the effective use of these resources for the preparation of feasible, cost-effective and action-oriented environment programmes;

- Recognition of the work of the Environment and Security Initiative, which should continue to aim at reducing environment-related security risks;
- The decision to undertake a reform of the EfE process, with a timetable, in order to ensure that the process remains relevant and valuable, and to strengthen its effectiveness as a mechanism for improving environmental quality and the lives of people across the region. The reform should focus on format, focus and priorities of the process and Ministerial Conferences, evaluating the performance and impact of the process, more active engagement of all stakeholders, future secretariat arrangements;
- UNECE/CEP should develop by the end of 2008, in consultation with EfE partners, a plan for the EfE reform so that it can be endorsed, at a political level, by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe at its next session in spring 2009.

The Ministerial Declaration which was adopted in Belgrade clearly expresses the joint commitment to continue, to strengthen and to reshape the “Environment for Europe” Process, which was also one of the main political objectives of the EU. The following steps – the reform of the Process – will be crucial to ensure that the Process is aligned to the needs of the region and will require further attention from the Environment Ministers.
