



Report of the fifth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF)

**Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of
Macedonia
24-25 November 2015**



**World Health
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**5th Meeting of the European Environment
and Health Task Force
Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,
24-25 November 2015**

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Abstract

At its fifth meeting, held in Skopje, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on 24 and 25 November 2015, the European Environment and Health Task Force reviewed the draft road map for the preparatory process for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, scheduled for 2017. A number of technical topics related to the proposed road map themes were presented, based on the outcome of recent technical discussions. These included urban green spaces and health, waste and health, environmentally sustainable health systems and water and health. The Task Force was further informed about the preparations for the second United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 23-27 May 2016) and the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016).

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Acknowledgements

The fifth meeting of the European Environment and Health Task Force was generously hosted by the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Opening of the meeting

1. The European Environment and Health Task Force held its fifth meeting on 24 and 25 November 2015 in Skopje, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, at the kind invitation of the Government of that country. See Annex 1 and document EURO/EHTF5/02 for the scope and purpose of the meeting, Annex 2 and document EURO/EHTF5/04 for the programme of work, Annex 3 for the main points of discussion and decisions and Annex 4 for the list of participants.
2. Mr Dragan Gjorgjev, Chair of the Task Force, opened the meeting and welcomed participants. The meeting was chaired by Mr Gjorgjev and Mr Robert Thaler of Austria, Co-Chair of the Task Force. A short film was shown giving the highlights of the High-level Mid-term Review of the European Environment and Health Process (Haifa, Israel, 28-30 April 2015).
3. Mr Nurhan Izairi, Minister of Environment and Planning of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, likewise welcomed participants and described his country's efforts, with European Union assistance, to combat air pollution and other major environmental health problems. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will join the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board in January 2016.
4. Mr Jovica Andovski, Deputy Minister of Health, noted that thousands of premature deaths in the country every year are attributable to the effects of air pollution; the Government is working with the WHO Regional Office for Europe under the Health 2020 policy framework to improve air quality.
5. Mr Srdan Matic, Coordinator, Environment and Health, WHO Regional Office for Europe, warmly thanked the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for hosting the present meeting. One task of the meeting is to continue the preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, scheduled for 2017. The Ministerial Conference will reflect the changing world situation, characterized by increased globalization and different patterns of production and consumption and new policy tools including Health 2020 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Adoption of the agenda, election of officers and confirmation of the composition of the Ad-Hoc Working Group of the EHTF

6. The Task Force adopted the agenda of the meeting, with the addition of a report from the Health in Climate Change (HIC) Working Group and details of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, due to be held in Paris, France from 30 November to 12 December 2015.
7. The Task Force reviewed the composition of its Ad-Hoc Working Group and decided to launch a new call for nominations from countries in group A¹ and to hold an online election to fill the vacant seats. It adopted the proposed amendment to paragraph 10 of

¹ Country Group A: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

the terms of reference of the Ad-Hoc Working Group, allowing all members of the Task Force, both Member States and other stakeholders, to participate in the open meetings of the Ad-Hoc Working Group if they so wish.

Reporting and informing

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

8. Mr Matic reported on the discussion of the Environment and Health Process at the annual meetings of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the Committee on Environmental Policy of the United Nations Economic Committee for Europe (UNECE). Both governing bodies endorsed the outcome of the Mid-term Review and asked to remain involved in the preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference, including the preparation of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) goals and targets.

b) Reporting on the main outcomes of the seventh meeting of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (Zagreb, Croatia, 19 November 2015)

9. Participants were briefed on the outcomes of the meeting of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board the previous week, at which the Board reviewed and broadly agreed with an informal discussion paper (document without symbol, distributed in the meeting room) intended to inform the initial discussion on the possible outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference. The Board transmitted the discussion paper to the Task Force for consideration at the present meeting.

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

10. Ms Francesca Racioppi, Senior Policy and Programme Adviser, WHO Regional Office for Europe, provided an update on preparations for the second United Nations Environment Assembly. The Assembly will include a ministerial policy review entitled “Healthy environment – healthy people”, supported by a global thematic report, and a symposium on mobilizing resources for sustainable investment. She drew attention to the online hub myunea.org, created to bring together information and encourage collaboration in the run-up to the Assembly.

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

11. Ms Ivonne Higuero, Chief, Operational Activities and Review Section, Environment Division, UNECE, addressed the meeting by videolink. The Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference will focus on “greening” the economy in the pan-European region and improving air quality for a better environment and human health. The Environment and Health Process was invited to contribute to the background documents and to the debate at the Conference, particularly on issues related to air quality, including sustainable transport. It could put on a side event during the Conference, and will have the opportunity to brief national delegations and other stakeholders informally.

12. The Task Force agreed to provide feedback on the background documents and action plan on air pollution being prepared for the Environment for Europe Conference. The Ad-Hoc Working Group and Ministerial Board should prepare a statement to be delivered on behalf of the Environment and Health Process at the special session of the Committee on Environmental Policy in February 2016. It should also consider participating in the ministerial discussion, organizing a side event and/or arranging a session of the Task Force or Ad-Hoc Working Group back-to-back with the Environment for Europe Conference.
13. In the ensuing discussion, the Chair of the HIC Working Group noted that the Group has decided to collaborate more closely in future with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, intended to combat short-lived climate pollutants, which has already provided substantial funding for decentralized heating and cooking systems in the developing world. Its work on reducing black carbon emissions is relevant for some Member States of the WHO European Region. Another participant drew attention to the potential funding for activities related to air quality and health mentioned by the representative of the World Bank during the Mid-term Review.
14. The Task Force decided to review the proposed commitments on air pollution to be adopted at the Sixth Ministerial Conference in the light of those adopted by the Environment for Europe Conference and Environment Assembly.

e) Highlights on environment and health policy developments in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

15. Mr Gjorgjev reported on developments in environment and health in his country. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is heavily dependent on fossil fuels and has high mortality from air pollution. A new strategy, currently in development, aims to establish a low-carbon, green economy through an intersectoral approach. A twinning project¹ involving agencies in Austria and Finland will build capacity for air quality measurement and impact assessment, emission inventories and dispersion and exposure modelling, and also improve air quality data management.
16. Ms Jovanka Karadzinska Bislimovska, Institute of Occupational Health of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, reported on the preparation of a national asbestos profile and a national programme for the elimination of asbestos-related diseases. The country has met its targets under the Parma Declaration of the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Parma, Italy, 10–12 March 2010), but remaining challenges include uncertainty about the total number of people affected, weaknesses in the cancer and occupational disease registries and the lack of a public health assessment of environmental exposure to asbestos.
17. The Task Force congratulated the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on achieving the Parma target on asbestos,

¹ See <http://twinning.moepp.gov.mk/>, accessed 3 October 2016.

Road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

a) Proposed preparatory process and work-plan for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, including consideration of additional stakeholders to be invited to participate in the EHP

18. Mr Matic introduced the implementation plan for the road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (see document EURO/EHTF/6 and annexes 1-4), along with an informal discussion paper (document without symbol, distributed in the meeting room) which had been discussed by the Ministerial Board at its seventh meeting the previous week. The preparatory work comprises two parallel streams – definition of the technical, thematic issues to be discussed and creation of a political consensus on the actions to be taken. It is intended to be a transparent and inclusive process, involving Member States, other stakeholders, the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. The inputs to the Conference will be the technical documents on the thematic issues and an analysis of the added value created by the Process, its achievements and the areas where work remains to be done. The outputs will be a ministerial declaration, a decision on future institutional arrangements for the Process and an action plan. The Task Force will develop the ministerial declaration, with input from the Ministerial Board and Ad-Hoc Working Group.
19. Mr Rémy Slama, Focal Point for relations with WHO at the International Society of Environmental Epidemiology, addressed the meeting as a representative of academia in areas of possible interest to the Environment and Health Process. The Society is a leading international research association investigating the influence of environmental factors on health. Relevant current projects include the European Studies of Air Pollution Effects (ESCAPE) project and the effects of early-life exposure to endocrine disruptors and persistent organic pollutants. The Society has an established network of environmental health researchers, in Europe and beyond, and supports training and capacity-building, especially in countries where research in environmental health is not yet well developed. Participants asked a number of technical questions about the Society's work, and one participant asked about the criteria to be applied when considering the admission of new stakeholders of the European Environment and Health Process.
20. Participants agreed that a small number of targets should be defined, reflecting the priorities agreed during the Mid-term Review (air pollution, climate change, chemical safety, and water and sanitation) and reflecting the aspirations of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Work to implement the goals agreed at the previous Ministerial Conference must continue.
21. The Task Force endorsed the proposed implementation plan for the road map. It requested the Secretariat to continue consulting the countries that have expressed interest in the various proposed themes and to include the agreed activities in the intersessional programme of work in order to inform the negotiations on the political outcomes of the Ministerial Conference.

b) Highlights from road-map themes:

i) Urban green spaces and health

22. Ms Catharine Ward Thompson, Professor of Landscape Architecture, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, reviewed a range of research studies which show, overall, the benefits for both physical and mental health of living near and walking in green spaces. Living near green areas helps to mitigate the adverse effects of air pollution, noise and high temperatures, with particular benefits for children, elderly people and poor and socially disadvantaged groups. Research indicates that every urban resident should have access to a green space (a minimum of 0.5 hectare) within five minutes' walk (300 metres) of home. Appropriate spatial planning is the key to achieving this goal, including the creation and maintenance of local parks and investment in green infrastructure, with an active transport system for urban areas and their hinterlands.
23. In the ensuing discussion, participants shared their own countries' experiences, emphasizing the contribution of green spaces to mitigating social health inequalities. Several mentioned the problem of choosing plants for public green spaces which are least likely to provoke an allergic reaction. One participant drew attention to the Positive Health Effects of the Natural Outdoor Environment in Typical Populations of Different Regions in Europe (PHENOTYPE) project (<http://www.phenotype.eu/en/about>).

ii) Waste and human health: evidence and needs

24. Mr Pietro Comba, National Health Institute, Italy, reported on the recent WHO expert consultation on waste and health (Bonn, Germany, 5-6 November 2015). The first priority is to reduce the amount of waste produced, followed by increased reuse and recycling, with a particular emphasis on the informal sectors of the economy. The elements which might be included under the waste management topic in the future ministerial declaration are: the need to modernize waste management technology, reduce informal waste disposal and landfill and increase the available knowledge about the health effects of hazardous wastes. Low- and middle-income countries in the WHO European Region need training in waste incineration and biomass production technologies and the disposal of electronic waste. The health of workers dealing with hazardous waste, including children in some countries, must be protected.
25. Ms Eva Csobod, Head of Health and Environment Topic Area, Regional Environmental Center, Hungary, spoke on the issues of waste management and human health, with particular reference to the Member States of south-eastern Europe. Challenges in that area include the lack of research and indicators and inadequate communication of the risks. Using a case study from Hungary, where there has been considerable dispute about the location of an asbestos disposal site, she illustrated that asbestos is still present in industrial buildings and private homes in many countries. There is a need for more data on the health hazards associated with landfill sites and exposure to hazardous wastes; the influence of socioeconomic factors; participation by the health sector in waste management decision-making and policy-making; better awareness-raising and communication; and information about appropriate monitoring technology.
26. Participants supported the inclusion of waste management as a theme for the Ministerial Conference. There is potential for collaboration with the Secretariat of the

Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. One participant noted that action for waste management has to go beyond the health and environment sectors: incentives are required to establish the “circular economy”, which will result in a reduction in the use of hazardous substances which cannot be recycled or reused. In addition, “product passports” should be introduced to keep track of potentially hazardous substances, even if they have not yet been banned. Funding of such activities should follow the “polluter pays” principle. Other participants noted the importance of management of medical waste and protection of the workers working on the disposal of hazardous wastes.

iii) Environmentally sustainable health systems

27. Mr Krunoslav Capak, Institute of Public Health of Croatia, noted that health systems and associated industries use large amounts of electricity and water and produce waste streams with high levels of pollutants. They also constitute a large sector of their respective national economies and are major employers. A national environmental sustainability policy could be developed for health systems: a formal policy framework, supported by a strategy or action plan and environmental sustainability assessments and covering different areas of action.
28. Ms Louise Newport, Chair of the HIC Working Group, described the Sustainable Development Strategy of the United Kingdom National Health Service, which aims to build sustainable health systems, a healthier environment and more resilient communities.
29. Participants noted the importance of ensuring that health workers themselves remain healthy. Some said that action to promote environmentally sustainable health systems could be economically beneficial, limiting inputs into health systems and the production of hazardous waste and pollution, and could be financed by investment from outside the health sector. They also remarked that this topic would be relevant to both the health and environment constituencies of the Environment and Health Process, and that the Process could play an important role in the development of technical guidance and advocacy. The United Nations system has introduced an initiative for sustainable procurement in the health sector.¹ Other participants considered, however, that this issue is less important than the other themes proposed for the Ministerial Conference.

iv) Water, sanitation and health

30. Mr Pierre Studer, Chair of the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, noted that a number of Member States of the WHO European Region have not met their water and sanitation targets under the Millennium Development Goals. There are marked disparities between rural and urban areas and between socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups. The Protocol is a flexible tool which can help to integrate national programmes with regional collaborative action on environment and health. The Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Protocol, Ms Marta Varga, said that action under the Protocol could contribute to implementing the outstanding commitments on water, sanitation and health, adopted at the Fifth Ministerial Conference, and support translating and operationalizing the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water, sanitation and hygiene in national contexts.

¹ See <http://www.savinglivesustainably.org/>, accessed 3 October 2016.

31. Participants acknowledged that water and sanitation targets remain to be met in the Region and noted the valuable work undertaken under the Protocol, particularly in schools. They agreed that the issue of water, sanitation and health should be discussed at the Ministerial Conference, including a call for more countries to accede to the Protocol.

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

32. Mr Matic noted that, as agreed at the Mid-term Review, the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference should consist of a limited number of SMART targets¹ with added value for the Environment and Health Process, aligned with the activities of other existing processes and consistent with Health 2020 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Countries may undertake commitments under their own national environmental health action plan or in one of the suggested thematic areas, which include water and sanitation; sustainable chemistry; elimination of threats to human health through the circular economy; resilient and sustainable cities; and environmentally sustainable health systems.
33. Participants particularly stressed the importance of air quality, water, sanitation and hygiene, urban health, sustainable chemistry and waste management. The outstanding commitments from the previous Ministerial Conference, as well as legal and funding aspects and monitoring and evaluation of results, must not be forgotten. The outcomes must aim to promote action at the national level, and potential synergies with activities under Health 2020 and United Nations mechanisms should be exploited to the full. The HIC Working Group could identify potential commitments related to climate change, in the light of the outcomes of the forthcoming twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. More time was needed for discussion of the draft outcomes at the national level. Mr Matic urged those members who represented only one ministry – environment or health – to consult fully with their counterparts from other sectors.
34. A number of participants insisted that the draft outcomes must be developed by the Task Force itself, assisted by the open-ended Ad-Hoc Working Group and the Secretariat.

d) Adoption of an intersessional programme of work for the EHTF

35. The Task Force expected to hold two meetings in the second and fourth quarters of 2016, preceded by meetings of the open-ended Ad-Hoc Working Group. The intersessional workplan will be finalized in the light of the conclusions of the present meeting. The Task Force accepted with gratitude the invitation from the Government of Austria to hold one of its meetings in 2016 in Vienna, Austria.

Any other business and closure of the meeting

36. The Chair of the HIC Working Group reported on the Group's meeting in June 2015 and drew attention to the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, due to begin in Paris, France the following week. The Environment and Health Process might usefully intervene to increase the attention paid to health issues in the outcome document

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

adopted at the Conference, which would be legally binding on States Parties. She called upon participants to discuss the matter with their relevant national focal points.

37. Ms Racioppi read out the main decisions of the meeting (see Annex 3), which were adopted unanimously. The Task Force expressed its gratitude to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for its warm hospitality and hosting of the meeting. Mr Gjorgjev declared the meeting closed at 13:00 on 25 November 2015.

Annex 1. Scope and purpose

The Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Parma, Italy in 2010, established the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) as the leading international body for implementation and monitoring of the European Environment and Health Process (EHP).¹

The EHTF convenes following the high-level mid-term review meeting (MTR) of the European Environment and Health Process that took place in Haifa, Israel, 28-30 April 2015. The main purpose of the meeting is to take stock of the conclusions of the MTR and kick-off the preparations of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. In particular, the discussion will focus on the following main areas:

1. Reporting: The EHTF will be informed about the outcomes of discussions at the 65th WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Vilnius, Lithuania, 14-17 September 2015), and at the 21st session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, Switzerland, 27-30 October 2015). In addition, the EHTF will be informed about the main outcomes of the discussions held by the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board, at its seventh meeting, which will take place in Zagreb, Croatia, on 18-19 November 2015, as well as about other relevant developments since the meeting in Haifa.
2. Preparing: Road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health: The EHTF will review and discuss the final draft workplan for the preparatory process for the Sixth Ministerial Conference, taking stock of the results of the survey carried out with EHTF members regarding the proposed road-map. The EHTF will be informed of the results of the process of nomination of members of its Ad-Hoc Working Group representing Member States on a geographical basis, and Non-Government Organizations. The EHTF will also discuss its role and engagement in the preparation of the Conference, agree on its intersessional programme of work until the Ministerial Conference and consider expanding the EHTF stakeholders to include also representatives of the scientific community and local authorities, as well as the International Financial Institutions (IFIs).
3. To provide the background to this discussion, the Secretariat will highlight the proposed possible outcomes of some of the themes making up the road map. The choice of technical topics to be presented at this meeting does not represent a departure from the priorities identified at the High-level Mid-term Review Meeting. Rather, the proposed topics represent the opportunity for the EHTF to review parts of the Roadmap themes on the basis of relevant recent meetings and developments stimulating a discussion on which of the possible outcomes identified for these themes would be of the greatest technical and political relevance. At this meeting, the following topics will be presented, taking stock of activities implemented as part of the EHTF intersessional programme of work in 2015:
 - Urban green spaces and health (Roadmap theme “Cities”);
 - Waste and human health: evidence and needs (Roadmap theme “Cities”);

¹ The European Environment and Health Process (2010-2016): Institutional Framework”
http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/104443/Parma_EH_Conf_edoc07.pdf, accessed 3 October 2016.

- Environmentally Sustainable Health Systems (Roadmap theme “Disasters, Climate change”);
 - Water and Health (Roadmap theme “Water”);
4. Informing: The EHTF will be informed about the preparations for the second United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 23-27 May 2016) and the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016), with a focus on the possible active engagement of the EHP into these events, including through the EHMB.

Annex 2. Programme of work

	Tuesday, 24 November 2015
08:30 - 09:30	Registration
09:30 - 10:00	<p>Opening of the meeting (Agenda item 1) Welcome by the Task Force Chair, host Country, WHO secretariat; Election of the EHTF Co-Chair, confirmation of the composition of the Ad-Hoc Working Group of the EHTF, adoption of the agenda and programme.</p> <p><i>Relevant documents:</i> <i>EHTF5/1 - List of documents</i> <i>EHTF5/2 - Scope and purpose</i> <i>EHTF5/3 - Provisional Agenda</i> <i>EHTF5/4 - Provisional Programme</i> <i>EHTF5/5 - Provisional list of participants</i> <i>EHTF5/8 Report of the high-level mid-term review meeting of EHP, Haifa, Israel, 28-30 April 2015</i></p>
10:00 - 11:00	<p>Reporting and informing (Agenda items 2.a,2.b, 2.c, 2.d) The EHTF will be updated on the main outcomes of the 65th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Vilnius, Lithuania, 14-17 September 2015) and of the 21st session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, Switzerland, 27-30 October 2015) of relevance to the EHP.</p> <p>The EHTF will also be updated on the preparations of the second United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 23-27 May 2016) and of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016).</p> <p><i>Relevant documents:</i> <i>EHTF5/8 Mid-term review report of the European environment and health process (EHP)</i> <i>EHTF5/10 Report of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board to the 65th WHO Regional Committee for Europe and 21st session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy</i></p>

11:00 - 11:30	Coffee and tea break
11:30 - 13:00	<p>Roadmap towards the 6th Ministerial Conference on environment and health (Agenda item 3 a)</p> <p>The Secretariat will present the proposed preparatory process and work-plan for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. The discussion will include consideration of additional stakeholders to be invited to participate in the EHP.</p> <p><i>Relevant documents:</i> <i>EHTF5/6 Road-map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (2017)</i></p>
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 - 15:30	<p>Roadmap towards the 6th Ministerial Conference on environment and health - cntd. (Agenda items 3 b, i and 3 b ii)</p> <p>The EHTF will be presented with highlights from selected themes of the road-map, taking stock of recent international events with a focus on Urban green spaces and health and Waste and human health: evidence and needs</p> <p><i>Relevant documents:</i> <i>EHTF5/6 Road-map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (2017)</i> <i>EHTF5/11 Urban green spaces and health: a review of the evidence</i></p>
15:30 - 16:00	Coffee and tea break
16:00 - 17:30	<p>Roadmap towards the 6th Ministerial Conference on environment and health - cntd. (Agenda items 3 b, iii and 3 b iv)</p> <p>The EHTF will be presented with highlights from selected themes of the road-map, taking stock of recent international events with a focus on Environmentally Sustainable Health Systems and Water and Health.</p> <p><i>Relevant documents:</i> <i>EHTF5/6 Road-map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (2017)</i></p>

	Wednesday, 25 November 2015
09:00 - 09:45	Reporting and informing (Agenda item 2.e) The EHTF will be presented with highlights on Environment and Health policy developments in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
09:45 - 10:30	Roadmap towards the 6th Ministerial Conference on environment and health - cntd. (Agenda item 3 c) The EHTF will hold an initial discussion on the possible outcome elements for the Declaration of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health <i>Relevant documents:</i> <i>EHTF5/6 Road-map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (2017)</i>
10:30 - 11:00	Coffee and tea break
11:00 - 12:00	Roadmap towards the 6th Ministerial Conference on environment and health - cntd. (Agenda item 3 c) The EHTF will hold an initial discussion on the possible outcome elements for the Declaration of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health <i>Relevant documents:</i> <i>EHTF5/6 Road-map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (2017)</i>
12:00 - 12:30	Roadmap towards the 6th Ministerial Conference on environment and health - cntd. (Agenda item 3 d) The EHTF will adopt its intersessional programme of work <i>Relevant documents:</i> <i>EHTF5/7 Programme of work for EHTF for 2016-2017 EHTF5/13 Financial Overview of EHP in 2014-15</i>
12:30 - 13:00	Any other business and closure of the meeting (Agenda item 4)

Annex 3. Main points of discussion and decisions

1) Adoption of the agenda, election of officers and confirmation of the composition of the Ad-Hoc Working Group of the EHTF

The meeting was opened by Mr Dragan Gjorgjev, the Chair of the EHTF, and welcome speeches were made by Mr Nurhan Izairi, Minister of Environment and Planning of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mr Jovica Andovski, Deputy Minister of Health, and by Mr Srdan Matic on behalf of the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

The meeting was chaired by Mr Dragan Gjorgjev, the EHTF Chair, and Mr Robert Thaler, EHTF Co-chair.

The EHTF reviewed the composition of the Ad-Hoc WG of the EHTF and noted the invitation to submit nominations from country group A.¹

The EHTF decided to launch a new call for nominations to the AWG for countries from group A and to hold on-line elections

The EHTF adopted the proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference of the AWG, to allow all members of the EHTF to participate in the open meetings of the AWG, if they so wish.

The EHTF adopted the agenda of the meeting, amended by the addition of a report from the Health in Climate Change (HIC) Working Group and details of the forthcoming UNFCCC COP21 meeting.

2) Reporting and informing

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

The EHTF noted the reports on the outcomes of the WHO RC65 and UNECE CEP21 provided by Mr Matic and Ms Ivonne Higuero, UNECE, respectively.

b) *Reporting on the main outcomes of the seventh meeting of the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (Zagreb, Croatia, 19 November 2015)*

The EHTF were informed that the EHMB reviewed and broadly agreed with a discussion paper drafted by the secretariat to provide input to the initial discussions on the possible outcomes of the sixth ministerial conference. The EHMB decided to transmit that document to the EHTF for its consideration and discussion at the current meeting.

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

The EHTF noted the update on the preparations for UNEA2 given by Ms Francesca Racioppi on behalf of Mr Wondwosen Asnake of UNEP.

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

The EHTF noted the update on the preparations for the Batumi conference provided by Ms Ivonne Higuero, UNECE, including its strong links to air quality and the green

¹ Country Group A: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovak Republic, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

economy. They further noted the multiple opportunities for active participation by the EHP and contributions to the outcomes of the Conference, such as through side events, statements, comments on the documentation and participation by Ministers of Environment in the ministerial segment of the Conference. There would also be opportunities for organizing back-to-back meetings for the preparation of the sixth Ministerial Conference.

The EHTF expressed its strong interest in contributing to the Batumi Conference and agreed to:

- provide feedback on the background documents that are being prepared on air pollution, including the action plan, to ensure that they reflect the priorities and interests of the EHTF
- entrust the AWG and the EHMB with developing a proposal for a statement to be delivered on behalf of the EHP at the special session of the CEP taking place in February 2016 in Geneva, with a view to including an intervention on behalf of the EHP in the ministerial discussion which will take place in Batumi
- consider opportunities to organize a side event in Batumi on the EHP
- consider having a meeting of the EHTF or AWG back-to-back with the Batumi Conference
- review the specific commitments that could be considered with respect to air quality as an outcome of the sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health on the basis of the outcomes of the Batumi and UNEA2 events.

e) ***Highlights of on Environment and Health policy developments in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia***

The EHTF noted with appreciation the presentations given by Mr Dragan Gjorgjev and Ms Jovanka Karadzinska Bislimovska on environment and health policy developments in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It congratulated the country on achieving the Parma target on asbestos, through the development of the national action plan for the elimination of asbestos-related diseases.

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

a) Proposed preparatory process and work-plan for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, including consideration of additional stakeholders to be invited to participate in the EHP

Mr Srdan Matic introduced the implementation plan for the Roadmap towards the 6th Ministerial Conference that was requested by the Mid-term review meeting. It operationalizes the road map presented in Haifa, defining the scope of the themes for the road-map and providing an indication of the further preparatory process and events that could take place as part of the development of the thematic areas under the road map. He also introduced an informal discussion paper that presents initial proposals for possible commitments that could be considered for the Ministerial Conference (document without symbol, tabled at the meeting), following the discussions of the EHMB at its seventh meeting.

The EHTF endorsed the proposed implementation plan for the road-map. It requested the secretariat to continue consulting the countries that have expressed interest on the different themes and to include the agreed activities in the inter-sessional programme of work in such a manner that it informs timely the negotiations of the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference.

In the general discussion it highlighted the importance of ensuring that:

- in line with the MTR conclusions, further preparations should take place in the context of the EHTF, ensuring consistency and coherence

between the EHTF and the EHMB in the directions of the work.

- the commitments already undertaken in Parma are upheld and continue to be pursued
- the commitments to be undertaken at the sixth Ministerial Conference reflect the priorities indicated in Haifa (air pollution, climate change, chemical safety, water and sanitation)
- the outcome document of the sixth Ministerial Conference should have a very limited number of commitments, with SMART targets.

The EHTF noted with appreciation the presentation of Dr Remy Slama, representative of the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISDE), who was invited as observer to the meeting. ISDE represents the scientific and academic community, focused on environment and health.

b) Highlights from road-map themes

During this part of the meeting, the EHTF was provided with a summary feedback from technical consultations on themes, or parts of themes contained in the Roadmap. The choice of topics depended on the calendar of events in 2015 and included only those on which technical discussions were completed, without prejudice for their respective priority.

i) Urban green spaces and health

The technical consultation on green spaces took place in May 2015, as part of the review of the roadmap theme “Cities”. The EHTF noted with appreciation the presentation of Ms Catharine Ward Thompson on urban green spaces and health. They remarked on the usefulness of providing policy recommendations on the basis of the knowledge already available. They highlighted the growing body of evidence and studies in different countries, the importance of making links with mental health benefits and benefits to the ageing population, the positive role of green spaces in promoting more cycling and physical activity, and the opportunities to make progress by highlighting the positive contribution that providing more such spaces can make to economic development. They also agreed to take the perspectives provided on urban space and health into account in the further discussions of the possible commitments that might be considered by the sixth Ministerial Conference with respect to the theme on “cities”.

ii) Waste and human health: evidence and needs

The scoping meeting of a small group of experts on the theme of Waste and health took place in November 2015, with the aim of opening the review of the theme as part of the preparation of the Sixth Ministerial Conference. The EHTF noted with appreciations the presentations of Mr Pietro Comba, from the National Health Institute of Italy, and Ms Eva Csobod of the REC on waste and human health.

They strongly agreed on the high importance of the topic, which should be further developed in view of the Ministerial Declaration, and to hold further consultations to formulate the next steps and scope of possible commitments. Aspects that could be taken into account include: the opportunities for collaboration with the Basel Convention, the occupational health aspects affecting workers in waste management and treatment (often involving vulnerable population groups, including children), funding mechanisms to make progress in this area, and links to other aspects of the road map, e.g. environmentally sustainable health systems.

iii) Environmentally Sustainable Health Systems (ESHS)

The EHTF noted with appreciation the presentations by Mr Krunoslav Capak of the Institute of Public Health of Croatia and Mr Louise Newport, Chair of the HIC Working Group, on the outcomes of the recent technical consultation on ESHS.

The EHTF acknowledged the relevance of the topic, which is also relevant for

strengthening health systems and improving the occupational health of the health work force. Aspects of ESHS could be considered and introduced when reforming the health systems. There are good opportunities for funding action in this area, and the EHP could play a unique role in advocacy and provision of technical guidance. The topic addresses the agenda of both ministries of health (The Tallin Charter) and ministries of environment.

iv) Water and sanitation

The EHTF noted with appreciation the presentations by Mr Pierre Studer, Chair of the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health, Switzerland, and Ms Marta Vargha, Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Protocol, Hungary.

The EHTF acknowledged that water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) remains an important item of unfinished business of the Parma agenda that the current situation is ethically unacceptable, and that WASH should feature as part of the Ministerial Declaration. They acknowledged the Protocol on Water and Health as the only legally binding instrument through which progress related to WASH could be achieved.

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

The EHTF took note of the discussion paper, which was presented by Mr Matic, as an interesting informal initial contribution to the discussions on how the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference could be formulated. For the follow-up work they agreed to:

- Request that the open-ended AWG and the Secretariat prepare the first draft of the outcome document for the next EHTF meeting in mid-2016;
- Use the five criteria proposed in the discussion paper to guide the development of the possible commitments for the sixth Ministerial Conference;
- Ensure that the existing commitments under the Parma Declaration are reflected in an appropriate manner in the outcome document and that existing processes are duly taken into account, avoiding duplications;
- Provide the necessary time to hold domestic consultations on the possible new commitments, also by posting the relevant documents on the sharepoint;
- Build on the work of the HIC to identify possible commitments for the EHP on climate change, also on the basis of the outcome of the COP21.

During the discussion, participants highlighted the importance for the commitments to be supported by effective means to ensure implementation, monitoring and reporting. They also emphasized the need for appropriate national mechanisms to ensure follow-up in the countries, and some considered that National Environment and Health Policies could be a useful means to catalyse national action and engage different sectors within government. Regarding the possible priorities, the most frequently mentioned issues were: air pollution, waste management, cities, WASH, climate change and chemical safety.

d) *Adoption of an intersessional programme of work for the EHTF'*

The EHTF considered the initial calendar of forthcoming events, as highlighted also in Annex 4 of the road map, with the expectation of holding in 2016 two meetings of the EHTF (in late spring/fall) to be prepared by meetings of the open-ended AWG. EHTF requested that the Secretariat finalizes the intersessional workplan incorporating the points raised in this meeting. The EHTF accepted with gratitude the invitation by Austria to hold one of the EHTF meetings in Vienna in 2016.

4) Any other business and closure of the meeting.

Participants noted the update provided by Ms Louise Newport, the Chair of the HIC

Working group, including the forthcoming side events that will take place in the context of the UNFCCC COP21 meeting in Paris.

EHTF expressed its gratitude to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for its warm hospitality and hosting of the meeting.

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