



24th Meeting of the
European Environment and Health Committee
(EEHC)
25–26 October 2007, Bonn, Germany

with a focus on

BUDAPEST CONFERENCE DECLARATION Paragraph 21b:

“We agree to meet again at a fifth European ministerial conference on environment and health to be held in 2009.”

Report of the
24th meeting of the European
Environment and Health Committee

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Contents

	Page
Opening session.....	1
Election of the Chair and Co-chair of the EEHC	1
EEHC work plan 2007–2009	2
Reporting back on the Intergovernmental Midterm Review (IMR)	2
Operational cost of the EEHC	3
Rules of procedure and terms of reference of the EEHC	3
Towards the Fifth Ministerial Conference	4
Preparing the evidence base.....	7
Update on youth involvement.....	8
Reporting back on activities by EEHC members.....	9
Any other business and closure of the meeting	12

EEHC decisions

- Election of the Chair and Co-chair of the EEHC
 - Dr Jon Hilmar Iversen (Norway) was elected as chair for the health sector and Dr Corrado Clini (Italy) was elected as co-chair for the environment sector.
- Work plan of the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) for 2007–2009
 - The conclusions and recommendations of the Intergovernmental Midterm Review (IMR) were discussed and agreed upon.
 - The rules of procedure and terms of reference that will be applicable to the new EEHC were explained and agreed upon.
 - A work structure for the EEHC was presented: there would be four preparatory meetings for the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. They would be intergovernmental meetings lasting a maximum of three days. The first day would be reserved for reporting back on implementation of the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE), the following day and a half would be devoted to the preparation of the Ministerial Conference, and the final half-day would be an executive session for EEHC members, to facilitate discussion and decision-making.
 - The CEHAPE Task Force meeting would be integrated into the EEHC meeting (on day 1) in order to streamline the process. Austria would continue to chair the CEHAPE session within the EEHC meeting.
- Towards the Fifth Ministerial Conference
 - The Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health would take place preferably in autumn 2009 but, if necessary, could be held in early 2010.
 - Issues suggested as priorities for further work in preparation for the Conference included the specific needs of the newly independent states (NIS) and south-eastern European (SEE) countries, gender issues, inequity in environment and health, the health impact of climate change and the economic costs or benefits of (in)action.
 - Preliminary discussions identified a possible road map of activities towards the Ministerial Conference; EEHC members were invited to send their comments on the proposed draft agenda for the Ministerial Conference in writing to the EEHC secretariat by 9 November 2007.
 - The Scope and purpose and Programme of the International Public Health Symposium on Environment and Health Research were presented. EEHC members supported the idea of holding the second high-level preparatory meeting back-to-back with the Symposium.
- Youth involvement should continue to have a central place in the European Environment and Health Process and the upcoming Ministerial Conference. Cooperation between young people and the national environment and health focal points had to be strengthened.
- The next meeting of the EEHC would probably take place around the second week of March 2008 in Italy and would be the first preparatory activity for the Ministerial Conference.

Opening session

Dr Nata Menabde, Deputy Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, addressed participants at the opening of the 24th meeting of the EEHC and thanked the German Government for hosting the meeting. She fully supported the Committee's work and was glad to finally have an opportunity to attend a meeting, which would give her a better understanding of the way the EEHC worked.

The meeting had three main objectives: to discuss the terms of reference and rules of procedure of the newly elected Committee; to discuss the outcome, conclusions and recommendations of the Intergovernmental Mid-term Review (IMR); and to have a first round of discussions on the preparations for the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health to be held in Italy in 2009. The Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe was happy to see the ongoing involvement and commitment of the Member States towards the implementation of the Budapest commitments. Their plea that support should be ensured for the continuation of the European Environment and Health Process (EEHP) had been understood and the Regional Director had confirmed that the Office would continue to address environment and health issues. It would continue to engage in environmental health activities in the Region, promoting the application of policies that could be shared across the regions, while prioritizing the work focused on the European Region.

Dr Menabde referred to the work of the Regional Office team on climate change and acknowledged the results achieved in that area. She then invited Dr Alexander Nies to make his opening address and officiate the election of chairpersons.

Dr Nies, Director, Environmental Health and Chemical Safety of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety welcomed the participants and thanked WHO for organizing the meeting. The German Federal Government hosted the United Nations facilities in Bonn, where 650 staff members were currently employed; their activities had intensified since the seat of government had moved to Berlin. The EEHC was a unique committee; Germany endorsed the Regional Office's policy of supporting all 53 Member States and agreed on the importance of discussing a work plan for environment and health up to 2009.

At national level, the environment ministry was stepping up its commitment to environment and health issues in preparation for the 2009 Ministerial Conference. It was important to ensure that the objective of maintaining a healthy environment remained a priority. Particular interest was given to key areas including: air pollution, climate change, noise, chemicals and food safety. Dr Nies wished the Committee a successful meeting with constructive discussions and invited the EEHC members for a dinner later that evening, kindly offered by the German Federal Ministry of the Environment.

Election of the Chair and Co-chair of the EEHC

Dr Nies chaired the first part of the meeting and asked the EEHC members to adopt the agenda. The representative of the European Commission (DG SANCO) proposed changing the order of the programme so as to begin with discussions on the conclusions and recommendations of the IMR. That would identify the priorities for the next phase of the EEHP and would thus lead to easier discussions on the work plan. The Italian member of the Committee also asked for the discussions on the draft agenda of the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health to be brought forward to the end of the first day since he had to attend to other urgent matters to attend to the following day. The proposed revised order of the programme was accepted.

Dr Nies invited the WHO representatives to explain the rules of procedure with regard to the election of the chairpersons for the EEHC and called for nominations for those posts. The EEHC always had two chairpersons, one representing the health sector and the other the environment sector. It was usually recommended that one of the chairpersons should be from the host country of the next Ministerial Conference.

Dr Stella Michaelidou Canna from the Ministry of Health of Cyprus nominated Dr Jon Hilmar Iversen from Norway as chairperson representing the health sector. Dr Julie Ng-A-Tham from the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment of the Netherlands nominated Dr Corrado Clini as co-chairperson representing the environment sector. Both nominations were accepted by the EEHC members. Dr Nies congratulated the new chairpersons and invited them to take up their posts.

EEHC work plan 2007–2009

Reporting back on the Intergovernmental Midterm Review (IMR)

A representative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe presented a paper on the conclusions and recommendations of the IMR. In the context of the preparatory process towards the Fifth Ministerial Conference, an explanation was given on the structure and rationale of the upcoming EEHC meetings intended to help the Committee build up the road map towards the Conference.

The chairman, Dr Iverson, invited the Committee members to comment on the paper. Several members made interventions asking for small corrections in the text of the report. It was felt that the overarching theme of children should continue to be the driving force of the process. The involvement of other sectors and groups (children, health community, youth, vulnerable groups, business community) should also be made more visible. Emphasis should be put on access to water and sanitation and ways of assessing the implementation of international commitments.

Environment and health impact assessments and monitoring were important, and Member States should be encouraged to use those tools further, possibly by developing legislation and standards. Furthermore, there was a need to identify the progress achieved, by presenting an overview of the activities that had been undertaken. Other issues to be considered for future action included: a) the cost of (in)action and the environmental burden of disease; b) inequity in environment and health; and c) advanced and innovative technological solutions. It was important to recognize that the CEHAPE was the driving force of the process and Member States needed to consider upgrading it to a legal instrument. Various possibilities for doing so had been discussed at the IMR, including linking the CEHAPE to an existing legal instrument or establishing it as a new stand-alone legal instrument.

The EEHC secretariat welcomed the comments received and took note of the suggestions. The paper should reflect the discussions that had taken place at the IMR and could not therefore include any new ideas or statements. With regard to the recommendations made at the IMR, the issue of climate change was discussed in depth. All EEHC members recognized the importance of that issue; however there were different opinions on how to deal with it in regard to the Ministerial Conference. Several members wanted to see it treated as a separate item at the Conference, while others preferred to deal with it in a cross-cutting manner.

Dr Menabde recognized the importance of climate change in the environment and health debate but stressed that it should not be the major theme of the Conference; it could, however, be addressed in a separate session. Climate change was a cross-cutting issue that could be addressed by different approaches (health systems, education, communication, monitoring).

Following the discussions, the EEHC secretariat incorporated all comments received and presented a final version of the paper, which was endorsed.

Operational cost of the EEHC

The secretariat explained the budget requirements of the EEHC and presented the operational costs, including the voluntary donations and pledges received so far.

The Member States that had supported the secretariat in 2007 were thanked for their contributions and EEHC members were asked to kindly continue to support the secretariat. Voluntary donations were more than welcome, especially since the Committee wanted to hold a meeting in the NIS countries. In order to be able to plan the Committee's activities, the secretariat would appreciate knowing about donations (including those for the drafting groups) by March 2008 so that the road map could be presented at the next EEHC meeting.

Ms Bente Moe, the Norwegian alternate EEHC member, confirmed a donation of US\$ 25 000 for 2007 and explained that a further contribution would be made in 2008. Dr Julie Tham, the EEHC member from the Netherlands, informed the secretariat that her country would give a donation of €25 000 for the working year 2008. The secretariat thanked those countries for their support and expressed the hope that other delegations would follow their example.

Rules of procedure and terms of reference of the EEHC

The Regional Office representative introduced the terms of reference and rules of procedure applicable to the EEHC for the new working period 2007–2009. It was suggested that there could be four preparatory meetings before the Fifth Ministerial Conference, each focusing on a separate pillar of the Conference agenda. The structure of the meetings would be adjusted to ensure that adequate discussions were held with the Member States, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders. The EEHC meetings would be planned for three days: the first day would be dedicated entirely to the CEHAPE, to ensure that reporting back by the Member States continued until the Ministerial Conference. That would also maintain the much appreciated exchange of good practice and case studies. The following one and a half days would be devoted to the preparations for the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. The final half day would consist of the executive session for EEHC members only, in order to ensure uninterrupted discussion and more effective decision-making, as had been demonstrated at the last EEHC meeting held in Brussels in February 2007.

It was hoped that the new structure would create more transparency and enhance participation by the Member States through the direct involvement of environment and health (EH) focal points in the EEHC meeting. That would allow the Committee members to listen directly to the opinions of the Member States and would thus result in greater commitment from the countries in the preparations for the Ministerial Conference.

The entire three-day meeting would be chaired by the EEHC chairperson. However, in order to ensure continuity with the previous CEHAPE Task Force, it was recommended that the outgoing chairperson of the Task Force (Austria) should co-chair the CEHAPE session on the first day of the EEHC meeting. That proposal was accepted by the EEHC members.

In order to streamline procedures, more effort could be made to provide special assistance in the NIS countries. Administrative procedures could also benefit from being streamlined.

Ms Francesca Racioppi of the Regional Office indicated that the proposed format for EEHC meetings would strengthen the role and visibility of the CEHAPE, as well as the work of the national EH focal points. It would also help to streamline human and financial resources while giving the secretariat more time to carry out individual country-focused work. Dr Menabde also pointed out that there was a need for the CEHAPE Task Force to be integrated into the EEHC, since the CEHAPE was actually delivered by the work within the countries and not by the Task Force meeting itself.

EEHC members felt that the proposed work structure would avoid the repetitive reporting back sessions, as well as being more cost- and time-effective than separate three-monthly meetings. The idea of the CEHAPE being part of the EEHC meeting was welcomed and the secretariat was encouraged to continue to use the different Regional Priority Goals (RPGs) to structure the discussions during the CEHAPE session. The Austrian member of the EEHC (outgoing chairman of the CEHAPE Task Force) feared that the value of the CEHAPE would be lost if it were integrated into the general EEHC meeting structure. He suggested that the CEHAPE Task Force should be maintained as a separate entity and that its meetings could be organized back-to-back with the EEHC meeting since the processes had never been separate. From a political perspective, the CEHAPE had been a very instrumental process that had won full support from the Member States. It was therefore important that the work of a CEHAPE Task Force should continue to be politically visible. Thus it was suggested that the first day of the EEHC meetings should still be recognized as meetings of the CEHAPE Task Force.

The secretariat's viewpoint was the functions of the EH focal points should continue; the name under which they did so mattered less. The priority in the next phase was no longer reporting back, but rather preparing the Conference, and the EEHC was recognized as the Committee responsible for that.

Several suggestions were made by EEHC members that an appropriate reporting back mechanism be developed to ensure the validity of the scientific evidence presented. The use of a common template would make such a mechanism more effective. One EEHC member suggested that it would be useful to prepare an overall report collated from information from all the Member States in preparation for the Ministerial Conference, as a less tedious way of presenting the reports. Another suggestion was to appoint one or two EEHC members to take responsibility for specific priorities, questions or issues, which could then be reported on to the EEHC meetings. Those 'stewards' could then advise the declaration drafting group on main issues to be included in the Ministerial Conference declaration. It was also important to avoid parallel processes and to ensure that the members of the declaration drafting group also participated in the EEHC preparatory meetings. The inclusion of an executive session of the EEHC on the third day of each meeting was also endorsed and it was strongly recommended that the meetings should be limited to a maximum of three days every six months.

The Italian delegate and co-chairman of the EEHC offered to host its next meeting in the newly proposed format in March 2008, as the first official preparatory event for the Conference, and suggested that the event be used as the official launch of the Conference preparations.

Towards the Fifth Ministerial Conference

Dr Lucianne Licari of the WHO Regional Office for Europe gave an overview of the European Environment and Health Process from Budapest to Rome, concentrating on setting the agenda for the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health.

The Fifth Ministerial Conference should consist of four thematic areas or "pillars", described below.

1. The **progress made during the twenty-year process** (through an assessment of the health and environment situation in Europe). The session could also include a focus on the special needs of NIS and SEE countries and other vulnerable groups, and discussions on inequity in environment and health between and within the countries. Gender issues also needed to be addressed.
2. The second pillar of the Conference should be the presentation of a set of updated tools required for **strengthening the policy-making base**: environment and health information system economic tools, the CEHAPE table of actions, legal instruments, etc.
3. The third pillar should address **working across sectoral boundaries** and provide space for the discussion of synergies and new opportunities. It could cover climate change, strengthening capacity to work across sectoral boundaries, supporting the development of health systems, public health reform, and work at and with the local level.

4. The final pillar of the Conference would look at **the way forward** and allow discussions to set directions for the future of the process; it should result in the adoption of a Conference declaration.

The next three EEHC meetings, structured in the form of intergovernmental or high-level meetings, should ensure that all issues covered by the four pillars were discussed. There should also be a pre-Conference meeting to finalize all papers prior to their presentation to the ministers at the actual Conference. A request was made to avoid reporting back sessions at the Conference itself but, instead, to identify a set of case studies that would best serve to demonstrate good practices.

The secretariat suggested that the next EEHC meeting should focus on RPGI as well as the additional work done on a number of tools by the secretariat. After the second working day, the executive part of the EEHC would meet again to decide on what it had heard during the meeting. The declaration drafting group would have its first meeting in autumn 2008 or spring 2009, when it would be expected to consider the future of the process.

The second EEHC preparatory meeting could possibly be organized back-to-back with the International Symposium on Public Health and Research on Environment and Health, which would provide the scientific evidence base for the Conference.

The EEHC members commented on the draft road map and the proposed pillars for the Fifth Ministerial Conference. The members from NIS countries asked that the process towards and beyond the Fifth Ministerial Conference consider their specific basic needs such as the water supply situation in the central Asian countries. They asked the Regional Office for special assistance to help them to provide the necessary information through the Environment and Health Information System (ENHIS) and with harmonization of the legal framework. Currently, the Office was helping with the assessment of public health systems, and public health care reforms were in progress. Thus, there was a continuing need for support from the Regional Office on very specific activities and in developing national action plans. The representative of the Republic of Moldova proposed holding one of the meetings in the eastern European countries. The EEHC member from Kyrgyzstan supported the idea to have a meeting organized in a central Asian country, but asked the Regional Office to provide financial support.

Several other Committee members also recognized the importance of properly addressing the special problems and needs of the eastern European countries at future meetings. Inequity could be a cross-cutting theme or approach that could be addressed from different perspectives (gender, social inequity, inequity between countries, vulnerable groups, etc.). Other priorities included youth involvement, which had been the overarching theme of the Fourth Ministerial Conference, legal instruments, working at, and with authorities at, the local level, innovative technologies and the involvement of new stakeholders.

The pillars should be formulated so as to attract interest. The third pillar could consider the more political dimension of working across sectors and should take both challenges and opportunities into account. Referring to the need to involve all sectors, Dr Menabde asked about the main aim/objective of the Committee, whether its emphasis was more on health or environment and whether other sectors were involved; what its role was and how its members saw each other.

EEHC members answered that the two sectors fulfil an interrelated function in the protection and prevention of environmental health-related problems and the formulation of adequate policies for health objectives. Health was the ultimate aim of the work in the implementation phase but there was a need for support from other ministries. Climate change was also an area that required an integrated approach.

The Ministerial Conference could be useful in establishing how better to integrate the sectors in implementing the health in all policies approach. As they all had different objectives, however, it was difficult to find one common cross-cutting goal. Suggestions for common goals included: innovation, poverty alleviation or more general economic considerations (how economic policies reflect on health, but also their impact on economic development as environmental health-related diseases created huge health costs).

The European Commission (DG SANCO) representative stated that health topics could be addressed more prominently in the Committee, and that the agenda of the Conference should focus more on the health outcomes involving environment and health professionals and services. Environmental policies were driven by health considerations but the question often arose as to who should take responsibility for the actions required or the negative outcomes of actions taken.

Dr Menabde understood that assessment and prevention had been the key drivers for policy development but stressed that, from a health governance perspective, WHO needed to respond in an effective way. It was mandated to do so and, if the Committee did not fulfil those requirements, they would have to be addressed by WHO.

Dr Licari suggested that the Committee might consider a common theme for the Conference, as that would set a context for the pillars. A general theme such as economic development could be a helpful way forward, making it possible to address all relevant risks groups. The secretariat would adjust the pillars according to the comments and suggestions received by the members. It was clear that the agenda needed to appeal to other sectors, for instance, by including climate change and addressing social inequities and gender issues. The next EEHC meeting could consider the second pillar if no clear direction had yet been set for the focus of the Conference.

The chairman asked for comments on the major outcomes of the Conference. The Committee members indicated that the Budapest Declaration commitments should be the starting point for setting the agenda, as they had to be reported on anyway. It was also suggested that each CEHAPE session consider more than one RPG. The goal of the CEHAPE sessions was not only to report but also to make comments on aspects to be strengthened. The next EEHC meeting could focus on country needs, for instance, by having a subregional session. It was important to concentrate on the lessons learned, and on highlighting inequity across the countries but also within countries, so that specific actions could be recommended.

The focus of activities should shift away from the fact-finding of the past (the indicators report was a good example, highlighting differences across the Region) to the formulation of specific actions. There was a need to address gaps, and to identify the right tools to close those gaps and the right actions to be taken at local and technical level. Actions to combat climate change and to provide better services for children should be developed. One member mentioned the EEA's State of the environment report and the report on water and sanitation that could be used to formulate and identify future actions. The secretariat was also asked to write a paper with the chairman of the CEHAPE Task Force on how the CEHAPE reporting back should be organized. The paper could be distributed for comments.

The secretariat undertook to work further on the theme of the Conference, the agenda and the road map. It was agreed that meetings should concentrate not only on reporting on what had been done, but also on discussions about the future. An expert could be asked to help address the issue of inequalities. The Committee had to consider a process that would lead to the intended outcome. It was accepted that the CEHAPE Task Force would be integrated into the EEHC and that the chair of the CEHAPE session of EEHC meetings would continue to be Austria.

The chairman, Dr Clini, gave an overview of the national plans in Italy towards the Fifth Ministerial Conference. He stressed the importance of the Conference dates: the G8 plus 5 group would also be meeting in Italy during the latter part of 2009, as Italy had the presidency. That occasion would provide further visibility for the Ministerial Conference, especially since the G8 summit was to focus on climate change, presenting an opportunity to link the European Process and the Ministerial Conference with the global process. In December 2009, Denmark would host the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. For that reason, although early 2010 was a feasible option for holding the Ministerial Conference, late November 2009 was preferable. The venue was yet to be decided; it could be Rome, but Milan, Genoa, Florence, Venice and Naples were also possibilities.

Mr Massimo Cozzone called for a strong communication strategy to be established for the process and for key messages to be identified. The next EEHC meeting should provide a good opportunity for further discussion on those issues and therefore Italy was proposing that the first intergovernmental meeting in March 2008 could take place in Italy, to ensure that the preparations for the Conference were adequately addressed by the national media; that would be of particular value to the Italian government with regard to the hosting of the Ministerial Conference in 2009.

The representative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) suggested that a previous G8 declaration that endorsed a document on children and environment and health might provide a useful link between the G8 summit and the Ministerial Conference.

Preparing the evidence base

Ms Sabrina Bijlsma from the secretariat gave a presentation on the scope and purpose of the International Symposium on Public Health and Research on Environment and Health, to be organized as one of the preparatory events contributing to the research and evidence base of the Fifth Ministerial Conference.

The Symposium was to be held in Spain in autumn 2008 for a target group of 250 scientists, policy-makers and representatives of nongovernmental organizations. It would provide a platform for discussion on the most recent achievements in research on environment and health and would contribute to the preparation of a reference document for strategic planning in the field of environment and health research. The Symposium would be a two-and-a-half-day event, with one day organized in parallel working sessions. The first day, in plenary session, would present an overview of environment and health research: progress made and lessons learned since 1999. The second day would consist of parallel sessions addressing four different topics: neglected issues in environment and health (e.g. impact of socioeconomic status); integrated risk assessment methods and approaches; emerging issues in environment and health; and health in all policies: bridging the gap between science and policy. The final day would be devoted to reporting back from the parallel sessions, followed by a round table which would bring together scientists and policy-makers in an attempt to reach a common understanding on the approaches required to make effective use of research in future policy-making.

As the Symposium would probably take place in October 2008, it was proposed that an executive session of the EEHC be held immediately afterwards. Another option could be to organize the second intergovernmental EEHC meeting over the following two and a half days. That was subject to approval by the Spanish hosts but, if it was not possible, then the intergovernmental meeting would have to take place by the end of 2008. A third intergovernmental meeting would be held in March 2009 and the pre-Conference meeting in June 2009. Additional meetings of the drafting group would have to be set as well.

The secretariat proposed that a scientific advisory board could be set up as an outcome of the Symposium, to take responsibility for the preparation of a series of policy briefs. The EEHC was asked for advice on all those issues. The target group of the International Symposium would be mainly scientists, with policy-makers from the 53 countries of the European Region to be involved on the final day. The participation of the NIS and SEE countries would be ensured, as funding for them had been provided. Although the main focus of the Symposium would be to connect policy-makers and scientists, ministers from Spain would be present at the opening and possibly the closing sessions.

The Symposium and the idea of linking it to the second intergovernmental EEHC meeting were well received by the EEHC members. Several EEHC members recognized the value of the work of the European Commission's Research Directorate-General in its fifth, sixth and seventh framework programmes of research, with environment and health projects such as NoMiracle and those on integrated risk assessment and communication, and recommended that the evaluation of those projects be reflected in the Symposium as well. If held back-to-back with the Symposium, the EEHC executive session could be a useful forum to discuss the research needs of policy-making and should therefore be linked to the programming committee of the 7th Framework Programme on Research.

The importance of research was recognized, but the question was how the research could be translated into effective policy-making and how the knowledge was to be presented. The Symposium should be a tool to identify what kind of research policy-makers needed in order to be able to make political decisions. Practical work from scientists could help policy-makers better understand the impacts of certain actions or decisions on health.

The delegate of the European Commission (DG SANCO) recognized the need for policy briefs but stressed that the discussion should also look beyond 2009 to consider how expectations could be met. One EEHC member was of the opinion that the Symposium should not only address health risks but also present a comparison and prioritization of risks at national and regional level, as well as a cost calculation. Different types of research needed to be considered. Furthermore, it was recommended that the Symposium look not only at the research outcomes themselves but also at policy recommendations. Different topics that would contribute to implementation of the CEHAPE at local level could be discussed.

Some EEHC members welcomed the idea of a media workshop during the Symposium, believing it would lead to increased attention for environment and health problems. Others, however, feared that the presence of the media at the Symposium would lead to confusion. Other forms of media participation were suggested: the media could be involved in an integrated way (no separate media event, but rather a special session with media representatives and scientists). An option would also be to postpone or limit media participation until the Conference itself, when the findings of and follow-up to the Symposium could be more clearly communicated. Another option was to reserve one day for the media to get in touch with the scientists. Ms Racioppi suggested holding a media workshop (as at the IMR), where media representatives could interact with scientists, rather than having a media presence throughout. The media workshop at the IMR had been successful, though the press conference had been somewhat more difficult.

One EEHC member mentioned an experience of a training workshop for the media that had given good results; others thought that the media event was not a good idea because the curiosity and interest of the media tended to be biased and the media and politicians often have a difficult relationship. The Vienna event had shown the need for a careful approach with the media. It was also important to focus on the good news and how it could be translated and communicated. To that end, the media should have direct contact with the scientists. On the other hand, the media could also train the policy-makers and especially the scientists in effective communication. Communication should be seen as working in two directions: from scientist to media and from media to scientist.

The secretariat welcomed the suggestions made by the Members States, including that of having high-level speakers from eastern European countries; they would be taken into account in the further development of the programme. It was clarified that the round table would act as a discussion platform for integrating different stakeholders, sectors, etc., and for bringing together policy-makers and scientists. The media could participate on the first day, and in the workshop on the second day, as well as in the subsequent report back to the Symposium.

Update on youth involvement

The youth delegates gave an overview of the history of youth involvement and the youth-friendly CEHAPE. The youth network currently consisted of around 70 representatives from 30 countries in the WHO European Region. The youth delegates wanted to see closer collaboration between the young people in the network and their greater involvement in the environment and health process. Comments from network members included a request for one major meeting each year and regular smaller workshops and meetings at national level, in order to strengthen the youth process in environment and health. Contacts with the EH focal points were particularly important and the IMR had been a positive experience. The perspective of youth must be taken into account in environmental and health policy-

making, because children and young people are much more exposed to environmental hazards, injuries, etc. It would be helpful if the documents could be translated into the four working languages of the Regional Office for Europe, and into local languages too. The youth delegates further gave an overview of the steps to be taken up until the Ministerial Conference and sustainable youth participation in them.

In response, the secretariat asked Member States to support its work with regard to youth involvement. Several Committee members recognized the importance of youth involvement in the process and promised to draw attention to the youth-friendly CEHAPE and raise awareness of the specific situation and particular needs of young people. The NGO representatives spoke of activities they had undertaken involving young people. As one of the main points raised had been the need for strengthened contact with the national focal points, one member proposed using the EEHC's network to provide the national focal points with information that should be disseminated at national level. The representative of the Regional Environment Centre for central and eastern Europe (REC) indicated that the Centre had country offices and web pages in different languages that could be linked to the youth network. The youth representatives could also publish articles in the REC publication, the *Green Horizon*. Young people should be involved in all the Centre's events; it was suggested that other organizations do the same. The UNEP representative offered to publish an article by young people on environment and health in one of its magazines the following year. The European Commission (DG SANCO) representative expressed support for the continuation of the youth process and supported the requests made.

The chairman reminded the Committee members to fill out the case studies on youth involvement as requested by the secretariat. Italy confirmed that young people would play a fundamental role in the Ministerial Conference as well as in the next EEHC meeting. Dr Licari added that some of the biennial collaborative agreements between WHO and individual countries had included youth involvement. WHO would continue to assist countries to build up their youth networks.

Reporting back on activities by EEHC members

The members were asked to report back on the latest activities concerning implementation of the Budapest commitments. The member from Austria indicated that the country's interministerial committee had been enlarged and now included young people. A network of CEHAPE coaches had been established and, inspired by the CEHAPE award, Austria was trying to establish a national award for youth. Furthermore, it was exploring how to incorporate CEHAPE implementation under the theme of climate change, as all funds were now focusing on climate change. Awards would be made under the school mobility management plans project at the end of 2007.

The Council of Ministers of Cyprus had approved the CEHAPE the previous month and, with that official endorsement, all governmental actors were now obliged to implement it. The launch of the CEHAPE would be promoted by a press conference in the coming months. The national committee had been extended and now included university representatives and parents. Capacity building had been strengthened. Key areas were: indoor air in school and home, particularly with regard to passive smoking, and exposure to pesticides. A campaign had been prepared to present the CEHAPE at the parliament.

Estonia had not developed a special strategy, but the CEHAPE was integrated into different strategies. A new health strategy that focussed especially on children was under preparation. The youth representative had been contacted and the environmental health part of the health strategy had been developed.

Finland gave an overview of its updated environmental health strategy. Many activities had been undertaken at the level of schools: a network of green schools has been set up, an energy-saving week had been introduced and schools focussed on a specific topic in order to improve their own energy efficiency. The chemicals programme had been updated to emphasize the health aspects. The representative of the health sector had not been very active in the national process, which focussed more on the environment.

In Italy, efforts had been made in recent months to establish a network with representatives of different sectors to prepare the Ministerial Conference. Italy supported several initiatives and projects implementing the Budapest commitments (e.g. the REC's air quality in schools project in which Italian schools were participating) and international agreements: the Protocol on Water and Health had not yet been ratified, but Italy had the lead responsibility on climate change and in the Task Force on surveillance and early warning systems under the Protocol.

Kyrgyzstan indicated that the Ministry of Health was taking the lead in developing the CEHAPE and that the plan should be approved later on in the year. Main areas had been identified and rural health committees had improved; 700 health committees that included local level activists had been set up to determine priorities and develop action plans. Those were necessary to mobilize resources. Secondary school curricula had been revised mainly to include health protection for young people. The legislative and regulatory framework had been improved; a number of laws had been adopted (tobacco smoke – limitation in schools and educational facilities). Progress was expected before the end of the year in establishing priorities in health care reforms but the issue of funding was still open because of shortfalls.

In the Netherlands, the Ministry of Health had not been very much involved in environment and health issues. However, the new minister recognized opportunities to integrate policies, and a new approach to environment and health was currently being developed. Indoor environment, outdoor environment (urban planning – physical activity) and the strengthening of civil society formed the basis of the new approach. A digital system had been developed to give citizens more information on behavioural aspects in environment and health. Efforts were being made to work at local level by liaising with the Healthy Cities Network and the PRONET project to disseminate best practices. Cost-benefit analyses of best practices were also part of the activities.

Norway had recently launched the 'Future of our Children' programme with five main areas: better monitoring of hazards for children; public decision-making processes at school level; better nutrition; a white paper on chemicals; and bilateral collaboration with other countries (Poland).

The Republic of Moldova reported that a number of legislative acts had been approved in national health policy. Public health had been recognized as a priority and funding was provided for everything that had been adopted. There were strategies on poverty reduction and improvement of health and environment, as well as the Third Millennium Strategy, of which environment and health was a part; a white paper on social hygiene monitoring was to be discussed (with the participation of the WHO Bonn Office); the Children and Environment and Health plan had been extended; and the paper on implementation of the National Environment and Health Action Plan had been discussed. The Ministry of Economy had been asked to participate, but that was proving difficult. Collaboration with neighbouring countries was ongoing, and that with other countries had increased; in particular, the Nordic countries' experiences were very important. The findings of European Union health promotion project had been implemented at local level and a strategy on obesity prevention (in line with the European charter on counteracting obesity) was implemented; efforts had to be made to ensure youth and NGO involvement.

In Uzbekistan, there was no separate CEHAPE, and funding was needed for the action plan on environmental protection, the strategy for sustainable development until 2010, the poverty reduction strategy, the MDG implementation strategy and other programmes of action on environment. The finances could come from many different sources (government, ministries). Water quality in the urban setting had improved but there were still problems in rural areas. Efforts had been made to reduce the level of sulphur in gasoline and new targets had been set to achieve the desired reduction by 2010. Cost-effective mechanisms such as penalties for environmental pollution had been put in place and several documents had been prepared and were being assessed. A number of different departments were responsible for environmental monitoring and an integrative approach was needed to avoid duplication of efforts. Uzbekistan had endorsed two international conventions: on transboundary water resources and supply; and on transboundary air pollution. A major effort was now being put into the use of renewable energy sources.

The European Commission (DG SANCO) reported on a green paper on environmental tobacco smoke as well as improvements achieved in the smoking ban. Several activities on indoor air had been undertaken, including: indoor air monitoring in schools; a project highlighting the importance of ventilation in schools, as CO₂ levels were influencing learning results at school; and indoor air quality in nurseries. The WHO Regional Office for Europe's work on biological pollutants was praised and there were several projects underway such as those on indoor air; climate change; night noise guidelines; and the development of a strategy on nutrition, obesity and physical activity that would ensure better information to the consumer through food labelling, and increased physical activity through the promotion of cycling to school. The new public health strategy had been approved and was supported by funding programmes. The main areas of action in the strategy were: citizen's health security, patient safety, injuries, health promotion, health inequalities, and information.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) stated that there would possibly be five new areas of work, including: special agreements on working with countries outside the region; environment competitiveness; and climate change. *The OECD Environmental Outlook 2030* would focus on water, climate and biodiversity, and the cost of inaction on water, air quality, climate, etc. The documents would soon be finalized. On chemicals, special attention was given to international chemical management.

The REC representative referred to the transfer of experience between the Centre's members; environment and health issues should also be part of other programmes (municipality programme, climate programme) as well as other disciplines and curricula (e.g. in schools). Communication activities, making the work of the partners readily available to the public, and work with policy-makers had been strengthened.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) reported on the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference held in Belgrade in October 2007. The representative stressed the importance of ensuring implementation of national policies and strong commitment from eastern European countries; further integration of all policies for implementing the agreements; capacity-building; civil society and private sector; and reform of the Environment for Europe process towards greater effectiveness.

UNEP informed the Committee about the preparations for the ministerial session in Monaco on mobilizing resources for global challenges (with participation of the economy and finance sector). Mercury was to be a discussion point for future work. An internal initiative with the United Nations offices was the decision to go carbon neutral. Interagency cooperation was important and the representative referred in this regard to the UNDP report, which had been prepared jointly with UNEP. The Health Environment Inter-linkages report focussed on health-related issues.

The Pan-European Coalition of Environmental Citizens' Organisations (ECO-FORUM) reported that, after the IMR, they had sent a letter to Germany asking for more support and had also spoken to several Dutch parliamentarians. The nesting website had been launched, providing advice on security in the home. Activities on sanitation for rural schools had been initiated. Furthermore, they had translated the WHO guidelines on waste water into two more languages and they continued their collaboration with the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) on pesticides.

HEAL informed the Committee that all projects put forward for the IMR awards (not only the winners) had been uploaded to the web. Other activities included a vote on pesticides legislation by the European Parliament (production of cards); production of a brochure on climate change and health; a briefing on chemicals and health (neurotoxicity); a fact sheet for children on air quality; and national report cards on injury (in conjunction with the European Child Safety Alliance).

The International Trade Union Confederation stressed the growing importance of sustainable development, covering, as it did, both climate change and chemicals (the preparation of the sixth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety had been difficult). The issue of nanotechnology was

now high on the agenda, and the global campaign on asbestos was continuing. Furthermore, the implementation phase of the registration, evaluation and authorization of chemical substances had begun and was receiving broad support.

Ms Racioppi gave an extensive overview of the activities of the environment and health centres and the policy actions undertaken by the WHO Regional Office for Europe. A review had been carried out of the strengths of the Children, Environment and Health table of actions; a capacity-building workshop on the CEHAPE had been held in Armenia; more workshops on air quality had been held; and the issue of climate change was more prominent on the agenda, with, for instance, the publication of the EuroHEAT final report and specific support for countries during heat waves. On food safety, the WHO Regional Committee for Europe had launched the Second Food and Nutrition Action Plan, stressing the necessity of intersectoral actions. Work had been done on chemicals in Serbia. Preparations for the International Symposium on Public Health and Research on Environment and Health had been undertaken. There was continued cooperation with the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), and guidelines for economic evaluation had been developed. A meeting of injury focal points had taken place in Portugal in November; a country workshop on water and sanitation had been held in the Republic of Moldova. The environment and health performance reviews had been extended, with workshops held recently in Slovakia and Poland. In the area of housing and noise, the Large Analysis and Review of European Housing and Health project had been finalized, and indoor air quality guidelines and night noise guidelines had been developed; the ENHIS Indicator Report had been published and work in that area for the Ministerial Conference was ongoing.

Any other business and closure of the meeting

It was announced that the next EEHC meeting would probably take place in Italy around the second week of March 2008. The chairman thanked the participants for their valuable contributions to the discussions of the previous two days and thanked the German delegates for hosting the meeting. The October 2008 Symposium and possibly the second intergovernmental EEHC meeting could take place after 20 October because of the meetings of THE PEP and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. The third EEHC meeting was to be held in 2009, hosted by Germany. A working group meeting could then possibly be held in December 2009 in Kyrgyzstan.

The EEHC secretariat thanked all the members for their support and the chairpersons for their assistance during the meeting. The chairman reminded delegates that 9 November would be the deadline for comments on the agenda and that the template for reporting on youth involvement / case studies had been sent out to the members. He declared the meeting closed.