

ECO Forum/WECF and HEAL report
EEHC and Ministerial Declaration drafting group meetings
October 13-15, 2009 Parma, Italy
In preparation of the 5th Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment to take place in Italy, 9 – 12 March 2010

Background

Sascha Gabizon (WECF) representing Eco Forum on behalf of the environmental NGOs (sascha.gabizon@wecf.eu) and Genon Jensen, representing Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) on behalf of the health NGOs (genon@env-health.org) attended the EEHC meeting, and the Ministerial Declaration drafting group meetings.

Important main outcomes and upcoming dates:

- **Revised draft Ministerial declaration** with the majority of ECO Forum/WECF's and HEAL's priorities retained or in brackets. A new draft will be circulated to the drafting committee end October and to all member states end November for the next and final negotiating meeting to be held in January 2010 in Bonn, hosted by the German government.
- **ECO Forum / HEAL Ministerial slot for CEHAPE:** Confirmation of a 90 minute slot to present the CEHAPE awards and organize a ministerial panel in the context of the Parma Ministerial Conference on Thursday, March 11.
- Deadline for **application for side events, exhibitions and posters** for the Parma Ministerial has been extended to end of November 2009, the application for can be found under http://www.euro.who.int/Document/CEH/parma_Call4sideevents.pdf
- Deadline for **applications for the Children Environmental Health Award is December 7th 2009**, as many NGOs, schools, youth, women, local authorities and others should apply (see <http://www.wecf.eu/english/articles/2009/10/goodpractice-awardparma.php>)
- Youth can nominate candidates to take part in the Youth event on March 9th 2010 in Parma (pre-conference) by contacting Alina at HEAL, CEHAPE youth representative: alina@env-health.org
- Youth should contact their country delegation to require on the possibility to be part of the official delegation (member states have committed to having each 1 youth on their delegation). Contact your ministry of environment or health!
- A policy meeting on **gender and environmental inequalities will take place in Madrid on 10th and 11th of November**
- The **Water and Health protocol 10th anniversary** will be celebrated with a pre-conference on March 9th in Parma, Italy (for information contact: Tomasz.Juszczak@unece.org)

DRAFT MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

Member states from the EU, EECCA and SEE region including Turkey, met for a 4th drafting meeting preparing the Ministerial declaration, based on latest draft version prepared at the previous drafting meeting held in Andorra. The drafting group aims at making a short, focused ministerial declaration. Norway came with a proposal for a substantially reduced version which was used as the basis of progress on the draft

declaration. The Andorra draft had been send to all 52 Member States of the EU, EECCA and SEE region many of which provided suggestions for changes. HEAL and Eco Forum also submitted comments. To see the full submitted comments of member states, please contact Sascha or Genon.

Next steps

The new draft is NOT yet available. The previous version is available at: <http://www.wecf.eu/english/articles/2009/06/parma-ministerialdraft.php> . A revised draft will be send to all drafting committee members by the end of October, and then to all member states by the end of November.

CEHAPE related sections

The issue of quantative targets was discussed at length, and the WHO secretariat made a plea to keep them in, supported by several countries and HEAL, as this was one of the only new things in the Ministerial Declaration and would show strong political support. The targets will remain, although some dates may be in brackets in the next version.

The proposal to clearly state the focus on each RPG, included in Norway's version, and also supported by HEAL and Eco Forum, was agreed on and will be included in the next version.

RPGIV, Asbestos

Germany proposed to add a reference to the Rotterdam Convention to the draft declaration. The Russian Federation (not in the drafting group) had send in a comment on the need change the reference to "ban asbestos in construction products", and define that this should be only the case for amphibole types of asbestos, not for chrysotile asbestos. One of the arguments provided by the Russian Federation is that the Rotterdam Convention has failed to list chrysotile asbestos for lack of evidence of "any carcinogenic hazard". On the contrary, the Rotterdam Convention has recommended to list chrysotile asbestos because of its health risk, based on the results of a global scientific panel. Neither the German nor the Russian suggestion were taken into the text as the meeting was aiming to reduce the text, the original text with "asbestos" (referring to all its forms) remained in the draft declaration.

RPGIV, Endocrine Disruptors and Cumulative Effects

A number of countries (e.g. Denmark) want to specifically refer to endocrine disruptors, whereas others believe there is not enough proof (Finland), whereas others refer to the need to apply the precautionary principle when in doubt and supported Denmark. HEAL and several other countries (Sweden, Belgium and France) supported Denmark's proposal to also include mention of cumulative effects. The references to endocrine disruptors remain in the text, although bracketed, as in the previous version.

RPGIV, Emerging issues including nanotechnology and EMFs

France made a call to include all electromagnetic fields in new research. HEAL had requested to include new text to ensure research looks at "*Biological effects of low-intensity electromagnetic fields including radiofrequency radiation from wireless technologies*", and supported the bracketed text to ensure that research evaluates early life exposures. The text will most likely remain in brackets.

Future of the Process

The chair of the drafting group had requested support from the WHO secretariat to progress on the part of the declaration which focuses on the future of the process. The WHO produced a “non paper” with input including to:

- continue political financial and technical commitment by all partners and stakeholders to reduce negative impacts of environment on human health
- to strengthen shared responsibility and involvement of the health and environment sectors
- to further develop linkages with civil society and the private sector, empowering citizens role in decision making and responsible management not harmful to human health
- to continue to promote health in all policies
- to continue to focus both on long-term and short-term environmental health with a lasting impact on future generations

Eco-Forum / WECF called on a focus for the next 5 year period up to the ministerial conference in 2015, and suggested to focus on improving environmental health in school and child care settings, a neglected area, which is a problem in almost all member states, including on indoor air pollution, asbestos, hygiene and sanitation, pesticide spraying in schoolyards, unhealthy food in canteen and lack of green spaces and safe mobility to and from schools.

Denmark proposed to focus on climate and health and the follow up of the Copenhagen climate negotiations.

Netherlands proposed to focus on increasing urbanization including needs of elderly. HEAL supported the call to look at urbanization and climate change as a future focus, while ensuring that the attention on vulnerable groups such as children, health affected groups and the elderly remained a cross-cutting goal.

The minutes of the discussions on the Future of the Process from Andorra and Bonn meetings were also available, which evaluated the value added of the process and its structures, such as secretariat and the European Environment and Health Committee.

The conclusion of the drafting group came to was that:

- the EEHC had been looking to much at logistical and technical issues instead of fulfilling a steering function and guiding on policy.
- the secretariat should inform member states more regularly on upcoming meetings and drafting processes
- the process should strengthen member ship involvement by creation or re-installing task forces on main issues such as for example CEHAPE, Climate and Health and Urbanization.
- To strengthen cooperation with UNECE , UNEP, EEA on the environmental tools and policies, in addition to the work of WHO on tools and policies in the health area, so as to create more added value and better integration of the 2 sectors

The process will also continue and the draft declaration includes bracketed text to hold a next ministerial conference on environment and health in 2015. The commitment from WHO to continue holding the secretariat has not been clear in the past year due to changes in the personnel and political support from members. However, the newly elected Regional Director Europe of the WHO, Suszanna Jacobs, former minister of health of Hungary and co-chair of the EECH during the Budapest Ministerial Conference in 2004, has indicated that Environment and Health will be one of her priorities.

Knowledge Tools

A long debate evolved on the draft declaration on strengthening efforts in the area of human bio-monitoring (HBM) and its benefits. Finland, Armenia had reservations about mentioning the purpose of the HBM, while many other countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and the European Commission supported the need to be specific on how HBM relates to policy making.

HEAL strongly called for HBM to be linked to public health and environmental measures, evaluate the effectiveness of such policies and be used to raise awareness.

Finally the version adopted included reference to the need of HBM for policy making and awareness raising to lead to more preventive action, although the entire HBM section is now in brackets, and will need to gather more member state support in the next negotiating meeting.

FIFTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH: DATES, PROGRAMME AND SIDE EVENTS

The EEHC meeting met to decide on a final agenda for the Parma conference, and to discuss the future of the process and the role of the EEHC.

Eco-Forum/WECF and HEAL have been asked to organize the CEHAPE best practice Awards on Children Environmental Health, which will be awarded by 8 ministers during the plenary session on Thursday 10th. After awards have been handed over a panel debate will take place with the ministers and stakeholders on challenges in the areas of the 4 regional priority goals, as well as 4 new issues, schools, climate, mobility and youth participation. Please encourage as many local initiatives as possible to apply for the award (1000 euro cash award and trip to Parma paid), at:

<http://www.wecf.eu/english/articles/2009/10/goodpractice-awardparma.php>

Furthermore, EcoForum/WECF and HEAL will launch nominations for stakeholders from different sectors to participate in the panel debates. Contact: Olivia.radu@wecf.eu

Agenda of the Parma Conference

A draft conference very similar to the version provided in January and in April was provided to the EEHC.

March 9th: Three pre-conferences

- Youth
- 10th anniversary of Water and Health Protocol
- SEE and NIS meetings

March 10th:

Morning: 8 parallel side events (to be decided)

Afternoon: Opening session with Minister or Head of State from Italy, Commissioner and WHO regional director (new: Suzanna Jacob). *Session 1 Environment and health in Europe – an assessment. Session 2 Environment and health challenges in a globalised world: socioeconomic and gender inequalities.*

March 11th: CEHAPE focus

Morning; *Session 3: Implementing CEHAPes* – the impact in the WHO Region (Presentation by Austrian minister); CEHAPE award and panel debate between 8 ministers and stakeholders (organised by the HEAL/ECO Forum with youth), Tools for CEHAPE (Italy and REC on indoor air quality in schools - SEARCH).

Afternoon; Media Awards (WHO), Key note by the European Commissioner of Health, *Session 4: Looking ahead with partners and stakeholders*. Panel debate session with local authorities from Parma and rest of Europe, as well as youth, trade unions and business.

March 12th:

Session 5: Challenges and synergies in dealing with climate change. Climate change and health session with a.o. Achim Steiner, ExDir of UNEP and several ministers, Keynote by Director General WHO (Chan), Future of the Process and signing of Ministerial Declaration, Youth declaration, Closing

Side events are planned between 18:00 – 20:00 each day.

The EEHC suggested that Side Events should be selected on a number of criteria, including if they bring added value to the themes in the ministerial declaration, or address emerging issues the declaration could not address. There is no cost for side events. Rooms are equipped with beamer. There is no translation.

Exhibition space can be requested through the form on the EEHC website, although the details of potential square meters and supporting materials for exhibition still need to be communicated by WHO and the host country, Italy.