



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

**Vilnius, Lithuania
01 July 2014**



**World Health
Organization**

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Abstract

At its fifth meeting (Vilnius, Lithuania, on 1 July 2014), the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) reviewed the strategic direction of the European Environment and Health Process (EHP) and key strategic partnerships. The EHMB discussed the draft progress report to be submitted to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in the autumn of 2014 and adopted a programme of work for the period until its sixth session in February 2015. The EHMB further discussed the preparations for the high-level mid-term review meeting, to be hosted by Israel in November 2014, and initial preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 2016. It designated air quality, climate change and chemical safety as its priorities in the period until the Ministerial Conference.

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Acknowledgements

The fifth meeting of the EHMB was generously hosted by the Government of Lithuania.

Opening of the meeting

1. The European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) held its fifth meeting on 1 July 2014 in Vilnius, Lithuania, at the kind invitation of the Government of Lithuania. See Annex 1 (document EURO/EHMB5/2) for the scope and purpose of the meeting, Annex 2 (document EURO/EHMB5/4) 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 Gediminas Černiauskas, Vice-Minister of Health of Lithuania, welcomed participants on behalf of the Minister of Health, Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis, and thanked the Lithuanian Parliament authorities for providing the venue for the meeting.
3. Ms Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe, welcomed participants and thanked the Government of Lithuania for its generous hospitality. She proposed that, in the absence of the Chair, Mr Amir Peretz of Israel, the latter's alternate, Ms Sinaia Netanyahu, should chair the first part of the meeting. She thanked the Government of Spain, which had offered to host the next EHMB meeting in February 2015, and welcomed Mr Alexander Nies, Chair of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF), together with the current Co-Chair, Mr Thor-Erik Lindgren of Norway, and the incoming Co-Chair, Mr Dragan Gjorgiev of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, who will take over from Mr Lindgren on 1 September 2014.
4. Ms Netanyahu formally opened the meeting and chaired the discussion of agenda items 1–6. She read out a message from Mr Peretz, in which the latter greeted participants and thanked the Government of Lithuania for its hospitality. He called on members of the EHMB to actively support its work and to explore ways of improving their communication between meetings. Every international event related to environment and health, especially those connected with multilateral conventions, agreements and protocols on health and climate change, air quality and chemical safety, gave members the opportunity to publicize the importance of environment and health issues. Israel was to host the high-level mid-term review of the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health in November 2014, with approximately 270 participants from the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region, United Nations agencies and nongovernmental organizations. The meeting would comprise two days of site visits and two days of discussion by the EHTF, although he hoped that EHMB members would also attend.
5. Ms Netanyahu summed up the main objectives of the current meeting, namely, to review the strategic direction and partnerships of the European Environment and Health Process, to provide guidance for the high-level mid-term review and to adopt an intersessional programme of work for the EHMB.
6. Ms Jakab thanked EHMB members for their fruitful collaboration with the Secretariat since the last session, in particular their guidance in the preparation of the joint report to the 63rd session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the 19th session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP). She called on the EHMB to develop the political framework required to lead the response to essential issues such as air pollution, the effects of climate change and chemical safety. Useful tools are already available, including the Health 2020 policy framework, the United Nations post-2015 sustainable development agenda and multilateral environmental agreements and programmes. Two high-level events that have taken place since the previous session of the EHMB – the Third Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Water and Health (Oslo, Norway, 25–27 November

2013) and the Fourth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) (Paris, France, 14–16 April 2014) – have shown that working for health across sectors can be highly effective.

7. The forthcoming election of a new President of the European Commission and new Members of the European Parliament provides an opportunity to renew the engagement of the European Commission in the EHMB's work. States due to take up the presidency of the European Union in the near future should explore opportunities for synergy between their presidency agenda and their role within the EHMB and the EHTF.

8. A number of lessons have become evident since the EHMB's fourth meeting in Belgrade, Serbia, in 2013. In the interests of credibility, it is essential for the EHMB to speak with a single voice: it must draw up an agreed position on major issues that all members can convey at relevant forums. For instance, it has not, as yet, been possible to agree on a joint position on the listing of chrysotile asbestos in the list of hazardous chemicals in Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade. It has also become clear that it is not enough merely to gather scientific evidence: it is also essential to carry out advocacy activities to publicize it. For instance, despite the available evidence on the effects of poor air quality on health, as presented to the EHMB at the Belgrade meeting, it did not prove possible to introduce the desired amendments during the European Union air policy review in 2013. She called on EHMB members to publicize as widely as possible the evidence to be presented at the current meeting on the health co-benefits of combating climate change and on chemical safety.

Adoption of the agenda

9. The agenda (document EURO/EHMB5/3 Rev.1) and programme of work (document EURO/EHMB5/4) were adopted.

Introduction of new members and election of a Co-Chair from among the ministers of health

10. Ms Netanyahu welcomed the new members representing the health sector from Croatia, Georgia, Lithuania and Spain. Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis, Minister of Health of Lithuania, was elected Co-Chair and chaired the discussion of agenda items 7–9.

Adoption of the report of the fourth EHMB meeting

11. The report of the fourth EHMB meeting, held in Belgrade, Serbia, in April 2013 (document EURO/EHMB5/6), was adopted without amendment.

Follow-up to previous decisions

12. Ms Francesca Racioppi, Senior Policy and Programme Adviser, Environment and Health Governance and Partnerships, WHO Regional Office for Europe, reported on the Secretariat's follow-up to previous decisions of the EHMB, where this was not covered elsewhere on the agenda (see document EURO/EHMB5/7). A valuable discussion of the EHMB's report took place in the autumn of 2013 at the 63rd session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the 19th session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. The member for Lithuania

delivered a statement on behalf of the EHMB at the Fourth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment of THE PEP. The issue of chrysotile asbestos would be discussed again at the next Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention in May 2015. A statement by the EHMB, calling on the WHO European Region and UNECE Member States to consider promoting and advancing multilateral environmental agreements and policies of special relevance to the Parma commitments and to develop specific actions to engage youth organizations in their national programmes for environment and health, was sent to the States concerned in July 2013.

13. Turning to operational aspects, she said that the EHMB members' alternates had held two fruitful meetings in March and May 2014, the latter on the occasion of a Bureau meeting of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy, where the two groups discussed potential synergies in their activities, such as back-to-back meetings. In the light of important specificities identified for the two processes and of additional considerations of a logistical and political nature, participants agreed that the present conditions were not yet appropriate for holding back-to-back conferences. A joint communication plan was approved by the EHMB and the EHTF.

14. In the interests of continuity and institutional memory, the WHO Regional Committee for Europe has nominated two members of the EHMB to serve for three years and two members to serve for two years. The UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy has nominated four new members for a two-year term, and will keep the issue of continuity in mind in future.

15. Mr Jan Dusik, Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Europe, drew attention to the outcome of the first United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) (Nairobi, Kenya, 23–27 June 2014) and to other forthcoming UNEP events. The Assembly adopted resolutions on air quality and on chemicals and wastes, including action related to the Minamata Convention on Mercury and an integrated approach to financing the sound management of chemicals and wastes. The second UNEA would take place in Nairobi on 23–27 May 2016, the third high-level global meeting scheduled for 2016 along with the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health and the Eighth "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference. Although joint events between the EHMB and UNEP were not feasible at present, it was important to consider how to gain the commitment of ministries of health and environment when they often represented widely differing interests.

16. Mr Nies noted that the health sector was still more strongly represented in the EHP than the environment sector. It was essential to ensure that both constituencies were equally well informed. He hoped that the session on environment and health, to take place during the 20th session of the CEP in October 2014, would provide an opportunity to raise awareness and promote the active engagement of the environment constituency.

17. Ms Jakab asked the members representing the environment sector how the EHMB could best engage environmental stakeholders in the EHP. It was difficult to arrange back-to-back meetings at ministerial level, as this would require ministers to be away from their desks for three or four days at a time.

18. Ms Netanyahu noted that the EHTF would be represented at the next meeting of UNECE. It was important to address both the European Union environmental agencies and the United Nations. One upcoming opportunity was the Lima Climate Change Conference (20th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol) in December 2014.

19. Mr Srdan Matic, Coordinator, Environment and Health, WHO Regional Office for Europe, introduced the EHMB's draft progress report to the 64th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the 20th session of the UNECE CEP (document EURO/EHMB5/8). The document would be updated to reflect the outcomes of the current meeting. The meetings of the alternates to EHMB members, particularly the working group on communications, had proved very useful for providing guidance for the Secretariat.

20. Mr Nies said that the report should reflect the outcomes of the alternates' meetings and the discussion on the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health since the most recent sessions of the Regional Committee and the CEP, and document the change of Co-Chair of the Task Force. The EHTF would next meet at the high-level mid-term review meeting in November 2014.

Strategic partnerships of the EHP

21. Mr Matic introduced the working paper on strategic partnerships for the EHP, prepared by the Secretariat (document EURO/EHMB5/9), and asked for the EHMB's guidance on further action to be taken. A number of technical and funding partnerships had been established with various European Union bodies and agencies, including the directorates-general for health, environment, education, employment and transport. However, the European Commission's participation in the EHMB's work did not match its political commitment. He hoped that the appointment of a new President of the Commission and new Commissioners would enable the issue to be resolved finally. The EHMB should make contact with those Member States that would assume the presidency of the European Union in the run-up to the Sixth Ministerial Conference – Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovakia and Malta – to encourage them to use their influence to secure funding for environment and health activities.

22. International financial institutions are another potential source of funding: for instance, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Water Fund, which follows the guidance of the UNECE/WHO Protocol on Water and Health, has promoted the investment of €3.8 million in water and sanitation in Europe. The Secretariat proposed that a specific plan for engaging international financial institutions in the implementation of the Parma Declaration should be prepared for discussion at the Sixth Ministerial Conference.

23. The parties to the various multilateral environmental agreements still appeared to have limited awareness of the EHP. EHMB members could play a political role in increasing awareness, and the EHTF may wish to consider inviting the chairs of the multilateral environmental agreements to attend the mid-term review to discuss possible synergies with their own activities.

24. EHMB members' alternates met the Bureau of the CEP at the latter's meeting in Lisbon, Portugal, in May 2014, finding much common ground, and that contact should continue.

25. The EHMB may wish to draw up a joint position on health for the post-2015 development agenda, to be disseminated by the Member States of the WHO European Region. Other potential partners include the Health 2020 process, other WHO regions and civil society stakeholders.

26. The representative of Croatia said that the environment and health process is dependent on its political stakeholders. The European Commission should be encouraged to re-engage with the process, potentially by means of a dedicated organizational structure. Activities in the area of

environment and health must remain consistent with the main policy frameworks created since the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, held in Parma, Italy, on 10–12 March 2010, namely, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and Health 2020. Exchanges of knowledge and experience with other regions are important, as environmental factors affect the whole planet.

27. The representative of Spain said that the EHMB should write to the President of the European Commission, urging him to assign responsibility for environment and health matters to a specific directorate-general. The EHMB should invite the chairpersons of the conventions and protocols relevant to environment and health to attend the mid-term review meeting. Her country welcomed the possibility of collaboration with the “Environment for Europe” process and Health 2020, and felt that collaboration with Health 2020 should be the subject of a separate agenda item at the next meeting of the EHMB.

28. Mr Marco Keiner, Director, Environment Division, UNECE, drew attention to the list of relevant multilateral environmental agreements in Annex 1 of the Secretariat report. The chairpersons of the multilateral environmental agreements meet once or twice a year with a flexible agenda: it would be possible to include items related to the EHP there. The workplans of the United Nations environmental conventions could be cross-checked for synergies with the objectives of the Parma Declaration and suitable cross-references included. That would increase the visibility of the Declaration.

29. Mr Nies said that the EHMB could play a stronger role as the political face of the health and environment process. He called on members to include environment and health issues in their national statements at meetings of United Nations and European Union bodies and in their contacts with nongovernmental organizations, which often have influence with national decision-makers.

30. Mr Lindgren said that, in his experience, States’ positions on the post-2015 development agenda were worked out at the national level. It would not be an effective use of resources to devote efforts to drawing up policies acceptable to a large number of States. Similarly, the European States should focus on clarifying their own objectives in the European context and establish closer ties with European Union institutions, relevant financial institutions and the multilateral environmental agreements before engaging with other regions.

31. Mr Gjorgiev said that the personal engagement of and advocacy by EHMB members are the key to increasing the visibility of the EHMB’s goals. The main priorities were to increase links with the European Commission, relevant international financial institutions and nongovernmental organizations.

32. Mr Dusik said that collaboration with the various environmental conventions was complicated by the fact that they all had their own governing bodies: UNEP merely acted as their Secretariat. Other potential partners are the European Economic and Social Committee, a consultative body seeking to engage with civil society, and the Climate Technology Centre and Network of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. As regards the sustainable development agenda, the main approaches had already been worked out and the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals had begun to refine them: EHMB members should encourage discussion in their own countries that would influence that process, rather than trying to draw up a new joint position at this late stage. Mr Keiner noted that the revised zero draft of the proposed goals and targets on sustainable development for the post-2015 development agenda, just adopted by the Open Working Group, included the target of reducing

deaths and illnesses caused by water, air and soil pollution, among other causes. Other potential partners were the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and industrial health and safety organizations.

33. The representative of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition said that collaboration between national environment and health focal points and youth organizations should be improved. In a survey conducted by WHO in preparation for the high-level mid-term review meeting, only one third of States reported that young people were involved in health and environment projects.

34. Ms Netanyahu asked the Secretariat to draw up a timetable of EHMB members' planned attendance at international meetings so that members could coordinate the delivery of remarks relevant to EHMB's activities.

35. Ms Jakab said that the preparation of the sustainable development goals was a process driven by Member States. Basic environment and health concerns, such as universal health coverage, pollution and noncommunicable diseases, already feature in the revised zero draft of the proposed goals and targets on sustainable development: the EHMB should agree on key messages that members could put across in the discussion of the draft at the national level. Ministers should make every effort to attend the discussions on the final draft of the sustainable development goals in 2015. She urged members to adopt a joint and more active approach to encouraging as many States as possible to accede to all multilateral environmental agreements related to the Parma Declaration objectives.

Priority environment and health issues for engagement of EHMB

36. Mr Matic, introducing the item, said that the alternates of EHMB members had suggested three priority issues: air quality, climate change and health, and chemical safety (see document EURO/EHMB5/10). These issues are relevant to the Parma Declaration; Member States have shown political commitment to addressing them; and effective interventions are available.

37. Since the technical presentation on air quality that the EHMB heard at its previous session in Belgrade, WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer has published a monograph¹ classifying air pollution as a Group I carcinogen, WHO has published revised estimates of the burden of disease arising from air pollution,² and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has estimated the health cost of air pollution in its 34 Member States at US\$ 1.7 trillion.³ EHMB members may wish to support the initiative of Norway and other WHO Member States for a draft resolution on air pollution and health, to be submitted to the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly in 2015. They may further wish to advocate the revision of the European Union's air pollution policy and enhanced implementation of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, and increase awareness of air pollution as a cause of noncommunicable diseases.

¹ Outdoor air pollution. Lyon: International Agency for Research on Cancer (in press) (IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans, Vol. 109).

² Burden of disease from household air pollution for 2012: summary of results. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014

(http://www.who.int/phe/health_topics/outdoorair/databases/FINAL_HAP_AAP_BoD_24March2014.pdf?ua=1, accessed 19 December 2014).

³ The cost of air pollution: health impacts of road transport. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; 2014 (http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/environment/the-cost-of-air-pollution_9789264210448-en, accessed on 19 December 2014).

38. In the area of chemical safety, the alternates to EHMB members recommended that the EHMB should pay particular attention to asbestos-related diseases and the health effects of mercury exposure. The call for Member States to promote the widespread implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, contained in World Health Assembly resolution WHA67.11, provides a good opportunity for the EHMB to take action.

39. The first invited speaker, Professor Rainer Sauerborn, Director of the Institute of Public Health at Heidelberg University, Germany, gave a presentation on the health effects of climate change. The economic impact of these effects would be considerable: to cite only two health-related effects, workers' capacity for work, particularly manual work in the open air, would be limited, and workers would need to take breaks more frequently, thus reducing their productivity. Communicable diseases such as West Nile disease, which had previously been seen only in warmer regions, were now occurring in the WHO European Region with increasing frequency. Members may wish to cite the statement from Chapter 11 (Human health: impacts, adaptation and co-benefits) of the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that, even with a relatively modest increase in the global mean temperature, namely, 4 °C, compared to preindustrial levels, the health effects, due principally to undernutrition, heat and food- and vector-borne infections, would no longer be manageable.⁴

40. The health sector could contribute to activities to combat climate change by drawing attention to the risks to individuals and their families and encouraging behaviour change; advocating policies that provide both health and environmental benefits ("co-benefits"), such as the promotion of cycling and walking; improving the evidence base for national action plans and vulnerability studies; and reducing the high level of greenhouse gas emissions associated with health care, mainly due to the manufacture and packaging of medicinal drugs.

41. The second invited speaker, Professor Philippe Grandjean of the University of Southern Denmark and Harvard School of Public Health, gave a presentation on the health effects of mercury, particularly before birth and in early life. Exposure to mercury before birth, as in the tragic cases in the city of Minamata, Japan, in the 1950s and 1960s, caused severe physical deformity and mental impairment in children at levels not apparently harmful to adults. In a 2014 paper in *The Lancet*⁵ updating an earlier study, Professor Grandjean identified six new industrial chemicals known to cause developmental neurotoxicity in human beings, including polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) – flame retardants commonly used in children's clothing. The developing brain was particularly vulnerable to toxic chemicals and damage caused at this early stage could never be reversed. The annual economic costs attributable to the reduced intelligence quotient (IQ) associated with exposure to toxic chemicals were estimated at €3 billion across the European Union.⁶

42. There were a number of possible responses to the mercury problem. Consumers had a right to know about the possible harmful effects of the products that they bought and consumed (as established, inter alia, in the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation

⁴ Field CB, Barros VR, Dokken DJ, Mach MD, Mastrandrea TE, Bilir, M et al., editors. Climate change 2014: impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability. Part A. Global and sectoral aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. New York: Cambridge University Press; 2014.

⁵ Grandjean P, Landrigan PJ. Neurobehavioural effects of developmental toxicity. *Lancet Neurol.* 2014;13(3):330–338. doi:10.1016/S1474-4422(13)70278-3.

⁶ Bellanger M, Pichery C, Aerts D, Berglund M, Castaño A, Čejchanová M et al. Economic benefits of methylmercury exposure control in Europe: monetary value of neurotoxicity prevention. *Environ Health.* 2013;12:3. doi:10.1186/1476-069X-12-3.

in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters adopted in Aarhus, Denmark, on 25 June 1998). In some cases, less harmful alternative products were available. EHMB members might wish to advocate the more widespread use of the OECD Guidelines for the Testing of Chemicals. An international clearing house should be set up to collect all available information on the neurotoxicity of commonly used chemicals. Large-scale biomonitoring, although costly, was essential if governments were to know the extent of the mercury problem, assess its effects and decide on appropriate action. The issue of reduced IQ due to exposure to toxic chemicals in early life currently received little attention from European Union agencies or Member States and was therefore an area where the EHMB could increase its visibility.

43. In the ensuing discussion, participants mentioned the likelihood that climate change would lead to an increase in public health expenditure and health insurance premiums. The member for Croatia noted that climate change was already causing flooding, higher death rates and a greater incidence of diseases spread by mosquitoes, including West Nile disease. Unfortunately, however, vector control measures were also likely to affect beneficial insects, such as bees. The member for Spain said that her country supported the proposed World Health Assembly resolution on air pollution and the proposal to include chrysotile asbestos on the list of hazardous substances in the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, while national asbestos control programmes would require the collaboration of the asbestos industry and trade unions. The members for Georgia and Ukraine asked for guidance from other members as their countries began to tackle environment and health problems in a broader European context.

44. Professor Sauerborn noted that exposure to toxic substances could be exacerbated by the effects of climate change, for instance, because solvents and glues are more likely to evaporate when the ambient temperature is higher. Mr Nies drew attention to the European Union's chemical safety directives and the work of the European Chemicals Agency, which had noted the low quality of maternal toxicity data submitted to it. Mr Lindgren noted the underutilized potential for action by the EHMB in connection with the WHO Health-in-All-Policies approach. The EHMB's activities provided a practical example of multisectoral collaboration that other bodies could follow. Mr Dusik asked for members' guidance on the integration of mercury exposure into a general chemicals management system. UNEP and UNECE could advise the EHMB when it seeks to liaise with other regions.

45. Ms Jakab, summing up, said that the Secretariat would approach the European Commissioners and European Parliament to promote the revision of the European Union air quality standards in line with WHO guidelines. It would write to Member States, calling on them to ratify the multilateral environmental conventions and to promote the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The EHMB should agree a joint position on asbestos, which was still a pressing public health problem in many European countries. She suggested that the EHMB should write to the WHO Director-General, expressing its concerns about air quality and its support for the proposed World Health Assembly resolution on the subject. There was scope for collaboration with the agriculture sector in relation to climate change hazards applicable to both health and agriculture.

46. The EHMB agreed to consider the topics of air quality, the effects of climate change and chemical safety as its main priorities in the period leading up to the Sixth Ministerial Conference in 2016.

Adoption of a programme of work until the sixth meeting of EHMB

47. Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis, Minister of Health of Lithuania, chaired the discussion of agenda items 7–9. Mr Matic, introducing item 7 (see document EURO/EHMB5/11), suggested that the Secretariat should prepare a calendar of forthcoming international events and asked EHMB members to indicate the events at which they could deliver a statement on the EHMB's behalf. The EHMB needs to continue its preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference in 2016, including identifying a host country and venue and considering financing arrangements.

48. The EHMB agreed that the Secretariat would work with the EHMB alternates to prepare the discussion on the preparatory process for and the scope and content of the Sixth Ministerial Conference, for consideration at the EHMB's sixth meeting. Mr Dusik suggested that, since the existing structures – the EHMB, its alternates and the EHTF – appeared to be working well, there was no need to appoint a separate steering group.

49. Mr Nies proposed that the EHMB should engage in discussions with those European States that had opposed the listing of chrysotile asbestos under the Rotterdam Convention, in fulfilment of the Parma Declaration commitment to developing national programmes for the elimination of asbestos-related diseases by 2015. Germany, with WHO, the International Labour Organization and nongovernmental organizations, had developed national workshops to raise awareness of the risks of asbestos exposure and appropriate safety precautions. If possible, the dates and venue of the Sixth Ministerial Conference and the next EHTF meeting should be announced by the time of the mid-term review.

50. The members for Croatia and Ukraine said that their countries would consider hosting a future meeting of the EHMB or the EHTF.

51. The observer for Germany said that the EHMB should concentrate on its role as the political face of the environment and health process and on the action needed to prepare for its next meeting in February 2015.

52. Ms Jakab, summing up, thanked the members for Croatia and Ukraine for their offers to host future meetings. She suggested that a small group of EHMB members' alternates or EHTF members, including representatives of the Russian Federation, should continue to discuss the chrysotile asbestos issue. She clarified that both the EHMB and the EHTF would have an important role to play in the preparation of the Ministerial Conference. The EHMB would guide and advise on the identification of the priorities and lead themes for the Ministerial Conference, while the EHTF would extend the discussions and negotiations to the 53 Member States.

Update on the preparation of the mid-term review meeting with a view towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference in 2016

53. The high-level mid-term review will take place in Tel Aviv, Israel. The meeting will include two days of meetings of the EHTF, in which members of the EHMB are encouraged to participate, and study visits to a water treatment facility and a desalinization plant. The review is intended to generate plans for future activity based on key questions and priorities, to show how Member States have tackled the challenges facing them and to prepare for the Sixth Ministerial Conference.

54. Ms Netanyahu, speaking on behalf of the Government of Israel, said that the letter of invitation to States was currently in preparation. She called on all members to encourage as many States as possible to attend.

Any other business and closure of the meeting

55. There was no other business. Ms Racioppi read out a summary of the main conclusions and decisions of the meeting. The EHMB adopted the conclusions and decisions, which are reproduced in Annex 3.

56. Ms Jakab, summing up the day's discussions, said that the EHMB must decide how to involve the environment sector more actively in its work at a high level. The EHMB should also consider whether to adopt a term of more than two years for its members. The EHMB should increase its international visibility and prepare agreed key messages for delivery at high-level meetings of other bodies. Although the respective roles of the EHMB and the EHTF had become much clearer, they must be further clarified and communicated effectively to the outside world by the time of the Sixth Ministerial Conference, which will review the governance process.

57. Mr Andriukaitis declared the meeting closed at 16:00 on 1 July 2014.

Annex 1. Scope and purpose

The fifth meeting of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) is being convened in consultation with the Chair of the EHMB, in accordance with Rule 4 of its Rules of Procedure.

At this meeting, four new members will assume their seats on the EHMB and a Co-Chair from the health sector will be elected. The four new members are the Ministers of Health of Croatia, Georgia, Lithuania and Spain.

The main purpose of the fifth meeting is to review the strategic direction of the European Environment and Health Process, its priorities and its key milestones in 2014 and 2015, with a view towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference, scheduled for 2016.

As discussed by the alternates of the EHMB members at the preparatory meeting in Bonn, Germany, the EHMB will have the opportunity to review the strategic partnerships for the European Environment and Health Process and priority environment and health issues for the engagement of the EHMB in the coming period.

The outcomes of the EHMB's discussions of the two main areas will inform the preparations for the high-level mid-term review meeting and will set guidance for a road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference.

It is expected that the EHMB will also propose appropriate actions to further strengthen the understanding within both sectors of the relevance of environment and health determinants of health and the importance of addressing them.

Finally, as decided at the fourth meeting in Belgrade, Serbia, in 2013, the EHMB will adopt a programme of work within its areas of responsibility.

Annex 2. Programme of work

- 08:45–09:00 *Registration*
- 09:00–09:30 **Opening of the meeting, adoption of the agenda, introduction of new members and election of a Co-Chair from among ministers of health (agenda items 1 and 2)**
- Relevant documents:*
1. *List of documents*
 2. *Scope and purpose*
 3. *Provisional annotated agenda*
 4. *Provisional programme*
 5. *Provisional list of participants*
- 09:30–10:00 **Adoption of the report of the fourth European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) meeting and follow-up to previous decisions (agenda items 3 and 4)**
- Relevant documents:*
6. *Draft report of the fourth EHMB meeting, Belgrade, Serbia, April 2013*
 7. *Secretariat report on follow-up to previous decisions*
 8. *Draft progress report to the 64th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the 20th meeting of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (2014)*
- 10:00–10:30 *Coffee/tea break*
- 10:30–11:45 **Strategic partnerships of the European Environment and Health Process (agenda item 5)**
- Introduction by the Secretariat
- Relevant documents:*
9. *Strategic partnerships for the European Environment and Health Process*
- 11:45–13:00 **Priority environment and health issues for engagement of EHMB (agenda item 6)**
- Introductory presentations by invited key-note speakers on climate change and health and on chemical safety.
- Relevant documents:*
10. *Priority environment and health issues for the engagement of EHMB*
- 13:00–14:00 *Lunch*

- 14:00–14:30 Priority environment and health issues for engagement of EHMB (agenda item 6)
(continued)
- 14:30–15:00 **Adoption of a programme of work until the sixth meeting of EHMB (agenda item 7)**
- Relevant documents:*
- 11. Proposed activities for the EHMB in the intersessional period*
- 15:00–15:30 *Coffee/tea break*
- 15:30–15:50 Update on the preparation of the mid-term review meeting with a view towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference in 2016 (agenda item 8)
- Presentation by the Secretariat
- 15:50–16:00 Any other business and closure of the meeting (agenda item 9)

Note: EHMB members and Member States shall have the opportunity to provide comments and make proposals for items on the agenda not later than one week before the meeting (23 June 2014).

Annex 3. Main points of discussion and decisions

1. Adoption of the agenda

The European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) adopted the meeting agenda.

2. Introduction of members and election of a Co-Chair from among the ministers of health

The EHMB welcomed its four new members from the health sector (Croatia, Georgia, Lithuania, Spain) and elected Israel as Chair and Lithuania as Co-Chair of the meeting.

3. Adoption of the report of the fourth EHMB meeting

The EHMB adopted the report of its fourth meeting, held in Belgrade, Serbia, in April 2013.

4. Follow-up to previous decisions

The EHMB noted the report on follow-up on previous decisions.

It also noted the information provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) that the next United Nations Environment Assembly would take place in Nairobi, Kenya, on 23–27 May 2016.

The EHMB was informed of the preparations for the participation of the European Environment and Health Process (EHP) in the 20th session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), with a view to increasing awareness and engagement of the environment constituency in the EHP.

The EHMB noted the progress report on the EHP to the 64th session of the WHO Regional Committee and to the 20th session of the CEP. The document will be finalized by 4 July 2014 based on the outcomes of the EHMB meeting, and circulated to the EHMB for possible comments.

5. Strategic partnerships of the EHP

The EHMB acknowledged the relevance and breadth of the paper on strategic partnerships and of the proposed actions for follow-up by the EHMB. It also acknowledged the need for the EHMB to be more active and visible on different platforms. In particular, it agreed:

- to emphasize the advocacy role of the EHMB through the development of a set of messages that they could use at different international platforms and events (e.g., World Health Assembly, United Nations Environment Assembly, CEP);
- to prioritize the re-engagement of the European Union, in collaboration with the WHO Representation to the European Union in Brussels, Belgium. This would involve:
 - identifying new Members of the European Parliament with a specific interest in environment and health who could be approached to host joint advocacy and scientific events;
 - inviting the new President of the European Commission to clarify responsibilities for environment and health issues within the Commission;
 - meeting with the new Commissioners and their Directors-General, with EHMB involvement; and
 - strengthening links and communication with the forthcoming European Union presidencies, and exploring opportunities for links with the European Economic and Social Committee;

- to further explore the possible engagement of international financial institutions in specific areas;
- to enhance synergies with multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) by:
 - combining a “passive” approach, consisting of communication to Member States regarding ratification and implementation of MEAs, with an “active” one, consisting of developing messages and positions to be advocated by EHMB members in relevant forums;
 - including the EHP on the agenda of one of the upcoming meetings of the Chairs of the MEAs; and
 - undertaking an assessment of the activities implemented under the MEAs to explicitly identify those that contribute to the Parma agenda, with a view to emphasizing the synergies between them;
- to develop a set of messages to support EHMB and EHTF to advocate environment and health arguments as part of national policy dialogues on the post-2015 agenda and the sustainable development goals, taking into account that the negotiation process is led by Member States through the Open Working Group, and that it may be inefficient and ineffective to try and develop a joint EHMB position.
- to consider including the links between the EHP and Health 2020 as part of the agenda of the sixth EHMB meeting (subject to further discussion);
- to prioritize actions related to the regional agenda (European Union collaboration, international financial institution engagement, MEA implementation) before turning to collaboration with environment and health processes in other regions;
- to discuss means to further engage nongovernmental organizations in the work of the EHMB, noting that more work needs to be done for the engagement of young people at the national level, based on the replies to a policy survey carried out by WHO; and
- to develop a map of events and opportunities for active EHMB engagement, as an annex to the intersessional programme of work.

6. Priority environment and health issues for engagement of EHMB

The EHMB:

- noted with appreciation the presentations delivered by Professors Sauerborn and Grandjean on climate change and health and chemical safety and health, respectively;
- agreed on the identification of climate change, air pollution and chemical safety in their relation to health as priority areas for the EHMB’s work in the next two years – these topics should also be featured on the agenda of the Sixth Ministerial Conference;
- supported the actions proposed in the paper on priority and health issues for engagement of EHMB, noting the importance of communication aspects and the capacity of the EHMB to consistently express joint positions;
- acknowledged the opportunity for the EHP to be highlighted as a good model of Health in All Policies;
- agreed to address a letter to the WHO Director-General, expressing EHMB’s support for the development of a World Health Assembly resolution on air pollution; and
- noted the proposal by UNECE and UNEP to support advocacy efforts at the global level.

7. Adoption of a programme of work until the sixth meeting of EHMB

The EHMB:

- reviewed and agreed on the activities proposed for its intersessional programme of work, with adjustments reflecting the discussions held at the meeting;
- agreed to operationalize the intersessional programme of work by developing an action plan with deadlines and milestones, to be circulated to the EHMB for comments and adoption; and,
- regarding the preparations for the Ministerial Conference:
 - noted with gratitude Ukraine’s expression of interest in hosting one of the preparatory events or the Conference itself;
 - agreed on the need to start profiling the strategic partnerships as part of the preparation for the Ministerial Conference, with a strong engagement; and
 - clarified that both the EHMB and the EHTF would have an important role to play in the preparation of the Ministerial Conference. The EHMB would guide and advise on the identification of the priorities and lead themes for the Ministerial Conference and the EHTF would extend the discussions and negotiations to the 53 Member States;

8. Update on the preparation of the mid-term review meeting with a view towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference in 2016

The EHMB:

- noted with appreciation the Secretariat’s update on the preparations for the mid-term review meeting in Israel and its background documentation and programme, including field visits;
- expressed its gratitude to Israel for hosting the meeting;
- agreed that at least a few of its members would participate in the meeting, representing the EHMB; and
- highlighted the importance of ensuring that all Member States participate in the mid-term review.

9. Any other business and closure of the meeting

The EHMB:

- noted with gratitude Croatia’s expression of interest in hosting one of the forthcoming EHMB meetings.

Annex 4. List of participants

Croatia

Siniša Varga
Minister of Health

Krunoslav Capak
Head of Department, Croatian National Institute of Public Health

Davor Vidiš
Head of Office, Office of the Republic of Croatia in the Republic of Lithuania

Georgia

David Sergeenko
Minister, Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs

Amiran Gamkrelidze
Director General
National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia,
Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs

Israel

Sinaia Netanyahu
Chief Scientist, Ministry of Environmental Protection

Lithuania

Vytenis Povilas Andriukaitis
Minister of Health

Kestutis Miskinis
Head, EU Affairs and International Relations Division, Ministry of Health

Spain

Mercedes Vinuesa Sevastian
General Director, Public Health, Quality and Innovation Department,
Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality

Covadonga Caballo
Deputy Subdirector, Environment and Occupational Health Department,
Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality

Ukraine

Oleksii Obukhov
Outside Adviser to the Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine

Ex officio members of EHMB

EHTF Chair (Germany)

Alexander Nies

Deputy Director General, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety

EHTF Co-Chair (Norway) – until 31 August 2014

Thor-Erik Lindgren

Senior Adviser, Ministry of Health and Care Services, Department of Public Health

EHTF Co-Chair (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) – from 1 September 2014

Dragan Gjorgjev

University Professor/Policy Adviser, Institute of Public Health

Stakeholders

UNECE

Marco Keiner

Director, Environment Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNEP

Jan Dusik

Acting Director, United Nations Environment Programme

WHO Regional Office for Europe

Zsuzsanna Jakab

Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for Europe

Guenael Rodier

Director, Division of Communicable Diseases, Health Security and Environment

Srdan Matic

Coordinator of Environment and Health

Elizabet Paunovic

Head of Office, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health

Francesca Racioppi

Senior Policy and Programme Adviser

Observers

Germany

Birgit Wolz

Head of Division IG II 2, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety

Environment and Health Youth Coalition

Dovile Adamonyte

Executive Board member of the European Environment and Health Youth Coalition,
National Youth Coordinator in Lithuania

Speakers

Philippe Grandjean

University of Southern Denmark, Institute of Public Health

Rainer Sauerborn

Head of the Institute, University Hospital Heidelberg, Institute of Public Health

WHO Secretariat

Marco Martuzzi

Programme Manager, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health

Bettina Menne

Programme Manager, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health

Oliver Schmoll

Programme Manager, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health

Julia Solovieva

Administrative Officer, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health

Rapporteur

Teresa Lander

**The WHO Regional
Office for Europe**

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France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Latvia
Lithuania
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