

# **Chair's Summary of the fifth informal meeting between representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the Committee on Environmental Policy**

held on 27 October 2014 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva

The fifth informal meeting between representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP)<sup>1</sup> was chaired by Mr. Michel Amand, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutants Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR Protocol) until July 2014.<sup>2</sup>

The key objectives of this meeting were to: (a) Continue the discussion on identifying and applying potential synergies between the MEAs; (b) Explore possibilities of joint undertakings related to common over-arching issues identified at the last meeting; (c) Further exchange ideas on possible involvement of MEAs in next Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference; and to (d) Continue the discussion on how to ensure adequate and predictable financing of activities under the MEAs and of staff necessary to implement them.

## **1. Opening**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the participants (see [annex II](#) for the list of participants). Mr. Marco Keiner, Director of the ECE Environment Division, informed the participants that the Executive Secretary would not be able to participate in this meeting due to a last minute change in his agenda, however, that he would try to attend future meetings of this Group which he considered a unique opportunity for cooperation.

## **2. Follow-up to the endorsed paper on possible synergies among the MEAs and to joint activities**

The meeting discussed possible synergies and joint activities among the MEAs, based on concrete ideas for cooperation which the Chairs or vice-Chairs of the MEAs presented (see [annex I](#) for the list of possible joint activities). Participants welcomed this exchange of ideas and agreed to report on implemented and possible future joint activities again at the next meeting.

## **3. Possible involvement of the MEAs in the Eighth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference**

The meeting discussed the possible involvement of the ECE MEAs in the Eighth EfE Ministerial Conference which will be hosted by Georgia in June 2016. Participants agreed that it would be useful to organize a joint segment relevant to all ECE MEAs during the Conference and initially exchanged ideas for a joint theme (e.g. Environmental

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<sup>1</sup> The first informal meeting between representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE MEAs and the CEP was held on 22 November 2011. The meeting was initiated and chaired by Mr. Chris Dijkens, Chair of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange information on priorities under the ECE MEAs and to identify and discuss possible areas of cooperation and synergies that could be established among the MEAs as well as with the CEP, in light of recent and future key developments in the area of environment. Since 2011, the informal meetings have been held at least once a year. Further information is available [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> The Meeting of the Parties to the PRTR Protocol, at its second session (Maastricht, 3–4 July 2014), elected a new Chair to the Protocol's Bureau. Mr. Amand kindly agreed to chair the fifth meeting until its successor from another MEA would be elected.

Governance, Support of MEAs to EECCA countries). Further details would be considered following relevant decisions by the CEP.

#### **4. Promotion of MEAs to other regions, including opening to non-ECE countries**

Representatives from the ECE MEAs exchanged information about recent developments regarding the promotion of MEAs to other regions, including the opening of some MEAs to non-ECE countries. The information exchanged can be summarized as follows:

- (a) Those MEAs and Protocols that were initially adopted as being open to non-ECE countries (Aarhus Convention, Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA Protocol) and PRTR Protocol) or that were amended later to be open (Espoo and Water Conventions) reported that there was substantial interest from countries outside the region in the ECE MEAs, e.g. from China, Mongolia, Morocco and countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean regions (in the Aarhus Convention and/or its PRTR Protocol), Morocco (in the Espoo Convention and SEA Protocol). The Water Convention reported that representatives from approximately 50 countries from outside the ECE region have participated to date in meetings under the Convention.
- (b) Those MEAs that are not open to non-ECE countries informed the meeting that discussions about a possible opening will be held shortly (Industrial Accidents Convention, at the eighth Conference of the Parties on 3–5 December 2014) or have not yet started although likely (Protocol on Water and Health, due to its current level of implementation<sup>3</sup>). The Air Convention reported that attempts to open the treaty in 2006 and 2013 were not successful, despite interest from non-ECE countries in the Convention, in particular from Asia.

The meeting concluded that there was significant interest from countries outside the region in ECE MEAs and Protocols, showing a trend towards opening the treaties. Ms. Elisabete Quintas da Silva, the CEP Chair, welcomed these developments and at the same time stressed that the MEAs should remain with ECE.

#### **5. Implementation of the MEAs in countries with economies in transition**

Representatives from the ECE MEAs informed each other about the status of ratification of the respective treaties as well as about implemented, on-going and future activities in countries with economies in transition. From the discussions, it became clear that building technical capacities in those countries is a joint challenge of all MEAs and that, given significant cross-cutting areas between some of the MEAs, the secretariats and Parties should strive to implement capacity-building activities in a cooperative manner. To this end, the meeting agreed that the ECE MEAs should, to the extent possible, explore further possibilities for synergies and joint capacity-building, e.g. through strengthening their practice to inform each other well in advance about planned activities. At the same time, the meeting agreed that coordination between the national Focal Points of the different MEAs would be useful to identify possibilities for implementing joint activities.

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<sup>3</sup> The Protocol on Water and Health was adopted in 1999 and entered into force in 2005. To date, three Meetings of the Parties (MOPs) have been held in 2007, 2010 and 2013. The next MOP in 2016 could also discuss the possibility to open the Protocol to non-ECE countries.

## **6. MEAs role in sustainable development/green economy**

Representatives from the ECE MEAs informed the meeting how the MEAs contribute to sustainable development and greening the economy. Participants concluded that the MEAs can play an important role in setting up post-2015 agenda/Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and that they could be a useful tool in the future to measure the implementation of SDGs. The meeting agreed that drawing up a document outlining the contributions of ECE MEAs to greening the economy could be undertaken. Existing materials could be used for this.

## **7. Analysis of the workload of MEA's Secretariat**

Mr. Keiner informed participants about the findings of a study launched by ECE to analyse the workload of the different MEA secretariats. He informed that the study led, inter alia, to the following conclusions:

- (a) The workload of the MEA secretariats has risen substantially since the early 90s when most of the treaties were established.
- (b) The rise in workload is due to an increase of the number of Parties, meetings and related meeting documentation, travels of staff, experts groups and task forces, etc. In addition, new mandates (e.g. from the Rio+20 Conference) have been added.
- (c) The tasks of the secretariats are not clearly defined in most of the MEAs, so that Parties can currently add tasks to the secretariat's list without limitation.
- (d) The MEA secretariats can no longer compensate with the existing resources the additional workload created since the adoption of the MEAs.
- (e) There is a need for Parties to provide further resources to the MEAs and to clearly define and prioritize the secretariat's tasks to ensure both planning security, including through sustainable funding, and the implementation of the MEAs in the future.

Mr. Keiner further informed the meeting that a service package, consisting of core tasks that the secretariat could provide to the ECE MEAs, would be elaborated. In addition, implementation tasks will be defined which could be implemented if sufficient extrabudgetary resources, both human and financial, would be provided by Parties. Mr. Keiner further informed participants that the proposal on secretariats' tasks would be shared with the MEA Bureaux upon finalization for their further discussion.

Participants took note of the conclusions from the ECE study and welcomed also the recent Environment Division Retreat which led to approximately 100 recommendations by the MEA secretariats to further enhance efficiency. Recognizing the need for further action, participants decided that a dedicated meeting be organized to discuss the content of the core service package and to brainstorm on how to ensure sustainable funding to the MEAs in the future (see also agenda item 8), presumably towards the end of March or early April 2015.

## **8. Continuation of the discussion on financial arrangements under MEAs**

Further to the findings of the ECE study (see agenda item 7), participants informed each other about recent developments regarding the financial arrangements under the MEAs, with the aim to continue the discussion on how to ensure adequate and predictable financing of activities under the MEAs and of staff required for implementing them. From the discussion, the following joint challenges were identified:

- (a) The implementation of activities under the MEAs highly depends on extrabudgetary resources which Parties are willing to provide only on a voluntary basis. Assessed contributions, in accordance with the United Nations Scale of Assessment, have so far been rejected by Parties to the ECE MEAs. Voluntary contributions are often connected to the economic situation in a country and do not allow sustainable funding and planning.
- (b) When providing financial resources to the MEAs, Parties often earmark contributions to ensure the implementation of specific activities or projects. This limits the use of financial resources which might be needed in other areas more urgently.
- (c) Parties provide financial resources mainly for the implementation of activities or projects. They also provide resources for P-staff to implement activities. However, necessary resources to hire the needed G-staff to administratively support this work are usually not provided. This leads to additional workload by regular budget G-staff.

With regard to the above challenges, participants agreed to further discuss how to ensure sustainable funding to the MEAs in the future at a dedicated meeting towards the end of March or early April 2015 (see also agenda item 8).

#### **9. Exchange with the CEP Chair on the organization of agenda items relevant to MEAs during the CEP20 session**

The Chair informed Ms. Quintas da Silva that a joint presentation by the ECE MEAs would be delivered at the CEP meeting, addressing the following issues: (a) Promotion and opening of the ECE MEAs beyond the region; (b) Status, value and challenges of national implementation reporting; and (c) MEA key developments and plans. The Chair also informed that he would brief the CEP about the outcome of this meeting.

Ms. Quintas da Silva welcomed the joint presentation and asked the representatives from the MEAs to address some of the questions in the CEP background papers on national implementation reporting (ECE/CEP/2014/16) and the opening (ECE/CEP/2014/6) during their presentations.

#### **10. Election of a new Chair**

The meeting elected Mr. Massimo Cozzone, Chair of the Water Convention, as the new Chair of the meetings between the ECE MEAs.

#### **11. Next meeting(s)**

The meeting agreed to meet again back to back with the next CEP meeting (27–30 October 2015), i.e. on 26 October 2015.

#### **12. Closing**

The Chair thanked all participants for their active engagement during the meeting and expressed his best wishes and confidence in Mr. Cozzone, the new Chair, to facilitate the meetings in the future. Ms. Quintas da Silva expressed, also on behalf of the other participants, her appreciation to Mr. Amand for his outstanding work and commitment as a member and Chair of this Group.

## **Annex I: List of possible synergies and joint activities among the MEAs**

### **1. Possible synergies and joint activities identified by the Water Convention**

#### **(a) Existing synergies**

- Joint ad hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (JEG) is now coming close to concluding its *checklist on contingency planning*.
- Danube Delta project theoretically involves Espoo, Water and Industrial Accidents.
- National Policy Dialogues under the Water Convention also support Espoo, Industrial Accidents and the Protocol on Water and Health.
- Past: publication on the UNECE MEAs in Central Asia.

#### **(b) Possible future synergies**

- Explore consideration of policy-level SEA in the work on benefits of transboundary water cooperation.
- Future work under JEG should be needs-driven.
- Opportunities to link with Aarhus and Espoo when working with basins on adaptation to climate change, on a case-by-case basis.
- Joint promotion of Water Convention and the Aarhus Convention is indicated in a proposal to Sida for the Middle East and North Africa.

#### **(c) Other continuing synergies**

- Cooperation with other Divisions on inputs to the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda, the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, public-private partnerships and disaster risk reduction (links with climate change work).
- Cooperation with other UN system entities – too numerous to list in full, but includes UN-Water and its Members such as the regional commissions, WHO, WMO, UNDP, UNEP, FAO, UNESCO, but also many others.
- Cooperation with other MEAs, including UNFCCC (climate change), Alpine Convention (climate change, nexus), Ramsar (assessment, nexus work), UNCCD.
- Cooperation within the Environment and Security Initiative.
- There are numerous other synergies with non-UN and national actors, e.g. GWP, INBO, GEF, as well as EU and national governments

#### **Strengthening of synergies**

Regarding the promotion of the MEAs beyond the ECE region, one could try to have a clear mapping of our ongoing and planned activities in different countries.

### **2. Possible synergies and joint activities identified by the Protocol on Water and Health**

#### **(a) Existing synergies**

- Guide to public participation under the Protocol on Water and Health, developed in cooperation with Aarhus Convention Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making, launched in November 2013.
- National Policy Dialogues under the Water Convention also support Espoo, Industrial Accidents and the Protocol on Water and Health.
- Past: publication on the UNECE MEAs in Central Asia.

**(b) Other continuing synergies**

- Cooperation with other Divisions on inputs to the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda.
- Cooperation with other UN system entities, including WHO.

**3. Possible synergies and joint activities identified by the Espoo Convention and its SEA Protocol**

**(a) Current (included in the workplan)**

- Assessment and reduction of transboundary impacts on transboundary watercourses and international lakes in the context of the Espoo Convention, the Protocol on SEA and the **Helsinki (Water) Convention**; and Effective public participation in SEA/EIA in the context of the Espoo Convention, the Protocol on SEA and the **Aarhus Convention**, both in the context of subregional coordination in the Baltic Sea (lead country Lithuania, planned in 2015).
- Joint capacity-building activities with the **Aarhus Convention** for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia on public participation in decision-making, including to strengthen the capacities of national Aarhus Centres and the regional Aarhus Centres Network in the EIA and SEA processes (including the development and compilation of capacity-building materials; and regional and national training workshops (lead countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, involving Aarhus Centres in all three, with support from OSCE and inputs from Aarhus Convention and Convention on Environmental
- Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) secretariats.

**(b) Future synergies**

- Sharing of good practices on safety and land-use planning/development of guidance on safety and land-use planning (possibly in cooperation with the **Industrial Accidents Convention** and the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management) (subject also to the decisions of the TEIA COP meeting in December 2014 and the WG on EIA and SEA meeting in May 2015) (international experts in law and policy on both areas to be engaged, timeframe summer 2015 – end 2016).

**4. Possible synergies and joint activities identified by the Aarhus Convention and its PRTR Protocol**

- For the Water Convention: Aarhus Convention secretariat could suggest experts on public participation matter for the Water Convention's and its Protocol's activities, when required. The secretariats could also discuss if it will be beneficial and feasible to cooperate on the promotion to non-ECE countries.
- For the Industrial Accidents Convention: Aarhus Convention secretariat could suggest relevant experts and also provide advisory support to the drafting of the Convention's amendments on public participation matter.
- For the Espoo Convention and/or its SEA Protocol: There might be opportunity for cooperation within the activities of the Aarhus Convention Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making. This can be discussed bilaterally between the secretariats and with the Chair of the Task Force.

- Although the PRTR Protocol, OECD and UNITAR are more natural partners in terms of expertise and scope of activities, one could explore the opportunity for a possible joint workshop with the Air Convention for EECCA countries.

**Other continuing synergies**

- Cooperation with other ECE programmes on e.g. access to environmental information/data; inputs to the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda
- Cooperation with other UN system entities –such as ECLAC, UNITAR, HRC, UNEP
- Cooperation with other MEAs, including UNFCCC and CBD
- Cooperation within the Environment and Security Initiative
- Synergies with non-UN and national actors, e.g. IPCC, OECD, OSCE as well as EU and national governments

**Background material:**

Work programmes of the Aarhus Convention and its PRTR Protocol, as adopted by MOPs, are available from:

- [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop5/Documents/Post\\_session\\_docs/ECE.MP.PP.2014.2.Add.1\\_aec.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop5/Documents/Post_session_docs/ECE.MP.PP.2014.2.Add.1_aec.pdf)
- [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/prtr/MOPP2/Post-session\\_documents/ECE.MP.PRTR.2014.4.Add.1\\_aec.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/prtr/MOPP2/Post-session_documents/ECE.MP.PRTR.2014.4.Add.1_aec.pdf)

Document on the promotion of the PRTR Protocol in EECCA, as endorsed by MOP:

- [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/prtr/MOPP2/Post-session\\_documents/ECE.MP.PRTR.2014.4.Add.2\\_aec\\_02.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/prtr/MOPP2/Post-session_documents/ECE.MP.PRTR.2014.4.Add.2_aec_02.pdf)

**5. Possible synergies and joint activities identified by the Industrial Accidents Convention**

**(a) Existing/current cooperation**

- Cooperation with the Water Convention to address issues related to accidental water pollution through the Joint Expert Group (JEG) on Water and Industrial Accidents and through the National Policy Dialogues (NPDs).
- Cooperation with the ECE Programme on Education for Sustainable Development within a project on raising knowledge on industrial safety at universities under the Industrial Accidents Convention workplan.

**(b) Future/planned cooperation**

- Possibility for cooperation with the Aarhus Convention when preparing amendments to strengthen the provisions on public participation (including definitions) of the Industrial Accidents Convention which are likely to be mandated by the eighth Conference of the Parties. The Aarhus Convention could provide support in this to ensure the alignment of the Industrial Accidents Convention with its provisions.
- A possibility for further cooperation with the Aarhus Convention is through the Aarhus Centres in the region which could provide a means to reach out to the public, to provide it with information about the Convention.
- Possibility for cooperation with the Espoo and/or SEA Protocol within the future draft workplan of the Industrial Accidents Convention (for 2015–16) which contains the preparation of a guidance document on safety and land-use planning. This could be a possibility to jointly prepare a guidance document and exchange experiences and good practices on land-use planning with the Espoo Convention and/or its SEA Protocol as well as with the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management.

## **6. Possible synergies and joint activities identified by the Air Convention**

### **Future synergies**

- Cooperation with the PRTR Protocol on air pollutant emissions from sources covered by the PRTR Protocol;
- Cooperation with the Water Convention on ammonia emissions and abatement techniques.



## Annex II: List of participants

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