

Resolution

Greening the economy through promoting sound waste and chemicals management - NGO view

Batumi, June 8, 2016

We, participants of the side-event, support the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP), adopted at Rio+20 in June 2012. We call on governments of the UN ECE region to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production and encourage innovation and cooperation among all stakeholders to achieve poverty eradication, social and economic development, and reverse environmental degradation for good.

We note that waste generation (including household and industrial waste, hazardous waste, obsolete pesticides, electric and electronic waste) is a key environmental problem faced by many countries of the UN ECE region, and especially those of the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). This problem includes growing spread of waste dumps, both legal and illegal as well as those that contain wastes of different hazard classes.

We state that EECCA countries lack reliable information on amounts, volumes and compositions of already accumulated wastes, including hazardous wastes, as well as information on annual generation, import and export of waste. Information from different sources demonstrates substantial deviations and does not reflect the real situation.

We stress that waste management is a lucrative business. Corruption, deregulation and monopolisation are clearly visible in all EECCA countries. Business seeks to monopolize waste management - these intentions are reflected by regulations that are drafted with active involvement of business entities.

Governments and industries in the EECCA region actively promote incineration-based technologies instead of environmentally sound waste minimization, recycle and reuse approach. So far, the high costs of waste incineration plants vs waste landfilling serve as a limiting factor. However, attempts to lobby for waste incineration plants in countries of the region do not cease, notwithstanding proven adverse health impacts of waste incineration operations.

We highlight the problem of obsolete pesticide stockpiles which is part of the overall waste management in EECCA. We note that EECCA countries now lack technologies for elimination of obsolete pesticides (including pesticides which are persistent organic pollutants) that underwent state environmental appraisal and could be authorized for implementation. Some countries such as Moldova and Belarus managed to deliver substantial amounts of banned and obsolete pesticides to EU countries for elimination. But the problem is still there in the majority of EECCA countries.

We note a new emerging issue of electronic and electrical waste (e-waste) generation in EECCA. This is a new and complicated problem for these countries facing lack of recycling facilities and a threat of becoming an e-waste dumping site for a more developed countries of the UN ECE and beyond.

As a positive trend, it is worth noting that countries have already started to gradually introduce the extended producer responsibility principle into their laws and regulations. The process of pollutant release and transfer registry (PRTR) development is also gradually gathering momentum. Related projects are already under way in Azerbaijan, Moldova and Belarus.

Having highlighted these complicated issues we call on the environmental ministers of the UN ECE region to step forward and announce sound waste management as the major theme for the next Environment for Europe ministerial conference.