

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC)

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) is a partnership of six international organizations (the OSCE, REC, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP and NATO as an associated partner) that aims at identifying and reducing interlinked environment and security risks through strengthening cooperation among and within countries in four regions: Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. Specific regional developments during the reporting quarter include the following:

South Caucasus

At the beginning of the reporting period, ENVSEC responded to a request from the Armenian Ministry of Emergency Situations regarding Nubarashen pesticides burial site near Yerevan which, according to old records, contains over 500 tons of dangerous and banned organ-chlorine pesticides such as DDT. An international expert undertook an assessment of the burial site and revealed an emergency situation with uncovered pesticides exposing nearby village populations to imminent health risks. As a result of the ENVSEC assessment, the Armenian government committed financial resources to implement emergency measures. An in-depth feasibility study is currently under preparation by the international expert in close cooperation with the national and international stakeholders in Armenia.

Eastern Europe

A meeting of some 50 participants took place in Odessa on 7-9 June to discuss the status of implementation of the "Transboundary cooperation and sustainable management in the Dniester river basin" project. A new climate and flood component was launched during the meeting, and other potential fields of cooperation were discussed. Within the framework of the "Flood monitoring and Forecast in the Pripjat River Basin" project, ENVSEC partners organized two meetings on 12 and 13 April, respectively in Lutsk and Kuznetsovsk, Ukraine. Flow measurement equipment was presented to the Ukrainian Volyn Hydromet Department and field-tested in the two areas. In addition, on 3-4 June, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River's Eighth Standing Working Group adopted a resolution supporting the development of a Danube Delta analysis and management plan, endorsing at the same time the related ENVSEC project proposal. Under the project on "Prevention of illegal cross-border transport of hazardous waste," awareness tools for border and customs authorities were prepared, translated into region's languages, and presented at OSCE's 18th Economic and Environmental Forum in Prague in May. In addition, Belarus continued to assess the environmental impact from obsolete pesticides around the Brest and Petrikov stockpiles. Fieldwork at pesticide depots ended with winter, and resumed in May, when a visit to Belarus of Belgian and Czech project counterparts took place. Following the launch in November 2009 of a project-supported experimental unit in Minsk for the destruction of



The assessment of the Nubarashen pesticides burial site near Yerevan, Armenia revealed an emergency situation with uncovered pesticides exposing nearby village populations to imminent health risks

pesticides by high-temperature plasma technology, a design for an industrial-scale installation is currently being developed. In addition, by 24 June, over 3,100 tonnes of mélange from two of Ukraine's six storage sites (Kalynivka in the Vinnytsya region and Tsenzhiiv near Ivano-Frankivsk) had been sent by the ENVSEC project to be eliminated at specialized chemical works in Russia. Arrangements are being finalized and funds raised for the next phase of the project to eliminate 2,900 tonnes from Radekhiv, in the Lviv region, which would clear western Ukraine of the toxic substance. Finally, media training and a press tour on awareness, public participation and education on environment and security risks and linkages was organized on 24-27 May in southern Belarus, for journalists from Belarus and northern Ukraine, with a team of peer journalist trainers from Ukraine, Switzerland and UK, bringing together more than 60 participants.

South Eastern Europe

The ENVSEC Regional Coordination Meeting for South Eastern Europe (SEE) took place on 20-21 May in Szentendre, Hungary, at the Regional Environmental Center's (REC) headquarters. The overall objective of this two-day meeting was to assess progress of the ENVSEC's SEE programme of work and to discuss priorities and opportunities for further collaboration in the region. The meeting gathered ENVSEC project managers, National Focal Points appointed in the Ministries of Environment and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and other local partners working in the SEE region. Current priority areas under the ENVSEC Initiative were reconfirmed, while issues of climate change, energy efficiency, green economy and management of shared natural resources in the context of NATURA 2000 were additionally identified as relevant for the region. In addition, in the framework of the project aiming at supporting the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a national workshop was organized on 17-18 May in Sarajevo to agree upon the roles and responsibilities of national stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention. The workshop

gathered 25 representatives of the governmental and non-governmental sector from Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as experts from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and REC.

Central Asia

The ENVSEC Regional Coordination meeting for Central Asia took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 23 June. Presentations informed the participants about the reforms in ENVSEC, the status of ENVSEC's work programme and projects in Central Asia. The participants discussed the relevance of previously defined regional priorities and made new projects proposal for the region. After its launch in South Caucasus, the CASE (Civic Action for Security and Environment) project was extended to Tajikistan with a view to building the capacity of civil society organizations to address environment and security challenges. At the heart of CASE is a small grants programme that allows civil society organizations to implement their own projects in close cooperation with their governments. Projects are selected based on their contribution to national environment and security priorities, through a participatory selection process including local stakeholders. Throughout the project design and implementation stages, civil society organizations can rely on the services of the Aarhus Centres in their country. Meanwhile, the Aarhus Centres in Central Asia continued their activities at an increasing pace. With the addition of the Atyrau and Astana Aarhus Centres, the network in the region has reached six members. Activities include awareness-raising events on environmental issues, trainings on EIA processes, public hearings on industrial issues and environmental legislative development, and the provision of legal advice to the public regarding environmental rights. Finally, Aarhus Centre representatives from the region gathered on 22 June in Almaty, Kazakhstan to elaborate the Aarhus Centres workplan for 2010 and beyond. The potential role of Aarhus Centres as public outreach facilities for the ENVSEC Initiative was emphasized by several participants.

* The newsletter is prepared on the basis of the UNEP Disaster and Conflict Quarterly Progress Report 2/2010.

For more information on the Environment and Security Initiative, please contact:

Ms Laura RIO
ENVSEC Senior Programme Manager
UNEP Regional Office for Europe
11-13 chemin des Anémones
CH-1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland
Tel : 00 41 22 917 8207
Email: laura.rio@unep.org

www.envsec.org/