



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 21.5.2007
SEC(2007) 633

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

Accompanying document to the

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**Commission cooperation with the Environment for Europe Process after the 2007
Ministerial Conference in Belgrade**

[COM(2007) 262 final]

ANNEX 1

Present framework for EU environmental cooperation with EfE partner countries

In addition to the frameworks mentioned below, cooperation with EfE partner countries is also taking place in the context of national and/or regional financial assistance programmes.

1. THE THREE CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

1.1. Turkey and Croatia

Relations between the EU and Turkey are based on the Association Agreement of 1963 and the Customs Union established in 1995. In 1999, Turkey was granted candidate country status and in both 2002 and 2004, the European Council reiterated that Turkey was a candidate state destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to other candidate states. The formal opening of accession negotiations with Turkey took place in October 2005.

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with Croatia was signed on 29 October 2001, and entered into force on 1 February 2005. Croatia applied for EU membership in February 2003. In June 2004, the European Council granted the country candidate status and negotiations were opened in October 2005.

Pre-accession work is intensifying with each of these countries. The 'screening' of national environmental legislation started in the spring of 2006 for both Croatia and Turkey, during which each country reported on the status of its preparedness to apply the EU environmental acquis. Decisions are foreseen shortly concerning the opening of negotiations on the Environment 'chapter' considering each country's individual situation and merits.

1.2. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYRoM)

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the EU and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia came into force in April 2004. The country presented its application for European Union membership on 22 March 2004. Following a positive opinion from the European Commission on 9 November 2005, the European Council granted candidate status to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia at its 15-16 December 2005 meeting. Negotiations on future membership have yet to be opened.

2. THE REMAINING WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES

At bilateral level, a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with Albania was signed 12 June 2006, ratification is expected to take two years. As in other such Agreements, environment is included as an area for cooperation. SAA negotiations with Bosnia & Herzegovina started in January 2006.

Although there are as yet no Stabilisation and Association agreements between the EU and Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo, an Enhanced Permanent Dialogue process (in Montenegro and Serbia) and Stabilisation and Association Tracking Mechanism (in Kosovo) has existed since 2003. In this framework, the focus has been on progress in legal approximation and capacity building for environmental institutions.

Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo¹, as well as the candidate countries in the Balkans, also cooperate in the field of the Environment with the Union regionally through the Regional Environmental Reconstruction Programme for South East Europe (REReP), which was established in 2000 under the Stability Pact

3. RUSSIA

EU-Russia environmental relations have developed largely independently of the Environment for Europe process and since 2005 they have been conducted within the framework of the EU-Russia Strategic Partnership and the Common Economic Space (CES) road-map. An EU-Russia Environmental Dialogue was launched in October 2006 to strengthen bilateral co-operation and implement the priorities set out in the CES road-map. Activities such as capacity building work by the Russian REC and co-operation with Russia on the EECCA water initiative will be integrated into the bilateral Dialogue. Negotiations are foreseen to establish a new legally binding framework agreement that takes account of the Common Economic and other Spaces, to replace the existing EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA).

4. THE EASTERN NEIGHBOURS (ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN, BELARUS, GEORGIA, MOLDOVA, UKRAINE)

At bilateral level, the EU relations with these countries are based on Partnership and Cooperation Agreements². Priorities for cooperation are further outlined in the Action Plans that have been agreed with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). In the environment sector, the Action Plans contain specific objectives with regard to environmental governance, including the development of framework legislation, strengthening of administrative structures and procedures, and enhancement of co-operation on environment issues.

Bilateral contacts between the EU and Ukraine have deepened considerably with the adoption of the Action Plan in February 2005, and environment is one of the areas identified for 'enhanced cooperation' with the EU. This has notably led to intensified contacts in the areas of climate change, environmental governance, water quality and waste management.

Moldova's Action Plan of February 2005 identifies the priorities for cooperation with this country. In the environment area closer cooperation is being pursued in particular in the areas of legislative and institutional strengthening.

In November 2006, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia agreed ENP Action Plans with the EU. In the environment sector, the strengthening of administrative structures and procedures is identified as a key priority for action.

Belarus, while covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy, does not participate fully in it and has no action plan. In line with Council Conclusions, the EU's relationship with Belarus is

¹ As defined by UN resolution UNSCR 1244

² However, the conclusion and ratification of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement as well as an Interim Agreement with Belarus are frozen since 1997.

governed by a two-track policy whereby a policy of restricted contacts at Ministerial level is paralleled by EC assistance directed at democratisation and support for the needs of the population.

The European Neighbourhood Policy thus now provides for enhanced bilateral discussions of the EU with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia Moldova and Ukraine in the above areas. The six countries also benefit from assistance under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

5. CENTRAL ASIA (KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, TAJIKISTAN, TURKMENISTAN, UZBEKISTAN)

In the wake of the 2004 enlargement, the EU moved closer to Central Asia, geographically, politically and economically, and intends to strengthen and deepen its relationship with Central Asian countries. At bilateral level, the EU relations with Central Asian states are based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements³.

In April 2006 at a Ministerial Conference in Almaty, the representatives of the Central Asian States and the EU agreed that enhanced environmental cooperation would constitute an important component of the EU-Central Asia Regional political dialogue and set up an EU-Central Asia Joint Expert Working Group in order to develop and strengthen cooperation on environmental issues, focusing on water (particularly transboundary waters) and climate change. The Regional Environment Centre for central Asia, based in Almaty provides support and expertise Environmental performance and Sustainable development to the administration and civil society of the countries of the region.

6. REGIONAL COOPERATION

The **Regional Environmental Centres**, established in Moldova, Russia, Georgia (serving the three South Caucasus countries) and Almaty (serving the Central Asian states) promote cooperation between countries to solve regional environmental problems and to strengthen links between authorities, NGOs, business and researchers. Work is ongoing to re-establish a REC in Ukraine. The charter of the REC Caucasus has recently been amended to make the REC more operational.

The twelve EECCA countries⁴ participate in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia regional component of the **EU Water Initiative**, a regional component of the EU Water Initiative as announced at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. The initiative aims to promote better water governance and co-ordination between stakeholders.

Turkey, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, Russia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are members of the **Danube-Black Sea (DABLAS) Task Force**, which provides a platform for cooperation between IFIs, donors and beneficiaries on water protection and

³ The EU has individual Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) with all five Central Asian states, although only those agreements with Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan are in force. The PCAs with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have yet to complete their ratification processes.

⁴ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

water-related issues concerning the Danube and the Black Sea. The main aim is to encourage a strategic focus to the use of financing, and to coordinate action between all financial instruments operating in this region.

The **Commission for the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution** to which all the littoral states are party aims at improving the environmental situation in the Black Sea area. The need to address marine environment problems at regional level is also recognised by the EU Marine Strategy and proposed Marine Strategy Directive, which will require EU Member States in all regional seas bordered by the EU to seek cooperation with all countries in the region. To this end, Member States – Bulgaria and Romania – will be encouraged to work within the Black Sea Commission – to ensure this cooperation. The European Commission is presently looking into the possibility for Community accession to the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution in order to facilitate this process.

Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine are also members of the **International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)**, which is identifying the work necessary to implement the EU Water Framework Directive with the aim of keeping water in good ecological and chemical condition – across the whole of the basin.

The great majority of the above-mentioned countries/entities moreover participate in **the Europe and North Asia Forest Law Enforcement Governance (FLEG) process** concerning forest governance and the protection and sustainable management of forests in the region.

ANNEX 2

Definitions

EAP Task Force: In 1993, at the EfE Conference in Lucerne, Environment Ministers adopted the **Environmental Action Programme** for Central and Eastern Europe as a broad strategy to guide environmental reform in those countries. Ministers also established a Task Force to facilitate the implementation of this Programme – **the "EAP Task Force"** - and in particular to assist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) to integrate environmental considerations into the processes of economic and political reform; to upgrade institutional and human capacities for environmental management; to broaden political support for environmental improvement, and to mobilise and make cost-effective use of financial resources. The EAP Task Force brings together policy makers from the CEE, EECCA and donor countries, as well as international institutions active in the region. A number of other stakeholders, among others representatives of NGOs, enterprises, Regional Environmental Centres, are also involved. The Task Force is presently co-chaired by the European Commission together with an EECCA Environment Minister on a rotation basis (current co-chair is Kazakhstan).

Project Preparation Committee: A network of international financial institutions and donors, established at the EfE Conference in Lucerne in 1993, to mobilise environmental investment financing in the CEE/EECCA region.

Regional Environmental Centres (RECs): The successful Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe - REC CEE – (established in 1990 in Hungary) served as a model for the establishment of five further RECs – the "EECCA RECs"- in 1998-2000. These EECCA RECs include one each for **Russia**, **Moldova**, and **Ukraine** (under re-construction), and two multi-country RECs for **Caucasus** (based in Tbilisi/Georgia) and **Central Asia** (based in Almaty/Kazakhstan). The mission of the RECs is to promote co-operation between government bodies, local authorities, NGOs, the business community and others involved in environmental protection and to promote public participation in environmental decision-making. Their mission also includes the free collection and dissemination of information.