



The Environment for Europe Process

Since its launch in 1991 the 'Environment for Europe' process provides an essential political framework for formulating environmental policy on the continent. It covers the region of the United Nation Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) including 55 countries, with the focus moving more to Eastern Europe and even more in the NIS countries in the last five years. It regularly brings together Ministers of Environment and other relevant partners at Pan-European conferences for defining common environmental policies.

The process is most useful tool for Pan-European coordination, to harmonize the efforts and to avoid unnecessary duplication, as well as to ensure that funding from various resources is channelled to the areas most in need. It also provides an effective forum for disseminating ideas that may help to tackle the environmental crisis of the region, such as changing production and consumption patterns, public participation, energy efficiency or precautionary principle. Hence the process is a good source of inspiration, guidance and support on the way of creating a more sustainable Europe.

The First Ministerial Conference (1991, **Dobris**) called for a comprehensive assessment of Europe's environment and the development of an Environmental Programme for the entire region.

At the Second Ministerial Conference (1993, **Luzern**) Ministers endorsed the "Elements for a Long-Term Environmental Programme for Europe" elaborated within the UN/ECE framework and agreed on the further development of the environmental programme on the basis of a comprehensive assessment of the region's environment. "Europe's Environment: The Dobris Assessment" was prepared by the European Environment Agency for the 1995 Sofia Conference.

The Third Ministerial Conference (1995, **Sofia**) endorsed the Environmental Programme prepared within the UN/ECE framework. This document is the first attempt at Pan-European level to outline long-term environmental priorities and to make Agenda 21 more operational in the European context, especially its provision related to the integration of environmental considerations into other sectoral policies. It aims to serve as a framework for better coordination between national and international efforts and for promoting convergence of national environmental policies.

With regards to nature conservation the most important outcome of the Sofia Meeting was the ministerial endorsement of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy.

At the Fourth Ministerial Conference (1998, **Aarhus**) the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy reported on progress made in the implementation of the Environmental Programme. Moreover the ECE was invited to continue to screen the programme, taking into account the report "Europe's Environment: The Second Assessment" in order to make proposals for concrete priority actions.

The Aarhus Conference endorsed the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, or as it is widely known, the "Aarhus Convention".

At the Fifth Ministerial Conference (2003, **Kyiv**) the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians was signed by the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Ukraine and later in November by Poland. Besides the Ministers approved the Environmental Strategy for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), which evolves as a partnership initiative of all UN/ECE member states for the better environment of twelve NIS countries.

An ambitious nature conservation commitment was undertaken in the Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity to halt the loss of biodiversity at all levels by 2010. Besides the Biodiversity Resolution determines additional tangible targets for the first decade of the century in various fields from ecological networks, through forestry and agriculture to monitoring and public participation.

LINKS

Environment for Europe: <http://www.unece.org/env/wgso/welcome.html>

Europe's Environment: The Dobris Assessment: http://reports.eea.eu.int/92-826-5409-5/en/tab_abstract_RLR

Environmental Programme for Europe: <http://www.unece.org/env/europe/welcome.html>

Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy:
<http://www.strategyguide.org>

Europe's Environment: The Second Assessment: <http://reports.eea.eu.int/92-828-3351-8/en>

Aarhus Convention: <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf>

Europe's environment: The Third Assessment:
http://reports.eea.eu.int/environmental_assessment_report_2003_10/en

Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians:
http://www.unep.ch/roe/assets/programme_activities/environmental_law/04_emi/documents/final_carpathian_convention.pdf

Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity: http://www.kyiv-2003.info/main/docs/documents/Category1/Biodiversity/biodiv_resolution_e.pdf