

ECE Regional Implementation Forum

15 – 16 January 2004

Summary Report

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to the decision of the 11th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development inviting Regional Economic Commission to coordinate and contribute to CSD work programme through the organisation of regional implementation meetings, the Economic Commission for Europe incorporated the agenda of CSD into its discussions during the First Regional Implementation Forum for Sustainable Development for the ECE region. The meeting took place from 15 – 16 January 2004 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, and was attended by 300 delegates.

The purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation with respect to water, sanitation and human settlements within the ECE region – identifying challenges, obstacles and constraints, as well as opportunity, lessons learned and recommendations for progress. Further review took place on cross-cutting issues relevant to the region, for example; production and consumption patterns, governance and information for decision making.

The meeting was chaired by the Hon Margaret Beckett, Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (UK). The Vice-Chairs were as follows:

Sanitation:	Mr. Zaal Lomtadze, Minister of Environment (Georgia)
Water:	Mr. Philippe Roch, Secretary of State, Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape (Switzerland)
Human Settlements:	Ms. Elena Szolgayova, Senior Advisor to the State Secretary, Ministry Construction and Regional Development (Slovakia)

REPORT OF THE MEETING

Human Settlements

Principle focus was on the achievement of the JPOI target:

“11. By 2020, achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, as proposed in the “Cities without slums” initiative. This would include actions at all levels to:...”

Within the ECE Region activities are primarily focused on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the 21st Century

Progress

- Strong growth with traditional market economies;
- National Sustainable Development Strategies;
- Partnerships initiated by local authorities;
- Policy developments in: land-use planning, strategic planning, urban regeneration, and land administration;
- Sustainable land-use planning;
- Urban regeneration;
- Government led land administration systems;
- Introduction of laws to regulate the operation of homeowners’ associations for the management and maintenance of privatised multi-family housing, in most countries in transition;
- Sustainable infrastructure focused on competitive decentralised models;
- Introduction of integrated management systems;
- Limited implementation of energy efficient measures;
- Provision of adequate and affordable housing.

Constraints and Obstacles**ECE Region:**

- Number of people living at risk of poverty, facing consistent poverty and classified as poor is a significant social and political challenge;
- Number of refugees and immigrants is placing pressure on provision of adequate housing and services, and is contributing to social exclusion;
- Regional social and economic inequalities have increased;
- Municipalities in countries-in-transition have become crisis managers with limited fiscal powers;
- Lack of master plans in economies in transition to promote sustainable land-use-planning;
- Constraints on the implementation of modern land administration systems;
 - Ineffective control due to lack of capacity
 - Incomprehensive land policy
 - Lack of transparency in land restitution and privatisation

- Growth of illegal settlements;
- Increasing disparity between income and cost of housing;
- Increase in homelessness;
- Discontinuation in the provision of new social housing; privatisation of social housing;
- Inability to upgrade common facilities and structure

Global Level:

- Increase in slum dwellers;
- Financial constraints;
- Lack of access to land and credit for poor countries;
- Lack of political representation of the poor;
- Unequal access to information and communications technology;
- Ineffective governance and sustainable management of resources.

Opportunities and Challenges**ECE Region:**

- Increase good governance, accountability and transparency of government actions;
- Emphasise sustainable housing reforms and social equality;
- Promote good land administration for social equality;
- Provide strategic investment as an incentive towards behavioural change and consumption patterns;
- Integrate urban perspectives into national sustainable development strategies;
- Encourage institution-wide effort to address urban and local government issues;
- Promote the multi-dimensional agenda of urban sustainability;
- Foster and integrated urban planning approach;
- Support participation of local government, private-public partnerships and empower civil society to contribute to implementation;
- Ensure sustainable consumption of natural resources in construction;
- Encourage government involvement to facilitate investment in the rehabilitation of existing stock;
- Improve asset management;

- Assist marginalized groups in gaining access to social housing.

Global Level:

- Mobilise international support through ODA;
- Focus on the implementation of policies that facilitate sustainable urbanisation;
- Address the absence of comprehensive and inclusive policies for capacity-building of local and community-based institutions;
- Establish mechanisms to facilitate technology transfer, diffusion of knowledge and achievements and good practices;
- Facilitate public private partnerships in building and managing sustainable communities;
- Focus on the implementation of innovative financing to leverage private resources in the provision of adequate water, sanitation, public transport and waste management; mobilise public sector efforts in creating an enabling institutional environment to attract foreign investment;

Water and Sanitation

The primary focus of the discussions was on the following targets:

- “To halve by 2015 the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water”
- “To halve the proportion of people with access to basic sanitation by 2015”
- “To prepare water resource management and water efficiency plans by 2005”

Progress

- Establishment of comprehensive framework of water management;
- Adoption of an integrated approach;
- Improvement in regulation and permit condition enforcement;
- Creation of new national bodies;
- Elevation of public awareness;
- Increase in public participation in decision making;
- Enhanced role of water users in water resource management;
- Improved water quality in Western Europe and EU accession countries;
- Reduction in the use of fertilizers and pesticides;
- Innovative application of watershed protection;
- Increased ratification of UNECE Water Convention
- International cooperation fostered by the Environment for Europe process

Challenges

- 120 million people still have lack of access to safe drinking water
- Water supply to rural areas – Central Asia/Caucasus often disrupted
- In EECCA many inland and coastal waters still polluted
- Water pollution from microbiological and other contaminates
- Water-related diseases
- 31% of Europe’s population live in areas of high water stress
- Over-exploitation of drinking water sources has significant environmental implications
- Water wastage
- Water quantity problems (floods/droughts)
- Transboundary water issues, in particular ecosystem management.
- Inequitable distribution of water

WATER

Constraints and Obstacles

- Investment and funding;
- Infrastructure deterioration;
- Insufficient water utility revenues;
- Insufficient utility companies in EECCA and some in South-East Europe;
- Current pricing regime;
- Lack of date due to deterioration of monitoring systems;
- Ineffective/out of date monitoring systems;

Opportunities and Challenges

- Integrated water resource management across the whole of a catchment area is a precondition to meeting the 2015 water and sanitation target;
- Integrated water management and sanitation schemes with strong stakeholder engagement, gender sensitivity and pro-poor emphasis;
- Effective protection of groundwater aquifers and surface waters;
- Adoption of sustainable production and consumption policies;

- Recognise the ecosystem approach in water management;
- Development and use of innovative financial mechanisms;
- Institutional strengthening;
- Development and implementation of best practice approaches;
- Establishment and operation of information systems able to provide policy-relevant information;
- Securing human and financial resources for a step-wise rehabilitation of deteriorated water monitoring networks in EECCA and the Balkans;
- Provision of access to information and public participation;
- Reinforcing international water governance by an open ended global mechanism;
- Strengthening and establishing joint bodies for transboundary waters;
- Developing bilateral and multilateral agreements on transboundary and integrated water resource management.

SANITATION

Opportunities and Challenges

- Development and periodic review of national/local targets;
- Provision of an adequate standard of sanitation to protect human health and the environment;
- Improve maintenance of collective drinking-water supply and sanitation;
- Equitable access to water;
- Policy reform in countries of transition to maintain, operate and upgrade sanitation infrastructure;
- Creation of an appropriate mix of legal, regulatory, administrative and economic frameworks to enable all stakeholders to contribute to improving sanitation and reducing water-related diseases;
- Development of action plans for economies in transition to improve water supply and waste-water treatment infrastructure;
- Continuation in countries in transition of the reform of the municipal water sectors, decentralisation, transformation of water utilities, and phase-out of subsidies;
- Consideration of the social acceptance of water sector reform;
- Development of innovative approaches to address the issue of sanitation from a user's perspective to encourage investment in sanitation;
- Enable multi-stakeholder partnerships to increase resources available for sanitation, ecosystem protection and commitment to provide affordable water to the poorest.

INTER-LINKAGES

Delegates were asked to focus on assessing failures in the region, identifying the obstacles and challenges, and transforming words into action. The following issues arose.

Opportunities and Recommendations

- Identify how best practice in each thematic area can be harnessed to full effect across all thematic areas;
- Need to reach a common understanding of the concept of IWRM;
- Need for good donor coordination;
- Arctic Human Development Report and Arctic Climate Impact are good examples of monitoring and reporting;
- Development of sustainable development education schemes;
- Focus and draw upon sub-regional activities;
- Need to address new technical issues;
- Need for development of effective regional sustainable development strategies;
- Need for progress reporting; structural indicators; involvement of national consultative councils to oversee the implementation of strategies;
- Greater focus on NSSD and PRSPs;
- Greater focus on sustainable production and consumption;
- Need to mainstream gender equity into policy development;
- Development of more effective and transparent partnerships;
- Need to address gender and poverty issues in relation to employment;
- Promote good governance: “*Global Campaign for Good Urban Governance*”;
- Enhance capacity building: “*Localising Agenda 21: Action Planning for Sustainable Urban Development*”;
- Improve monitoring: “*Global Urban Observatory*” – “*Local Urban Observatory*”;
- Improve public-private partnerships: “*Cities Alliance*” programme;
- Adoption of the ‘ecosystem approach’;
- Making MDG 7 and the 2010 biodiversity target a priority;
- Improved coherence between trade and sustainable development, through the strengthening of international governance.

IMPRESSIONS

The meeting was well attended by Governments, UN Agencies and intergovernmental agencies, but extremely poorly attended by other stakeholder groups. This is both a symptom of a lack of awareness of the regional process, and a lack of engagement in the CSD as a whole.

The objective of the regional implementation meetings is to have an interactive dialogue to identify the challenges, constraints and obstacles to implementing Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the JPOI, as well as providing lessons learned, achievements and recommendations for further action. However, the session consisted of pre-drafted three minute statements from governments and stakeholders. Whilst these raised priority issues which can now be documented as a formal submission to the CSD Secretariat, no significant level of interaction was attained.

It is arguable that as a result the session was superfluous, and that the same outcome could have been reached through the submission of written statements to the ECE Secretariat. Reflecting on the statements above, there is little new information being captured or raised. This is most likely due to the time allocated for the preparation of national reports and stakeholder input, but also the fact that national reports submitted during the WSSD process were used as the basis of this reporting procedure. In order to move on, innovative methods of monitoring and reporting on implementation must be identified.

The level of engagement of those stakeholders attending was good. Representatives of Civil Society were given equal opportunity to take the floor as governments. This was an effective way of both encouraging stakeholder participation, and enabling bi-laterals between stakeholders and governments/agencies.

Greater consistency in the structure and form of the Regional Implementation Forums needs to be achieved, both in terms of the event and the resulting documents. Without this level of coherence it will be difficult to achieve a results based approach, due to incomparability.

RESOURCES

Documents for the ECE meeting can be found at;

http://www.unece.org/env/wgso/Sustainable%20Development/sd_forum.jan2004.htm

Other Regional Implementation Meetings:

West Asia

Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) under the league of Arab States: Hosted by JCEDAR, 19 – 21 October 2003, Cairo, Egypt.

<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd12/WestAsiaRimReport.pdf>

Asia and Pacific

Asia and Pacific Regional Implementation Meeting: Hosted by ESCAP, 27 – 28 October 2003, Bangkok, Thailand.

<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd12/BangkokRimReport.pdf>

Africa

Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water: Hosted by ECA, 8 – 12 December, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd12/panafcon_rimreport_wsh.pdf

Latin America and the Caribbean:

Fourth Meeting of Environment Ministers of Latin America and the Caribbean: Hosted by UNEP/ROLEC, 20 -25 November, 2003, Panama City, Panama.

<http://www.pnuma.org/panama/pan142003i.htm>

Meeting of Ministers and Maximum Authorities of the Housing and Settlements of Latin America and the Caribbean:

Ibero – American Meeting of Ministers and Maximum Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector: 5 – 7 November, La Paz, Bolivia

<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd12/Informe%20Foro%20MINURIV%202003%20ing.pdf>

<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd12/La%20Paz%20Declaration%20Minurvi%20ing.pdf>

International Seminar on the Outcomes of the Johannesburg Summit: Hosted by ECLAC, 17 – 18 November, 2003, Santiago, Chile.

http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd12/eclac_santiagomtg_agenda.pdf