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EU4Environment

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine

EU4ENVIRONMENT SECOND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETING

Tuesday, 22 September 2020
10h00 - 13h00 Brussels/Paris time
VIRTUAL FORMAT

[Draft] Summary Record

The summary record was prepared by the OECD, with inputs from the European Commission and the Implementing Partners (UNEP, UNECE, and UNIDO).

ACTION REQUIRED: For comments, by Friday, 23 of October 2020. The participants are also kindly invited to provide their feedback on the meeting by responding to the short evaluation questionnaire, please see [here](#) a link.

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Action implemented by:



[Draft] Summary record

Video on EU4Environment

Item 1. Welcome by the Chair of the meeting

Mr. Michael Rupp, Team Leader, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), and Chair of the meeting, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants on behalf of the European Commission. Mr. Rupp pointed out serious health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that the world, and the EaP countries, face. He highlighted the importance of making recovery “green” and inclusive and re-confirmed EU’s support to the partner countries in addressing these unprecedented challenges. Mr. Rupp underlined the guiding role of the European Green Deal in driving a green transformation in the European Union but also internationally.

The Chair reminded that the first Regional Assembly of the “European Union for Environment” (EU4Environment) programme was held on 27-28 June 2019, in Brussels, leading to the adoption of the country-specific and regional work plans. He pointed out that despite health challenges and strict confinement measures stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual consultations were conducted with six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries in May-July 2020. These national consultations demonstrated strong commitments from the countries and good progress on the EU4Environment implementation.

The participants took note of:

- Opening remarks by Mr. Vassilis Maragos, Head of Unit, DG NEAR, European Commission, in which he highlighted an important milestone of the transition from the “20 Deliverables for 2020” to a new EaP agenda beyond 2020. The EU and EaP country leaders, at their video-conference in June 2020, gave a clear political steer to base this agenda on the overall theme of resilience, including environment protection, circular economy promotion and support for a green recovery, protection of natural assets, and addressing the climate change challenges. He emphasized three points:
 - the link between funding and commitments to the European Green Deal, green recovery and climate policy. He pointed out that more than EUR 1.3 billion were mobilized for environment and climate investments due to EU blending mechanisms. However, many of the investment projects face difficulties on the ground. Therefore he called for working on identification of investments, but also on their better preparation, in cooperation with all stakeholders, including municipalities. He signalled that the next multiannual financial framework of the EU is likely to mobilize more funds for the green transition which will require building political support, linking with targets for climate action, and the technical maturity of projects;
 - the significance of mobilising political support, raising awareness of civil society, decision-makers and people at large so that people’s aspirations are reflected. In this context, Mr. Maragos stressed the need to involve legislative authorities; and
 - the need to cultivate awareness and an environmentally responsible behaviour among youth. He mentioned the role of the Young European Ambassadors initiative in pursuing this goal and invited the participants to join the Eastern Partnership “Youth for Environment Conference”.
- Opening remarks of Mr. Davor Percan, Head of Unit, DG Environment, European Commission, in which he underlined that we all live in very challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic and that this crisis showed weaknesses of current approaches. Mr. Percan stressed that when recovery begins, we cannot afford going back to business as usual; we need a green recovery for building back our societies better. The European Green Deal, the new EU growth strategy, aims to turn challenges into opportunities by encouraging the transition to a resource-efficient, low carbon economy that creates jobs, increases competitiveness and boosts innovations. Mr. Percan invited all countries to join this path and highlighted the relevance of EU4Environment in this context. The European Green Deal focuses, among others, on climate action, biodiversity, zero pollution, circular economy, sustainable production. He underlined that the EU alone can do only so much and there is a need to work with the EU close neighbours, including the Eastern partners. Mr. Percan mentioned the importance of cooperation, including within the Eastern Partnership framework, and the EU4Environment’s contribution to the implementation of the “20 Deliverables for 2020” and other commitments, such as the Association Agreements.
- Joint intervention by Mr. Krzysztof Michalak, Senior Programme Manager, OECD, and Ms. Carolina Gonzales, Project Manager, UNIDO, in which they presented highlights of progress on the EU4Environment implementation on behalf of all the Implementing Partners [presentation is available on the [meeting web page](#)].
- Information by the Chair about the status of the EC-World Bank contract under EU4Environment (Result 4). Mr. Rupp indicated that the contract is currently subject to final negotiations and is expected to be signed before end of 2020.

Item 2. Update on progress on the Action implementation, its impact and plans 2020-2021 – Country perspective

The National Focal Points from the six EaP countries were invited to update the participants on recent green developments, demonstrate selected highlights of progress under EU4Environment, and highlight government priorities for 2020-21.

The participants took note of:

- Presentation by Ms. Irina Ghaplanyan, Deputy Minister of Environment, **Armenia**, in which she underlined, among others: the importance of appointing a National Action Co-ordinator in Armenia to improve co-ordination of the Programme, hiring local talents as much as possible for various EU4Environment components, important to launch activities on Result 4 (Emerald Sites are of high priority for Armenia) and exploring the opportunities for greening the post-COVID-19 recovery within the project. The presentation is available on the [meeting web page](#).
- Joint presentation by Mr. Faig Mutallimov, Head of International Organizations and Projects Subdivision, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, and Ms. Aytekin Guluzade, Deputy Head of Department of Cooperation with International Organizations, Ministry of Economy, **Azerbaijan**, in which they highlighted, among others, the importance to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, including 8 priority areas to address during the post-pandemic period; the EU4Environment support to greening SMEs, including financing; progress on development of the SME Development Centres; need for modernization of the vocational education and training (VET); and support to the creation of new business associations; alignment of draft secondary legislation on EIA and SEA with the international standards and Azerbaijan's intention to propose a draft water strategy developed under EUWI+ for a pilot SEA. The presentation is available on the [meeting web page](#).
- Intervention by Mr. Alexander Korbut, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, **Belarus**, in which he underlined several measures that have been taken by the Government of Belarus to mitigate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, more than 23 million seedlings have been planted to create new forest areas, conditions have been created to develop eco-tourism, both for national and international tourists and a Government resolution was adopted to limit the use of single-use plastics. Major work was done to implement technical assistance projects, such as purchasing equipment for monitoring air quality and radiation levels in line with EU standards.

Mr. Korbut pointed, in particular, to progress on activities under Result 2 - new growth opportunities and circular economy. This included plans to train 15 national experts on the RECP methodology; a list of 22 SMEs from food production, machine building, production of electrical equipment sectors engaged in greening activities. Work has also started to implement eco-industrial parks in Minks and Mogelev's free economic zones. In addition, official web pages on social networks have been created.

With relevance to Activity 1.3 on SEA/EIA, Mr. Korbut highlighted the implementation of a pilot project on SEA of the draft water resources management strategy in context of climate change till 2030 under the EU Water Initiative Plus. In March 2020 the SEA scoping report was prepared by international and national experts for the draft water strategy; public discussions held online; key comments incorporated into the SEA report and the draft water strategy which will be formally submitted for approval.

Mr. Korbut also reiterated the emphasis placed on the promotion of green economy by the Ministry of Economy which is particularly interested in development of circular economy and eliminating barriers for sustainable consumption. He also signalled that all programmes and activities to green the economic policies of Belarus are being implemented in full (including round tables, international meetings) from September 2020.

- Presentation by Ms. Ekaterine Mikabadze, First Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, **Georgia**, in which she underlined, among others, the importance of: capacity building of SMEs for the implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility systems, training of civil servants on the Green Economy, development of Green Growth Strategies for Georgia, and launching the component on ecosystem services and livelihoods. The presentation is available on the [meeting web page](#).
- Joint presentation by Ms. Lilia Palii, State Secretary for Economy, and Maxim Popov, State Secretary for Environment, **Republic of Moldova**, in which they underlined, among others, the importance of: the approval of the draft Law on industrial emissions, updating the Programme on the promotion of Green Economy in the Republic of Moldova for 2021-2023, the development of a Programme on waste management, improving administrative capacity in the environmental sector (especially in the Environmental Agency), as well as of the transposition of the Directive 2004/35/EC on Environmental Liability and promotion of green investments in all economic sectors. The presentation is available on the [meeting web page](#).
- Presentation by Ms. Iryna Stavchuk, Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, **Ukraine**, in which she pointed out three priority areas: 1) biodiversity and protected areas management, including development of the National Strategy on biodiversity and national plans for protecting cetaceans and sturgeon (including via the Emerald Network), 2) EIA and SEA, including planned changes to the SEA Law, development of the recommendations on SEA for the community level action plans,

introduction of electronic “Unified Register of Strategic Environmental Assessment”, and 3) green economy, including revisions of the annexes to the Association Agreement, revision of national and regional development strategies for priority economic sectors, transposition of the of EU Directives into Ukrainian legislation, development of a roadmap for Ukraine's participation in the European Green Deal, eco-innovation and inclusion of "green" components in the SME development strategy, RECP, and waste management. The presentation is available on the [meeting web page](#).

Under this agenda item the participants took also note of:

- Intervention by the Ms. Ina Coseru, Civil Society Forum, in which she called for very strong cooperation and joint efforts to promote the green economy. She underlined that still a lot of improvements can be made in various areas, e.g. to ensure better environmental compliance by enterprises, strengthen institutional capacity of line Ministries, make environmental funds' operations efficient and free from political influence, and to strengthen the links with local public authorities. She expressed her appreciation for positive examples, such as the planting of trees in Armenia, or the initiative to reduce plastic waste in Belarus, inviting other countries to follow these examples. She also expressed her appreciation of new environmental legislation development in all six countries. She pointed out the importance of 1) keeping dialogue with all stakeholders, including with civil society; 2) financing, including possibility of re-allocation of travel funds to environmental projects; 3) increasing the environment as a priority on the political agenda and strengthening inter-ministerial dialogue; as well as 4) strengthening the visibility of actions and benefits of the programme, in a language that is understandable to non-experts and the public. Finally, she invited all participants to consult the Civil Society Forum policy paper that is being prepared for the Regional Assembly in December 2020 and urged the EaP countries to participate in the preparation of the EaP Summit. She also reminded about the EaP Youth4Environment Conference, taking place online on 24-26 September.¹
- An intervention by the EC/DG ENV on eco-labelling that highlighted this issue as an important way to influence consumers' choices; and a clarification from the Republic of Moldova that the Ministry of Economy is responsible for consumer protection, monitoring of existing practices, as well as ways to improve legislation according to EU standards and best practices in eco-labelling.

Decisions and follow up:

The participants:

- Took note of the EaP countries' recent green developments, progress highlights and government priorities for 2020-21;
- Took note on possible areas of improvements, including those suggested by the Civil Society Forum;
- Agreed to continue dialogue with all stakeholders, including with the civil society;
- Took note of the recommendation to further work on the communication approaches to reach out to more people, and use less technical language;
- Agreed to follow up bilaterally on specific questions and activities, related to, *inter alia*, water activities (UNECE/Azerbaijan), work on environmental regulations (OECD/Azerbaijan), and training of civil servants on the Green Economy (UNEP/Georgia).

Item 3. Update on progress on the Action implementation and plans for 2020-2021 – Regional activities

The participants took note of:

- Updates on the implementation of regional activities under the Regional Work Plan by the Implementing Partners:
 - Result 1 (UNEP, UNECE);
 - Result 2 (UNEP, UNIDO);
 - Result 3 and 5.3 (OECD), including on communication activities;

The presentation is available on the [meeting web page](#).

- Oral intervention by Ms. Vladislava Nemova, Co-Task Team Leader, the World Bank, who reconfirmed the full commitment of the team to start work under Result 4, as soon as the EC-World Bank contract is finalized, and expressed her appreciation to hear that Result 4 remains one of the main priorities for the countries.

¹ Environmental challenges and opportunities of the EaP Region: solutions and potential for youth involvement.

The participants also took note of:

- Intervention by Ms. Angela Bularga, DG NEAR, EU4Environment Programme Manager, who outlined the importance of 1) working in synergy with other initiatives funded by the EU (e.g. EU4Business and EU4Climate), as well as by EU Member States and other donors; 2) having a coordinated approach on communication, including the launch of the restructured EU4Environment web site; 3) considering to link the regional mid-term report on green growth indicators to the need of establishing a baseline in relation to the Eastern Partnership post-2020 priorities in the area of environmental resilience.

Decisions and follow up:

The Participants agreed to:

- Continue to implement the activities as envisaged in the regional Work Plan and in line with the agreed timeline, using alternative modes of operation (virtual communications/meetings) and to coordinate with other initiatives funded by EU and beyond;
- To the extent feasible, link the mid-term monitoring report, that will use green growth indicators, to the Eastern Partnership post-2020 priorities;
- Continue implementing communication activities, as envisaged in the Work Plan, promoting the wide subscription to the EU4Environment Newsletter and coordinating the launch of a new web site and videos thereon (using EC/EUD/Ministries channels).

Item 4. Action governance, coordination with other programmes and cross-cutting issues

The participants took note of:

- Update by the OECD, UNEP and UNIDO on action governance, coordination with other programmes and cross-cutting issues, including:
 - Inter-ministerial dialogue on green economy and National Implementation Committees (UNEP);
 - National Action Co-ordinators (OECD);
 - Coordination with other programmes and cross-cutting issues (UNIDO).

The presentation is available on the [meeting web page](#)

Decisions and follow up:

The participants:

- Took note of progress on the action governance, including efforts to set up inter-ministerial dialogues on green economy through National Implementation Committees and other means;
- Welcomed the appointment of National Action Co-ordinators in all countries;
- Took note of efforts by the Implementing Partners to coordinate with other programmes;
- Took note of progress on cross-cutting issues, including gender-related issues;
- Agreed to follow up bilaterally on outstanding issues, in particular on an informal inter-ministerial dialogue platform in Georgia, which could be established if the country develops a new green economy strategy.

Item 5. Session on selected projects: SEA/EIA and green bonds

The participants took note of interventions by:

- Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, Project Manager, UNECE, who summarized the results on SEA/EIA poll and presented the topic;
- Ms. Nelly Petkova, Project Manager, OECD, who summarized the results on green bonds poll and presented the topic.

Decisions and follow up:

The Participants agreed to:

- Take note on the interventions and follow up bilaterally on project-specific questions.

Item 6. The EU Green Deal context and the EaP Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Change

The participants took note of:

- An intervention of Mr. Andrzej Januszewski, DG ENV, European Commission, in which he presented the European Green Deal and updated the participants on the preparations to the EaP Ministerial Conference on environment and climate. Mr. Januszewski highlighted, in particular:
 - That the European Green Deal, announced on 11 December 2019, is considered a “man on the Moon” moment for the EU and a key mechanism to transforming economies to achieve environmental goals, for years to come. It is a breakthrough in the EU’s thinking, under the aim of becoming the first climate-neutral continent. Mr. Januszewski stressed that the COVID-19 crisis should not impede these efforts but rather it will reinforce a green transition. The Green Deal comprises 50 actions. The recent developments on environmental angle include: 1) working towards a circular economy based on a new circular economy action plan adopted on 11 March 2020; and 2) preserving biodiversity through a new Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 as well as the EU nature restoration plan (also in the context of the UN biodiversity summit (30 September 2020) and the high-level event (28 September 2020). Mr. Januszewski encouraged the EaP countries and civil society to support the EU in this regard.
 - That the EaP ministerial conference is expected to take place on 22 October 2020 in Luxembourg. A hybrid format is considered subject to confirmation (in-person presence, but it will also be possible to join online). The agenda is under development with main topics including sustainable infrastructure, green finance, biodiversity and climate (in relation to COPs).

Decisions and follow up:

The participants:

- Took note of the European Green Deal presentation and would follow up bilaterally if any questions;
- Took note on the preparations to the EaP ministerial conference on environment and climate, and its key topics.

Item 7. Other issues and closure

The participants took note of:

- A suggestion by the Implementing Partners to plan the next Regional Assembly meeting in September 2021 in person; and consider it earlier if there are changes to the travel restrictions; and
- An invitation by the Implementing Partners for the countries to put forward their readiness to host the meeting in September 2021.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Michael Rupp, European Commission and Chair of the meeting, thanked the countries for their interventions and updates, briefly summarised the key outcomes of the meeting (which are presented in relevant sections above) and invited the participants to follow bilaterally with the implementing organisations.

Decisions and follow up:

- OECD will prepare and circulate a draft Summary record for comments;
- Meeting evaluation poll will be sent together with the Summary Record.

ANNEX 1.

Online poll on EU4Environment programme

The participants were invited to respond to 10 poll questions on EU4Environment programme relevance, efficiency and effectiveness.

Results:

	Yes	Partially	No
Do all key stakeholders demonstrate effective commitment?	69%	28%	3%
Is EU4Environment adequately monitored by partner governments?	64%	33%	3%
Is there an effective national inter-ministerial coordination for EU4Environment implementation?	44%	54%	3%
Is EU4Environment adapted to partner governments' institutional, human, financial capacities?	51%	46%	3%
Does EU4Environment effectively support partner governments policies?	68%	32%	0%

The participants were also invited to respond to 5 poll questions on EU4Environment programme sustainability and horizontal issues.

Results:

	Yes	Partially	No
Are key stakeholders acquiring the institutional and human capacities to ensure sustainability?	41%	56%	3%
Is the private sector adequately involved?	31%	62%	8%
Are the necessary measures taken to enhance the role of women?	49%	46%	5%
Are there good practices developed which could be useful to share more widely?	62%	33%	5%
Are the communication and visibility implemented in an appropriate manner?	38%	54%	8%

The participants were invited to respond to poll questions, dedicated to:

- SEA/EIA, and
- Green bonds

Results – SEA/EIA poll:

What kind of documents does SEA apply to?	National legislation in the field of nature protection and environmental policy	Plans and programmes prepared by national, regional or local authorities [correct]	Technical documentation of strategic projects
	24%	76%	0%
What's the name of a process to decide if an EIA is needed / or if a proposed activity significantly affects the environment across borders?	Scoping	Monitoring	Screening [correct]
	19%	10%	71%

Results – Green bonds poll:

What is a green bond?	A loan made by a bank to a borrower	A loan made by an investor to a borrower	A loan made by a bank to a borrower but explicitly earmarked for green investments	A loan made by an investor to a borrower but explicitly earmarked for green investments [correct]	-	-
	6%	6%	22%	67%		
Which entities can issue green bonds?	Public authorities	Credit institutions	Public/private companies	IFIs	All [correct]	-
	22%	6%	6%	0%	67%	-
Which EaP country has enacted legislation on green bonds and has issued the 1st green bond?	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Georgia	Republic of Moldova	Ukraine [correct]
	17%	6%	0%	28%	6%	44%

Annex 2. Agenda

Time	Item
09:30 – 10:00	<i>Connection by the participants</i>
10:00	<i>Video: EU4Environment</i>
10:00 – 10:15 (15 min)	<p>Chair: European Commission (DG NEAR)</p> <p>Item 1. Welcome, opening and adoption of the agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome by the EC • Overall progress on environmental and green policy reform and implementation in the EaP countries and highlights of the measurable achievements of the Action by OECD and UNIDO, as lead Partners
10:15 – 10:20 (5 min)	<i>Online poll on programme relevance, efficiency and effectiveness</i>
10:20 – 10:50 (30 min)	<p>Item 2. Update on progress on the Action implementation, its impact and plans 2020-2021 – EaP county perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations by the EaP countries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Armenia ○ Azerbaijan ○ Belarus • Short time for immediate questions after each intervention
10:50 – 10:55 (5 min)	<i>Online poll on programme sustainability and horizontal issues</i>
10:55 – 11:30 (35 min)	<p>Item 2. Update on progress on the Action implementation, its impact and plans 2020-2021 – EaP county perspective (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations by the EaP countries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Georgia ○ Republic of Moldova ○ Ukraine • Intervention by the Civil Society Forum • Short time for immediate questions after each intervention
11:30 – 11:40 (10 min)	<p><i>Short break</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Video on green economy (UNEP)</i> • <i>Video on SEA (UNECE)</i> • <i>Video on RECP – example of Ukraine (UNIDO)</i>
11:40 – 12:00 (20 min)	<p>Item 3. Update on progress on the Action implementation and plans for 2020-2021 – Regional activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations by the Implementing Partners, with a focus on regional activities and components that were adjusted since beginning of the year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Result 1 (UNEP and UNECE) ○ Result 2 (UNEP and UNIDO) ○ Result 3 and 5.3 (OECD) ○ Result 4 (World Bank)

	Reactions from the EaP countries/Civil Society after the presentations.
12:00 – 12:15 (15 min)	<p>Item 4. Action governance, coordination with other programmes and cross-cutting issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on governance arrangements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inter-ministerial dialogue on green economy and National Implementation Committees - UNEP ○ National Action Co-ordinators - OECD • Coordination with other programmes and cross-cutting issues – UNIDO
12:15 – 12:30 (15 min)	<p>Item 5. Online poll session on selected projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIA/SEA – two questions followed by a short presentation by UNECE • Green bonds – three questions followed by a short presentation by OECD
12:30 – 12:45 (15 min)	<p>Item 6. The EU Green Deal context and the EaP Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Green Deal and the preparations for the EaP Ministerial Conference on Environment and Climate Change planned for 22 October 2020 (key topics: green infrastructure and finance) – EC and Germany (TBC) followed by one instant poll question to the participants • Poll (one question) on green deal
12:45 – 13:00 (15 min)	<p>Item 7. Other business and closure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Regional Assembly meeting – OECD • Any other business • Closing remarks

Annex 3. List of participants

I agree to my name and function and/or to my image/voice being video/audio recorded and being used by European Commission for publications, both off and on-line, in accordance with the applicable European data protection regulations.

I consent to my contact details (First and Last Name, Organisation, Function, Country represented and e-mail) being included in the list of participants and circulated amongst the meeting participants.

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