



Report of the seventh meeting of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB)

**Zagreb, Croatia
19 November 2015**



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Europe**

7th Meeting of the European Environment
and Health Ministerial Board
Zagreb, Croatia, 19 November 2015

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Abstract

At its seventh meeting, held in Zagreb, Croatia, on 19 November 2015, the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board reviewed the strategic direction of the European Environment and Health Process, its priorities and key milestones for 2016 and the draft workplan for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, scheduled for 2017. It took note of the outcomes of the high-level mid-term review of the European Environment and Health Process, the main outcomes of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (New York, United States of America, 25-27 September 2015) and of the report “The European environment — state and outlook 2015. Finally, it heard details of the forthcoming fifth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force (Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 24-25 November 2016), and discussed its potential participation in the second United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 23-27 May 2016) and the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016).

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Acknowledgements

The seventh meeting of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board was generously hosted by the Government of Croatia.

Opening of the meeting

1. The European Environment and Health Ministerial Board held its seventh meeting on 19 November 2015 in Zagreb, Croatia, at the kind invitation of the Government of Croatia. See Annex 1 and document EURO/EHMB7/02 for the scope and purpose of the meeting, Annex 2 and document EURO/EHMB7/04 for the programme of work, Annex 3 for the main points of discussion and decisions and Annex 4 for the list of participants.
2. Mr Aramayis Grigoryan, Minister of Nature Protection of Armenia, the Chair of the Ministerial Board, opened the meeting. Mr Sinisa Varga, Minister of Health of Croatia, was elected Co-Chair.
3. The Ministerial Board observed a minute of silence in memory of those killed or injured in the terrorist attacks in Paris, France on 13 November 2015.
4. Mr Varga welcomed all participants to Zagreb and outlined the public health challenges currently facing his country, including floods induced by climate change and the ever-growing influx of migrants. Approximately 400 000 people have entered the country since September 2015: most stay in Croatia for a few days at the most, and medical and public-health services have to be provided promptly, both to help the migrants and to protect the general public. He said the current meeting was an excellent example of the intersectoral cooperation and whole-of-government approach which lay at the heart of the WHO European Region Health 2020 policy framework. He wished participants every success in their work.
5. Mr Hrvoje Dokoza, Deputy Minister of Environmental and Nature Protection of Croatia, likewise welcomed participants and stressed the importance of international cooperation, and specifically the European Environment and Health Process, in his country's efforts to combat the adverse effects of climate change. Croatia is including climate change adaptation measures in national policies in all sectors and aims to become a low-carbon economy by 2020. Mitigation measures include the construction of energy-efficient public buildings and 15 000 energy-efficient family homes, the promotion of public transport and electric and hybrid private vehicles and the promotion of innovative "green" technology. He looked forward to learning from the experience of other Member States.
6. Ms Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe, thanked the Government of Croatia for its generous hospitality and the significant role the country plays in tackling the current migration crisis. The forthcoming High-level Meeting on Refugee and Migrant Health of the Regional Office for Europe, due to take place on 23 and 24 November in Rome, Italy, will discuss, among many other topics, the environmental aspects of the migration situation in the Region.
7. She welcomed members of the EHMB and alternates, including new members from Belarus, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uzbekistan, and other participants, including Mr Hans Bruyninckx, Executive Director of the European Environment Agency, Mr Dragan Gjorgjev, Chair of the Environment and Health Task Force and observers from Germany, the European Environment

and Health Youth Coalition and the nongovernmental organization Women in Europe for a Common Future, representing Eco-Forum.

8. Noteworthy events since the previous meeting include the adoption by the United Nations of the Sustainable Development Goals: the Ministerial Board offers an excellent example of the intersectoral collaboration which will be required to implement the Goals. The high-level mid-term review of the Parma Declaration (Haifa, Israel, 28-30 April 2015) had discussed a number of politically strong, measurable, time-bound targets for adoption by the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, scheduled for 2017. The Standing Committee of the Regional Committee for Europe and the Committee on Environmental Policy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) would contribute to work on the draft outcome document of the Ministerial Conference, thereby assuring political support for the document.
9. Mr Andrey Vasilyev, Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECE, emphasized the importance of mechanisms such as the European Environment and Health Process in maintaining a regional and subregional focus to complement the national initiatives promoted in the Sustainable Development Goals.
10. The Board adopted the report of its sixth session (Madrid, Spain, 24 February 2015 – document EURO/EHMB6/2015).

Adoption of the agenda

11. The Ministerial Board considered the provisional agenda (document EURO/EHMB7/3). On the proposal of the observer for Germany, an additional subitem on the appointment of a member of the EHMB to attend meetings of the Ad-Hoc Working Group of the European Environment and Health Task Force (see document EURO/EHMB7/3 Add. 1) was added to the agenda under item 5 (see item “Any other business”, below). The amended agenda (document EURO/EHMB7/3 Rev.1) and programme of work (document EURO/EHMB7/4) were adopted.

Reporting and informing

Follow-up on previous decisions (Document EURO/EHMB7/06)

12. Ms Francesca Racioppi, Senior Policy and Programme Adviser, Environment and Health Governance and Partnerships, WHO Regional Office for Europe, outlined the status of follow-up to previous decisions. Reports to the Regional Committee for Europe and the Committee on Environmental Policy were submitted on schedule, and arrangements for participation as observer in meetings of the European Environment and Health Process by a selected nongovernmental organization were completed. The Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission is considering appointing a focal point for liaison with the Process. Close links are maintained with the European Commission at a technical level, for instance with the officials responsible for the European Human Biomonitoring Initiative, to be launched by the European Commission in 2016, but closer links are required at the political level. The European Environment and Health Gateway information portal is under development, although progress

depends on the overall development of the WHO Europe corporate health information portal. Statements and letters putting forward the position of the Ministerial Board on relevant environmental issues have been prepared, as requested by the Board, but not all had been delivered as planned, mostly due to a time constraints at the events, for which they had been written. .

13. Alignment of the work of the Process with the Sustainable Development Goals will need to take into account the outcomes of the forthcoming Regional Coordination Mechanism meeting of United Nations agencies in December 2015 and the WHO European Region coordination meetings in the spring and early summer of 2016.
14. The representative of Croatia said that his Government will suggest the convening of an informal joint meeting on environment and health of the European Union Environment Council and the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council. Ms Jakab is scheduled to meet representatives of the Directorate-General for Environment in January 2016 and participate in forthcoming United Nations meetings to plan activities to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

Reporting on the high-level mid-term review (MTR) meeting, Haifa, Israel, 28-30 April 2015 and its main outcomes; (Documents EURO/EHMB7/7 and Annexes 1-4, EURO/EHMB7/10 and EURO/EHMB7/11)

15. Mr Srdan Matic, Coordinator, Environment and Health, WHO Regional Office for Europe, reviewed the outcomes of the mid-term review of the Environment and Health Process (for the mid-term review document, see EURO/EHMB7/10; for the report of the meeting, see document EURO/EHMB7/11). Challenges to the Process identified during the review include political engagement at the ministerial level and above, streamlining of institutional arrangements, including human resources and financing, maintaining the relevance of the Process for Member States with differing political and economic situations and identifying the unique “niche” of the Process. Participants agreed that it is important not to lose sight of the commitments made under the Parma Declaration. Future commitments should be aligned with the Health 2020 policy framework and Sustainable Development Goals, and should be relevant to a 21st-century context, limited in number, feasible to implement and measurable. Participants adopted a road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, scheduled for 2017, outlining eight main thematic areas for discussion and putting forward a provisional timeline (see document EURO/EHMB7/7 and Annexes 1-4). Mr Gjorgjev highlighted the need for strong partnerships between countries and between sectors at all levels and for greater political support from decision-makers.
16. The observer for Germany, speaking as the Chair of the mid-term review, noted three major outstanding issues: 100 million people in the WHO European Region still lack safe water supplies and adequate sanitation; smoking is still not banned in schools in three countries; and 300 million people live in regions where asbestos is still in use.

Reporting on the Environment and Health Process to the 65th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Vilnius, Lithuania, 14–17 September 2015) and to the

21st session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, Switzerland, 27–30 October 2015) (Document EURO/EHMB7/12)

17. Ms Jakab noted the positive reaction of the two governing bodies to the report. They stressed the need for the Sixth Ministerial Conference to produce a short, focused outcome document concentrating on a small number of important issues, including reform of the governance of the Process.
18. Mr Andrey Vasilyev, Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECE, said that the Committee on Environmental Policy will allocate time at its twenty-second session to discussing the preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference. He invited the Ministerial Board to contribute to the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, to be held in Batumi, Georgia, on 8-10 June 2016.

Reporting on the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 (New York, United States of America, 25-27 September 2015)

19. Ms Nedret Emiroglu, Deputy Director, Division of Communicable Diseases, Health Security & Environment, WHO Regional Office for Europe and Special Representative of the Regional Director on the Sustainable Development Goals and governance, highlighted the relevant Goals adopted at the Sustainable Development Summit. For instance, Goal 3.9 deals with hazardous chemicals and pollution and contamination of air, water and soil, and thus requires action by the health, environment and other sectors. Goal 6 on water and sanitation is particularly relevant for the WHO European Region, where this topic is still an unfinished agenda. Goal 11 on cities and human settlements, including waste management, and Goal 13 on climate change are likewise relevant. Indicators and a methodology for implementation of the Goals are still to be developed. Ms Jakab noted that the United Nations country teams and European Union agencies are updating their national and regional development plans to fit in with the Goals, and the European Environment and Health Process will need to do the same. In the ensuing discussion, one participant noted the importance of subregional and cross-border collaboration, involving groupings such as the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the countries of south-eastern Europe.

Preparations for the second United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 23-27 May 2016) (Document EURO/EHMB7/15)

20. Mr Wondwosen K. Asnake, Programme Officer, United Nations Environment Programme briefly reviewed the preparations for the second Environment Assembly, scheduled for May 2016, which will focus on the environmental dimension of the post-2015 development agenda. Wide-ranging activities have been conducted to increase stakeholder engagement, including outreach to non-traditional constituencies such as schools and religious organizations and an online hub, myunepa.org. At the political level, the emphasis will be on policy options, governance and potential partnerships. The Environment Assembly will include a ministerial policy review entitled “Healthy environment- healthy people”, supported by a global thematic report, which is being developed in collaboration between UNEP and WHO and a symposium on mobilizing resources for sustainable investments. The Committee of Permanent

Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme aims to decide on a definitive agenda by February 2016. Mr Asnake invited the Ministerial Board and the EHTF to consider the possibility of organizing a side event to raise awareness about the EHP in other regions.

Preparations for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016) (Document EURO/EHMB7/13)

21. Ms Ivonne Higuero, Chief, Operational Activities and Review Section Environment Division, UNECE, said that 500-600 participants are expected to attend the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in June 2016. The Ministerial Board and/or Task Force are invited to arrange a meeting back-to-back with the Conference, or to put on a side event. The representative of Georgia pledged his Government's willingness to assist in the organization of such an event. Participants noted that a pan-European report on the status of the environment, based on collaboration between UNECE and the European Environment Agency, will be launched during the Conference.

Road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

Presentation of the report "The European environment — state and outlook 2015: synthesis report" (Document EURO/EHMB7/09)

22. Mr Bruyninckx introduced a report by the European Environment Agency entitled "The European environment — state and outlook 2015: synthesis report".¹ Europe faces persistent and emerging challenges linked to unsustainable global chains of production and consumption. "Living well, within the limits of our planet"² – the vision of the 7th Environment Action Programme looking forward to 2050 – requires a transition to a resource-efficient, circular, low-carbon economy – not merely the attempt to make current technologies more efficient.
23. EEA is working with WHO and the European Commission, in areas such as human biomonitoring, drinking and bathing water quality, noise, low-dose chronic exposure to metals such as lead and cadmium and premature deaths due to air pollution, to find systemic solutions to systemic problems. Action must be taken now to achieve the desired results by 2050. In order to build support for the initiative, it is important to develop a "narrative" linking economic investment in the present with long-term benefits for health and well-being in an "imaginable future".

¹ Reproduced in document EURO/EHMB7/09. Also available at <http://www.eea.europa.eu/soer> (accessed 28 August 2016).

² Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/action-programme/> (accessed 01 November 2016).

Proposed preparatory process and work-plan for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Document EURO/EHMB7/7)

Discussion on possible outcome elements for the Declaration of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

24. Mr Matic introduced the road map document (EURO/EHMB7/7), intended to guide the process of preparation for the Sixth Ministerial Conference. The preparatory process will include a political element, intended to achieve a broad consensus on a selected number of outcomes, and a thematic review of the main environment and health issues of the 21st century. The political process will include input from the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the Committee on Environmental Policy, as well as an online public consultation.
25. The Task Force will develop draft outcomes, supported by its Ad-Hoc Working Group and by the Ministerial Board. The final outputs are expected to comprise a ministerial resolution with a limited set of specific political/policy commitments; a document on the institutional arrangements for the European Environment and Health Process after 2017; and an action plan for the implementation of the resolution. The thematic review, based on the Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Health 2020 policy framework, covers eight areas of health and well-being relevant to the 21st century.
26. Mr Matic introduced an informal discussion paper putting forward possible criteria for the selection of commitments to be proposed at the Sixth Ministerial Conference, namely that they should provide added value for national policies, contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Health 2020, not overlap with the specific commitments of other processes and be amenable to the setting of SMART targets,¹ monitoring and reporting on implementation. The proposed ministerial resolution would be based on the adoption of national environmental health action plans (NEHAP) by every Member State; the pursuit of five regional initiatives: environmentally sustainable health systems; adequate water, sanitation and hygiene conditions in every country of the WHO European Region; sustainable chemistry; eliminating threats to human health in the transition to a circular economy; and making European cities environmentally sustainable and resilient.
27. Points raised during the discussion included ways of establishing links between the Sixth Ministerial Conference and national policy-making and increasing the attendance at meetings of the Task Force. Participants stressed the importance of integrating environment and health issues into the major WHO initiatives of universal health coverage, health system strengthening and control of noncommunicable diseases. Public education campaigns will be a necessary part of efforts to improve water, sanitation and hygiene conditions. The regional initiative on sustainable chemistry is understood to include sustainable design of products and reduction of chemical use, not merely recycling/reuse of chemicals. Observers urged that the goals set in Parma and not yet achieved should continue to be pursued, and highlighted the importance of strengthening the education dimension of the proposed actions.

¹ SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

28. From a governance perspective, the Chair of the EHTF and the observer for Germany remarked that the EHTF, which represents all the MS of the European Region, with its Ad-Hoc Working Group, should be the main platform for the negotiation of the Ministerial Conference outcomes, and suggested that the road map document should be amended to reflect this more clearly.

Adoption of an intersessional programme of work for the EHMB (Documents EURO/EHMB7/8 and EURO/EHMB7/14)

29. Ms Racioppi drew attention to the proposed intersessional programme of work, contained in document EURO/EHMB7/8 and covering future meetings of the Ministerial Board, engagement with the European Union, links with multilateral environmental agreements and programmes and preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference. A host country is still required for the Ministerial Conference. Mr Matic drew attention to an overview of the resources available to the Secretariat in 2014-2015, contained in document EURO/EHMB7/14.
30. The observer for Germany called upon the Secretariat to prepare an appropriate communication to be sent to those States which are due to take up the Presidency of the European Council in the near future, asking them to include environment and health issues in the activities of their Presidency. The intersessional programme of work should include the activities planned for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. The Ministerial Board might also contribute to the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in March 2016 and the World Health Assembly in May 2016.
31. The Ministerial Board adopted the intersessional programme of work on the understanding that it would be updated in light of the discussion. In particular, members agreed to continue convening Ministerial Board meetings as needed in line with Rule 4.1 of the Rules of Procedure (“the Ministerial Board shall meet not less than once in a year. The Ministerial Board shall determine the dates and places of its meetings”).

Highlights on the meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force to be held in Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on 24-25 November 2015

32. Mr Gjorgjev said that 80-90 participants are expected at the Task Force meeting. The Task Force will discuss the road map and other preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference and other priority themes, including environmentally sustainable health systems and urban green spaces.

Any other business and closure of the meeting

33. Participants nominated Armenia to represent the Ministerial Board in the Ad-Hoc Working Group of the Task Force in respect of environment issues, and requested Croatia to respond on health issues.

34. The observer for Germany drew attention to a new initiative, the International Sustainable Chemistry Collaborative Centre (ISC3 – <https://isc3.org/>), which is due to open in Germany in early 2017.
35. The representative of Georgia remarked on the positive effect that the participation of Georgia in the Ministerial Board has had on promoting intersectoral policy development at the national level in his country.
36. The Ministerial Board agreed that a summary of the meeting would be circulated by email for correction, if necessary, and approval.
37. Mr Matic, summing up the day's discussions, expressed his appreciation of the constructive work achieved at the meeting and thanked the Croatian hosts for their excellent organizational work.
38. Ms Anahit Aleksandryan, Head of Department of Hazardous Substances and Waste Policy Division, Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia, thanked participants on behalf of the Minister of Nature Protection and declared the meeting closed at 15:15 on 19 November 2015.

Annex 1. Scope and purpose

The seventh meeting of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) is convened in accordance with Rule 4 of the Rules of Procedure.

The Ministerial Board convenes following the high-level mid-term review meeting of the European Environment and Health Process that took place in Haifa, Israel, 28-30 April 2015.

The main purpose of the meeting is to review the strategic direction of the European Environment and Health Process (EHP) and its priorities and key milestones for 2015 and 2016, with a view towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. In particular, the discussion will focus on the following main areas:

1. **Reporting:** The EHMB will be informed about the outcomes of the high-level mid-term review (MTR) meeting and the ensuing discussions at the 65th WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Vilnius, Lithuania, 14-17 September 2015), and at the 21st session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, Switzerland, 27-30 October 2015). The Secretariat will report on follow up and implementation of the previous decisions. The EHMB will also be informed regarding the main outcomes of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (New York, United States of America, 25-27 September 2015).
2. **Informing:** The Board will be informed about the preparations for the second United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 23-27 May 2016) and the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016). The Board will decide on its possible active role at these events.
3. **Road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health:** The EHMB will review and discuss the final draft workplan for the preparatory process for the Sixth Ministerial Conference, including aspects related to the sustainability of the EHP and its financial needs until 2017. The Board will discuss its role and engagement in the negotiation of the political outcome of the Conference. To provide the background to this discussion:
 - a. the European Environment Agency will present the 2015 Status of Environment in Europe Report (SOER);
 - b. the Secretariat will highlight the proposed possible outcomes of the themes making up the road map, to stimulate a discussion by the Board on which of these outcomes would be of the greatest political relevance, in view of the negotiations of the outcomes of the next Ministerial conference. In addition, the Board will be informed about the forthcoming discussions to be held by the European Environment and Health Task Force, at its fifth meeting, which will take place in Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on 24-25 November 2015.

Annex 2. Programme of work

Wednesday, 18 November 2015		
18:00 - 19:30	Welcome reception hosted by the Minister of Health of Croatia, with tour of the HAZU Gallery of Old Masters	<i>Palace of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences (HAZU)</i>
Thursday, 19 November 2015		
08:30 - 09:00	Registration	<i>Palace of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences (HAZU)</i>
09:00 - 09:30	Opening of the meeting (Agenda item 1) <i>Opening and introductions - Chair: Mr Aramayis Grigoryan, Minister of Environment of Armenia, EHMB Co-Chair</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Welcome by Mr Sinisa Varga, Minister of Health of Croatia</i> • <i>Welcome by Mr Mihael Zmajlovic, Minister of Environmental and Nature Protection of Croatia</i> • <i>Welcome by Ms Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe</i> 	
09:30 - 10:30	Agenda items 2.a, 2.b, 2.c, 2.d: <i>Follow-up to previous decisions</i>	
11:00 - 11:30	Coffee and tea break	
11:30 - 13:00	Road map towards the 7th Ministerial Conference on environment and health Agenda item 3.a: <i>Presentation of the Status of the Environment in Europe Report (SOER) by the Executive Director of the European Environment Agency (EEA)</i>	

	Agenda item 3.b, 3.c: <i>Preparatory process for the 7th Ministerial Conference - endorsement of the road map</i>	
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch hosted by the Minister of Health of Croatia	
14:00 - 15:15	<p>Agenda item 2.e: <i>Preparations for the second United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 23-27 May 2016)</i></p> <p>Agenda item 2.f: <i>Preparations for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016)</i></p> <p>Agenda item 3.d: <i>Adoption of the Intersessional programme of work for the EHMB</i></p> <p>Agenda item 3.e: <i>Highlights on the meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force to be held in Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on 24-25 November 2015</i></p>	
15:15 - 15:30	Agenda item 4: <i>Any other business and closure of the meeting</i>	

Annex 3. Main points of discussion and decisions

1. At the opening of the meeting, the Board observed a minute of silence in memory of those killed or injured in the terrorist attacks in Paris, France on 13 November 2015.

1) Adoption of the agenda

- a) Participants elected Mr Aramays Grigoryan, Minister of Nature Protection of Armenia and Mr Sinisa Varga, Minister of Health of Croatia, as Co-Chairs of the meeting.
- b) The representative of Germany proposed that the Ministerial Board should nominate its member of the Ad-Hoc Working Group of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF). Participants adopted the agenda of the meeting, as amended.

2) Reporting and informing

a) Follow up on previous decisions

Regarding the engagement of the European Commission in the EHP, proposals were made to:

- highlight the 7th EHMB meeting at the next Councils of EU Ministers of Health and Environment – Croatia, as the host of the present meeting, could be well positioned for this;
- explore opportunities for an (informal) Council meeting on Environment and Health;
- continue technical engagement, for example on the Human Bio-monitoring Initiative to be launched in 2016 by DG Research;

Regarding the SDGs, it will be important to take into account the outcome of the forthcoming Regional Coordination Mechanism meeting of the UN Agencies for SDG implementation (mid-December, Istanbul Turkey) and capitalize on the WHO Europe meetings, which will take place in spring 2016 and June 2016.

b) Reporting on the high-level mid-term review (MTR) meeting, Haifa, Israel, 28-30 April 2015 and its main outcomes

Participants appreciated the direct engagement of MS and EHP stakeholders in the preparation of the meeting. They also agreed on the importance of enhancing high-level political support for the EHP and reviewing and streamlining its governance as part of the preparations for the next Ministerial Conference.

c) Reporting on the Environment and Health Process to the 65th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Vilnius, Lithuania, 14–17 September 2015) and to the 21st session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, Switzerland, 27–30 October 2015)

Participants noted the reports presented by the WHO RD and the Deputy Executive Secretary of the UNECE on the main outcomes of the RC65 and CEP21.

d) Reporting on the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 (New York, United States of America, 25-27 September 2015)

Participants noted with appreciation the report on the outcomes of the SD Summit and the links between the SDGs and the EH agenda presented by the WHO Secretariat. They noted the opportunity for UN regional initiatives to offer a bridge linking the SDGs to national action, thereby supporting implementation in countries. This process could take advantage of the presence of UN country teams in several Member States and of platforms such as UNDAF. These will need to be brought into line with the SDGs, as well as their targets and

forthcoming indicators. Both UNEP and UNECE highlighted the transformative nature of the agenda and crucial role of intersectoral partnership.

e) *Preparations for the second United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 23-27 May 2016)*

Participants noted with appreciation the presentation on the status of implementation of UNEA1 resolutions and UNEA2 preparations. UNEA is the global “parliament” of the environment agenda, involving 193 countries. UNEA2 will be held under the overarching theme of delivering the environmental dimension of the post-2015 agenda. There will be a high level ministerial policy review on “Healthy Environment- Healthy People” supported by a thematic report that will present the evidence of the linkages between environmental quality, human health and well-being, and policy options for improved health and well-being. UNEA2 will also have a Symposium on “Mobilizing resources for sustainable investments” that will highlight the necessity to mobilizing and align the world’s capital to accelerate the transition to a green economy. Participants were encouraged to make use of the newly launched online tool called myUNEA.org aimed at increasing participation with UNEP and UNEA. A side event could be considered by the EHMB and EHTF, also as a means to raise awareness about the EHP in other regions.

f) *Preparations for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016)*

Participants noted with appreciation the update on the preparations for the Batumi Conference, which is expected to be attended by ca. 600 delegates. There will be no more than 20 side events, which should address issues of relevance to the conference. Organizations and countries should join forces to propose events. Proposals for side events should be sent by 15 January 2016. UNECE is ready to work with WHO and UNEP and MS to propose a side event. There could also be links to the side events to be proposed by the MEAs, e.g. Protocol on Water and Health. There could be opportunities to hold a back-to-back meeting of EHP bodies, under the WHO leadership and with political support from the Ministry of Health.

The UNEA2 and Batumi conferences could present an opportunity to address aspects of the EHP that represent high priorities, e.g. with respect to air pollution. In Batumi, consideration will be given to the organization of a preparatory meeting for the Ministerial Conference.

3) Road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

a) *Presentation of the report “The European environment — state and outlook 2015: synthesis report”*

Participants noted with appreciation the presentation by Mr Bruyninckx, Executive Director of the EEA, of the SOER 2015 report. This highlights progress (e.g. improvements in efficiency in the use of energy and natural resources and in the low-carbon economy) and challenges (e.g. living within the limits of the planet) in the European environment with an outlook into the future. Climate change and chemicals remain a major area of concern, which will be greatly influenced by global trends in emissions and policies. There is a need to look at issues with a new, systemic approach, to understand the root causes of unsustainability, and identify systemic solutions, including the universalization of the “circular economy”. Upscaling “niche innovations” will be necessary to develop the green economy. To make an impact at the political level, the development of a different “narrative” that brings the issues closer to what matters most to politicians and the public is of essence, along with setting long term targets, while looking at actions within an “imaginable future”.

Participants also noted that a pan-European report on the status of the environment will be launched on the occasion of the Batumi Conference, based on collaboration between the UNECE and EEA.

b) *Proposed preparatory process and work-plan for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health;*

And

c) *Discussion on possible outcome elements for the Declaration of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health;*

Participants noted with appreciation the presentation of the proposed preparatory process for the 6th Ministerial Conference, and of the initial proposal for substantive items that could be considered as elements for political commitments to be undertaken by the Ministerial Conference.

Participants expressed broad support for the proposed elements, and agreed to continue the discussion of the paper with the EHTF. They remarked on the importance of making explicit the contribution that could be made to strengthening health systems, addressing inequalities, and contributing to universal health coverage, as well as tackling noncommunicable diseases. They remarked that, when addressing the circular economy, links to the chemical agenda will also be important, as well as those related to waste. An EU document on the circular economy, which will be launched on 2 December, could provide a useful reference. They also highlighted the need to build on forthcoming opportunities for joint action, such as the document on air pollution which will be adopted in Batumi. Observers urged that the goals set in Parma and not yet achieved should continue to be pursued, and highlighted the importance of strengthening the education dimension of the proposed actions.

From a governance perspective, the Chair of the EHTF and the observer for Germany remarked that the EHTF, which represents all the MS of the European Region, with its Ad-Hoc Working Group, should be the main platform for the negotiation of the Ministerial Conference outcomes, and suggested that the road map document should be amended to reflect this more clearly.

d) *Adoption of an intersessional programme of work for the EHMB*

Participants reviewed and adopted the intersessional programme of work of the EHMB, with the following modifications:

- 1. Future meetings of the EHMB:** these will be decided in line with the EHMB Rules of Procedure (see also “Any other business” below);
- 2. Engagement of the European Union in the EHP:** EHMB members could highlight the EHP as part of their interventions in Councils of Ministers of Environment and Health, and advocate the organization of a Council on Environment and Health
- 3. Overview of events for possible EHMB engagement:** the following two additional events were proposed for possible active engagement of EHMB members: Seventh meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee (INC7) for the Minamata Convention on Mercury (Amman, 9 March 2016) and Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly (Geneva, 23-28 May 2016), to highlight the synergy between EHP agenda and the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and to contribute to the discussion on a draft resolution on chemical safety and health, respectively.

e) *Highlights on the meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force to be held in Skopje, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on 24-25 November 2015.*

Participants received with appreciation the update provided by Professor Dragan Gjorgiev regarding the preparations for the fifth meeting of the EHTF.

4) Any other business and closure of the meeting

Participants nominated Armenia to represent the EHMB in the Ad-Hoc Working Group of the EHTF in respect of environment issues, and requested Croatia to respond on health issues.

The observer for Germany reminded the EHMB that the Board meets only annually by quoting the “Institutional Framework”- that states: ‘ Its (EHMB) annual meetings will be arranged back to back with sessions of the Regional Committee and meetings of the CEP in alternating years...’. In the following discussion, EHMB members agreed to continue convening the EHMB meetings as needed and in line with its Rules of Procedure (Rule 4.1 “*the Ministerial Board shall meet not less than once in a year. The Ministerial Board shall determine the dates and places of its meetings*”).

Participants also noted the information provided by the observer for Germany that his country will host an International Collaborative Centre on Sustainable Chemistry, which will support capacity building efforts in countries.

The representative of Georgia, which reaches the end of its mandate in the EHMB at the end of 2015, expressed his appreciation for the work of the EHP and remarked on the positive effect that the participation of Georgia in the EHMB has also had on promoting intersectoral policy development at the national level in his country.

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