



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

**Madrid, Spain
24 February 2015**



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Europe**

6th Meeting of the European Environment
and Health Ministerial Board
Madrid, Spain, 24 February 2015

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Abstract

At its sixth meeting, held in Madrid, Spain, on 24 February 2015, the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) reviewed the strategic direction of the European Environment and Health Process, its priorities and key milestones for 2015 and 2016 and its preparations for the High-level Mid-term Review Meeting in 2015 and the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 2017. It considered updated information on links with the Health 2020 policy framework, relations with the European Commission and the process of negotiation of a draft resolution on air pollution, to be submitted to the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly in May 2015. It further considered the governance of the Environment and Health Process and adopted a number of amendments to its Rules of Procedure.

Keywords

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Acknowledgements

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

Opening of the meeting

1. The European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) held its sixth meeting on 24 February 2015 in Madrid, Spain, at the kind invitation of the Government of Spain. See Annex 1 and document EURO/EHMB6/2 for the scope and purpose of the meeting, Annex 2 and document EURO/EHMB6/4 for the programme of work, Annex 3 for the main points of discussion and decisions and Annex 4 for the list of participants.
2. Ms Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe, opened the meeting and thanked the Government of Spain for its generous hospitality. She welcomed participants, including Ms Rimantė Šalaševičiūtė, Minister of Health of Lithuania, Mr Alexander Nies and Mr Dragan Gjorgjev, Chair and Co-Chair of the European Environment and Health Task Force, Mr Christian Friis Bach, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and observers from Germany, Israel (host of the forthcoming Mid-term Review of the European Environment and Health Process) and the European Health and Environment Youth Coalition.
3. Mr Alfonso Alonso Aranegui, Minister of Health, Social Services and Equity of Spain, welcomed participants to his country and outlined the main aims of the meeting: to ensure a higher profile for the commitments undertaken under the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health; to provide guidance for the preparations for the sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, now scheduled for 2017; to identify the major environmental factors affecting health and ways of addressing them; and to ensure a more dynamic presence of the Board in international forums. The meeting would further discuss the strategic links between the Environment and Health Process and the Health 2020 strategic policy framework of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, establish targets and a work programme for 2015-2016 and discuss the arrangements for the Mid-term Review.
4. Ms Guillermina Yanguas Montero, Director-General of Quality and Environmental Assessment and Natural Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment of Spain, described her Ministry's ambition to use the best available scientific knowledge to design policies which elucidate the link between the environment and human health. The European Environment and Health Process, European Union Environmental Action Programmes and other national and international initiatives have enabled the Ministry to set priorities in the field of environment and health with the aim of arriving at a coordinated response.
5. Ms Jakab noted that the Secretariat has held a number of valuable meetings with the alternates to Board members in the intersessional period, in order to prepare for forthcoming meetings and work on the priorities established by the Board, namely air pollution, chemical safety and climate change. The Board is now in a better position to increase the engagement of the European Commission in the European Environment and Health Process, since its former Chair, Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis of Lithuania, has been appointed European Commissioner on Health and Food Safety. She asked members to provide guidance on the desired political outcomes of the next Ministerial Conference and noted that no country has yet offered to host the

Conference. The personal commitment and engagement of members will be essential over the coming months if the Board was to boost political commitment to its work, both within and among ministries not directly involved in the Process.

6. Mr Srđan Matic, Coordinator, Environment and Health, WHO Regional Office for Europe, briefly reviewed the history of the European Environment and Health Process for the benefit of new Board members. The Process is influenced by the policy environment of the European health sector – decisions of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, the Health 2020 policy framework, the International Health Regulations (2005) and activities to combat noncommunicable diseases – and the environment sector – decisions of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP), the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2012) entitled *The future we want*, the post-2015 development agenda which is currently being negotiated, the Environment for Europe (EfE) process and the multilateral environmental agreements. The Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health is due to take place in 2017, and two further meetings each of the Board and the Task Force are scheduled to inform its preparations.
7. Mr Friis Bach said that it is essential for the Board and UNECE to work together to raise awareness of health and environment issues, with research covering both aspects required in order to generate the data which will convince governments to take action. The sustainable development goals which are currently in negotiation emphasize the importance of synergies such as those which can be achieved by addressing health, well-being and environment issues together. UNECE environmental instruments and programmes which take health factors into account, and in which collaboration with WHO is well established, include the Protocol on Water and Health, the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, strategic environmental assessments, environmental performance reviews, the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) and the Environment for Europe process.

Adoption of the agenda

8. The Board considered the provisional agenda (document EURO/EHMB6/3). On the proposal of Mr Nies, an additional subitem on the appointment of a new observer to the Board (see document EURO/EHMB6/3 Add. 1) was added to the agenda under item 5. The amended agenda (document EURO/EHMB6/3 Rev.1) and programme of work (document EURO/EHMB6/4) were adopted.

Introduction of new members and election of Co-Chairs

9. Mr Alfonso Alonso Aranegui and Mr Aramayis Grigoryan, Minister of Nature Protection of Armenia, were elected Co-Chairs of the meeting. Mr Alonso Aranegui, Mr Rubén Moreno Palanques, Secretary-General for Health and Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equity of Spain, and Mr Jose Javier Castrodeza Sanz, Director-General of Public Health, Quality and Innovation, Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equity, chaired the discussion.
10. Ms Jakab welcomed the appointment of four new members from the environment sector: Mr Grigoryan; Mr Branimir Gvozdenovic, Minister of Sustainable

Development and Tourism of Montenegro; Mr Jorge Moreira da Silva, Minister for Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy of Portugal; and Mr Sergey Donskoy, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

Reporting and informing

Links between the Environment and Health Process and Health 2020 (Documents EURO/EHMB6/16 and EURO/EHMB6/17)

11. Ms Jakab said that the interrelationship between health and wealth is increasingly being considered as an issue of human rights and social justice. The Health 2020 strategic policy framework seeks to redress avoidable health inequities both within and between the countries of the WHO European Region; these are largely attributable to noncommunicable diseases influenced by economic, social, lifestyle and environmental factors. Health 2020 follows a life-course approach, strengthens people-centred health systems, public health capacities and emergency preparedness, surveillance and response, and seeks to create resilient communities and supportive environments. Close collaboration with other sectors will be required – an area in which the Board can provide valuable experience and guidance. Appropriate research and convincing evidence will encourage other sectors to invest in areas which also benefit health, such as reducing air pollution or preventable exposure to harmful chemicals. If the Region is to respond to current health challenges, it will require clear policy frameworks, such as Health 2020, a strong public health infrastructure and improved coordination both within the health sector and with other sectors. In this context, the European Environment and Health Process, with its long history, represents a good model for intersectoral work, and its experience could be harnessed to support the development of other intersectoral processes.
12. Mr Moreno Palanques said that there is great scope for synergies between the European Environment and Health Process and Health 2020. It is important to consider the diversity of States within the Region, multisectoral approaches and the links with other international conventions and processes, and the need to ensure convergence in the political dialogue between governments, intergovernmental organizations and other stakeholders, including civil society. The achievement of the goals of the Parma Declaration on Environment and Health will contribute to the Health 2020 priorities and help to reduce health inequalities. Some of the priorities of the Environment and Health Process, including air quality, chemical safety, and access to clean water and sanitation, are of particular importance for his country: Spain has introduced programmes to monitor exposure to asbestos and mercury, and is willing to share its extensive experience of monitoring the quality of drinking and bathing water. More effort is required to improve measurement methodology, since sound political decision-making is dependent on the provision of complete, valid, reliable and comparable data, and to raise awareness among governments of the effects of complex environmental influences and interactions on health.
13. Mr Jan Dusik, Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Europe, drew attention to a number of major environmental meetings scheduled for 2015: the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai, Japan, 14-18 March 2015), the joint conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (Geneva, 4-15 May 2015), the

United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (New York, 25-27 September 2015) , the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM4) (Geneva 28 September - 2 October, 2015) and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (Paris, France, 30 November-11 December 2015). It is essential to ensure that environment and health concerns are duly taken into account in those meetings: for instance, even within the European Union it has not proved possible to introduce amendments to the European air quality regulations, in spite of the wealth of new evidence that has recently become available. UNEP stands ready to help in the European Environment and Health Process, particularly through its work on chemical safety under the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and in the re-engagement of the European Commission in the work of the Process.

14. In the discussion which followed, it was suggested that consideration could be given to opportunities to organize side events to these important international meetings, to highlight specific contributions by the Environment and Health Process. In addition, Mr Nuritdin Inamov Director of the Department of International Cooperation Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation said that the economic and social implications of environmental protection activities must not be forgotten. In the Russian Federation alone, 100 000 jobs depend on the asbestos industry, and the Government is concentrating its efforts on action at the national level to reduce the risk to human health from exposure to asbestos and other pollutants.
15. Ms Jakab, summing up the discussion, highlighted the need to raise awareness and strengthen national political commitment to action on environment and health, especially among countries which were not currently members of the Ministerial Board. The WHO Regional Office for Europe will take the priorities described by Member States, UNECE and UNEP into account in its own work.

Reporting on the Environment and Health Process to the 65th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Vilnius, Lithuania, 14–17 September 2015) and to the 21st session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, Switzerland, 27–30 October 2015) (Document EURO/EHMB6/6)

16. Mr Castrodeza Sanz said that the Ministerial Board's report to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy will describe the lessons learnt and the opportunities for strengthened implementation in the context of the most recent global and regional policy developments, such as the sustainable development goals and Health 2020, and report on advances in scientific knowledge. It will also summarize the outcome of the present meeting and the forthcoming High-level Mid-term Review of the European Environment and Health Process. Document EURO/EHMB6/6 contains a concept note indicating the proposed contents of the report to be submitted to the Regional Committee and Committee on Environmental Policy and the programme of the sessions on environment and health to be held at the meetings of these two bodies in 2015.
17. Mr Marco Keiner, Director, Environment Division, UNECE, described the valuable debate and panel discussion on the previous year's report in the Committee on Environmental Policy.

Follow-up on previous decisions (Document EURO/EHMB6/07)

18. Mr Moreno Palanques invited participants to submit any comments in writing to the Secretariat within two weeks of the present meeting.

Engagement of the European Commission in the work of EHP (Document EURO/EHMB6/9)

19. Ms Jakab said that efforts to create closer ties with the European Commission had borne some fruit on the health side. The week before the current meeting, she had met senior officials from the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG-SANTE). It is hoped that Commission officials will attend the Ministerial Board's next meeting. There has been less progress on the environment side: she called upon stakeholders from the environment sector to arrange meetings for their representatives in Brussels with the Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and the Director-General for Climate Action (DG-CLIMA). The legal basis for the Commission's work with the European Environment and Health Process is, unfortunately, still not clear.
20. The representatives of Portugal and Spain offered to publicize the Ministerial Board's activities, for instance at the forthcoming meetings of the Environment Council, a subdivision of the European Council. Mr Dusik said that UNEP enjoys good relations with the Commission and may be able to organize a joint event or roundtable discussion on the latter's work with the Ministerial Board. The European Economic and Social Committee is another possible contact. Mr Nies called upon all members of the Ministerial Board to bring up the issue of collaboration whenever they have dealings with the Commission. At its last meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania, in June 2014, the Ministerial Board decided to write to the new President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, to ask him to clarify the respective responsibilities of DG-SANTE and DG-ENV in relation to collaboration with the Ministerial Board, but the letter has not yet been sent. Action must be taken now if the goal of ensuring the participation of the Commission in the next meeting of the Ministerial Board is to be achieved.
21. Ms Jakab, summing up the discussion, urged members of the Board and other stakeholders to raise the issue of collaboration with the Commission whenever they meet Commission representatives. Other possibilities are the meeting of the Environment Council in June and the informal meeting of European ministers for employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs to be held under the Latvian Presidency of the European Union in April. Approaches could also be made to the European Parliament. It would be better to pursue all possible avenues of contact with Commission officials before writing to the President.

Air quality and pollution – towards a World Health Assembly Resolution (Document EURO/EHMB6/15)

22. Ms Nedret Emiroglu, Deputy Director, Division of Communicable Diseases, Health Security & Environment, WHO Regional Office for Europe, outlined the main points of the draft resolution entitled "Health and the environment: addressing the health impact of air pollution", which was considered by the WHO Executive Board at its 136th session in January 2015 with a view to subsequent transmission to the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly in May 2015. The draft resolution described

the noncommunicable disease burden arising from air pollution and its disproportionate impact on low-income groups, women and children. In an attempt to find an acceptable compromise to different views regarding several substantive aspects, the draft resolution was discussed by an informal working group throughout the session, and a decision (EB136(14)) was adopted calling upon Member States to continue their discussions and agree on a final draft for submission to the Health Assembly.

23. Mr Dusik noted that the first United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, Kenya, 23-27 June 2014) adopted a resolution on “Strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality” (resolution 1/7), which enjoyed wide-ranging support among Member States. The Ministerial Board could perhaps benefit from the experience of the sponsors of the resolution. The Climate and Clean Air Coalition, for which UNEP provided the Secretariat, has succeeded in engaging the environment sector, although it does not yet include representatives of the health sector. UNEP is preparing a report on the burden of disease attributable to particulate matter in the air. There is great potential for expanding the work of UNEP and UNECE to include more health issues.
24. Mr Friis Bach noted that both the WHO Executive Board draft resolution and the resolution adopted by the Environment Assembly share common themes with the UNECE Environment for Europe (EfE) process. At a joint meeting between UNECE, UNEP and the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the three agencies discussed existing strengths and ways of raising awareness of air pollution issues: one suggestion was to organize a joint event at meetings of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
25. Ms Rimantė Šalaševičiūtė, Minister of Health of Lithuania, briefly reviewed the provisions relating to air pollution in her country’s health programme and called upon all Member States to support the draft resolution when it came before the Health Assembly. The representative of the Russian Federation said that flexible policy solutions are needed: his country participates actively in mechanisms such as the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution.
26. Ms Jakab called upon the Ministerial Board to use its influence in the negotiations on the draft resolution and raise awareness of air pollution issues in other WHO regions beyond Europe. Mr Matic said that the Secretariat has drafted a statement to be delivered at the Health Assembly on behalf of the Ministerial Board: however, there is a need to agree on who will deliver it.

Information about the preparations for the high-level mid-term review (MTR) meeting
(Document EURO/EHMB6/12)

27. Mr Gjorgjev gave details of the preparations for the forthcoming High-level Mid-term Review of the Environment and Health Process, which is being organized by the Ad-Hoc Working Group of the Task Force, established for that purpose at the third meeting of the Task Force, held in Brussels, Belgium, on 10-11 December 2013. Ms Sinaia Netanyahu of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Israel, which is hosting the conference, said that the conference will comprise two days of formal meetings, one day of professional study tours and one day of general visits within Israel. The exact dates will be finalized soon.

Road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

Proposed preparatory process for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Document EURO/EHMB6/8)

28. Mr Matic said that, in the run-up to the Sixth Ministerial Conference, the Ministerial Board must agree on its expectations of the event and the desired outcomes – i.e. priorities and strategic directions for future action – and define an appropriate preparatory process. The Secretariat proposes that this process should follow two parallel tracks – political and technical. On the political side, stakeholders will agree on a limited number of SMART targets (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound). On the technical side, eight themes are proposed: air; water; energy; chemicals; food; waste; cities; and disasters and climate change. Over the coming months, the Secretariat will consult Member States further and encourage stakeholders to volunteer to lead the preparatory work for each of the eight themes.
29. Mr Nies noted the emphasis in the road map document (EURO/EHMB6/8) on preparatory work by the Environment and Health Task Force, which represents all Member States of the WHO European Region: however, if the Task Force is to fulfil that role properly, it must meet at least once a year until the Sixth Ministerial Conference. Mr Dusik stressed the importance of creating a sense of ownership of the preparatory process among Member States and the need to avoid duplication with existing mechanisms. The themes must be closely aligned with the future sustainable development goals.
30. In the ensuing discussion, participants welcomed the inclusion of waste management, especially in respect of toxic and electronic waste, and water and sanitation issues. The “cities” theme ties in well with the work of THE PEP.
31. Ms Jakab said that the preparatory process must include all Member States as far as possible, so input will be required from both the Ministerial Board and the Task Force. High-level participation is essential and must include ministers other than the current members of the Ministerial Board.
32. Mr Matic called upon the Ministerial Board to provide political guidance indicating the main desired outcomes of the Ministerial Conference. It would be preferable to make use of existing institutions, especially the Task Force, rather than set up a new preparatory body. No country has yet offered to host the Ministerial Conference: he called upon all Member States, not just the current members of the Ministerial Board, to consider doing so.
33. One participant suggested that a letter should be sent to all Member States, inviting them to consider hosting the Sixth Ministerial Conference and making clear the financial commitment and infrastructure which would be required.

Coordination of EHP and Environment for Europe (EfE) Process (Documents EURO/EHMB6/9 and EURO/EHMB6/10)

34. Mr Keiner described the EfE process, for which UNECE acts as the Secretariat. EfE promotes the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements, in collaboration with UNEP and representatives of business and civil society. The

eighth Efe Ministerial Conference will be held in Batumi, Georgia, on 8-10 June 2016, and will consider two major themes – greening the economy in the pan-European region and improving air quality for a better environment and human health – in addition to a high-level segment on education for sustainable development. The expected outcomes are a ministerial declaration and a strategic framework for greening the economy.

35. Participants noted with gratitude the offer of Georgia to consider hosting a meeting of the EHTF and/or to organize a side event on environment and health back-to-back with the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in 2016.

Adoption of the intersessional programme of work for the EHMB (Documents EURO/EHMB6/9 and EURO/EHMB6/10)

36. Mr Castrodeza Sanz invited the Ministerial Board to consider the proposed intersessional programme of work (document EURO/EHMB6/9), including activities to promote strategic partnerships; topics for further Ministerial Board engagement, including air pollution, climate change and chemical safety, with a special emphasis on eliminating asbestos-related diseases and reducing exposures to mercury; and activities to support resource mobilization for the European Environment and Health Process and prepare for the Sixth Ministerial Conference. The Secretariat has drafted a number of statements and letters to be delivered on behalf of the Ministerial Board on issues such as air quality and chemical safety (see document EURO/EHMB6/10).
37. Other participants emphasized that that the commitment of EHMB members is of the utmost importance for the successful implementation of the intersessional programme. An engaging programme which addresses thematic issues and facilitates substantive decisions by Ministers will encourage greater attendance.
38. The Ministerial Board approved the intersessional programme of work and the statements and letters, with the exception of the statement to the joint Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the letter on the development of national policies on asbestos-related diseases, where more drafting work appeared to be needed to reach a revised text acceptable to all Board members.
39. Participants discussed the respective roles of the Ministerial Board and the Task Force and their implications for the intersessional programme of work for each body. Mr Nies noted the relatively high number of meetings scheduled for the Ministerial Board, compared with those planned for the Task Force. Ms Jakab suggested that a website could be set up to facilitate intersessional work.

Governance of the Environment and Health Process

Information on the discussion on governance in EHTF (Document EURO/EHMB6/13)

40. The Ministerial Board noted the discussion on governance conducted by the Task Force and the proposal to extend the Working Group's mandate until the Sixth Ministerial Conference, which will be considered at the High-level Mid-term Review Meeting.

Proposed amendments to the EHMB Rules of Procedure (Documents
EURO/EHMB6/3 Add. 1, EURO/EHMB6/11)

41. The Ministerial Board adopted changes to Rules 2, 3, 4.4, 7.3 and 9 of its Rules of Procedure, correcting some minor inconsistencies and providing for the election of the Chair and Co-Chair by electronic means if necessary.
42. Mr Nies proposed that the Ministerial Board should invite one or both of the nongovernmental organizations already represented on the Task Force, namely ECO Forum and the Health and Environment Alliance, to attend its meetings until the Sixth Ministerial Conference. Ms Jakab drew attention to the ongoing debate within WHO about transparency of relations with non-State actors, which will be the subject of a draft resolution at the World Health Assembly. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Secretariat will prepare a discussion paper on the issue and that the Ministerial Board will decide by electronic means whether to allow one or both of the organizations and/or other stakeholders to attend its meetings, before it meets next.

Any other business and closure of the meeting

43. There was no other business. Ms Racioppi read out a summary of the main conclusions and decisions of the meeting. The Board adopted the conclusions and decisions, which are reproduced in Annex 3.
44. Ms Jakab, summing up the day's discussions, thanked participants for their remarks, which would guide the Secretariat in its further work on the agenda of forthcoming meetings, the respective mandates of the Ministerial Board and Task Force and possible ways to encourage greater participation in the work of the Environment and Health Process. She thanked the host Government, Spain, and the Secretariat staff for their hard work.
45. Mr Castrodeza Sanz declared the meeting closed at 16:30 on 24 February 2015.

Annex 1. Scope and purpose

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

At this meeting, four new members will assume their seats on the EHMB and a Co-Chair from the environment sector will be elected. The four new members are the Ministers of Environment of Armenia, Montenegro (2015), Portugal and the Russian Federation.

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

1. Reporting and informing: The EHMB will be informed about the final preparations of the high-level mid-term review (MTR) meeting. It will also discuss the links between the EHP and the new WHO European health policy, Health 2020. The EHMB will also agree on reporting 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).
2. Road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health: The EHMB will review and discuss a document highlighting the proposed preparatory process for the Sixth Ministerial Conference, including links to the post-2015 agenda and the sustainable development goals. The EHMB will also agree on its intersessional programme of work, including planned advocacy activities for its engagement.
3. Governance of the EHP: The EHMB will review a draft working paper, “Governing the European Environment and Health Process: lessons learned and the way forward”, that will be discussed at the MTR meeting, as well as proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure.

Annex 2. Programme of work

08:45 - 09:00 Registration

09:00 - 09:30 Agenda items 1 and 2: Opening of the meeting, adoption of the agenda, introduction of the new members and election of Co-Chairs

The EHMB meeting will be opened and members and observers introduced. One minister of health and one of environment will be elected as Co-Chairs of EHMB. Agenda of the meeting and the programme will be adopted.

Relevant documents:

- 1. List of documents*
- 2. Scope and purpose*
- 3. Provisional annotated agenda*
- 4. Provisional programme*
- 5. Provisional list of participants*
- 14. List of EHMB members*

09:30 - 10:30 Reporting and informing

Agenda item 3.c: Follow-up on previous decisions

The Secretariat will introduce the report on the implementation of the decisions taken at previous meetings. EHMB is invited to note the report, comment on the implementation of its previous decisions and decide on any further follow-up as appropriate.

Relevant documents:

- 7. Secretariat report on follow-up to previous decisions*

Agenda item 3.a: Links between the Environment and Health Process and Health 2020

The Health 2020 European health policy framework will be introduced. A discussion will follow on its links to and relevance for the Environment and Health Process.

Relevant documents:

- 16. Health 2020: a European policy framework supporting action across government and society for health and well-being*
- 17. WHO Regional Office for Europe resolution EUR/RC62/R4: Health 2020 – The European policy framework for health and wellbeing*

10:30 -11:00 Coffee/tea break

11:00 - 12:00 Reporting and informing

Agenda item 3.d: Engagement of the European Commission in the work of EHP

EHMB is invited to discuss the opportunities and means to re-engage the European Commission in the EHP, in light of the present Commission policy context and of recent communications between the WHO Regional Director and the European Commission. Following a discussion on the

issue, the EHMB will agree on its follow-up activities.

Relevant documents:

9. *Draft intersessional work plan for EHMB for 2015-2017 (paragraphs 9-13)*

Agenda item 3.e: Air quality and pollution – towards a World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution

The WHO Executive Board discussed air pollution at its 136th session in January/February 2015. A draft resolution was proposed by a group of Member States, including Member States of the WHO European Region, but was not fully agreed or adopted. The matter was referred to the World Health Assembly in May 2015. The EHMB may wish to discuss its possible engagement in support of the adoption of a WHA resolution on air quality and air pollution. Two Member States represented in the EHMB are also members of the WHO Executive Board (Croatia and Lithuania).

Relevant documents:

15. *Health and the environment: addressing the health impact of air pollution - Report by the Secretariat (EB136/15)*

12:00 - 13:00

Road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

Agenda item 4.a: Proposed preparatory process for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

This agenda item aims at receiving EHMB feedback on the proposed approach to the preparations of the Sixth Ministerial Conference, including the identification of a host for the Conference. It will consist of a presentation by the Secretariat, followed by discussion with EHMB members and agreement on follow-up activities. It is expected that the EHMB recommendations will be included in its Report to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and UNECE CEP in 2015 advising on the strategic directions towards the 6th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 2017. The relevant document is presented as the basis for the discussion on the matter.

8. *Draft road map of preparatory events and consultations for the 6th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (2017)*

Agenda item 4.b: Coordination of EHP and Environment for Europe (EfE) process

This agenda item aims at introducing the UNECE Environment for Europe (EfE) process, and discussing its links to and relevance for the Environment and Health Process. The session will consist of a presentation given by UNECE, followed by discussion with EHMB members.

13:00 - 14:00 Lunch

14:00 - 14:30

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

Agenda item 4.c: Adoption of the intersessional programme of work for the EHMB

EHMB should discuss and adopt its intersessional programme of work. It

includes decision on future meetings of EHMB and on events where EHMB wants to take an active role and express its views on high-priority issues in environment and health. For the events proposed, a set of draft statements and letters has been drafted by the Secretariat and the EHMB alternates.

Relevant documents:

9. *Draft intersessional programme of work for EHMB for 2015-2017*
10. *Draft of statements and letters to be delivered by EHMB in 2015*

14:30 - 15:00

Reporting and informing

Agenda item 3.b: Reporting on the Environment and Health Process to the 65th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (RC) (Vilnius, Lithuania, 14-17 September 2015) and to the 21st session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) (Geneva, Switzerland, 27-30 October 2015)

EHMB will consider the draft note to WHO Standing Committee of the Regional Committee on: a) the proposed contents of the report to be submitted to the WHO RC and UNECE CEP and b) on the programme of the sessions on environment and health at the WHO RC and UNECE CEP. The EHMB is invited to give guidance on what should be included in its report to the two bodies, make suggestions on the concept for the sessions and identify who will represent EHMB at the two sessions of the governing bodies to present the report.

Relevant documents:

6. *Concept note for the session on Environment and Health at the 65th WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Vilnius, Lithuania, 14-17 September 2015)*

15:00 - 15:10

Governance of the Environment and Health Process

Agenda item 5.b: Proposed amendments to the EHMB Rules of Procedure

The proposed changes aim to clarify and improve the EHMB Rules of Procedure. A limited number of amendments are proposed to clarify issues that were identified during the past years and to resolve one inconsistency between two rules in the Rules of Procedure.

Relevant documents:

11. *Proposed revisions to the EHMB Rules of Procedure*

15:10-15:30-Coffee/Tea break

15:30 - 15:40

Reporting and informing

Agenda item 3.f: Information about the preparations for the high level mid-term review (MTR) meeting

This session aims at informing the EHMB of the latest preparations of the MTR. It will consist of an introduction made by the Chair of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) and the Host of the MTR, followed by discussion with EHMB members.

Relevant documents:

12. *Key messages from the MTR Report*

15:40 - 15:50

Governance of the Environment and Health Process

Agenda item 5.a Information on the EHTF discussion on EHP governance.

This agenda item aims at informing EHMB of the governance issues that the EHTF intends to discuss at the MTR to strengthen its effectiveness in the period between the MTR and the Sixth Ministerial Conference. It will consist of an introduction by the Chair of the EHTF followed by a discussion by EHMB. The views of EHMB will be forwarded and presented to EHTF.

Relevant documents:

13. Governing the European Environment and Health Process: lessons learned and way forward - Working paper for the Mid-term Review Meeting

15:50 - 16:00

Agenda item 6: Any other business and closure of the meeting

Annex 3. Main points of discussion and decisions

Agenda items 1 and 2: Opening of the meeting, adoption of the agenda, introduction of the new members and election of Co-chairs

1. The Regional Director thanked the Spanish Government for its kind hospitality, welcomed participants and proposed to elect Mr Aranegui, Minister of Health, Social Services and Equity of Spain and Mr Grigoryan, Minister of Nature Protection of Armenia, as Co-Chairs of the EHMB.
2. The meeting adopted the agenda, with a modification proposed by the Chair of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) to address also the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the meetings of the EHMB.

Reporting and informing:

Agenda item 3.c: Follow up on previous decisions

3. EHMB was invited to take note of the report on follow-up to previous decisions, and send comments in writing to the Secretariat within two weeks, and to focus the discussion on the Health 2020 policy, the engagement of the European Commission in the EHP and air quality and health.

Agenda item 3.a: Links between the Environment and Health Process and Health 2020

4. EHMB strongly agreed on the importance of strengthening the links and synergies between health and environment, expressing concern that there is still insufficient awareness at the political level about the value and necessity of engaging in intersectoral work. The value of multilateral environmental agreements was also highlighted, as well as the importance of being informed by the global context of relevant forthcoming developments (such as the World Conference on Disasters Risk Reduction, the Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm, the UN summit on sustainable development and COP21 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC). In particular, the EHP could provide a means to implement the relevant sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the European Region.

Agenda item 3.d: Engagement of the European Commission in the work of EHP

5. EHMB agreed on the need to continue efforts to re-engage the European Commission in the EHP. The following actions were agreed, with the aim of having at least one EC representative participating in the next meeting of the EHMB:
 - a. Continue the on-going bilateral contacts between the Regional Director, the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety and his Director-General;
 - b. Leverage the support of EHMB members who are also EU Member States, to advocate the participation of DG Environment and DG Climate in the EHP, on the occasion of bilateral discussions with Commissioners and their Directors-General;

- c. Propose that the environment and health topic is addressed at the forthcoming Council of Ministers of Environment in June and possibly by the Ministers of Health in Riga;
- d. Organize a joint meeting in Brussels by late spring with the relevant Commissioners, possibly involving Members of the European Parliament, such as the Chairs of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB).
- e. Send a letter to the President of the EU on the basis of the outcomes of the above actions.

Agenda item 3.e: Air quality and pollution – towards a World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution

- 6. The EHMB expressed its full support of the importance of the issue, and agreed to support the negotiation of the WHA resolution on air pollution. It suggested looking at synergies with the Member States that sponsored the UN Environmental Assembly resolution on air pollution in 2014 as well as with the members of the Coalition on Clean Air. It decided:
 - a. To address a letter to the WHO Director General expressing support for the draft Resolution;
 - b. To finalize a statement in support of the resolution to be delivered by an EHMB representative at the WHA;
 - c. To encourage Member States to formally join the group of countries that are sponsoring the resolution.
- 7. In addition, the Board appreciated the links to other policy instruments, such as the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), and that air pollution will be one of the two themes of the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, and that the UNECE, WHO and UNEP agreed to hold a side event at the COP21 of the UNFCCC.

Road map towards the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

Agenda item 4.a: Proposed preparatory process for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

- 8. The EHMB noted the proposed road map for the preparation of the sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, and the invitation to submit comments in writing to the Secretariat. It appreciated the links between the proposed technical themes and the SDGs, as well as the proposal to develop Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-related (SMART) objectives as outcomes of the Conference. It welcomed that the proposal includes waste, which is a major concern, as well as water and sanitation aspects.
- 9. It expressed the importance and necessity for a broad participation and consultation involving both the EHMB and the EHTF to ensure political commitment. The EHTF and EHMB are complementary and both need to be fully involved, in their respective, distinctive roles.
- 10. It agreed that the consultation should make use of the existing institutional arrangements, and particularly the EHTF.
- 11. It supported the need to encourage Member States to consider hosting meetings of the EHTF, as well as the Ministerial Conference itself.

12. It noted with gratitude the offer of Georgia to consider hosting a meeting of the EHTF and/or to organize a side event on environment and health back-to-back with the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.
13. It agreed to send to all Member States a call to host the sixth Ministerial Conference on environment and health.

Agenda item 4.b: Coordination of EHP and Environment for Europe (EfE) Process

14. The EHMB appreciated the introduction to the UNECE Environment for Europe process, and highlighted its links to and relevance for the Environment and Health Process.

Agenda item 4.c: Adoption of the intersessional programme of work for the EHMB

15. The EHMB discussed and adopted its intersessional programme of work, which will be updated to reflect the decisions taken during the current meeting.
16. The EHMB considered the draft statements and letters that had been prepared to support its advocacy activities and adopted them, with the exception of the statement to the COPs of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the letter on the development of national policies on asbestos-related diseases, where agreement needs to be achieved on a revised text with respect to the inclusion of asbestos in Annex III to the Rotterdam Convention.
17. With respect to the forthcoming meetings of the EHMB, it was stressed that the commitment of EHMB members is of the utmost importance for the successful implementation of the intersessional programme. In addition, the provision of an engaging programme, which addresses thematic issues and facilitates substantive decisions by the Ministers, would encourage greater attendance.

Reporting and informing

Agenda item 1.b: Reporting on the Environment and Health Process to the 65th session of the WHO Regional Committee (RC) for Europe (Vilnius, Lithuania, 14–17 September 2015) and to the 21st session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) (Geneva, Switzerland, 27–30 October 2015)

18. The EHMB considered the concept note to WHO Standing Committee of the Regional Committee and to the UNECE CEP and welcomed the actions that have been taken to strengthen the links between the EHP and EfE process.

Governance of the Environment and Health Process

Agenda item 5.b: Proposed amendments to the EHMB Rules of Procedure

19. The EHMB considered the proposed changes to the EHMB Rules of Procedure. It decided to re-discuss the topic at the next EHMB meeting in order to introduce further revisions to stress the importance of personal commitment and participation by the appointed Ministers.

20. The EHMB considered the proposal by the EHTF Chair to invite one NGO, a member of EHTF, as an observer in the EHMB meetings. It agreed to develop a short paper further analysing the situation and proposing the principles according to which observer(s) (NGOs and/or other EHP stakeholders) would be invited to participate in the EHMB meetings, as well as a proposed text for the Rules of Procedure. The paper would be informed by the outcome of the discussions on the draft framework on non-State actors by the WHA, which will take place in May 2015. A decision by EHMB would be taken through electronic consultation ahead of the seventh EHMB meeting.

Reporting and informing

Agenda item 3.f: Information about the preparations for the High-level Mid-term Review (MTR) Meeting.

21. The EHMB noted the update by the Chair and Co-Chair of the European Environment and Health Task Force (EHTF) on the preparations for the MTR, which are supported by the Ad-Hoc Working Group of the EHTF. The Host of the MTR informed that the MTR will take place over four days, and that dates are being identified and communicated shortly.

Governance of the Environment and Health Process

Agenda item 5.a Information on the EHTF discussion on EHP governance.

22. The EHMB noted the introduction to the working document on EHP governance that has been drafted for the MTR meeting to strengthen its effectiveness in the period leading up to the Sixth Ministerial Conference. This includes the proposal to extend the mandate of the Ad-Hoc Working Group of the EHTF to support the preparations of the Sixth Ministerial Conference and the implementation of the intersessional programme of work of the EHTF.

Agenda item 6: Any other business and closure of the meeting

23. The Chair thanked participants and the Secretariat and closed the meeting.

Annex 4. List of participants

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The WHO Regional Office for Europe

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