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**NOTE**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016) - Information from the Presidency and the Commission

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Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Presidency and the Commission on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 20 June 2016.

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**Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016)****- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -****Summary**

Ministers and Heads of Delegation from 44 **UNECE**<sup>1</sup> Member States, including 25 from the EU, and the European Commission, and other stakeholders participated in the Ministerial Conference. The main outcomes include a Ministerial Declaration, a Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy together with the so-called Batumi Action on Green Economy (BIG –E) and the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA).

The commitments under Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate were recalled as crucial developments when tackling all the issues under consideration at the Conference, such as greening the economy, improving air quality and education for sustainable development. In addition, the Conference also acknowledged the importance of the Environmental Performance Review Programme, progress made in implementing the Astana Water Actions and the need to ratify and implement the Multilateral Environmental Agreements in the region (such as the Espoo Convention, the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), Aarhus Convention and related Protocols).

A number of side events were also organized on various topics and by different stakeholders, including showcasing work supported by the EU in **Eastern Partnership** countries and other countries in the UNECE region.

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

## Main Outcomes

### Greening the economy

A Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy was endorsed. It includes practical examples, good practices and tools to be used for accelerating the transition to a green economy, while promoting a bottom-up approach. The objectives of the Framework are to: (a) Reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcities, (b) Enhance economic progress and (c) Improve human well-being and social equity.

The Strategic Framework supports the objectives of the EU Circular Economy package, in that it aims to guide the pan-European region in its transition to an inclusive green economy by 2030.

The Conference welcomed a voluntary initiative on green economy, the Batumi Action on Green Economy (BIG-E), involving countries and organizations, both public and private, making voluntary commitments in the form of green economy actions, with a view to supporting the Framework's implementation during the period 2016–2030.

### Improving air quality

In view of the continuing severe air pollution in the UNECE region, as also highlighted by recent scientific assessments, an initiative was prepared by the Executive Body for the CLRTAP to encourage and support Governments and other actors in their work to improve air quality during the period 2016–2021.

This initiative, referred to as the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air, identifies possible actions for Governments and other stakeholders to address local, national and regional air pollution and the steps necessary for the further implementation of the CLRTAP and its protocols. Governments submitted voluntary commitments undertaken to address air pollution.

The Conference also welcomed the UNECE report “Towards cleaner air” summarizing current scientific knowledge on transboundary air pollution issues within the region and the effectiveness of air pollution measures.

## 10 years Education for sustainable development (ESD)

The meeting adopted a separate Statement on ESD from Ministers of Environment and Education to prolong the cooperation in this area for the next period and highlight the role of education in achieving the SDGs.

## Keeping the pan-European environment under review

### Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS)

The Conference discussed progress made in establishing the SEIS across the pan-European region to support a regular process of environmental assessment, as a follow up to the Astana commitments and underlined the importance for all countries to further develop their national information systems so as to have the SEIS in place across the region by 2021.

## Sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO)

The GEO-6 European regional assessment was launched at the Conference and greeted by the EU and its Member States as a future regular assessment for the pan-European region, building on the recent State and Outlook Report of the European Environment Agency.

## Conclusion

The interactive plenary and panel discussions, the side events and the outcomes show that the EfE process remains a unique and lively platform where different governmental and non- governmental stakeholders can actively engage and share experiences on environmental issues in the pan-European region with the common objective to improve the environment and health for all. The need to move from words to actions to deliver tangible results was underlined by ministers in their interventions.

The next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference is due to take place in 2021; the Czech Republic has expressed an interest in hosting it.