



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR

Europe

Report of the third
meeting of the
European
Environment and
Health Taskforce
(EHTF)

Brussels, Belgium

10-11 December 2013



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ABSTRACT

The European Environment and Health Taskforce (EHTF) held its third meeting in December 2013 in Brussels, Belgium. The meeting's purpose was to address statutory and governance issues, review progress towards the achievement of the Parma commitments, discuss the preparation of the high level mid-term review meeting of the EHTF to be held in 2014 and initiate discussion on possible themes and priorities for the agenda of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, to be held in 2016. The EHTF decided to establish the Health in Climate Change (HIC) group as a subsidiary body of the European Health Process and an ad-hoc working group to facilitate communication between the EHTF and the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board and to assist in preparations for the upcoming mid-term review meeting. The progress made towards achieving the Parma commitments was welcomed and it was agreed that priority should be given to the time-bound targets contained therein. It was also agreed that an editorial group should be established to assist in the preparation of the report for the mid-term review. A brain storming session was held on possible themes for the next Ministerial Conference and the possible format that conference could take.

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Introduction

1. The European Environment and Health Taskforce (EHTF) held its third meeting in Brussels, Belgium on 10 and 11 December 2013, at the kind invitation of the Government of Belgium. The meeting was attended by representatives of 34 Member States and a number of other partners. (See Annex 1 for the scope and purpose of the meeting, Annex 2 for the programme of work, Annex 3 for the main conclusions of the meeting and Annex 4 for the list of participants.)

Opening, adoption of the agenda and programme

2. Dr Dirk Cuypers, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Federal Public Service for Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment of Belgium opened the meeting and said in his opening speech that the increasing environmental challenges meant that it was vital to modify the way people lived and interacted with the environment in order to protect human health. The EHTF had an important role to play in that regard. The Parma Declaration on Environment and Health (Parma Declaration) had been a bold step and he recalled that it had included a number of time-bound targets. The current meeting would help to develop the next steps needed to achieve those targets and discuss possible themes for the sixth Ministerial Conference in 2016. In Belgium, there had been close collaboration between the Ministries of Health and Environment, paving the way for joint programmes in areas such as air pollution and its impact on health. Indeed, the third EHTF meeting marked the 10th anniversary of the Belgian process on environment and health

3. Dr Srdan Matic, Coordinator, Environment and Health, WHO Regional Office for Europe, welcomed the participants and thanked the host country on behalf of WHO. Dr Maria Neira, Director, Public Health and Environment, WHO Headquarters, acknowledged that the main challenge was to ensure that the issue of environment and health remained high on the political agenda. Recalling the signing of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in October 2013, a treaty that had been signed 50 years after the first medical cases related to mercury had appeared, she stressed that it was crucial that other international agreements on similar issues, such as air pollution, did not take as long to be agreed upon. In addition, it was vital for Member States to put in to practice the approach of including health aspects in all policies, through close collaboration between health ministries and other ministries, such as those related to energy, industry, urban planning and finance. Lastly, health needed to be a central element in the post-2015 development agenda and of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

4. The EHTF Chair, Mr Alexander Nies of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, expressed concern over the number of Member States participating in the meeting, which was only just sufficient to reach a quorum. The EHTF should consider ways to encourage and facilitate engagement and participation of all Member States in its meetings. The EHTF adopted then the agenda, programme of work and report of the second (extraordinary) meeting of the EHTF.

Item 1. Statutory matters

a) Election of a Co-Chair from the health sector for period 3rd to 4th EHTF meeting

b) Election of a Co-Chair from the environment sector for period 4th to 5th EHTF meeting

5. The Chair explained that the EHTF needed to elect two new Co-chairs, one from the health sector and one from the environment sector, who would assume the position of Chairperson in the coming years. As he himself represents the environment sector, the Co-Chair in 2014, that would be Chair in 2015, would be from the health sector, while the Co-chair for 2015 who would become the Chair for 2016 should be from the environment sector. It was proposed that Mr Thor Erik Lindgren (Norway) should be the health Co-chair and Mr Robert Thaler (Austria) should be the next environment Co-chair. There were no objections and both were duly elected, with Mr Thor Erik Lindgren serving as Co-chair already for the present meeting.

c) Establishment of the standing working group on the implementation of the Framework for action on climate change and health (HIC)

6. Following a presentation by Ms Louise Newport (United Kingdom), Co-chair of the working group on the implementation of the Framework for action on climate change and health (HIC), the EHTF agreed to formally establish that group as a subsidiary body of the EHP, co-chaired by Ms Newport and Ms Jutta Litvinovich (Germany). Ms Newport explained that the aim of the group was to help Member States to protect the health of their citizens from the impacts of climate change by facilitating dialogue, the sharing of experiences and communication on matters related to climate change and health. WHO was currently developing an online platform, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders. The main priorities of the HIC would have been to increase the group's visibility, establish close links with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and highlight the issue of climate change at the next meeting of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB). Thematic areas that it would consider included emerging threats, greening of health systems and early warning systems and surveillance. Presentation by the Co-chair was followed by a discussion among EHTF members and the proposed draft Terms of Reference were referred to a drafting group which was asked to reflect the comments and suggestions in the final proposal of the ToR. The meeting later considered and adopted, with proposed amendments, the Terms of Reference for the HIC contained in document EURO/EHTF3/6. It was stressed by one participant that the HIC should be a catalyst to help Member States achieve the Parma commitments, while responsibility for implementing the commitments lay with the Member States themselves. It was also agreed that, subject to the agreement of the HIC itself, the name of the group would be changed to Health in Climate Change Working Group (HIC).

Item 2. Review of progress towards achieving the Parma commitments (2010-2014)

a) Review of the implementation of the Parma commitments and possible improvements

7. The Chair recalled that during the preparatory meetings for the current meeting, concern had been expressed at the time lapse between meetings of the EHTF, to a large extent due to the limited resources and he therefore encouraged Member States to volunteer to host future meetings. At the preparatory meetings, it had also been suggested that a clear road map to 2016 needed to be developed and that priority should be given to the time-bound commitments in the Parma Declaration. To support the process, a lead country or lead stakeholder approach had been mentioned as a possible way to reduce the burden on WHO and increase ownership by the Member States and stakeholders. The need for adequate financial resources, within both WHO and Member States had also been highlighted; one possible way of addressing that issue was to mainstream the EHP into the work of international financial institutions, particularly regarding the resources needed for the implementation of programmes in the Member States. It has also been observed that more needed to be done to increase the visibility of the EHP.

8. Introducing the item, Dr Srdan Matic, said that the Secretariat had reported on the EHP and progress towards achieving the Parma commitments to the Sixty-third WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the nineteenth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP). He drew attention to the report that had been submitted which was contained in document EURO/EHTF/7 and the background document that had also been submitted to the Regional Committee meeting (document EURO/EHTF/8). The report, which contained a number of proposals for the direction of work of the EHP in the run up until 2016, had been welcomed and endorsed by the Regional Committee and CEP.

9. Dr Elizabet Paunovic, Head of the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health in Bonn, summarized the activities undertaken by the Secretariat to support Member States in implementing the Parma commitments and monitor their implementation. These included the development of tools to assist Member States in data collection, as well as the drafting of baseline reports and the establishment of networks to facilitate the sharing of data and experiences. Turning to the regional priority goals contained in the Parma Declaration, she drew attention to the progress made in those areas, such as the decision by the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health to focus on water and sanitation in schools and the new tools and projects that had been introduced in areas such as transport and health, air quality, chemical safety and climate change.

10. Participants welcomed the progress that had been made in achieving the Parma commitments and the work of WHO in that regard. However, it was stressed that in the lead up to 2016, more implementation was needed at the country level; one participant also felt that more interaction and recommendations were also needed at the local level. It was agreed that particular attention should be given to the time-bound Parma commitments. A number of speakers highlighted the financial and human resource constraints faced by smaller countries and it was suggested that the EHP should play a greater role in advising countries how to access funding. In the discussion on the added value of EHP and the niche for the Process, there was a mixed feedback from the Member States. However, participants generally acknowledged that the EHP was a useful and inspiring process, particularly for countries that did not have strong environment and health policies in place, as it encouraged and inspired increased cross-ministry interaction and cooperation and facilitated the development of national action plans. However it was

agreed that it was often difficult to pinpoint and clearly express the specific impact of the EHP and that EHP needs greater visibility. It was also vital to note that a 'one size fits all' approach to implementation of the Parma commitments would not be sufficient, owing to the different situations in individual countries. Sub-regional meetings could provide a useful opportunity to discuss different approaches. One participant also added that greater participation by representatives from the environment side should be encouraged as there were often more representatives of the health sector present at the meetings of the EHTF.

11. Dr Matic, acknowledging the comments made by participants, said that more action was needed to achieve the time-bound commitments contained in the Parma Declaration, particularly those related to the elimination of asbestos-related diseases and achieving a smoke-free environment for children; significant challenges remained if those targets were to be met. WHO was endeavouring to increase its impact in those areas, but Member States also needed to take action. There were some issues, such as water and sanitation that required concerted action at the national level, however, issues such as air quality required the cooperation and collaboration of all countries. The EHP was a unique process; there were no other similar processes in place in other regions with such a level of formal intersectoral governance, and without it, it was unlikely that WHO would be as active on the issue of environment and health.

b) Communication plan for the EHP

12. Ms Cristiana Salvi, Communications Officer, WHO Regional Office for Europe, speaking on behalf of the Communications Working Group (CWG), introduced the Communications strategy for the EHP that had been developed by the Secretariat at the request of the EHMB, which had already endorsed the strategy. The main elements of the strategy were positioning, outreach and partnership, and it would be steered by the CWG. There were a number of challenges, for example how to communicate and draw attention to positive stories related to the EHP, as negative news stories were often given greater coverage. In addition, the EHP was a voluntary process and faced competition for visibility and focus from other processes related to other issues; there was also a lack of new data on the environment and health burden of disease, which are important to attract the attention of the media, the public and policy makers. It was therefore difficult to ensure that it was high on governments' agendas. In order to address those challenges, a brand was needed for the EHP to make it and its products and achievements more visible and recognizable, and stories should be released on shared priority themes, such as air quality, chemicals or water. In addition, a communications toolkit for use by national focal points, policy makers and the CWG would be useful, together with positive case studies and access to updates and relevant information via a web platform. Social media was a useful tool and should be utilized where possible; other tools and approaches included a repository of videos and photographs, briefing top policy makers, ensuring that the EHP agenda was incorporated in national and regional meetings, and the naming of champions or ambassadors for the EHP. However, it was important to note that to properly implement those activities and develop toolkits, more resources were needed and in consideration of the present resource limitations, a careful prioritization of activities is needed.

13. Participants welcomed the communications strategy and stressed the importance of all members of the EHTF having input into the strategy, as well ownership of it, along with the EHMB. Concern was also expressed that the annex of the communications strategy contained negative messages about the environment, when it had been stated that there should be a focus on positive stories. However, it was also noted that the existence of the EHP was not relevant to the public, but it was important to educate the public in general regarding the link between health and the environment. With regard to a web platform for information, it would also be important to enable Member States to share their experiences.

14. Dr Neira suggested that one way to communicate positive messages would be to focus on the health outcomes that could be obtained from good environmental policies, thereby encouraging the use of health-related arguments in the development of environmental policies. Positive messages were important for policy makers, whereas negative messages could be used to attract the attention of the media. Dr Matic, responding to a question regarding ownership of the communications strategy, explained that it was for the EHP as a whole, rather than just the EHMB and the Terms of Reference for the CWG would be amended to clarify ownership. WHO had limited human resources available for communications on environment and health issues, although it was trying to address the issue through recruitment of part-time staff. However, that was not a long-term solution. Ms Salvi added that she hoped more Member States, particularly those in the east of the region, would propose focal points to join the CWG as those countries had particular issues that needed addressing.

c) Prioritization of work until the Mid-term Review and sixth Ministerial Conference

d) Adoption of an intersessional workplan for EHTF until Mid-term Review in late 2014 and discussion on expected achievements until the sixth Ministerial Conference in 2016

15. Ms Francesca Racioppi, Senior Policy and Programme Advisor, Governance and Multisectoral Partnerships, Environment and Health, WHO Regional Office for Europe, introduced the intersessional workplan, which she stressed was a living document, to be updated over time; contributions and suggestions were welcome. The workplan did not only focus on activities planned to be undertaken by the Secretariat, it also considered and acknowledged the work being done by Member States and stakeholders and would facilitate cooperation with relevant processes. The areas addressed in the workplan had been agreed upon by members at the preparatory meetings for the current meeting and included preparations for the Mid-Term Review (MTR) meeting, technical work related to the time-bound targets contained in the Parma Declaration, increasing the visibility of the EHP at the national level, and follow up of the work of the HIC.

16. A number of participants drew attention to upcoming events in their countries that could be included in the intersessional workplan. The Chairperson, noting that the workplan would be updated based on decisions taken at the current meeting, observed that the workplan was currently ordered by date. It would be useful to be able to order it by activity as well. Responding to a question regarding engagement with international financial institutions, Ms Racioppi explained that consultations had already begun in the EHMB regarding potential partnerships with such institutions; the Secretariat planned to continue collaborating with Member States to investigate which institutions could be viable partners. Many participants also stressed the importance of developing and fostering partnerships with relevant processes and organizations.

Item 3. Preparation for the Mid-term Review high level EHTF meeting in 2014

a) Date and place of the Mid-term Review high level EHTF meeting

17. The EHTF welcomed and expressed its gratitude for the generous proposal made by the representative of Israel that her country will host the MTR meeting. The Secretariat suggested that the

meeting should take place in mid-November 2014, but the exact date would be subject to further discussions with the hosts.

18. There was also general agreement that if any preparatory meetings for the MTR meeting are organized, then they should include both Member States and stakeholders, rather than holding separate meetings for each group as had been done for the preparation of the current meeting. Preparatory meetings at the subregional level could also be considered.

b) Discussion of the agenda for the Mid-term review meeting

19. With regard to the provisional agenda for the MTR meeting, the Chair observed that the meeting would be the last opportunity before the sixth Ministerial Conference to be held in 2016 to call for action regarding the time-bound Parma commitments; it would therefore be useful for the agenda to include a separate item on the issue. Clarification was also requested regarding the outcome document for the MTR meeting. Dr Matic responded that in previous similar meetings, there had been a summary of the main decision points, rather than a negotiated text. Several participants also expressed their preference for discussions on important elements of the Parma commitments to be mainstreamed into the plenary sessions of the MTR, rather than be held in parallel sessions or as side events. These would be more suitable for other relevant, but less key subjects.

c) Discussion on the draft proposal for the Mid-term review report and final agreement on reporting and indicators

20. Dr Marco Martuzzi, Programme Manager, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health, Bonn, outlined the goals of the MTR report, namely to summarize progress made in fulfilment of the Parma Commitments, highlight key issues, promote environment and health activities in the region and raise the profile of the EHP. The report would be produced in a manner that would minimize the burden on Member States regarding the provision of data. He suggested that the report should review three main areas, namely policies and institutions; exposures and impacts; and activities, projects and emerging issues. It should also include a section on conclusions and the way forward, identifying emerging issues and taking stock of developments. It had also been suggested that a summary should be developed for the media. He suggested that a small editorial group should be established comprising both Member States and stakeholders to assist with the development and production of the report. The timeline for the production and review of the report would be quite tight because it was important to ensure sufficient time to write the sections and enable their review by members of the taskforce.

21. There was strong support for the establishment of an editorial group to work on the MTR report. Representatives of Estonia, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, UNDP, Ecoforum and HEAL expressed an interest in participating in that group and the European Commission said that it could contribute text related to research aspects for inclusion in the report. The idea of including an executive summary for use by the media and policy makers was welcomed by many speakers and it was considered crucial that the conclusions and next steps section of the report should describe clearly the milestones that needed to be reached, what needed to be done and who would undertake such actions. A number of participants also recommended expanding the scope of the report to include issues such as endocrine disruptors, asbestos and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. Concerns were expressed regarding the planned timeline for production and review of the report, particularly the plan to submit the draft report for review by Member States during the month of August, which was traditionally a month where a large number of people took time off work and could cause difficulties for smaller Member States.

22. In response, Dr Martuzzi explained that the policy questionnaire for Member States would be released in early 2014 and should be returned in time for analysis in Spring 2014. The review period in August 2014 would be the second round of review after Member States' comments on the first draft had been taken into account; therefore it would not require as much input from different ministries as the first review planned for July 2014. It was possible that the initial review period could be moved to June, but it could not be earlier than that. Dr Matic added that it could be possible to hold a preparatory meeting for the MTR meeting before finalization of the report in order to enable Member States to submit more comments. He also said that the editorial group would have to develop a narrative for the report that expressed clearly the progress that had been made on the Parma Commitments so that it was understandable for lay persons as well as experts in the field.

Item 4. Review of governance aspects

a) Review of the respective roles of and relations between EHTF and EHMB

23. Dr Matic explained that clarification had been requested on the respective roles and responsibilities of the EHTF and EHMB; the Secretariat had produced a document addressing the issue, which had been reviewed by several Member States that had volunteered to do so. The institutional arrangements were fixed up until 2016 and any changes to those arrangements before then would need to be agreed upon by both the Regional Committee for Europe and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP). Consensus between those bodies was not always easy to reach, as had been shown in discussions regarding amending the schedule of elections and the length of the mandates of members of the EHMB. However, there was a need for discussion on the possible need to revise the present institutional arrangements after 2016, based on the experience developed since the Parma Conference. The document raised two main issues, namely the need for the meaningful engagement of Member States and stakeholders in the EHP and the need for coherence across the EHP as it was a complex process that brought together diverse sectors and countries with different political approaches.

24. Participants welcomed the document prepared by the Secretariat (document EURO/EHTF3/13) and noted that the comparative advantage of the EHMB was that it involved Ministers and was therefore a useful forum to increase the visibility of the EHP outside of the Parma process. However, it was important to note that not all Member States were represented on the EHMB. It was recognized that a clear division of labour between the EHMB and EHTF was vital and that there should be coherence between the groups' respective activities. It was suggested that a bureau or friends of the chair group could be established for the EHTF to facilitate its work and establish on-going communication links with the EHMB. It was agreed that there should be regular communication between the two groups, particularly on the outcomes of meetings of each body and the EHTF should be able to draw the attention of the EHMB to particular issues and encourage their consideration by that body.

25. The EHTF agreed to establish an ad hoc working group (EWG) to support the Chairperson and Co-Chairs in the preparation for the MTR meeting, including reviewing the provisional agenda for that meeting, and to facilitate collaboration with the EHMB. The following Member States and stakeholders expressed an interest in participating in that group: Armenia, Austria, Croatia, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, United Kingdom, Serbia, Spain, Tajikistan, The Netherlands, REC, UNEP, EEHYC, Ecoforum, HEAL. The composition of the EWG would be finalized in due course, taking into

account the need for varied representation and for the group to be of a size compatible with effective working arrangements.

26. Dr Matic said that the idea of swift reporting on the outcomes of discussions of the EHMB had already been put into practice, with summary information being produced and sent to all Member States and stakeholders shortly after the previous two meetings of the EHMB. He acknowledged that there was a need for summary information to be made available on the outcome of other relevant meetings; however, the Secretariat lacked the human resource capacity to do so for every technical meeting that it held. WHO was endeavouring to increase participation in the EHTF and had had some good results in that regard, namely the nomination of focal points for the HIC and the CWG and attendance by many Member States and stakeholders at the preparatory meetings for the present meeting.

b) Streamlining technical and governance work of EHP

27. This agenda item was addressed within the scope of the discussion of the intersessional workplan (item 2 d) of the agenda).

c) Options to address the financial sustainability of the Environment and Health Process

28. The EHTF took note of a presentation given by Dr Matic on sustainable financing of the EHP, particularly with regard to the budget shortfall of 15% in 2012–2013 and the projected funding gap of US\$ 9.5–11.2 million for 2014–2015. It was not unusual for there to be a funding gap at the start of a biennium, with sufficient funds being raised by the end of that period. However, such a situation made it difficult to have a proper plan of work. The Co-Chair said that financial dialogue was a useful method of addressing resource gaps. The EHTF also welcomed a presentation given by the European Environment and Youth Coalition on its activities.

d) Strengthening opportunities for strategic partnerships

29. Turning to the issue of strategic partnerships, the Chairperson said that it had been stated on many occasions that the EHP should be more active in that area, particularly as there were numerous programmes, processes, institutions and conventions that could be approached. It was particularly important that there was engagement to ensure that environment and health matters were integrated into the post-2015 development agenda. Dr Neira explained that she was the WHO focal point for the technical support group established to support the work of the United Nations Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG); she had been actively involved in discussions in order to raise awareness of health-related indicators that could be used in other thematic areas, such as energy, water and sanitation and sustainable cities.

30. Participants suggested other possible partners, including subregional networks and processes, the Council of Europe, the European Investment Bank, UNFCCC and the World Meteorological Organization. In addition, it was important that the EHP played an active role in setting priorities for research and that representatives of the EHP were able to participate in the upcoming meetings of the OWG. The Health2020 process would also be a crucial partner. Several participants volunteered to assist the Secretariat in the development of a paper on possible partnerships. The representative of Ecoforum

added that her organization was active in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and could provide information on the EHP and environment and health issues to those deliberations.

31. Dr Matic observed that the intersessional workplan included a number of practical steps to follow with regard to establishing new partnerships. However, it was also important to ensure the full engagement of existing stakeholders, for example by including their activities in that workplan. He also encouraged Member States, particularly European Union Member States, to raise awareness of the process and environment and health issues when they assumed the Presidency of the European Union. One way to encourage the establishment of partnerships was to propose that the issue should be included on the agenda of the next meeting of the EHMB. The Chairperson suggested that Member States or stakeholders could volunteer to take the lead on a specific potential partnership, producing a short information note on how the partnership could be developed. Such an approach would ensure that progress was made.

32. It was agreed that the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Chairperson, the EWG and other volunteers, would draft a working paper on potential partnerships to inform the discussions of the EHMB on the issue at its next meeting. In addition, the EHTF welcomed the availability of UNEP to develop a concept note on partnerships in relation to the EHP, as well as the availability of Austria to share the experiences developed under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP).

Item 5. Initial discussion on possible priorities and focus of the sixth Ministerial Conference in 2016 and on the relationship between EHP and Health 2020 and Sustainable development policy frameworks

33. Dr Matic gave a brief presentation on the Health 2020 policy, explaining the main aspects of and main rationale for the policy, including the strategic objectives and the implementation package, and how it closely relates to the EHP, which offers a practical model of intersectoral governance and “health in all policies” advocated by the Health 2020 policy.

34. Dr Bettina Menne, Programme Manager, Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Green Health Services, European Centre for Environment and Health, provided information on existing sustainable development policy frameworks, drawing attention to the topics that would be considered by the January and February meetings of the United Nations Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Key decisions had been taken by that Working Group with regard to water, and important developments had been made on health-related indicators in the areas of maximizing healthy lives and a definition of universal health coverage. The health-related aspects of energy issues, such as the impact on health of energy access, energy efficiency and renewable energy had not yet been considered by that working group. Lastly, consultations had been held with relevant partners, including UNEP, Ecoforum and REC, in which it had been stressed that it was crucial to act immediately to ensure that health-related aspects were included in the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda; in order to facilitate such inclusion, it had been suggested that a meeting should be held between environment and health and sustainable development focal points, and that side events at meetings such as the United Nations General Assembly should be organized to raise awareness of environment and health concerns.

35. Mr Asnake (UNEP), speaking also on behalf of UNECE, explained that the Committee on Environmental Policy was considering holding a panel discussion with the Co-Chairs of the EHTF and EHMB at its next session. It was also considering possible synergies between its eighth Ministerial Conference and the EHP sixth Ministerial Conference, both of which would be held in 2016. In addition, UNECE was highly active in the high level consultations on the SDGs. Drawing attention to the decision of the United Nations General Assembly to strengthen and upgrade UNEP, including by allowing universal membership of its Governing Body, he added that the first United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (UNEA1) would be held in June 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya, which could be an excellent opportunity for the EHP to organize a side event on environment and health issues. Lastly, he briefly introduced the UNEP Discussion Paper on Embedding the Environment in SDGs, which included a vision and methodology aimed at maximizing the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into the SDGs. There should not be one single environment-related goal, rather the issue should be part of all of the goals and credible and verifiable scientific evidence should be used as a basis in that regard.

36. At the suggestion of the representative of WECF, it was agreed that the Chair of the EHTF would participate in a side event organized by that organization at the forthcoming meeting of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, taking place in New York in early January 2014.

37. Participants agreed that it was vital that the steps should be taken to ensure that environment and health issues were embedded in the post-2015 development agenda. Development of sub-goals and indicators would facilitate that process. One stakeholder added that they were in the process of organizing a briefing on noncommunicable diseases and their place in the post-2015 development agenda; it would be important to ensure that any approach went beyond the four standard risk factors (tobacco smoking, harmful alcohol consumption, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity), as environment was not included in those factors.

38. Turning to the possible topics to be discussed at the sixth Ministerial Conference, participants took part in a brainstorming session on the issue. The following topics were suggested as possibilities: contaminated sites with a focus on children, climate change, the effects of innovation and new technologies, healthy cities/neighborhoods (including accessibility aspects), pre-natal exposure to harmful chemicals and pollutants, early warnings systems for emerging issues, economic benefits of actions and the cost of inaction, asbestos, environmental determinants of noncommunicable diseases, environmental exposure experienced by vulnerable groups, links between environmental exposures and emerging diseases (allergies, reproductive diseases and diseases of the nervous system).

39. Dr Matic acknowledged the suggestions, which all had considerable merit, and proposed a possible format for the conference, namely that it be based on main themes and cross-cutting thematic areas. The themes could include water; air; cities and urban areas; chemicals; natural resources and energy; and waste. The cross-cutting dimensions could include sustainable development and economy; climate change; health systems; wellbeing; health impacts; and human rights.

Item 6. Any other business and closure of the meeting

40. The representative of Italy observed that there were plans to hold two Ministerial Conferences at similar times in 2016, namely the one on Environment and Health organized by WHO and the one on Environment for Europe organized by UNECE. Holding two such important conferences so close together presented numerous challenges and he wondered whether it could be possible to hold one single

conference to enable interaction between the different processes, or at the very least to organize some form of engagement between the two conferences.

41. The merits of the proposal were recognized by the meeting and the Secretariat said that it would be interested in hearing the Member States' opinions on the issue and would therefore investigate ways to have an online exchange on the issue.

42. Ms Racioppi presented an executive summary of the main decisions taken by the EHTF during the meeting, which was adopted after a few proposed amendments. The full text of that summary can be found in Annex 3 to this report.

43. Dr Matic thanked the Government of Belgium for hosting the meeting, and thanked all Member States and stakeholders for their contributions to the proceedings.

44. The Chairperson thanked the Belgian Government, participants and the secretariat and declared the meeting closed.

Annex 1. Scope and Purpose

The Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Parma, Italy in 2010, established the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) as the leading international body for implementation and monitoring of the European Environment and Health Process (EHP).

The Third EHTF meeting will gather the officially nominated focal points for the EHP from the Member States and the intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations participating in the EHP.

The meeting will address statutory and governance matters related to the EHP, review progress towards the achievement of the Parma commitments since 2010, discuss the preparation of the high level EHTF meeting (MTR) to be held in 2014, and initiate the discussion on possible themes and priorities for the agenda of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, to be held in 2016.

The specific objectives of the meeting are to:

- 1) Elect Co-chairs from the health sector for the period 3rd to 4th EHTF meeting and from the environment sector for the period 4th to 5th EHTF meeting, respectively;
- 2) Establish the standing working group on the implementation of the Framework for action on climate change and health (HIC);
- 3) Consider possible amendments to EHTF Rules of Procedure;
- 4) Review progress towards the achievement of the Parma commitments (2010-2014), including possible improvements and prioritization of work until the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health;
- 5) Adopt an intersessional workplan for EHTF;
- 6) Discuss the preparation, agenda, documentation and desired outcomes for the MTR;
- 7) Review governance aspects of the EHP, including the respective roles of and relations between EHTF and EHMB, and opportunities to strengthen the EHP implementation through strategic partnerships, communication initiatives and more predictable and sustainable funds;
- 8) Start the discussion on possible priorities and focus of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 2016, as well as the relationship between EHP and Health 2020 and Sustainable development policy frameworks.

Annex 2. Programme of Work

Tuesday, 10 December 2013

08:30 - 09:30

Registration

09:30 - 10:00

Opening of the meeting

- Welcome by the Task Force Chair, host Country, WHO secretariat; Election of the EHTF Co-Chair (Agenda items 1.a and 1.b) adoption of the agenda and programme

Relevant documents:

EHTF3/1 - List of documents

EHTF3/2 - Scope and purpose

EHTF3/3 - Provisional Agenda

EHTF3/4 - Provisional Programme

EHTF3/5 - Provisional list of participants

Meeting Report, 2nd Extraordinary Meeting of EHTF, June 2012

10:00 – 11:10

Review of progress towards achieving the Parma commitments (2010-2014)

- Review of the implementation of Parma commitments and possible improvements (Agenda items 2.a):

Relevant documents:

EHTF3/7 - Report of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board to the 63rd WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the 19th United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Committee on Environmental Policy

EHTF3/8 - Report on the European Environment and Health Process (2010-2013) – Background document

EHTF3/Inf.3 - Summary of the decisions of the EHTF and the status of their implementation

11:10 – 11:30

Coffee/Tea Break

11:30 – 12:45

Review of progress towards achieving the Parma commitments (2010-2014) cntd.

- Progress of implementation and establishment of the working group on the implementation of the Framework for action on climate change and health (HIC) (Agenda item 1.c)
- Communication plan for the EHP (Agenda item 2.b)

Relevant documents:

EHTF3/6 - Draft Terms of Reference for the working group on the implementation of the Framework for action on climate change and health (HIC)

EHTF3/9 - Communication strategy for the Environment and Health Process

12:45-14:00

Lunch

14:00 – 15:30

Review of governance aspects

- Review of respective roles of and relations between EHTF and EHMB (Agenda item 4.a)
- Strengthening opportunities for strategic partnerships (Agenda item 4.d)
- Streamlining technical and governance work of EHP (Agenda item 4.b)
- Options to address the financial sustainability of the Environment and Health Process (Agenda item 4.c)

Relevant documents:

EHTF3/13 - Discussion paper on respective roles of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board and Task Force

EHTF3/14 - Sustainable financing of EHP

15:30 – 16:00

Coffee/Tea break

16:00 – 17:30

Preparations for the Mid-term Review high level EHTF meeting in 2014 (MTR)

- Date and place of the Mid-term Review high level EHTF meeting (Agenda item 3.a)
- Discussion of the agenda for the MTR (Agenda item 3.b)
- Discussion on a draft proposal for the MTR Report and final agreement on reporting (Agenda item 3.c)

Relevant documents:

EHTF3/11 - Draft agenda for the Mid-term Review high level EHTF meeting in 2014

EHTF3/12 - Concept note of the Mid-term Review reporting

19:30

Dinner

Wednesday, 11 December 2013

09:30 – 10:45

Preparations for the Mid-term Review high level EHTF meeting in 2014 (MTR) (cntd.)

- Prioritization of work until the MTR and 6th Ministerial Conference (Agenda item 2.c)
- Adoption of an inter-sessional workplan for EHTF until MTR in late 2014 and discussion on expected achievements until the 6th Ministerial Conference in 2016 (Agenda item 2.d)

EHTF3/10 - Draft inter-sessional programme of work 2014 for EHTF

10:45 - 11:15

Coffee/Tea break

11:15 – 12:45 **Initial discussion on possible priorities and focus of the 6th Ministerial Conference in 2016 and on relationship between EHP and Health 2020 and Sustainable development policy frameworks (Agenda item 5)**

Relevant documents:

EHTF3/Inf.4 - Health 2020 - A European policy framework and strategy for the 21st century

EHTF3/Inf.5 – EHP in the sustainable development agenda – a discussion paper

12:45 – 13: 45 **Lunch**

13:45 – 14:30 **Initial discussion on possible priorities and focus of the 6th Ministerial Conference in 2016 and on relationship between EHP and Health 2020 and Sustainable development policy frameworks (cntd.)**

14:30 – 15:00 **Any other business and closure of the meeting (Agenda item 6)**

- Summary of main points of discussion and actions agreed

Annex 3. Main Conclusions of the Meeting

The EHTF:

Opening of the meeting:

1. Adopted the meeting agenda,
2. Adopted the report of the second extraordinary meeting of the Task Force, held in the Netherlands in 2012;
3. Elected as its co-chairs Mr Thor Erik Lindgren from Norway, representing the health sector (becoming Chair in 2015 after the MTR), and Mr Robert Thaler from Austria (taking office in 2015, after the MTR, and becoming Chair in 2016), representing the environment sector, respectively.

Review of progress towards achieving the Parma commitments (2010-2014)

4. Discussed progress to date, the value added of the EHP for member states, and possible ways to strengthen its national and international relevance, and visibility. In particular, it agreed that:
 - a) considerable progress has been achieved towards the Parma Commitments;
 - b) the EHP provides support to the development of national action plans and inspires cooperation among national administrations;
 - c) there is a need to strengthen implementation at the country level, with more consideration to the local level;
 - d) implementation should prioritize the achievement of the time bound Parma targets, particularly those that are expected to be achieved by 2015;
 - e) implementation may benefit from greater flexibility and a differentiated approach to meet the very different needs and priorities of the 53 member states. Sub-regional meetings could provide an actionable platform for that.

Establishment of the working group on the implementation of the Framework for action on climate change and health (HIC, Health in Climate Change)

5. Reviewed progress in the activities of the working group on the implementation of the Framework for action on climate change and health;
6. Decided and welcomed the establishment of HIC (Health in Climate Change) as a subsidiary body of the EHTF;
7. Discussed the proposed Terms of Reference, and adopted them following some amendments;
8. Elected Ms Louise Newport from the United Kingdom and Ms Jutta Litvinovich from Germany as Co-Chairs of HIC, representing the health and environment sectors, respectively.

Communication strategy for the EHP

9. Discussed the communication strategy and proposals for implementation from the communication working group. Appreciated progress achieved so far, and encouraged the working group to continue in its work. Clarified that the Communication Strategy is jointly owned by all Member States;
10. Agreed to amend the terms of reference of the Communication Working Group to highlight that it is based within the Environment and Health Process (as opposed to being based within the EHMB or EHTF).

Review of governance aspects

11. Welcomed and discussed the paper on the respective roles of the EHTF and EHMB;

12. Agreed on several practical actions to improve the alignment and synergy between the work of the EHTF and EHMB:
 - a) Timely circulate executive summaries of the meetings of the EHTF and EHMB to all MSs and EHP stakeholders, to improve the flow of information;
 - b) Address recommendations to the EHMB on specific issues that are of relevance to the EHP implementation, and for which the EHMB could play an active role of outreach and advocacy;
 - c) Establish an EHTF ad-hoc working group (EWG) to support the Chair and Co-Chairs in preparing the Mid Term Review.
13. Discussed and adopted the proposed terms of reference for the EWG
14. Noted the expression of interest of the following Member States and EHP Stakeholders to participate in the EWG: Armenia, Austria, Croatia, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, United Kingdom, Serbia, Spain, Tajikistan, The Netherlands, REC, UNEP, EEHYC, Ecoforum, HEAL and decided to finalize the composition of the EWG taking into account the need for the group to be of a size compatible with efficient working arrangements.
15. Discussed several opportunities for developing strategic partnerships with different processes, and decided to:
 - a) Propose this as an agenda item for the next meeting of the EHMB;
 - b) Entrust the secretariat, in collaboration with the Chair, Co-Chairs and the EWG to develop a paper on possible partnerships, to inform the discussions of the EHMB (based on support kindly offered by Austria, UK, UNEP, Ecoforum.
16. Noted the secretariat report on sustainable financing of the EHP, highlighting the budget issues for 2014-15, as well as the opportunity of using the financing dialogue to close the resource gap.
17. Noted the progress report of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition (EEHYC)

Preparations for the Mid-term Review high level EHTF meeting in 2014 (MTR)

18. Gratefully welcomed the proposal from Israel to host the Mid Term Review in 2014 in Israel.
19. Discussed a draft proposal for the MTR Report and its preparation timelines, and:
 - a) Agreed on the overall structure and the report;
 - b) Decided to add an executive summary to support communication to policy makers and the public;
 - c) Recommended to expand the scope of the report to include endocrine disruptors, asbestos, SAICM and research; to further clarify the aim of the report, and to highlight possible ways forward.
20. Noted the following Member States and EHP stakeholders, who volunteered to join the Editorial Board: Estonia, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, UNDP, Ecoforum, HEAL. It also noted the offer of the European Commission to contribute text related to research aspects.
21. Discussed the draft agenda of the Mid Term Review, and entrusted the EWG to work with the secretariat in its further development, based on feedback provided by the EHTF;
22. Decided that preparatory meetings of the MTR, if needed, would involve both Member States and EHTF Stakeholders. These could include sub-regional meetings, if requested.

Adoption of an inter-sessional workplan for EHTF

23. Discussed the draft intersessional workplan for the EHTF, which will be updated in January 2014 based on latest available information and decisions taken by the EHTF.
24. Discussed opportunities for developing partnerships and welcomed the availability of UNEP to develop a concept note on partnerships in relation to the EHP, as well as the availability of Austria to share the experiences developed under THE PEP and of Ecoforum to facilitate participation in the post Rio discussions.

Initial discussion on possible priorities and focus of the 6th Ministerial Conference in 2016

25. Noted presentations by the secretariat on the links between the EHP and Health 2020 and the sustainable development agenda, respectively, complemented by an intervention by UNEP.

26. Decided to participate in a side event organized by the WECF on the occasion of the forthcoming Open Working Group Meeting, taking place in New York in early January, represented by its Chair.
27. Held an initial brain storm on the possible topics that could be highlighted by the Ministerial Conference, and possible formats for that. Initial ideas include issues related to: contaminated sites with a focus on children, climate change, effects of innovation and new technologies, healthy cities/neighborhoods (including accessibility aspects), pre-natal exposures, early warnings from emerging issues, economic benefits of actions and costs of inaction, asbestos, environmental determinants of NCDs, environmental exposures of vulnerable groups, links between environmental exposures and emerging diseases (allergies, reproductive diseases and diseases of the nervous system). In addition, the secretariat proposed to consider as a possible format for the conference one based on main themes and cross-cutting thematic areas. Themes could include water, air, cities/urban areas, chemicals, natural resources and energy and waste. Cross cutting dimensions could include: sustainable development and economy, climate change, health systems, wellbeing, health impacts, human rights.

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Annex 5. Main documents adopted by the EHTF

1. Terms of Reference of HIC

Working group on health in climate change (HIC) Terms of reference

**as discussed by the EHTF at its third meeting,
Brussels, 10-11 December 2013**

Introduction

1. The European Environment and Health Process (EHP) is continuing towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 2016. The European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) is the body leading the implementation and monitoring of the EHP. At the first meeting of EHTF in Bled in September 2011, it was proposed to establish the Working Group on Climate Change and Health, which should continue the work of the Climate Change and Health Task Force, which had been operating in preparation of the Parma Ministerial Conference.
2. All EHTF members were invited to obtain nominations of their countries' or organizations' representatives in the Working Group on Climate Change and its Impact on Health (HIC) in April 2012. Up to 10 November, 2013, thirty-eight Member States and five eligible stakeholder organizations have nominated their representatives in HIC.
3. EHTF established the Working Group on Climate Change and its Impacts on Health (HIC) in accordance with the Rule 20.2 of its Rules of Procedure (adopted at its First meeting in 2011).
4. The first meeting of HIC took place in Bonn, Germany on 4-6 June 2012. Nominated representatives reviewed working arrangements and other statutory matters regarding HIC and prepared a proposal to EHTF at its next meeting for review and decision. The meeting agreed that Germany (environment) and United Kingdom (health) will serve as interim Co-chairs of HIC until the working group is fully established by EHTF.

Overall Scope of the Working Group

5. HIC will facilitate dialogue and communication among Member States and other stakeholders on matters related to climate change and health, and will support and facilitate, in particular, the implementation of the relevant commitments in the Parma Declaration, guided by the European Regional Framework for Action on Climate Change and Health.¹
6. HIC will support Member States of the WHO European Region to protect the health of their citizens from the impacts of climate change, and to maximize the health benefits of sustainable low-carbon lifestyles, by sharing experiences and information on policies regarding adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

Membership

7. All WHO Member States in the European Region and all organizations and institutions that are members of EHTF may nominate their representatives in HIC at any time. The mandate of the
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HIC members is until recall by the nominating party. Representatives may be appointed, changed or withdrawn at any point by the nominating party. Decisions regarding HIC membership will be communicated to the EHP Secretariat in writing, which will maintain an up-to-date registry of nominations. The HIC co-chairs in consultation with its Members, can invite other organizations or individuals in the work of HIC, in particular UNFCCC and WMO.

HIC Terms of Reference

8. HIC will:

- a. Act as a catalyst in promoting, implementing and monitoring the climate change and health commitments in the Parma Declaration and ‘Commitment to Act’ (2010) at the national and international level, using the European Framework for Action as a guide, namely to:
 - i. integrate health issues in all climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, policies and strategies;
 - ii. strengthen health, social welfare and environmental systems and services to improve their response to the impacts of climate change;
 - iii. develop and strengthen early warning surveillance and preparedness systems for extreme weather events and disease outbreaks;
 - iv. develop and implement educational and public awareness programmes on climate change and health;
 - v. collaborate to increase the health sector’s contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen its leadership on energy- and resource-efficient management;
 - vi. encourage research and development, as well as developments towards European information platforms for systematic sharing of best practices, research, data, information, technology.
- b. Provide a platform for exchange of experiences and demonstrating good practices in implementation (e.g. with respect to vulnerability assessments, national adaptation plans, greening health services, healthy mitigation measures, disaster prevention such as heat health action plans and flood prevention, climate sensitive infectious disease prevention and response, other climate relevant health effects, healthy lifestyles, etc.) and encourage partnership working among countries and stakeholders;
- c. Provide health input to other climate change and sustainable development processes (such as the negotiations of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change and sustainable development goals), as well as facilitating interactions with environment, climate change and financing institutions.
- d. Develop the climate change and health contributions – for consideration of the EHTF - to the 6th Environment and Health Ministerial Conference in 2016.

Frequency of meetings

9. HIC will meet annually. HIC meetings will be convened and organized in the spirit of sustainability and to minimize travelling. Work between meetings will take place electronically,

using the internet and other appropriate modes of communication. Topic-specific meetings may be organized to further review, discuss and act upon particularly important topics and priorities.

Proposed methods of work

10. HIC will operate according to the Rules of Procedure of the EHTF.. HIC may invite experts to its meetings or convene technical meetings on a topic that requires and justifies further technical work. HIC may commission specific technical work and agree on the summary of results.

11. HIC will elect two co-chairs, one of which will be from the health sector and the other from the environment sector.

12. HIC will report back on the progress of its work to EHTF.

2. Terms of Reference of the Standing EHTF Working Group

1. EHTF establishes the Ad-hoc Working Group to support the preparations of the Mid-term review (EWG) in line with the rule 20.2 of the Rules of procedure of the EHTF.

2. The purpose of the EWG is to support the Chair and Co-chair of the EHTF in different aspects concerning the preparations of the Mid-term review EHTF meeting, which will take place in Israel in fall 2014.

3. The EWG will also support the Chair and Co-chair of EHTF and the Secretariat in the implementation of the inter-sessional workplan 2014.

4. The EWG consists of volunteer Member States and EHP Stakeholders. The following Member States and EHP Stakeholders have volunteered to serve on the EWG until MTR in 2014:

1. Alexander Nies (Germany), EHTF Chair
2. Thor-Erik Lindgren (Norway), EHTF Co-chair
3. Krunoslav Capak (Croatia), outgoing EHTF Chair
4. Robert Thaler (Austria), in-coming EHTF Co-chair
5. Massimo Cozzone (Italy), host country of the Parma conference
6. Louise Newport (United Kingdom), HIC Co-chair
7. Orna Matzner (Israel), host country of the MTR EHTF Meeting in 2014
8. UNECE
9. UNEP
10. WHO

5. The EWG will keep all members of EHTF regularly informed about its work.

6. The EWG will liaise with the EHMB and their alternates, as needed and appropriate, to maximize communication between and consistency of the work of the EHTF and EHMB.

7. EWG will be supported by the WHO secretariat. The working language will be English.

8. EWG is convened by the EHTF Chair in agreement with the Secretariat. To the extent possible, the EWG will operate through electronic communication means (phone and video conferences, emails, etc). The EWG may decide to hold meetings as necessary, having in mind the need to optimize the use of resources.

9. The EWG activities will be included in the EHTF intersessional programme of work for 2014.

**The WHO Regional
Office for Europe**

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations created in 1948 with the primary responsibility for international health matters and public health. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is one of six regional offices throughout the world, each with its own programme geared to the particular health conditions of the countries it serves.

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Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
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