



Final Conference Report

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Introduction

The Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health was the latest milestone in a series of conferences held in 1989 in Frankfurt on policy formulation, in 1994 in Helsinki on planning and in 1999 in London on action in partnership. The theme of this conference was “the future for our children”.

A total of 1169 people participated in the Conference, including 38 ministers of health and ministers of environment from 50 Member States of WHO’s European Region, representatives of 11 international organizations (including United Nations agencies), representatives of four Member States of other WHO regions (Argentina, Brazil, Canada and the United States of America), a delegation of representatives of the Healthy Planet Forum¹, representatives of 10 civil society groups and 138 observers.

The Conference elected as joint chairs Dr Mihály Kókény, Minister of Health, Social and Family Affairs of Hungary, and Dr Miklós Persányi, Minister of Environment and Water of Hungary. The joint vice-chairs were Ms Zsuzsanna Jakab, State Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs of Hungary, and Mr István Ory, State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Water Management of Hungary. Ms Siobhan McEvoy (Ireland) and Ms Susan Potting (the Netherlands) were elected as Rapporteurs. The Conference programme is given in Annex 1.

Proceedings

Opening session

The opening session was addressed by Dr Katalin Szili, Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary, who declared the Conference officially open at the end of her statement. Dr Lee Jong-Wook, Director-General of WHO, then delivered a speech and was followed by Dr Mihály Kókény, Minister of Health, Social and Family Affairs of Hungary, Dr Miklós Persányi, Minister of Environment and Water of Hungary, and Dr Marc Danzon, WHO Regional Director for Europe. Following his statement, Dr Danzon led the election of officers for all sessions. The opening ceremony of the Conference concluded with a celebration of dance and song by the indigenous Roma people.

Session 1 – The environment and health situation in Europe – an assessment

The joint vice-chairs of this session were Ms Marion Caspers-Merk, Deputy Minister, Federal Ministry of Health and Social Security of Germany, Ms Liisa Hyssälä, Minister of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, and Mr Alun Michael, Minister for Rural Affairs and Local Environment Quality of the United Kingdom.

The introductory speaker was Professor Giorgio Tamburlini, Scientific Director of the ‘Burlo Garofolo’ Institute of Child Health in Trieste, Italy, while the keynote address was made by Mr

¹ The Healthy Planet Forum was a four-day event for civil society groups and other organizations from across Europe held in Budapest in parallel with the Ministerial Conference.

Patrice Robineau, Acting Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

In his introductory address, Professor Tamburlini gave a brief overview of the current knowledge on the causal links between environmental risk factors and child health. He presented the magnitude of the effects of these risk factors on children's health, explaining the methodology and results of the WHO environmental burden of disease study prepared for the Conference, that clearly demonstrated why children deserve special attention in environment and health. Professor Tamburlini also identified the knowledge gaps that still existed and recommended increased research to fill them, along with further action to promote safer and healthier environments through effective policy-making.

Mr Robineau's keynote address looked at the challenges in the areas of environment and health. He acknowledged that, in recent times, there had been a growing awareness of environment and health but said that more still needed to be done to allow further implementation of the necessary action. Mr Robineau explained how, at regional level, a significant integrated approach had already been adopted, thanks to the collaboration between WHO and UNECE. This had enabled ministries of health and environment to come together. As a prime example, Mr Robineau described the intersectoral collaboration that had allowed environmental performance reviews to be carried out in countries in transition. These had demonstrated that the worst health conditions were found in the Caucasus and central Asia. The reviews had resulted in recommendations for action which were then discussed by UNECE with the country concerned before being adopted. The key challenge – to ensure their implementation – was still a real one. UNECE was also strong at drawing up international law, including most recently the Protocol on Water and Health (still to be ratified before it could come into force), the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (signed in Kiev in 2003), and the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP). He concluded that the collaboration between UNECE and WHO stretched beyond legal instruments and that the two individual political processes – the Environment for Europe process and the Environment and Health process – would continue to work together ensure a healthier environment in the Region.

Nine contributions were made from the floor during this session, of which six were by ministers, two by other country delegation members and one by a nongovernmental organization (NGO): Ireland representing the European Union, Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Portugal, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, and the European Public Health Alliance. The main points raised addressed the health situation resulting from the environment in the European Region and the progress achieved in implementing the commitments made at the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in London in 1999. Reference was also made to the need for the Environment and Health process in Europe to continue beyond the Budapest Conference, in order to help improve the environment and health situation in Europe. As a dynamic process, it would need to be constantly monitored and evaluated since it could have negative as well as positive impacts. Another important message was that the development and implementation of national environment and health strategies had been a means of achieving high political commitment on environment and health. Implementation of the London Conference commitments, such as those in the areas of water and health, and transport, environment and health, had provided positive stimuli for improvement. Some countries such as Bulgaria and Portugal devoted the main part of their presentations to water and health, and the development and progress of their action plans, also referred to by Turkey.

Session 2 – Implementing the London Declaration commitments – progress made. Showcase of good examples

This session was structured as a roundtable discussion. It was chaired by Professor Thomas Zeltner, Director, Federal Office of Public Health of Switzerland. Other panellists included Mr Zaal Lomtadze, Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, Mr Olavi Tammemae, Deputy Minister of Environment of Estonia, and Dr Michael Vít, Deputy Minister of Health of the Czech Republic.

The discussion was introduced by a brief presentation on the transport, health and environment process from London to Budapest, focusing in particular on THE PEP, its objectives, priority areas of work and the challenges and opportunities for its future implementation. The presentation was made by Ms Francesca Racioppi on behalf of the joint WHO-UNECE secretariat of THE PEP.

Mr Franklin Apfel facilitated the discussion, inviting panellists to reflect on different aspects of transport, health and environment. The main points that emerged during the discussions are outlined below.

Opportunities for and challenges to intersectoral collaboration

- Consensus between the transport, health and environment sectors on the necessity to act as well as on the actions to be taken facilitated collaboration between them. In the field of road traffic safety, for instance, regulation of issues such as speed, drunken driving and risk-taking behaviour by young drivers, and the enforcement of the road safety regulations were areas where collaboration between the relevant authorities was particularly necessary and relatively easy to establish.
- The existence of a regulatory framework facilitated the mobilization of resources for implementation activities.
- There was a need to raise awareness of the benefits of more sustainable and healthier transport as well as to improve the public perception of the magnitude of the problems at stake. As an illustration of the difference in public reaction to news, the Deputy Minister of Health of the Czech Republic referred to the news of an outbreak of meningococcal infection that had alarmed the public much more than the far greater health problem posed by road traffic injuries. Furthermore, as people's attitudes were shaped very early in life, the role of education and awareness-raising activities among children and young people was particularly crucial.

The relevance was particularly emphasized of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment as one of the existing policy instruments that could facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration and raise health and environmental considerations on the transport agenda.

Relevance of action at the subnational level

- Increasing consistency should be sought in the relationships between the transport, health and environment sectors at national and subnational (e.g. regional and local) levels, as subnational transport policy developments could evolve along different lines from national developments in the absence of effective coordination between the different levels of administration. International cooperation could play a role in supporting the efforts towards

coordination: at the pan-European level, THE PEP provided a framework for bringing the three sectors together and for promoting close cooperation between them.

- The special role of local planning in promoting more sustainable transport was stressed, as it was at that level that decisions concerning investment in infrastructure for cycling and walking were taken and implemented. For example, in Estonia, opportunities for developing cycling infrastructure were being sought as part of programmes to rehabilitate existing road infrastructure at the local level.

Use of information and communication strategies

- Effective intersectoral collaboration was also dependent on the availability of reliable information and data. For example, in Georgia, car ownership was increasing very rapidly and although reported mortality from road traffic injury was still low in comparison with other countries, caution was needed in interpreting the data, as they could merely reflect a low level of motorization rather than the existence of effective road safety policies. The availability of reliable information and the capacity to interpret it correctly was therefore of great importance in identifying emerging issues and guiding the policy response, especially under rapidly changing conditions.
- There was a need to improve communication and exchange of information between the health sector and other relevant sectors, as well as to develop more effective communication strategies targeting specific population groups, such as young people and decision-makers. For example, it was reported that in Switzerland, while there was widespread understanding and support in the middle levels of the administration for the need to promote more physical activity through walking and cycling, more needed to be done to ensure that the issue was also taken up by high-ranking officers and top decision-makers, resulting in stronger support and political leadership.

Resources to attain sustainable and healthier transport

- One issue of major concern was the lack of adequate resources to support sustainable development. That stemmed to a large extent from the difficulty of reconciling the long-term vision and commitment that sustainable development required with the time horizon of politics, which was often driven by short-term policies and the need to achieve rapid successes. To help overcome the problem, there was a need for new and stronger partnerships and alliances.

The discussion among the panellists was further enriched by five contributions from the floor: three by ministers and two by other country delegation members from the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. The speakers focused on THE PEP and various national action plans, strategies, initiatives and projects to improve trends in physically active transport (walking and cycling). In that context, Finland made reference to its National Walking Strategy; Italy highlighted the importance of actions taking place at the local level, such as the “sustainable cities for children” initiative supported by the Italian Ministry of Environment; the United Kingdom stressed the challenge posed by increasing levels of cycling and walking, highlighting the need for a stronger focus on health arguments and consideration of the health gains to be achieved; Germany informed the session about its Environment and Health Action Programme, which placed special emphasis on children and adolescents, and the Environment and Health Action Programme of North Rhine-Westphalia. The Czech Republic highlighted the importance of collaboration between different sectors, giving the example of health sector involvement in the development of the national environmental policy and quoting

the National Environmental and Health Action Plan (NEHAP) and Health for All policies as examples of useful policy frameworks that facilitated cross-sectoral collaboration.

In summing up the conclusions of the session, Professor Zeltner noted the importance of intersectoral collaboration and highlighted the significant progress increasingly being achieved in that direction. While there was still room for further progress in the area, there appeared to be a strong need to start addressing emerging issues, in particular those concerning children's health in relation to transport, and to providing more opportunities for physical activity through cycling and walking.

Session 3 – The impact and future of the Environment and Health process in Europe

The joint vice-chairs of this session were Dr Louis Deguara, Minister of Health, the Elderly and Community Care of Malta, and Mr Hans Olav Syversen, State Secretary, Ministry of Children and Family Affairs of Norway.

The introductory speaker was Professor Sergei Furgal, Director, Department of International Collaboration, Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, while the keynote address was made by Ms Genon Jensen, Director of the European Public Health Alliance.

Professor Furgal addressed the plenary session on behalf of the Chair of the Council for Health Cooperation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and explained the importance of the collaboration between the ministries of health of those countries and the recent developments and decisions of the CIS Council.

Ms Jensen stressed the importance of addressing environmental risk factors that affect children and the need for strong political commitment from those present without any further delay. She referred to indoor air pollution, particularly from environmental tobacco smoke and pollution by chemicals. Governments and civil society now had the responsibility to take action together, she declared. She spoke of different levels of responsibility: the first was international, where the Member States of the European Region needed to ensure that the documents signed during the Ministerial Conference were translated into real action. The second level of responsibility was national, the Member States ensuring that the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE) fed into national action plans to reduce ill health from environmental risk factors. The final level of responsibility lay with the NGOs which needed to educate the public. Ms Jensen concluded her speech by calling for the government representatives present to legislate and ensure adequate implementation of the commitments set out by the Conference and to meet the challenge of not giving up.

Six presentations were made during this session: three by ministers and three by other country delegation members from Armenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Uzbekistan. The main points raised included the need to ensure continuity of the Environment and Health process in Europe, through increased emphasis on public health and increased involvement of the health sector. Generally, the statements endorsed the idea of a fifth ministerial conference in the European Region and also called for a midterm review meeting to be held before the end of 2007. The new mandate of the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) was also endorsed, and reference was made to the need to better associate the Member States with the work of the EEHC by appointing national focal points, and thereby

reinforcing the links with the other international processes. The importance was stressed of providing additional financial and budgetary resources for the EEHC to ensure the effectiveness of its work. The WHO Regional Committee for Europe was invited to make environment and health one of the priorities for the European Region. There was a need to define clear mechanisms for the more efficient allocation of human and financial resources. Another significant comment made during this session concerned the importance of continuing the efforts to implement previous Conference commitments, since they were the solid foundations of the new commitments endorsed at the present Conference. There was also a need to add a health dimension to initiatives launched at the ministerial conferences on the environment, such as the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Environment Strategy.

Alán Pintér Award

The session started with a short presentation of slides about the late Alán Pintér, showing different aspects of his career. Dr Marc Danzon explained that Dr Pintér had been a strong advocate of the Environment and Health process and the motivator and original driving force behind the Budapest Conference. Dr Mihály Kőkény and Dr Corrado Clini from the Ministry of the Environment and Territory of Italy, a close personal friend of Alán Pintér, each said a few words about him, mentioning the fellowships to be awarded by the WHO Regional Office for Europe and Hungary to three young professionals for up to three months of advanced study in the field of environment and health, to commemorate him and his work.

Mrs Pinter and her daughter presented the awards to the winners mentioned below.

- Dr Erika Györffy from Romania who was working at the National Institute of Public Health in Hungary. She intended to carry out research at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health to compare the rates of lung cancer in Finland and Hungary in order to establish the role of occupational factors in cancer morbidity.
- Dr Catarina Isabel Nunes Lourenço, Ministry of Health of Portugal, who was to study perception and communication of environmental health risk at the Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany and subsequently develop tools and guidelines for practitioners in the public health services.
- Ms Zdenka Sharishska, National Institute of Public Health of Slovakia, who would further her studies on environmental health impact assessment at the Institute of Environmental and Occupational Medicine, Sonowiec, Poland after which she would develop guidelines for incorporating environmental health impact assessment into the practice of the public health services in her country.

Session 4 – Housing and health

The joint vice-chairs of this session were Mr Luis Filipe Pereira, Minister of Health of Portugal, and Dr Temirbek Akmatalliev, Minister of Ecology and Emergency Situations of Kyrgyzstan. The keynote speaker was Dr Juozas Olekas, Ministry of Health of Lithuania, while Ms Sascha Gabizon spoke on behalf of ECO-Forum.

Dr Olekas made a presentation on the importance of housing and the impact it can have on health. He spoke of energy consumption within households and excess winter deaths due to the energy problem. He also emphasized the importance of well-planned developments and cities, showing how they would impact on the lifestyles of children, especially with regard to their recreation and modes of travel. Injuries were an important factor to consider, both in the urban

setting and indoors. Dr Olekas mentioned the social factors that contributed to health and well-being, and concluded by explaining how Lithuania was placing emphasis on the health of children by declaring 2004 as the year of the child. He also announced a symposium on housing and health to be held in September 2004 to ensure that further attention was paid to the issue of housing and health.

Ms Sascha Gabizon emphasized the toxic dangers within households or related to life within households, from the burning of plastic waste to the use indoors and outdoors of chemicals that were bioaccumulating within children's bodies.

Nine presentations were made during this session, including one by a minister and five by other country delegation members from Belgium, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy and Turkey, one by an international organization, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and two by NGOs, Mama-86 and the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE). The main issues raised were the need for more attention to be paid to this environmental risk factor. Various household surveys were presented by the different Member States, but common conclusions and recommendations predominated throughout the discussion. There was a need to address all forms of unhealthy housing by targeting the hidden risks ranging from chemicals to accidents.

Session 5 – Tools for policy-making – Towards an environment and health information system to support environment and health decision-making across Europe

The joint vice-chairs of the session were Mr Pieter van Geel, State Secretary, Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment of the Netherlands, Mr Slavcho Bogoev, Minister of Health of Bulgaria, and Dr Fernando Lamata Cotanda, State Secretary of Health, Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs of Spain.

The introductory address was delivered by Professor Göran Pershagen, Chairman of the Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institute, Sweden, while Dr Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director, European Environment Agency (EEA), made the keynote address.

Professor Pershagen explained the role of indicators in decision-making. He gave various examples of how ill health had been linked to environmental risk factors such as air pollution and noise through the use of appropriate indicators. Professor Pershagen emphasized that the development of new policies and guidelines in the European Union (EU) countries helped to minimize adverse environmental health effects through research and capacity-building programmes. He concluded by appealing for more consideration to be given to these factors in the upcoming seventh framework programme.

Dr McGlade talked about the “large-scale experiment” with children's health and the need for close monitoring. She emphasized the lack of knowledge of the impact of our economic activities on children's health and stressed the importance of building up our knowledge on policy effectiveness. The overall economic benefits of actions on environmental pollutants, although unquantified, were not to be underestimated since they were substantial. She concluded by making strong recommendations on gathering information and data that would establish undiscovered links, serve as early warnings and help policy-makers make the right decisions to avoid health hazards and identify savings on health and education budgets.

Ten contributions were made from the floor during this session, of which two were by ministers and six by other country delegation members from Albania, Belarus, Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Turkey, and two by NGOs: the European Public Health Alliance and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The speakers referred to the assessment required for shaping policies. The London Conference Declaration had called for the creation or strengthening of information systems and had endorsed the objectives of ensuring investigation of environmental changes and their impacts on human health. Reports were to be completed to assist political decision-making. An information system was also considered to be an important communication tool. Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the proposed Environment and Health Information System and the development of indicators that would arise from it.

Session 6 – Tools for policy-making – Dealing with uncertainty: can the precautionary principle help protect the future of our children?

The joint vice-chairs of this session were Mr Thierry Detienne, Regional Minister of Social Affairs and Health of Belgium, and Ms Lena Sommestad, Minister for the Environment of Sweden.

The introductory address was delivered by Dr Philippe Grandjean, Professor and Chair of Environmental Medicine at the University of Southern Denmark. Dr Grandjean explained the limitations to scientific evidence, the uncertainties that still existed and the impact of these uncertainties on decisions taken and hence health. He also explained why and how failures of the past could be learned from and how similar scientific uncertainties should be addressed in the future. He stressed that research was moving at a very slow pace, mainly because interactions between environment and health were very complex because of the numerous interactions and nonspecific outcomes. Moreover, methodological problems in assessing such interactions were only just being clarified and the associations between environment and health only beginning to be understood. There was still bias towards false negative associations and failure to detect associations that really existed. Dr Grandjean referred to the work of the EEA and particularly how it had documented the lack of attention paid to past experiences, as in the case of asbestos. He stressed that such failures should be learned from. In the case of lead exposure and its impact on children, there was still a serious problem resulting from lead additives in petrol. They were still being exported, with the safety limits tightened up as evidence appeared. New pollutants such as phthalates were addressed by fewer publications and were also a potential problem. The role of the European Union in the field of chemicals had achieved some change but there was still much more that could be done with older chemicals.

Dr Grandjean compared the situation related to environmental impacts on children's health to the tip of an iceberg, saying that most scientists were attempting to discover how much more lay beneath, while unfortunately vested interests were trying to submerge the tip, as was the case with environmental tobacco smoke. He mentioned the need for more organized and integrated efforts within countries, saying that an environmental medicine institute was an asset in this but that unfortunately most countries did not have one. Moreover, he demonstrated why and how the precautionary principle was an important part of decision-making that could well supplement formal risk assessments carried out to date. It was important to apply the precautionary principle carefully and in a consistent manner, since it provided a means of acting when evidence was lacking and where harm could be particularly severe; he went on to make recommendations that

would ensure this. Stakeholder involvement and transparency were also necessary, as was continued exploration of the iceberg at all levels. Prudent interpretation of all scientific results as well as improved bridges between science and decision-making in children's health and environment were necessary.

There were 16 contributions from the floor during this session, from 11 Member States (Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Portugal, Switzerland, Turkey and Uzbekistan), including three ministers; EEA and UNICEF; and the Healthy Planet Forum Delegation, ISDE and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). The main points addressed the need to use the precautionary approach as a tool for policy-making. The European Commission's Communication on the precautionary principle and the developments in its use within Europe in recent years were mentioned by several of the Member States. Given the complex and specific nature of the health risks to children, the application of the precautionary principle was extremely important and should be linked to appropriate scientific investigations, information systems and policies. Member States also stressed that, in the case of children, knowledge of the impacts of environmental factors was more incomplete than for adults, and children were more vulnerable to a variety of risk factors. The tool was therefore even more useful in protecting the future of the children.

Finland expressed concern about potential abuse in the application of the precautionary principle, while several other delegations called for stronger work to be done on the principle and ways of strengthening its application. Many delegations expressed their strong support for the development of guidelines on application of the principle, a uniform framework and good criteria that would ensure its appropriate use. Several Member States gave clear examples of how the principle had been used and stated the importance of sharing experiences and best practices. It was also important to learn from failures to use the principle in the past when it should have been. Continuing work on scientific evidence and tools was also important, as was collaboration in the field. Many speakers mentioned the importance of democracy and transparency as well as of ensuring the participation of all stakeholders in decision-making processes. Practical work was needed to improve the capacity to identify and make use of early warnings of risks, and that included the establishment of new data sets and further research to address gaps in knowledge.

Keynote address by Ms Margot Wallström

Dr Miklós Persányi, Minister of Environment and Water of Hungary, invited Ms Margot Wallström, European Commissioner for the Environment; Nuclear Safety and Civil Protection, to address the meeting.

Ms Wallström spoke of how a healthy environment should be not a privilege but a basic human right. Children and young people were at the very heart of sustainable development and were allies in creating a healthier Europe. They were the generation that would be responsible in the future for tackling the environmental problems left behind by the world of today. She emphasized that they were also the most vulnerable to the dangers of pollution and this, together with their influential status on adults, meant that they were not only the victims of environmental problems but also ambassadors for a healthy environment for all.

Ms Wallström emphasized that much had already been done to reduce health risks through 30 years of European environment policy, decades of Member State effort and international initiatives similar to the Budapest Conference. She spoke of the European Environment and Health Action Plan adopted by the Commission just two weeks previously and also of the SCALE initiative to reduce diseases linked to environmental factors, and urged politicians to

show courage, commitment and leadership in deciding where action was merited. The European Action Plan was the EU's contribution to the Budapest Conference and would serve as a platform for joint work for years to come. To achieve implementation of the CEHAPE Regional Priority Goals, it was important to ensure cooperation with others, including WHO and civil society. Although the environmental problems would not be easy to solve, the Conference marked the launch of an important process which needed to be developed as practically as possible over the coming years to ensure a healthier future for our children and our society as a whole.

Session 7 – Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe

The joint vice-chairs of this session were Dr Norayr Davidyan, Minister of Health of Armenia, and Mr Josef Pröll, Federal Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of Austria. Ms Berglind Asgeirsdottir, Deputy Secretary General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) delivered the keynote address.

In her presentation, Ms Asgeirsdottir highlighted how the OECD was helping to decrease the impacts of environmental risk factors on health. It was working on economic aspects specifically related to children's health because the politicians wanted to see a cost-benefit analysis of proposed policy options. The economic valuation methods currently being developed by the OECD would better identify the differences between adults and children. Ms Asgeirsdottir also reflected on the achievements of the meeting of environment ministers in April 2004 where the OECD was specifically requested to work on quantifying the costs of inaction on environmental challenges, including their health impacts. This, she stressed, would be a substantial contribution to the implementation of the CEHAPE.

During this session there were 17 contributions from the floor, of which 13 were by ministers and other country delegation members (Cyprus, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan). Other comments were made by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, ICFTU, the International Council for Local Environment Initiatives and Earth Forever Bulgaria. The speakers mainly welcomed the CEHAPE as a practical action-oriented and priority-based commitment. Many of them mentioned ways in which their countries were addressing children's environment and health issues. Both Ireland and Norway stressed the need for youth involvement in the implementation of the CEHAPE on an international and national level, while Italy emphasized the need for collaboration and solidarity between countries as well as assistance from international organizations to support the efforts of those countries which bore the greatest part of the environmental burden. Sweden considered gender issues, the need to address the problems of the most disadvantaged population groups which were at highest risk, and the need to pay more attention to chemicals. Italy specifically called for the continued participation by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe in the European Environment and Health Committee and also in the implementation of the CEHAPE.

Session 8 – Special session between ministers and representatives of civil society on implementation of health and environmental policy: Effective policies, practical tools and functioning partnerships to protect our children’s health

The chair and facilitator of this session was Mr Micheál Martin, Minister of Health and Children of Ireland. The vice-chairs of the session were Ms Sascha Gabizon of ECO-Forum and Ms Genon Jensen of the European Public Health Alliance.

The chair introduced the round-table discussions explaining how the session was planned to further motivate the ministers and delegations present to take the Conference commitments seriously. Mr Martin introduced the members of the first panel, before asking the President and the Rapporteur of the Youth Parliament² held the day before to deliver a report on their activities. The President explained the work and proceedings of the day, while the Rapporteur, together with the young people present in the hall, explained the highlights of the Youth Declaration. It was stressed that health could not be negotiated and that everyone had the right to enjoy a healthier environment. Clearly there would be a cost if action were not taken immediately. Hence the Youth Declaration was requesting Member States to act now. There were three main issues highlighted by the Youth Declaration.

- There was a need for greater political will.
- The CEHAPE needed to be supported by actual timelines and the table of actions needed to become an integral part of the political document. Priority areas included food safety and quality, with regular monitoring of nutritional standards; decreased air pollution and increased open spaces, accompanied by alternative forms of clean and sustainable transportation; appropriate disposal of waste, together with the prohibition of nuclear waste; access to clean water and reduction in wasteful water consumption; the introduction of strong policies addressing tobacco and alcohol, in particular the implementation of a long-term smoking ban; and more education and better prevention and health promotion programmes addressing alcohol, drugs and tobacco.
- It was important to ensure the involvement of young people in all future policy and decision-making processes from the very start of the process. This could be done by having more young people on delegations, including a youth representative on the European Environment and Health Committee, and by governments ensuring that the planning, design, implementation and action of any policies respected young people’s rights throughout the process.

In conclusion, the Rapporteur of the Youth Parliament reminded those present that young people were the decision-makers not only of tomorrow but also of today. They were making a difference today and wanted to work with dedication to ensure a sustainable world in which everyone could live.

² The Youth Parliament on 23 June 2004 in Budapest brought together some 100 young people from across Europe - Hungarian youth representatives, members of the UNEP Tunza group of young environmentalists, and youth delegates on the official country delegations - to discuss the Children’s Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE) and to agree on a Youth Declaration to be presented to the Ministerial Conference. It was jointly organized by the Hungarian Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme and the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

The subject of the first round-table discussion was: “Reducing chemicals in society and improving affordable access to water: implications for child health”. The panel was asked to address CEHAPE Regional Priority Goals 1 and 4, and to demonstrate the particular role and responsibilities that they each had in reducing chemicals and educating the public, and how governments had used national legislation to reduce the harmful effects of chemicals.

Participants of the first round-table panel were:

- Dr Recep Akdağ, Minister of Health of Turkey
- Mr Hans Christian Schmidt, Minister of Environment of Denmark
- Mr László Miklós, Minister of Environment of Slovakia
- Ms Karolina Ruzickova, Health Care Without Harm, Czech Republic
- Ms Estefania Blount, Instituto Sindical de Trabajo, Spain
- Dr Mihaela Vasilescu, Institute of Public Health, Romania
- Professor Dominique Belpomme, President of the Association for Research on Treatments against Cancers (ARTAC), France
- Ms Ingrid Schullstrom, Hennes & Mauritz, Sweden.

After the panel discussion, some time was given to comments and queries from the floor. Some of the questions asked by young people in the audience are given below.

- What are you doing to ensure access to free health care services for young people? – young person from Denmark.
- How can you remove the timelines from the CEHAPE and still call it an action plan? – young person from Hungary.
- What type of measures are given in the Plan to internalize external costs and social costs? – young person from The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
- How would you involve the local communities in the implementation of national children’s environment and health action plans? – young person from Turkey.

The questions were answered by the three participating ministers and the Chair.

The second round-table addressed CEHAPE Regional Priority Goals 2 and 3. The title of the session was “Cleaner air and a safer urban environment to promote child health”. The discussions focused on examples of legislation, education and training that helped to improve indoor and outdoor air quality, and the urban environment in terms of safety and opportunities for physical activities for children. Participants on this panel were:

- Mr Micheál Martin, Minister of Health and Children of Ireland
- Ms Fathme Iliaz, Deputy Minister of Environment and Water of Bulgaria
- Mr Constantin Mihailescu, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Moldova
- Dr Jozica Maucec Zakotnik, State Secretary of Public Health of Slovenia
- Ms Svetlana Slesarenok, Mama-86, Ukraine
- Ms Maryse Lehnens, International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), Luxembourg

- Ms Silvia Hesse, Head of Agenda 21 Office, Hanover, Germany
- Dr Catherine Boulland, Institut bruxellois pour le gestion de l'environnement, Belgium.

Media awards

The Media Awards had been introduced at the London Ministerial Conference in 1999 and had proved to be an excellent way to encourage and recognize film-making on environment and health. Most people relied on television for their understanding of current affairs and knowledge on health and environment, and communication was therefore essential for policy-makers who wanted to make progress on environment and health issues. The Awards' theme for this conference was "The future for our children" and they were to be given for films made on protecting children from environmental hazards.

The Awards were divided into three categories – public service announcements; documentaries and programming by or for young people. There had been 116 entries, and an international jury of film professionals had been convened to choose the finalists. Some of the entries had already been shown during the Conference and an eight-minute montage was shown during the session as a reminder of the entries that had been included on the short list.

Dr Marc Danzon, WHO Regional Director for Europe, presented the certificates to the runners-up who were:

- Mr Cees Meijer for "Funniest home videos" made by the Consumer Safety Institute in the Netherlands;
- Television Trust for the Environment in the United Kingdom for "Chemical safety in a vulnerable world" made for the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety;
- Lyle Bailie International in the United Kingdom for "Home", part of the North/South Road Safety Publicity Campaign launched by the National Safety Council and the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland);
- Central Bureau of Information, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Russian Federation, for "The fashion of the future: consider it today";
- Students from the Mass Media Centre of the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University, Kyrgyzstan for "Passive smoking";
- Green Studio, Ukraine for "We don't want to live in such a Ukraine".

The two winners in the public service announcement category were:

- The Reliable Future NGO in Azerbaijan for the "Leave no child out" national campaign, with support from UNICEF Azerbaijan Office.
- The Tobacco Control Campaign of the Department of Health in the United Kingdom for "Smoking near children".

The prizes were accepted by Mr Ragim Gafarov and Ms Melanie Johnson, Public Health Minister of the United Kingdom, respectively.

In the documentary category, the award went to "Iodine deficiency in the Ukraine – hidden danger" from TV Studiya Plus, Ukraine. Ms Alla Andronova accepted the award on behalf of TV Studiya Plus.

In the young people's category, the winner was "The Bad Smell" from Finland, made by West Tesoma Kindergarten with the Pirkanmaa Film Centre, Finland. Eight-year-old Emilia Lindroos accepted the award on behalf of her kindergarten.

A special commendation was awarded to Duna TV from Hungary for their short fiction film, "Friends of a Brook called Friend", directed by Katalin Macskassy.

Session 9 – Extreme weather events and human health

The joint vice-chairs of this session were Mr François d'Aubert, Minister of Research of France, and Dr Jon Kristjánsson, Minister of Health of Iceland. The introductory address was delivered by Professor Andrew Haines, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, while Dr Miklós Persányi, Minister of Environment and Water of Hungary, and Mr Frits Schlingemann, Director and Regional Representative, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), made keynote addresses.

Professor Andrew Haines spoke about extreme weather events and health in Europe. He explained how climate change and variability impacted on health. He presented a slide demonstrating the increased temperatures registered in Europe since 1976, comparing these statistics to health data such as mortality records and, in particular, the excess deaths that occurred during the 2003 heat-waves. The risk factors that had contributed to the heat-related deaths were explained as well as interventions that would have been possible to prevent them, including a heat-wave warning system. Flooding was also an issue, with increased notifications of events in recent years. The impacts of flooding on health and mental health were demonstrated, and recommendations made on how to reduce the health risk of flooding. Professor Haines also elaborated on the potential future scenario, concluding by emphasizing the need for improved preparedness through increased collaboration and enhanced monitoring and surveillance, as well as adequate evaluation of warning systems to avoid uncertainties and surprises.

In his address, Dr Miklós Persányi called for more attention to the changes that were occurring in our environment as a result of human activities. As a politician, he felt a responsibility to call for political impetus to prevent such changes. He referred in particular to climate change arising from ozone depletion and to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted in 1992. He also reminded the audience that potential harmful effects had regularly been highlighted in the 1990s, leading the London Conference in 1999 to address the issue as a priority and to list clear recommendations in its Declaration. As current president of the governing body of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, he felt personally responsible for encouraging efforts to lessen global emissions and to put more emphasis on adaptation measures. He further elaborated on the Hungarian experience over the past years, quoting health statistics that were directly related to the previous year's heat-waves. Besides an increase in cardiovascular diseases, there was an accompanying increase in asthma resulting from a change in the blooming pattern of the allergenic pollen-producing plant species – the invasive ambrosia weed. The minister concluded his speech by calling for the promotion of human adaptation measures, together with additional research and medium and long-term action plans.

Mr Frits Schlingemann noted that the heat-waves of 2003 had arrived as a sharp contrast to the heavy downpours of 2002, a reminder of the need to address climate change as a priority and the

relevance of doing so at the Conference. Mr Schlingemann assured those present that UNEP, through its Executive Director, was committed to addressing this priority. The statistics were dramatic: in 2001, a UNEP report had projected changes in climate, with more intense precipitation, more heat-waves and episodes of increased drought. All those episodes would have potential health impacts. The frequency of events was increasing, doubling over the course of the 1990s in comparison to previous decades. A gradual and steady spread of diseases resulting from changes in climate was also occurring, as evidenced by the northwards spread of tick-borne Lyme Disease because of milder climates. Leptospirosis had also been associated with flooding, and outbreaks had been reported in Ukraine and the Czech Republic in 2002. Excess summertime mortality was expected to increase several times over by 2050, particularly in cities in developed countries. The annual economic losses from climate extremes, calculated at 10 billion euros in 1990, were also relevant: with four out of the five years with the largest economic losses reported having occurred since 1997, the issue was of increasing concern to the insurance industry. Mr Schlingemann stressed that there was enough knowledge to make a difference. Not all the “win-win” situations and zero-cost solutions had yet been fully exploited and, with the increasing understanding of the problem and more effective awareness-raising, it was now important to provide decision-makers with the right tools. In the Caucasus and central Asia, there was still a need to manage flooding and water supply and sanitation, and this was how the Environment for Europe process, together with the Environment and Health process, could reveal their true value. To conclude, Mr Schlingemann explained that young people were discussing their role – how they could help implement policies at national level. They were demanding that policy-makers uphold their right to a clean and healthy environment. The young people and citizens of Europe were expecting action, and it was important that those present should honour this expectation.

There were nine contributions during this session, including six by Member States (Georgia, Italy, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Turkey and Switzerland), of which four were delivered by ministers. Two comments came from international organizations, the EEA and the World Meteorological Organization, and one from an NGO, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC). Many speakers referred to their own countries’ experiences, and they all called for multidisciplinary action to mitigate the effects of extreme weather events. There was reference to the international initiative to develop a ten-year implementation plan for a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained earth observation system which would enhance human safety by improving our understanding of the whole earth system, help better protect the global environment and achieve sustainable development. Some Member States also called for more guidance from WHO through its programme addressing climate change, as well as for international collaboration to address health threats being faced by Europe.

The EEA explained how it was monitoring the impacts of climate change and responding to the data received. It had noticed an increase in Internet traffic during the forest fires of 2003, which was found to be due to the lack of information at national level. This demonstrated the importance of maintaining updated localized information especially as part of the emergency service provided by countries in such cases. The importance of modelling was also stressed because of its relevance to the response reactions of protection agencies and emergency services, and a call was made for better use of the established network of European environmental protection agencies.

Keynote address by Mr Pavel Telička

Dr Miklós Persányi, Minister of Environment and Water of Hungary, introduced the keynote address by Mr Pavel Telička, Member of the European Commission.

Mr Telička spoke about the commitment of the European Commission, set out clearly in the Environment and Health Strategy and the European Environment and Health Action Plan 2004–2010. They provided a comprehensive framework through which the European Commission was helping to meet goals and support activities. The international element could no longer be ignored, as half the Member States of the WHO European Region were members of the European Union and others were seeking membership. However, it had to be recognized that, while some policy areas were dealt with at the EU level, others involved the individual Member States. The preparation for the Budapest Conference and its two committal documents had been intense, and the European Commission had participated in the preparation of both the Conference and the documents, in order to ensure appropriate coordination and synergy and avoid unnecessary duplication between partners. For this reason, the Commission was deeply convinced that the objectives of the work had finally been achieved and the outcome was encouraging. It was, however, important to continue linking the two processes.

Looking ahead to the next steps, a plea was made for future conference work to focus on adding real value. Attention had to be paid when extending the scope of the Budapest Conference into actions, to ensure there was no diversion from those core competencies. Integrating environment and health considerations into other policies was an obvious need, at both European level and national level. It was important to remember to address regional disparities, especially the needs of central and eastern Europe. For this reason, the Commission had launched its European Neighbourhood Policy to encourage common understanding and the development of action plans with the countries concerned. There was also a need for close cooperation between all parties to avoid unnecessary overlap in instruments being developed, an example being the environment and health information system launched by the Conference. Reporting obligations were already in place with the Commission and care had to be taken to ensure proper coordination with the reporting mechanisms. Another important area was monitoring and research activities also addressed by the European Environment and Health Action Plan, as they would continue to provide insight to help improve policy development at national and international levels. One area of concern was indoor air quality and, in particular, environmental tobacco smoke. Stakeholder involvement in the European Action Plan would help to reduce exposure to environmental tobacco smoke while exploring legal and health promotion initiatives. While the process towards the fifth conference would bring about some improvements in environment and health, the real added value to all countries and all partners involved should not be overlooked. Mr Telička concluded his speech by assuring those present that the European Commission would continue to be committed to the process in the future.

Session 10 – Conference Declaration

The session was chaired jointly by Dr Miklós Persányi, Minister of Environment and Water of Hungary, who made some concluding remarks, and Dr Mihály Kökény, Minister of Health, Social and Family Affairs of Hungary. Before opening the floor to comments on the CEHAPE and the Conference Declaration, the Minister of Health stressed that the burden of disease was still high and it was important to ensure preventive efforts. This would only happen if fellow ministers took a serious decision to implement the commitments of the Budapest Conference and if national action plans were revised to ensure the inclusion of child-specific actions. The priorities for action were undoubtedly: to ensure a reduction in the current burden of disease arising from climate change; to improve working conditions; and to take immediate action to identify effects of chemicals, thereby preventing further chemical pollution. Environment and

health had to be at the core of policies on housing and energy use. Also, as environmental hazards had no borders, efforts at national level would only be successful if regional efforts were made. The Minister concluded by saying that he looked forward to the next ministerial conference in 2009 as it would be important to review what had been achieved following Budapest. He finished by inviting those present to adopt the Conference Declaration.

Twenty contributions were made during this session, including 15 by Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Georgia, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, and Uzbekistan), of which seven were delivered by ministers. UNEP and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies also made comments, followed by the Healthy Planet Forum Delegation, ICFTU and WBCSD. Italy offered to host the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 2009. The contribution from Latvia was made by the youth delegate who requested the presence of a young person on the European Environment and Health Committee, as called for in the Youth Declaration. Denmark highlighted the importance of chemical pollution in children's products, encouraging the use of all legal measures to ensure control and stating that a stronger text would have been desirable. Ireland, on behalf of the 25 member states of the European Union, made a congratulatory concluding statement, encouraging the continued involvement of young people. Bulgaria called for a CEHAPE Task Force to be set up. Georgia suggested that consideration could be given to holding the intergovernmental midterm review meeting in 2007 back to back with the next Environment for Europe ministerial conference. Cyprus supported the establishment of a CEHAPE Task Force and proposed to host its first meeting. The WBCSD undertook to play an active role in the CEHAPE implementation process.

Session 11 – Adoption and signing of the CEHAPE and the Conference Declaration

The session marked the closure of the Ministerial Conference with a symbolic signing ceremony of the Conference Declaration and the CEHAPE on behalf of all Member States. In addition, the Youth Declaration from the Youth Parliament was presented and a statement of support from the European Commission signed by its representatives. The session was chaired by Dr Marc Danzon, WHO Regional Director for Europe, together with Dr Miklós Persányi, Minister of Environment and Water of Hungary, and Dr Mihály Kőkény, Minister of Health, Social and Family Affairs of Hungary.

Mr Jack Evans, representative of the Youth Parliament and member of the Irish delegation, emphasized three major issues from the Youth Declaration. He specifically asked for all Member States to deliver upon commitments already made. He also made a strong call for the CEHAPE to become a legally binding document by the next conference. Active youth participation was essential, and he encouraged young people to participate at local, national and international levels. He emphasized the role of young people in drafting policies and plans as well as the importance of their involvement in the implementation phase both nationally and internationally. He asked Member States to ensure that a youth delegate was added to the core membership of the European Environment and Health Committee and to the proposed CEHAPE Task Force. On behalf of all young people present, he called on national delegations to follow this example and ensure the active involvement of young people in national policy-making. He also committed them to take an active part throughout the implementation phase of the Conference commitments. He concluded by saying that health could not be negotiated but was a fundamental right. Mr Evans stated that he was signing the Youth Declaration not only as a call to ministers to

involve young people, but also as an act of commitment on the part of all the young people present. Mr Evans then proceeded to sign the Youth Declaration.

The Regional Director then invited Ms Margot Wallström, European Commissioner for the Environment, and Mr Pavel Telička, Member of the European Commission, to read a statement of support and sign it in a symbolic act of commitment. The statement was read by Ms Wallström and signed by both Commission representatives.

The Regional Director then invited the two Hungarian ministers to officially sign the Declaration and the CEHAFE on behalf of all ministers. Concluding statements were made by Dr Miklós Persányi, Dr Marc Danzon and Dr Mihály Kökény, who thanked everyone present and all those who had contributed to the success of the Conference, and then officially declared the Conference closed.

Annex 1

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 23 June 2004

8.00–9.15	Registration
9.15–10.30	Opening session
10.30–11.00	Coffee break
11.00–12.30	Session 1: (a) The environment and health situation in Europe – an assessment (agenda item 2(c)) (b) Implementing the London Declaration commitments – progress made (agenda item 2(b))
12.30–14.30	Lunch break
14.30–15.15	Session 2: Implementing the London Declaration commitments – progress made. Showcase of good examples (agenda item 2(b)) (continued)
15.15–16.30	Session 3: The impact and future of the Environment and Health process in Europe (agenda item 2(a))
16.30–17.00	Coffee break
17.00–17.15	Alán Pintér Award
17.15–18.30	Session 4: Housing and health (agenda item 4(a))
20.00	Official reception

Thursday, 24 June 2004

- 9.00–10.30 **Session 5: Tools for policy-making – Towards an environment and health information system to support environment and health decision-making across Europe** (agenda item 3(a))
- 10.30–11.00 Coffee break
- 11.00–12.30 **Session 6: Tools for policy-making – Dealing with uncertainty: can the precautionary principle help protect the future of our children?** (agenda item 3(b))
- 12.30–14.30 Lunch break
- 14.30–14.45 **Address by Ms Margot Wallström, European Commissioner for the Environment; Nuclear Safety and Civil Protection**
- 14.45–16.00 **Session 7: Children’s Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE)** (agenda item 5(a))
- 16.00–16.30 Coffee break
- 16.30–18.15 **Session 8: Special session between ministers and representatives of civil society on implementation of health and environmental policy: Effective policies, practical tools and functioning partnerships to protect our children’s health**
- 18.15–18.30 **Media awards**
- 20.00 Official reception

Friday, 25 June 2004

- 9.00–10.30 **Session 9: Extreme weather events and human health** (agenda item 4(c))
- 10.30–11.00 Coffee break
- 11.00–11.15 **Address by Mr Pavel Telička, the EU Commissioner associated to the EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection**
- 11.15–12.30 **Session 10: Conference Declaration** (agenda item 5(b))
- 12.30–13.30 **Session 11: Adoption and signing of CEHAPE and Conference Declaration** (agenda item 5(c))
- 13.30–14.00 **Closure**