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**GREENER, CLEANER, SMARTER!**  
Eighth Ministerial Conference  
8-10 June, 2016, Georgia

## **EIGHTH ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE: 8-10 JUNE 2016**

The Eighth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference convened from 8 - 10 June 2016, in Batumi, Georgia. Ministers and heads of delegations from 44 countries in the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region and the representative of the European Commission (EC) attended alongside representatives from UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and civil society.

Participants focused on two key issues: the green economy; and air quality and human health. Plenary sessions and parallel sessions of multi-stakeholder roundtables took place on both issues. During the Conference, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNECE launched the sixth Global Environmental Outlook (GEO-6) Assessment for the pan-European region.

Throughout the Conference, participants stressed the role of the EfE process in supporting, implementing and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in meeting commitments to the Paris Agreement on climate change. Some suggested the EfE could play a critical role in follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

The Conference agreed on a number of outcomes and adopted a Ministerial Declaration. On the green economy, participants endorsed the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy, and launched the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E), with 36 countries and organizations submitting more than 100 voluntary commitments to advance the green transition in the region. On air quality, 28 countries and organizations made voluntary commitments to the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA). On Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), delegates adopted the Batumi Ministerial Statement on ESD and the Framework for the future implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD.

In the closing session, many participants praised the Eighth EfE Conference for its constructive spirit and collaborative atmosphere, with some saying the Conference had reconfirmed the importance of the EfE process in working towards a greener economy, cleaner air, human health, and sustainable development, among other issues.

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE PROCESS**

The UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was established in 1947 to encourage economic cooperation among member states. It currently has 56 members, including



Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister, Georgia

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 (Air Convention); the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention); the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and

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International Lakes (Water Convention); the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention); and the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention).

The First Ministerial Conference in the Environment for Europe (EfE) process was held from 21-23 June 1991 at Dobříš Castle, Czech Republic (formerly Czechoslovakia). Environment Ministers from 34 European countries, the United States, Brazil, Japan, various UN bodies, governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions attended. The Conference addressed long-term strategies toward an environmental programme for Europe, as well as ways to strengthen cooperation to protect and improve the environment. 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, from 28-30 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 for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) 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 CEE.

The Third EfE Ministerial Conference convened in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 23-25 October 1995. In the Ministerial Declaration from the meeting, ministers 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) carry out further work on the pan-European state of the environment assessment.

The Fourth EfE Ministerial Conference convened in Aarhus, Denmark, from 23-25 June 1998. The report on 'Europe's Environment: The Second Assessment' was presented at the meeting. Based on the report's 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 (EU) accession process. The Conference adopted the Aarhus Convention and two new Protocols to the Air Convention 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 21-23 May 2003. Ministers endorsed the Guidelines for Strengthening Compliance with, and Implementation of, MEAs in the UNECE region. Governments of the Carpathian region adopted the 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, Slovak Republic 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 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 to the Industrial Accidents Convention; and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, to the Aarhus Convention.

The Sixth Ministerial Conference convened in Belgrade, Serbia, from 10-12 October 2007. Ministers and high-level officials from 51 UNECE member states and the EC, 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 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 region's environmental priorities.

The Seventh Ministerial Conference took place in Astana, Kazakhstan, from 21-23 September. Ministers and heads of delegations from 44 countries in the UNECE region and the EC discussed, *inter alia*, sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems, and greening the economy. Ministers adopted a Ministerial Declaration that, among other things: reaffirmed the importance of the EfE as a unique pan-European forum; endorsed the Astana Water Action; agreed to take the lead in the transition to a green economy; invited UNECE to conduct its third cycle of the Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs); and decided to establish a regular process of pan-European environmental assessment and develop the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) across the region.

## REPORT OF THE EIGHTH EF E MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

### OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

On Wednesday morning, 8 June, Chair of the Eighth EfE Ministerial Conference, Gigla Agulashvili, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, Georgia, opened the Conference. Prime Minister Kvirikashvili, Georgia, welcomed participants, underscoring the importance of the EfE process as a platform for international cooperation on environmental issues and Georgia's commitment to a green economy and sustainable development.

UNECE Executive Secretary Christian Friis Bach called for the EfE process to continue to make tangible achievements to help implement the SDGs and take, at this Conference, bold decisions on the proposed Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) and the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA).



L-R: Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary, UNECE; Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister, Georgia; and Chair Gigla Agulashvili, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, Georgia

Archil Khabadze, Chairman, Government of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, Georgia, stressed his government's commitment to develop and implement environmental policies, such as participating in the UNDP Green Cities Programme.

Ambassador Tomáš Pernický, Czech Republic, said the SDGs provide an opportunity for common ground for Efe activities. He stressed the importance of regions in the 2030 Agenda's global environmental architecture.

Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP, highlighted the second UN Environment Assembly's (UNEA-2) resolutions on inclusive green economy and air quality and called on Efe participants to take actions to tackle air pollution and foster a green economy.



Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP

Chair Agulashvili introduced the agenda (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/1), which participants unanimously adopted.

### **THE ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS, MECHANISMS, POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS SUPPORTING THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** On Wednesday morning, 8 June, Chair Agulashvili introduced the 'Final report on the implementation of the Astana Water Action: fostering progress towards improved water management' (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/10) and 'Mapping of the Environment subprogramme processes and activities that support countries in achieving the SDGs' (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/INF/1). He invited participants to reflect on how to make best use of existing instruments and agreements to achieve the SDGs. UNECE Executive Secretary Christian Friis Bach and UNEP Deputy Executive Director Ibrahim Thiaw moderated the interactive discussion.

**CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES:** The Netherlands, on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States, called for political commitment to: decouple economic growth from environmental degradation; engage international stakeholders; create circular economies; and include a reference to the Paris Agreement in the Conference outcomes.



Khayrullo Ibodzoda, Tajikistan

Armenia shared national efforts to bridge gaps between government and academia, and highlighted joint commitments among actors. Belarus highlighted national experiences, underscoring the importance of monitoring results. Georgia emphasized harmonized legislation to develop green economies, highlighting the ESD Initiative.

Tajikistan highlighted poverty reduction, institutional reforms and the need for mechanisms to ensure stable financial investments to support sustainable development. Greece underscored the role of UNECE in monitoring SDG implementation, avoiding duplication among MEAs and raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

Bulgaria noted that its third Environmental Performance Review (EPR) is underway, underscoring its role in advancing environmental policies at the national and international levels. Kazakhstan highlighted access to safe drinking water, increased energy efficiency and agricultural productivity and stressed the need to develop and improve infrastructure and attract green technologies.

Uzbekistan underscored the importance of water resources for Central Asia's sustainable development. Portugal called for mainstreaming environmental issues at the national and international levels and stressed the role of UNECE in this regard.

Germany noted that several MEAs can contribute to SDG implementation and highlighted green economy and air quality as cross-sectoral issues.

**EDUCATION:** Croatia recognized the value of collaboration with stakeholders to support and strengthen synergies between formal, non-formal and informal education initiatives. Estonia underscored how environmental instruments can integrate work among sectors.

Sweden previewed a pilot project to inform users of environmental data in order to promote decision-making and protection of children. Czech Republic shared experiences integrating the environment in policy, suggesting a central body for UNECE to support SDG implementation.

**WATER AND HEALTH:** France referred to the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health as examples of successful cross-sectoral integration. Hungary said the Water Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health can play key roles in implementing SDG 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all). He encouraged reforming institutional architecture and pursuing pragmatic solutions and cost effective technologies and methods to achieve water-related SDGs.

Lithuania highlighted how an electrified railway connecting the Baltic States to Europe will contribute to environmentally-friendly transport and health benefits.

Republic of Moldova described her country's inter-sectoral approach for implementing MEAs and EPRs, emphasizing the importance of such approaches for implementing the SDGs and achieving green economy priorities.

Finland stressed the importance of transboundary water cooperation, including for energy and food security, saying UNECE conventions offer strong platforms for future cooperation.

Latvia said implementing different MEAs had advanced common understanding on water and the marine environment in the UNECE region.

**DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES FROM NON-GOVERNMENTAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:** European Eco Forum applauded support for public participation, highlighting a link to regional trade agreements.

Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC-CEE) recommended partnerships, increased capacity building at all levels of government and continued public participation.

Friends of the Siberian Forests and the Global Forest Coalition underscored cross-cutting impacts of eliminating deforestation and called for a refined definition of forests in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shared actions to support SDG implementation, announcing that the “Task Force for the Implementation of the Environmental Action Programme” has become the “Green Action Programme.”

**RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION:** Romania identified SDG 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns) as an enabler of the green economy and welcomed EPRs as tools to implement sustainable development.



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

Israel shared his country’s innovative technology in the agriculture, energy and water sectors, urging integrated environmental approaches and SCP. Italy supported decarbonizing the economy to achieve SCP, underscoring the role of public access to

information and public participation in achieving climate goals and the SDGs.

**INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE ASTANA WATER ACTION:** Slovenia highlighted SDG 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation), noting that industrial accidents reflect a lack of resilience and sustainable development. He said MEAs are key in both setting high environmental standards and listening to country’s needs.

Turkey shared his country’s goal of achieving 30% renewable energy and its establishment of a Ministry of Environment and Urbanization to promote coordinated action on environment and urban issues.

#### **KEEPING THE PAN-EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT UNDER REVIEW**

On Wednesday afternoon, 8 June, Session Chair Agulashvili introduced the ‘Report on progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in support of

regular reporting in the pan-European region’ (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/8) and the ‘Summary of key findings and policy messages of the European regional assessment of the GEO-6’ (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/9), among other documents.

Andrei Kovkhuto, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Belarus, described SEIS’s development, saying increased access to environmental information helps to fulfill MEA obligations. He highlighted challenges, including data quality.

Hans Bruyninckx, Executive Director, the European Environment Agency (EEA), presented EEA milestones in implementing SEIS, highlighting data traceability and transparency. He said electronic reporting facilitates timely access for policy makers and the public, supporting joint work.

**COUNTRY TESTIMONIALS:** Georgia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Belarus, and others discussed the value of SEIS and the GEO-6 in a video presentation.

The US applauded efforts under SEIS, stressing future developments should ensure environmental data integration with existing social and economic data to support national monitoring of SDG implementation.



Gunter Liebel, Director General of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of Austria, presented on SEIS and air quality

Austria presented its experience with SEIS for monitoring air quality and making information publicly available, suggesting targeted capacity building activities and partnership among countries.

Republic of Moldova offered views on SEIS in support of a green economy, highlighting the need for comparable green growth and environmental indicators and the importance of inter-sectoral

cooperation.

Kazakhstan highlighted his country’s SDG implementation activities related to water, renewable energy and climate change and promotion of SEIS principles.

**GEO-6 LAUNCH:** Jan Dusik, Director, UNEP Regional Office for Europe, and UNECE Executive Secretary Christian Friis Bach launched GEO-6 assessment for the pan-European region. Dusik stressed clean air and water, and resilient ecosystems as critical for a healthy planet and healthy people, calling for closing resource loops, among other solutions. Bach said GEO-6 is one component in establishing a regular reporting process across the UNECE region, underscoring the report as a foundation for improving environmental processes, identifying emerging issues and enhancing science-policy dialogue.

Matthew Billot, UNEP, identified air quality as the largest health risk to the pan-European population, saying lifestyle patterns, consumption and transport produce the biggest impact. He concluded environmental challenges in the pan-European region are increasingly complex and require coalitions among actors to agree on pathways to tackle risks.

**INTERACTIVE MINISTERIAL PANEL DISCUSSION:** Cristiana Pasca Palmer, Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests, Romania, moderated the panel.

Norbert Kurilla, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Slovak Republic, underscored the importance of analytical data, informing that Slovak Republic has created an Institute for Environmental Policy to promote such efforts.

Slaven Dobrović, Minister of Environment and Nature Protection, Croatia, called for harmonizing environmental spatial data according to agreed guidelines and suggested the pan-European region establish a geospatial information pillar under SEIS.

During discussions, many welcomed GEO-6. Kyrgyzstan and the EU reiterated the importance of information access for governments and the public. The Russian Federation called for clarification in the report's conclusions on exposure to air pollution, cautioning that using estimates can lead to inaccuracies.

Chair Agulashvili concluded by highlighting the importance of the GEO-6 for policy, transboundary cooperation and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

### **TOWARDS A NEW SOCIETY: 10 YEARS OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

On Wednesday afternoon, 8 June, Session Co-Chair Alexandre Jejelava, Minister of Education and Science, Georgia, opened the session by introducing the 'Draft Batumi Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development' (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/L.2) and the 'Framework for the future implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD' (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/11). He shared ESD achievements in Georgia, *inter alia*: standards for preschool teachers to increase general awareness; and funding for vocation and higher education for scientific studies.

Session Co-Chair Teimuraz Murgulia, First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, Georgia, said education initiatives should raise awareness of climate change impacts and called for an internationally binding agreement on ESD.

The Co-Chairs welcomed the keynote addresses and presentations. Costas Kadis, Minister of Education and Culture, Cyprus, outlined actions to bring ESD forward, including prioritization at ministry level and financial investment. He invited all UNECE education Ministers to the Ministerial Meeting for the Adoption of the Action Plan for the ESD

Mediterranean Strategy in Cyprus in December 2016. Sharon Dijkma, Minister for the Environment, the Netherlands, focused on the importance of formal, non-formal and informal education for the transition to sustainable development and its role in understanding complex environmental challenges and in dealing with uncertainty and changing values. Qian Tang, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, via video address, said the Global Action Programme on ESD aims to contribute to the SDGs as a follow up to the UN Decade of ESD and urged strengthened collaboration.

Gerald Farthing, Chair, UNECE Steering Committee on ESD, shared key findings in implementing the UNECE Strategy for ESD, highlighting secure leadership and political will and allocating budget and human resources as 'game-changers' in advancing progress.

Belgium, Romania, Belarus, Ukraine, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Greece, Kyrgyzstan, European Eco Forum, REC-CEE, and UNEP made interventions, with some sharing national actions, noting stakeholders' roles and pledging support for the Batumi Ministerial Statement on ESD.

Co-Chair Jejelava invited delegates to adopt the 'Draft Batumi Ministerial Statement on ESD' and the 'Framework for the future implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD,' to which participants agreed.

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

On Thursday morning, 9 June, Marc Chardonens, State Secretary for the Environment, Director, the Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland, opened the session, introducing the pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/6) and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/13) as tools to commit to a green economy while contributing to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, noting Switzerland's support.

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



Panelists of the session on "Towards a New Society: 10 Years of Education for Sustainable Development"

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

In a series of video testimonials, Belarus, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary, Sweden, Georgia, and others shared their commitments and national actions towards a green economy.



Andrei Kovkhuto, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Belarus

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

policies that suit country contexts.

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

Alexandra Carvalho, Secretary-General of Environment, Portugal, on behalf of the Chair of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy, presented the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and said it aims to enhance economic progress while reducing environmental risks and promoting human well-being and social equity. She described the Framework's regional architecture, which builds on the SDG framework to create a clear, predictable and coordinated mechanism to develop effective policies, deploy financing and measure national efforts over time.

The Conference endorsed the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy by acclamation. Chardonens launched the BIG-E, noting that 34 countries and organizations had already submitted more than 100 voluntary commitments. Two countries will submit their voluntary commitments after the launch, bringing the total participants to 36 countries and organizations.

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

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

On Thursday morning, 9 June, two parallel sessions of a multi-stakeholder roundtable on greening the economy in the pan-European region took place. Interventions addressed: opportunities and challenges; paths to sustainability; green incentives; and cooperation.

Slaven Dobrović, Minister of Environment and Nature Protection, Croatia, and UNECE Executive Secretary Christian Friis Bach moderated session one. Cristiana Pasca Palmer, Minister of Environment, Waters and Forests, Romania, and Dusik, UNEP Regional Director, moderated session two.

On opportunities, delegates named, *inter alia*: identification of positive effects to help 'sell' the green economy concept, such as green job creation and innovations; increased



Moderator Slaven Dobrović, Minister of Environment and Nature Protection, Croatia

engagement with investors; research and development of green technologies and circular economic models; use of regional cooperation tools like EPR, the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on SCP, the UNECE Strategy for ESD; improvement of resource productivity; platforms to share experiences and lessons learned; and improvement of societal awareness and acceptance.

Switzerland announced

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

Participants acknowledged that foundational changes, rather than marginal changes, are needed in economy and society, stressing that adjustments and different approaches will need to account for different interests and mentalities among countries. Several participants shared national examples of actions and commitments for sustainable development, citing challenges to further progress, including limited financial resources, policy fragmentation and fossil fuel subsidies. The World Bank raised the challenge of ensuring inclusivity of populations dependent on natural resources. Other participants challenged policymakers to integrate accounting, regular review and long-term analysis of the environmental and social impacts of economic policies as necessary steps to a successful green economy.

On paths to sustainability, participants drew attention to the water, energy and food nexus as both a challenge and opportunity, calling for increased resource efficiency. Delegates reflected on successful approaches for efficient use of natural resources, highlighting, among others: reuse and recycling; strengthened producer responsibility; eco-labeling; new business models, such as collaborative consumption; the role of art in promoting sustainable value chains in the fashion industry; and transitions away from fossil fuels.

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

On cooperation, delegates noted the role of civil society and recommended mapping and monitoring progress and engaging stakeholders, including through partnerships with business, inter-ministerial cooperation and awareness raising efforts. Others suggested building upon existing regional mechanisms and recommended a Forum for monitoring progress on BIG-E.

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

On Thursday afternoon, 9 June, Kestutis Trečiokas, Minister of Environment, Lithuania, Session Chair, introduced the relevant documentation: 'Improving air quality for a



The session was moderated by Kestutis Treciokas, Minister of Environment, Lithuania

better environment and human health' (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/5); 'BACA' (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/7); 'Towards cleaner air: scientific assessment report



Zsuzsanna Jakab, Regional Director for Europe, World Health Organization (WHO), delivered a keynote address

2016-Summary for policymakers' (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/12); and 'Seven messages on air pollution for ministers (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/INF/2). Treciokas highlighted linkages among clean air, climate and energy policies as well as with the 2030 Agenda.

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

Andrei Kovkhuto, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Belarus, shared national actions to address air pollution and improve air quality, including efforts to reduce motor vehicle transport, improve traffic management, increase public transport, and promote bicycle use. He said Belarus has completed its third EPR and is preparing to join several UNECE Protocols, including Protocols addressing acidification, heavy metals, ozone, and persistent organic pollutants.

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

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

Jan Olssen, Environment Ambassador, Sweden, presented the BACA, urging endorsement to intensify collective efforts and utilize solutions to address long-term risks. He shared a statement from the Nordic Council of Ministers to welcome and support the BACA, recognizing its benefits on regional and national scales.

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

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

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

On Thursday afternoon, 9 June, two parallel sessions convened on a multi-stakeholder roundtable on improving air quality for a better environment and human health. Interventions addressed: pollutants and policies; sectors and funding; public awareness and participation; and cooperation.

Maria Krautzberger, President, German Environment Agency, and Simon Upton, Director of Environment, OECD, moderated session one. Ostap Semerak, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Ukraine, and Dusik, UNEP, moderated session two.

Upton emphasized that an OECD study on the economic consequences of outdoor air pollution concluded that, unless action is taken, outdoor air pollution could cost one percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), around US\$2.6 trillion annually as a result of sick days, medical bills and reduce agricultural outputs.

On pollutants and policies, participants highlighted particulate matter, nitrogen oxide, ground-level ozone, black carbon, methane, and toxic pollutants in the air, such as pesticides, as threats to human health and as posing high risks. Several noted that monitoring systems and pollutant registers are lacking.

On sectors, participants identified several sources of concentrated air pollution, including transport, agriculture, indoor air pollution from local heating, and open burning of plastic and waste.

On sources of funding, delegates discussed both national schemes and the need for international financing support. European Eco Forum emphasized the application of the polluter pays principle. Several countries shared national strategies utilizing financial instruments to address pollution through taxes on pollution, rewards for energy efficiency and subsidies. Czech Republic highlighted its State Environmental Fund, which receives financial resources from regional funds, state budgets and fees collected by polluters. He identified the need to develop a strong linkage with the private sector as a challenge.

On public awareness and participation, delegates discussed communication efforts and stressed the need for full engagement of an informed and empowered public, with a special focus on vulnerable groups, such as children and pregnant women. Several interventions emphasized the

importance of transparency and free access to information on pollutants and identified education as making a positive contribution. The US shared a flagship programme, 'Air Now,' that provides access to data on air quality to users through an online platform.

All interventions emphasized the importance of international cooperation, stressing the complex transboundary effects of air pollution and linkages to climate change. Many countries shared commitments and actions under a range of instruments and platforms, including BACA, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, relevant UNECE Conventions and Protocols, and the Rio Conventions. Some highlighted efforts to address air pollution under the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and at UNEA-2.

The Vice Chair of the Executive Body of the Air Convention reminded participants that annual contributions from parties are necessary to the Convention's work, stressing it does not receive outside financing.

### REPORTING ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE DISCUSSIONS UNDER THE THEMATIC SESSIONS

On Friday morning, 10 June, participants heard reports from Thursday's multi-stakeholder roundtables on the green economy and air quality and human health.

Green economy: Marc Chardonens, State Secretary for



Maria Krautzberger, President, German Environment Agency

the Environment, Director, the Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland, reported on key messages, including: the need for strong political will to overcome challenges; support for natural resource accounting, regular review and long term

analysis; inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral integration into legal frameworks and mechanisms; deployment of ESD and increased public awareness to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation; provision of public funding to leverage and scale up market based instruments and removal of harmful subsidies; identification of the significance of the water food and energy nexus; and commitment by Central Asia to reduce water intake and increase resource efficiency.

Participants made a number of interventions, including requests to address *inter alia*: expansion of the reference to Central Asia to include energy efficiency in all sectors, including transport and management of waste and cooperation of civil society; inclusion of natural capital accounting; role of research and innovation; and political will from countries with large oil and gas resources.

**AIR QUALITY:** Maria Krautzberger, President, German Environment Agency, presented the outcomes, noting that participants had recognized the significant economic impacts of air pollution, including on human health and agricultural productivity, but concluding that, in spite of progress done, serious challenges remain to be addressed. She highlighted:

particulate matter, nitrogen oxide, ground-level ozone, methane, black carbon, and greenhouse gases (GHGs) as the main pollutants. She identified transport, energy, residential wood burning and agriculture as the main sectors that are sources of pollutants. She further noted that participants had emphasized the need for: special attention to vulnerable groups like children and pregnant women; monitoring systems; improved engagement with the public through outreach, awareness raising and information dissemination; and international cooperation on transboundary air pollution. She concluded by observing participants' wide support for UNECE's contribution, particularly the Air Convention and its Protocols and the BACA.

European Eco Forum emphasized: addressing indoor air pollution from pollutants in construction materials; education of the public; and monitoring and modeling of health impacts.

Uzbekistan suggested the outcomes include reference to air pollution in Central Asia caused by contaminants spread by the drying of the Aral Sea.

### ADOPTION OF CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

**ADOPTION OF MINISTERIAL DECLARATION:** On Friday morning, 10 June, Chair Agulashvili invited delegates to adopt the Batumi Ministerial Declaration, 'Greener, cleaner, smarter!' (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/L.1/Rev.1), to which delegates agreed by acclamation.

Many participants welcomed the Ministerial Declaration and praised pan-European cooperation. The EU and its Member States called for implementation and action to achieve tangible results

and underscored the role of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement in providing renewed momentum for action in the UNECE region. The Russian Federation supported the Declaration, describing it as a well-balanced document.

Many stressed the EfE process remains vital. The EU and its Member States said EfE remains a "unique and lovely platform" to exchange ideas and experiences and address critical challenges. The US recalled the EfE reform process, saying it had resulted in more focused efforts during the Conference, which he welcomed. European Eco Forum expressed concern about implementation of Conference agreements, saying her organization will monitor country progress and propose legally binding instruments at the Ninth EfE Conference in 2021. Observing that the EfE process has historically focused on eastern Europe, the European Eco Forum recommended focusing efforts on Europe as a whole.

On the green economy, UNEP described the BIG-E as an unprecedented commitment and an example to the world.

On air quality, the US urged countries to prioritize efforts to address air quality and incorporate them into development planning. The WHO welcomed the Conference outcome on air



Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary, UNECE





A view of the room from the stage

quality, saying it brings the world closer to achieving its public health, economic and social development objectives into a coherent whole.

Following the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, UNECE Executive Secretary Christian Friis Bach introduced and signed a Joint Statement in support of Efforts on the Reforestation and Afforestation in the Aral Sea Basin, part of the third Aral Sea Basin Programme (ASBP-3), between UNECE and the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. The statement draws attention to the need for action and international assistance and donors to improve the environment and human health in the Aral Sea region.

**FINAL OUTCOME:** In the Batumi Ministerial Declaration, Ministers and heads of delegations, *inter alia*:

- confirm commitment to improving environmental protection and advancing sustainable development in the ECE region, taking into account the renewed momentum provided by the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement;
- value the EfE process as a unique pan-European platform for addressing environmental challenges, improving environmental governance, promoting environmental and cross-sectoral cooperation and information sharing among countries, and as a pillar of sustainable development in the region for 25 years;
- reiterate the importance of the active inclusion of civil society in decision-making to improve the environment;
- reiterate commitment to take the lead in the transition to a green economy, as a key path to sustainable development and poverty eradication, and to direct investments and trade to support a green and inclusive economy;
- commit to implementing the SDGs;
- state intention to: work towards the full internalization of externalities that cause the loss of or damage to natural capital, including through measuring costs and using economic instruments; enhance ecosystems and ecosystem services as part of ecological infrastructure, and improve the sustainable use of natural resources; foster a circular economy, transparent and responsible business practice and eco-innovation; and work towards cleaner and more resource-efficient production processes;
- further state their intention to: develop human capital for green and decent jobs; provide access to essential services; and promote effective public participation;
- reaffirm the importance of further strengthening and scaling-up ESD;
- endorse the voluntary Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and invite ECE member States and other stakeholders to implement it; and welcome the BIG-E, which consists of voluntary commitments to operationalize the Framework;
- express concern that pollution, both outdoor and indoor, remains the largest environmental health threat and an important risk factor for major non-communicable diseases;
- commit to improving air quality for a better environment and human health, including by integrating air pollution reduction measures into financial and development policies and other sectoral policies; and cooperating to address transboundary impacts and enhanced policy coordination and coherence at the national and regional levels;
- endorse the voluntary BACA and welcome the initiatives launched by interested countries and other stakeholders aimed at improving air quality and protecting public health and ecosystems;
- commit to ensuring adequate monitoring of and public access to relevant information on air pollution, in particular ground-level monitoring;
- acknowledge the contribution of the ECE EPR Programme over the past 20 years as an effective and practical policy tool; highlight the EPR Programme's role in supporting the achievement and monitoring of SDGs in the pan-European region; and encourage countries to benefit from the EPR Programme by undertaking further reviews;
- invite countries to continue their efforts and to further develop their national information systems to have SEIS in place in the countries of Europe and Central Asia by 2021;
- welcome the launch of the GEO-6 as the regular pan-European environmental assessment;
- acknowledge progress in implementing the Astana Water Action, and encourage interested countries and organizations to continue using this initiative according to their needs;



UNECE Executive Secretary Bach signed a Joint Statement in support of Efforts on the Reforestation and Afforestation in the Aral Sea Basin, part of the third Aral Sea Basin Programme (ASBP-3), between UNECE and the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.

- reiterate the importance of civil society participation in decision-making to improve the environment and promote sustainable development; and
- invite the Committee on Environmental Policy to convene in 2018 a mid-term review to assess progress in the implementation of the main outcomes of this Conference.

#### CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

On Friday morning, 10 June, the Chair presented a Chair's Summary (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2/Add.3), which summarizes the main discussion and outcomes of the meeting.

UNECE Executive Secretary Christian Friis Bach described the Eighth Efe Conference as the culmination of five years of joint work since the Seventh Efe in Astana and highlighted the Conference's many "tangible and solid" outcomes. He reflected that the Efe process has played a role in translating the SDGs into concrete policies, actions and plans and expressed hope that the Efe process will also contribute to follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Bach concluded by thanking Georgia and all participants.

Chair Agulashvili thanked participants and praised the Conference results, expressing hope that their implementation will contribute to achieving the SDGs and enabling future generations to live in a healthy environment. He said Georgia stands ready to implement the SDGs and the Conference outcomes.

Chair Agulashvili declared the Batumi Conference officially closed at 1:04 pm.

#### UPCOMING MEETINGS

**Resilient Cities 2016: 7th Annual Global Forum on Urban Resilience and Adaptation:** Organized by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and co-hosted with the City of Bonn, Germany, this Forum will focus on a range of issues related to urban resilience and climate change adaptation. **dates:** 6-8 July 2016 **venue:** Gustav-Stresemann-Institut **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** ICLEI **phone:** +49 228/976 299-28 **e-mail:** [resilient.cities@iclei.org](mailto:resilient.cities@iclei.org) **www:** <http://resilientcities2016.iclei.org>

**Thematic Reviews for an Integrated Follow-Up & Review of the 2030 Agenda:** Organized by IASS and partners, this invitation-only high-level event will be held ahead of the HLPF and will aim to discuss the potential framing and set-up of a thematic review in support of the HLPF, from a natural

resources perspective. **dates:** 7-8 July 2016 **venue:** DoubleTree by Hilton Metropolitan Hotel **location:** New York City, US **contact:** Ivonne Lobos Alva **phone:** +49 331 288 224 31 **e-mail:** [Ivonne.LobosAlva@iass-potsdam.de](mailto:Ivonne.LobosAlva@iass-potsdam.de)

**Second Global Conference on Health and Climate; Building Healthier Societies through implementation of the Paris Agreement:** The WHO and the Government of France are organizing this meeting to showcase how the public health community will support the implementation of the Paris Agreement, with the aim of building healthier and more sustainable societies. **dates:** 7-8 July 2016 **location:** Paris, France **e-mail:** [maierom@who.int](mailto:maierom@who.int) **www:** <http://www.who.int/globalchange/conferences/en/>

**HLPF 2016:** The fourth HLPF, convening under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), will take place on 11-15 July 2016, followed by a three-day Ministerial Meeting on 18-20 July 2016. The theme of the 2016 session will be "Ensuring that no one is left behind." **dates:** 11-20 July 2016 **venue:** UN Headquarters **location:** New York City, US **contact:** Marion Barthelemy **phone:** +1 (212) 963-4005 **e-mail:** [barthelemy1@un.org](mailto:barthelemy1@un.org) **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

**Resumed OEWG 37, OEWG 38 and ExMOP 3 to the Montreal Protocol:** These meetings are expected to focus on efforts to conclude a hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) Amendment to the Protocol in 2016. **dates:** 15-23 July 2016 **location:** Vienna, Austria **contact:** Ozone Secretariat **e-mail:** [ozone.info@unep.org](mailto:ozone.info@unep.org) **www:** <http://ozone.unep.org/en/meetings>

**Transition to Green Economy:** The Conference is organized in the framework of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU to focus on SC5. **dates:** 6-7 September 2016 **venue:** Bratislava Slovakia **www:** <http://www.czelo.cz/en/horizon-2020/part-iii-societal-challenges/climate-action-environment-resource-efficiency-and-raw-materials/events/conference-transition-to-green-economy-sk-pres>

**Fourth Annual Conference of the Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP):** Meeting under the theme 'Transforming Development through Inclusive Green Growth,' the conference is part of Global Green Growth Week 2016. It will highlight research and policy considerations affecting pro-poor inclusive green growth and strengthen the GGKP objective of delivering pro-poor, socially inclusive green growth through best policy practices and strategically aligned efforts by international organizations. The Conference will



L-R: Nino Sharashidze, UNECE Secretariat; Angela Sochirca, UNECE Secretariat; Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary, UNECE; Chair Gigla Agulashvili, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, Georgia; Zaal Lomtadze, UNECE Secretariat; and Oksana Rott, UNECE Secretariat

focus on links to policy outcomes and practical applications for delivering inclusive green growth in developing countries and emerging economies. **dates:** 6-7 September 2016 **venue:** International Convention Centre **location:** Jeju City, Jeju, Republic of Korea **e-mail:** [conference@ggkp.org](mailto:conference@ggkp.org) **www:** <http://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/event/conference2016>

**Industrial Efficiency 2016:** The European Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ECEEE) and partners will hold its Industrial Efficiency 2016 Conference to bring together policy makers, energy managers and other decision makers in energy using industries, academics and experts in energy efficiency financing. **phone:** +46 8 673 11 30 **e-mail:** [eceee@eceee.org](mailto:eceee@eceee.org) **www:** <http://www.eceee.org/industry>, <http://www.eceee.org/industry/programme>

**European Ecosystem Services Conference:** The European Ecosystem Services Conference will meet under the theme, 'Helping nature to help us,' and will focus on the role that healthy ecosystems play in supporting human well-being and the protection of nature. The meeting agenda includes: keynote presentations from policy, practice and science; a networking day where businesses, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers will showcase their work; interactive sessions to demonstrate working examples of ecosystem services and natural capital; field excursions to see ecosystem services in action; and scientific sessions. The conference is being organized by the EU- projects ECOPLAN and the Ecosystem Services Partnership, among others, and hosted by the University of Antwerp. **dates:** 19-23 September 2016 **venue:** University of Antwerp **location:** Antwerp, Belgium **contact:** Martine van Weelden/Iskra Konovska, Ecosystem Services Partnership **phone:** +31 (0) 317 763 990 **e-mail:** [conference@es-partnership.org](mailto:conference@es-partnership.org) **www:** <http://www.esconference2016.eu/86157#.VygYo2P6taQEevents>

**UNFCCC COP 22 and CMP 12:** The 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 22) to the UNFCCC and the 12<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 12) will be held in Bab Ighli, Marrakech, Morocco. **dates:** 7-18 November 2016 **location:** Marrakesh, Morocco **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228 815-1000 **email:** [secretariat@unfccc.int](mailto:secretariat@unfccc.int) **www:** [http://unfccc.int/meetings/marrakech\\_nov\\_2016/meeting/9567.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/marrakech_nov_2016/meeting/9567.php)

**Fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health:** This meeting will address the UNECE Water Convention's Protocol on Water and Health. **dates:** 14-16 November 2016 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** UNECE Secretariat

### Global Workshop on the Water-Food-Energy

**Ecosystems Nexus:** This meeting will address the intersections of the water, food, energy and ecosystems nexus. **dates:** 6-7 December 2016 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** UNECE Secretariat **e-mail:** [info.ece@unece.org](mailto:info.ece@unece.org) **www:** <http://www.unece.org/info/events/meetings-and-events.html#/>

**Twenty-second session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy:** The 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy will convene in Geneva, Switzerland. **dates:** 7-9 December 2016 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** UNECE Secretariat **e-mail:** [info.ece@unece.org](mailto:info.ece@unece.org) **www:** <http://www.unece.org/info/events/meetings-and-events.html#/>

## GLOSSARY

BACA	Batumi Action for Cleaner Air
BIG-E	Batumi Initiative on the Green Economy
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EfE	Environment for Europe
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Environment Agency
EPR	Environmental Performance Review
EU	European Union
GEO-6	Global Environmental Outlook
MEAs	Multilateral environmental agreements
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
REC-CEE	Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe
SEIS	Shared Environmental Information System
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNECE	UN Economic Commission for Europe
UNEA	UN Environment Assembly
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
WHO	World Health Organization