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I. GOOD TO KNOW

Azerbaijan president Aliyev wins third term

According to official returns, Azeri President Ilham Aliyev overwhelmingly won a third five-year term in the election of 9 October. The best established of nine opposition candidates, Jamil Hasanli, won 5.5%. About 4000 people gathered in the capital the following weekend to dispute the results. The police allegedly beat and arrested a smaller number of the demonstrators.

Aliyev opened the path to a third five-year term by backing a 2009 referendum that scrapped presidential term limits.

With regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict the International Crisis Group (ICG) recently wrote the following: “Azerbaijan’s presidential election and Armenia’s susceptibility to political crisis in late 2013 make mutual restraint the immediate priority. Intensified regular contacts as well as meetings between ministers and parliamentarians can help in this regard and should be supported.”

More information here and here.

New government for Norway

Following the general election that took place on 9 September, a new government was formed in Norway on 16 October. The new government is a coalition between right-wing forces, the Conservative Party and the Progress Party.

Prime Minister is Ms Erna Solberg (52), Conservative.

Ms Tine Sundtoft (born 19 April 1967), also belonging to the Conservative Party, is Norway’s Climate and Environment Minister.

She studied economics and management at the Norwegian School of Management BI.

In 2005 she was a county executive in Vest-Agder county administration.

From 1995 to 2005 she served as the regional director of the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) for Agder.

Other positions include secretary general of the Young Conservatives from 1990 to 1992, political advisor to the Conservative Party’s parliamentary group, a member of Lillesand municipal council, the leader of the Conservative Party in Aust-Agder county and second deputy member of the Storting for Aust-Agder from 1989 to 1993.

Liberals asked to form Luxembourg government, sidelining Juncker

Xavier Bettel, the mayor of Luxembourg City, has been asked to form the next government of the country, sidelining long-serving Prime Minister Jean Claude Juncker.

Bettel, leader of the Democratic Party (DP) which increased its parliamentary presence after the election held on 20 October, is set to form a government with the Greens and Socialists, the royal palace said. The three parties have already said they are ready to work together in a coalition. The negotiations began 29 October and are expected to result in a new government by the end of November or early December.

If the talks are successful, it would be the first time since 1974 that a Luxembourg prime minister has not been chosen from the ranks of Juncker’s Christian Social People’s Party (CSV), which has ruled the country for all but five years of the post-war era.

The CSV lost three seats in the election, although remained the strongest party with 23 in the 60-seat parliament, while the DP added four seats and now has 13.

Juncker, the EU’s longest-serving head of government, has been a central figure in Europe’s debt crisis, leading the Eurogroup of euro zone finance ministers until early this year.

His departure, after early elections forced by a scandal over abuses of power by the secret service, would be unlikely to herald radically different policies on Europe or on the economy, among the healthiest in Europe.

More information here.
I. GOOD TO KNOW

INTERPOL and partners crack down on illegal e-waste trade

The illegal trade and disposal of electronic waste – known as e-waste or WEEE (waste electrical and electronic equipment) – is increasingly becoming a threat to global environmental health and security.

When illegally transported or dumped, electronic waste poses serious health risks because many electronic products contain hazardous substances such as mercury which can pollute the environment and cause health problems among the population. In addition, the valuable materials contained in some products, like gold, copper and palladium, attract the involvement of organized criminal groups.

To enhance the abilities of countries to combat this growing crime, INTERPOL and its partners have launched the Countering WEEE Illegal Trade (CWIT) project.

Coordinated by a consortium of seven partner organizations and funded by the European Commission’s Seventh Framework Programme, the two-year CWIT project was launched in September 2013 to create a set of recommendations for the European Commission and law enforcement agencies to assist them in countering the illegal trade of e-waste.

The project targets three main groups – government policy actors, law enforcement agencies and the electronics and e-waste industries. Its main goal is to identify the existing policy, regulatory, procedural and technical gaps which criminals exploit in order to illegally transport and dispose of e-waste, and to recommend solutions.

Among the tasks of the CWIT project are to estimate the volume of e-waste generated in Europe; assess the type of companies involved in exporting e-waste; analyse the involvement of organized crime; and develop a detailed understanding of the destinations and routes used for illegal e-waste shipments.

The CWIT project will also establish a platform for information exchange among the various actors involved in combating e-waste trade.

More information here.

Bikes outselling new cars

Car sales across Europe may have hit a 20-year low, but bike sales are going strong. So strong, in fact, that bikes have outsold cars in nearly every member country of the European Union, according to a surprising set of graphs from NPR.

In Italy, bikes outsold cars for the first time since World War II and in Spain for the first time ever. The flip coincides with Europe’s economic crisis, which wreaked havoc on household budgets and suppressed demand for big ticket purchases.

More information here.
II. UNEP ON THE GROUND

New Mercury Treaty explained to Geneva-based journalists

The Minamata Convention on Mercury was agreed to by governments last January and formally adopted as international law on 10 October 2013. On 17 October, Achim Steiner, UNEP's Executive Director, and Tim Kasten, Head of UNEP's Chemicals branch, briefed international journalists based in Geneva on the scope, objectives and expected results of such an ambitious convention.

The new treaty is the first new global convention on environment and health for close to a decade. Coming at a time when some multilateral negotiations have faced challenges, its successful negotiation, after a four-year process, provides a new momentum to intergovernmental cooperation on the environment.

Its agreement is also significant in that many countries, despite the lingering effects of the global financial crisis, remained prepared to commit resources to combating the harmful effects of mercury.

Japan, that hosted the diplomatic conference for governments to sign the treaty, became one of the first countries to sign the historic new international convention to control and reduce emissions and releases of the toxic metal into air, land and water and to phase out many products that contain mercury. At the diplomatic conference, 92 governments already signed the new treaty that will enter into force 90 days after ratification by 50 nations. The treaty is expected to take effect in 2016 at the earliest.

More information here.

Report released during International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action

More than 90 years after the League of Nations called for a ban on lead in paint, and despite the existence of many safe alternatives, young children and pregnant mothers in the developing world are still exposed to high levels of the dangerous toxin through unsafe paints.

A study by UNEP, released during the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action - organized by the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint, analysed enamel decorative paints from nine countries: Argentina, Azerbaijan, Chile, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Tunisia and Uruguay.

David Piper, Deputy Head, UNEP’s Chemicals branch, met with journalists in Geneva and illustrated the key findings of the report.

The report finds that the majority of the paints tested would not meet regulatory standards established in most highly industrialized countries and that some contain astonishingly high and dangerous levels of lead.

Few nations have established regulatory frameworks, but those that have generally exhibit lower lead paint levels.

“Each year, according to World Health Organization figures, childhood lead exposure contributes to an estimated 600,000 new cases of intellectual disabilities,” he added. “This report seeks to catalyze action by raising awareness among governments, manufacturers and consumers not just that the problem exists, but that there are cheap and safe alternatives to lead already in use that can lift this health burden in a very short time.”

WHO research shows that 99% of children affected by high exposure to lead live in low- and middle-income countries. An estimated 143,000 deaths per year result from lead poisoning and lead paint is a major contributor to this.

Worldwide, 30 countries have already phased out the use of lead paint. The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint, co-led by WHO and UNEP, has set a target of 70 countries by 2015.

Download the full report here.

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Serbia makes first switch to energy-efficient lighting

UNEP has worked hand in hand with the Serbian Ministry of Energy, Development and Environmental Protection, the University of Belgrade and the company OSRAM to demonstrate the multiple benefits of moving to efficient lighting in Serbia. The Faculty of Mechanical Engineering led a pilot project in its main Atrium, whereby all inefficient lighting was replaced. This is expected to result in annual savings of up to 75% of electricity consumption and reduce CO₂ emissions to 63.4 tonnes per year. The brand new lighting was inaugurated on 26 October on the occasion of University Open Day and has the potential to be replicated elsewhere in the country.

The project is part of the UNEP/Global Environment Facility (GEF) “en.lighten initiative”, whose purpose is to accelerate global market transformation to technologies in environmentally sustainable lighting. The initiative provides a coordinated global strategy and technical support for the phase-out of inefficient incandescent lighting. The project has brought together governments and lighting experts from over 40 international organizations to deliver guidance on the development and successful implementation of national and regional efficient lighting strategies. A global target of 2016 has been set for all countries to have phased out, be in the process of phasing out, or have policies in place to phase-out inefficient incandescent lamps.

The global transition to energy-efficient lighting globally would save billions of dollars in electricity costs and also boost economies and create green jobs in lighting and lighting-related industries. Improved access to electricity for millions of people would lead to increased productivity, income and quality of life. The transition to energy-efficient lighting is a win-win for the lighting industry, governments and end users worldwide.

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Innovative solutions for tracing international trade in python skins

CITES Secretary General, Mr John Scanlon, and high level UNCTAD officials, met with key players to discuss a traceability system that will ensure a sustainable and legal supply of South East Asian python skins pursuant to decisions taken by CITES Parties in Bangkok earlier this year.

A wide range of stakeholders took part in a meeting held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 17 to 18 October to discuss traceability systems for python skins. These included range State representatives from the CITES Management Authorities of Indonesia, Malaysia and Viet Nam, representatives from the private sector, including luxury brands and tanners involved in the trade in python skins, together with python specialists, international NGOs and database management experts. The meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the CITES Working Group on Snakes, Mr Mathais Lörtscher and facilitated by staff members of the CITES Secretariat and UNCTAD Biotrade programme.

The purpose of the meeting was to gather information on current options for traceability systems that could be applied to the trade in South East Asian python skins to ensure that the trade meets the CITES criteria for international trade, namely that the trade is sustainable, legal and verifiable. The information gathered during the meeting, including a scoping study and additional information that the CITES Secretariat may obtain from other sources, will be presented to CITES intergovernmental bodies, namely the Animal Committee and the Standing Committee in 2014 and 2015 that will make recommendations for eventual consideration by the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES in 2016.

Participants presented their current and proposed projects connected to traceability issues including barcode and RFID tagging, DNA and stable isotope traceability projects, public and private partnerships for sustainability and database management systems.

The presentations were followed by a round-table debate on the different options proposed for a viable marking system for python skins that could satisfy the requirements of both the CITES Parties and the private sector.

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Human influence on climate is clear, IPCC report says

Human influence on the climate system is clear, says the first volume of the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) that was released last September. According to the report, this is evident in most regions of the globe.

The Working Group I contribution to AR5 – “Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis” – provides a comprehensive assessment of the physical science basis of climate change. The report further states that warming in the climate system is unequivocal and since 1950 many changes have been observed throughout the climate system that are unprecedented. Each of the last three decades has been successively warmer at the Earth’s surface than any preceding decade since 1850.

The Geneva Environment Network Secretariat, in cooperation with the IPCC Secretariat, organized an event providing an overview of the Working Group I contribution to the AR5 report, which took place on 8 October in Geneva. Speakers included Renate CHRIST, IPCC Secretary, Gian-Kasper PLATTNER, Drafting Author of IPCC Summary for Policymakers and Director of Science at the Working Group I Technical Support Unit and José ROMERO, IPCC focal point in Switzerland. The event provided additional information on the scientific findings, the political willingness of the international community, and implications for the governments. The event is part of a series of outreach events that the IPCC is planning to present the results of AR5 as they are finalized.

AR5 will provide a clear view of the current state of scientific knowledge relevant to climate change.

For more information on the Working Group I contribution, please visit the IPCC website www.ipcc.ch or the Working Group I website for AR5 www.climatechange2013.org

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Information sharing platform to better preserve the Caspian

The five Caspian states are now sharing a common virtual platform to exchange information and data on the Caspian environment. This is one additional tool for Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan to better preserve, together, the Caspian and its unique biodiversity.

The virtual Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC) web portal was launched in its prototype form at the Fourth meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP4) to the Tehran Convention in Moscow (Russia) in December 2012, and welcomed by the Conference as an effective tool to collect, store and disseminate readily available environmental data. Now fully operational, CEIC is linked to the official website of the Convention and will play a central role in the unified reporting system and the Caspian Environmental Monitoring Programme, ensuring collective policy and decision-making to protect the Caspian Sea.

The CEIC web portal has been established by GRID-Arendal – the Center Collaborating with UNEP based in Norway and working closely with the five Caspian states and with the support of UNEP’s Regional Office for Europe, which hosts the Interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention on the protection of the Caspian Sea. Funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, along with financial support from BP Azerbaijan and its partners ensured the development of CEIC in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, which stipulates that a centralised database and information management system be established, as a virtual network to exchange information and data on the Caspian environment.

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UNEP organizes Youth Green Job Event at Committee of the Regions Open Days

Best practice, tangible solutions and concrete ideas for the creation of green jobs in youth-dominated industries were central to the interactive Youth Green Jobs workshop organized on 8 October by UNEP as part of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) Open Days. Panelists representing UNEP, the CoR and the private sector spoke about how green jobs initiatives had been successfully implemented in their geographical regions or areas of work.

Steven Stone, Chief of UNEP’s Economics and Trade Branch, spotlighted a range of projects that have been implemented in India, Bangladesh, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania which have created jobs with a strong environmental and social component and thereby contribute to sustainable development in these countries. Stone stressed the vital need for a green job transition in every part of the world, stating that “a business-as-usual approach is no longer feasible as planetary boundaries constrain economic growth as traditionally conceived”. CoR members Annamari Jaeger (Provence, FR) and Maria Victoria Palau Tàrrega (Valencia, ES) spoke about youth green jobs initiatives recently launched in their respective regions, whilst Cathy Cronin from Intel Ireland highlighted the important role that industry can play in the generation of green jobs.

The workshop was followed by a one-to-one environmental CV clinic provided by UNEP staff and networking drinks, during which young professionals and interns working in the environmental field were encouraged to join the Brussels Environment Interns Network. Led by UNEP’s intern team, this group regularly organizes events around the theme of green jobs.

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Steven Stone, Chief of UNEP’s Economics and Trade Branch
UN chemical experts recommend phasing out two industrial chemicals and adding three pesticides to the global watch list

Strengthening scientific synergies among global chemical agreements, Stockholm Convention's Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Review Committee held its ninth meeting at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) headquarters in Rome, 14-18 October, and its first joint meeting with the Rotterdam Convention’s Chemical Review Committee on 20 October 2013, just ahead of the Rotterdam Convention’s Chemical Review Committee’s ninth meeting (22 - 24 October).

The POPs Review Committee, a subsidiary body of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, recommended the inclusion of two additional chemicals under the Convention, polychlorinated napththalenes (PCN) and hexachlorobutadiene (HCBD), thus lining them up for eventual phase-out. PCN and HCBD are both industrial chemicals used widely for many years in various applications including wood preservation, paint and insulation (PCN) and industrial processes (HCBD). HCBD was also used as a fumigant in pest control.

The recommendations will be sent to the Parties to the Stockholm Convention for consideration at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (4-15 May, Geneva).

“Drawing upon its wealth of experience in tackling complex safety issues, the POPs Review Committee has recommended actions that will protect human lives and the environment against some of the world’s most dangerous toxic chemicals,” said Jim Willis, Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions.

The meeting was followed by a joint meeting between the POPs Review Committee and the Rotterdam Convention’s Chemical Review Committee on Sunday, 20 October. The committees exchanged information on their respective review processes, and discussed ways to strengthen scientific synergies and enhance collaboration and cooperation among the committees. The Chemical Review Committee, the scientific subsidiary body of the Rotterdam Convention met the following week (22-24 October). During the meeting, recommendations were made that methamidophos (pesticide) and fenthion 640 ULV (a severely hazardous pesticide formulation) be subject to the Convention’s Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure. The Committee also adopted the draft Decision Guidance Document (DGD) for trichlorfon, a pesticide recommended for inclusion in the Committee’s eighth meeting held in March 2012. The recommendations will be sent to the Parties to the Stockholm Convention for consideration at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, scheduled to be held from 4 to 15 May 2015 in Geneva.

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Chemicals management under review

The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), in collaboration with the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), organized the fifth Central and Eastern European (CEE) regional meeting on SAICM, in Skopje, FYROM, from 23 to 27 September.

The meeting provided an opportunity for extensive information exchange in areas that promote the achievement of the Strategic Approach 2020 goal and provided a platform for the development of future partnerships amongst key players in the region.

Some of the key highlights of the meeting outcome include: (i) selection of Poland, Mr Szymon Domagalski as the Regional Focal Point for the remainder of the term until ICCM4; (ii) identification of priority Strategic Approach implementation activities for the region that will also feed into the Overall Orientation and Guidance document; (iii) request to review synergies from a Strategic Approach perspective; and (iv) identified need and request for WHO to build capacity in the region for Poison Control Centres.

The meeting included sessions on manufactured nano-materials, children’s environmental health, work of the UNECE and synergies with SAICM, lead in paint, chemicals in products and highly hazardous pesticides. Participants reviewed regional progress on implementation of SAICM, identified regional priorities, exchanged experiences and shared information on activities undertaken at the national and regional levels.

The next regional SAICM meeting will be held in Pretoria, South Africa from 18-22 November.

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A regional approach for waste of ozone-depleting substances

The project “Demonstration of a Regional Strategy for ODS Waste Management and Disposal in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Region” was approved in April 2013 at the 69th Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, with UNIDO and UNEP as implementing agencies. It assists in the disposal of ozone-depleting substances (ODS) waste, more specifically chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC), and refrigerant mixtures that cannot be reused. The project seeks to demonstrate that a regional approach for this type of countries can be a cost efficient and sustainable solution for ODS waste disposal in the region.

The participating countries - Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, and Montenegro - consume low volumes of ozone depleting substances (ODS) and therefore require specific approaches and ODS management strategies compared to larger countries. In these countries, the amount of collected ODS is not enough for the establishment of local disposal facilities. The countries have already collected about 15 tonnes of ODS waste that are awaiting final disposal.

The start-up meeting of the Regional Strategy was held from 9-11 October in Vienna, Austria. The tender documentation for the destruction of a first batch of already-collected ODS waste was discussed and finalised. Participants agreed on the timeline for the various bidding processes to be launched in 2013. As a next step, Croatia will organize a stakeholder consultation meeting on the operation and handling of refrigerant identifiers, gas chromatographs as well as recovery, recycling and reclaim equipment.

Further training workshops will be held in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Montenegro to disseminate experience of the well developed collection and aggregation system of ODSs applied in Croatia. The ozone officers of the three countries are also cooperating with their colleagues dealing with persistent organic pollutants (POPs) to identify those areas in ODS and POPs management where joint efforts could lead to synergies and cost reductions, in particular the establishment of inventories, data collection as well as handling, transportation, storage and disposal.

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Chemicals management projects receive awards

The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) secretariat awarded eight certificates to the completed Quick Start Programme (QSP) funded project in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region and spotlighted one of the projects as having outstanding impact in the region at the recent CEE regional SAICM meeting.

The project entitled “Strengthening Capacities of Civil Society Organizations for National and Regional SAICM Implementation in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region” assisted Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan to strengthen civil society organizations capacities to ensure their meaningful participation in SAICM implementation at the national and regional levels. During project implementation, partners shared their experience and best practices in providing information to the public and to isolated communities.

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UNEP to launch Catchment Management Project for livelihoods, development and sustainable peace in North Darfur

The EU ambassador to Khartoum held a press conference on 24 October to inaugurate UNEP’s Wadi El Ku Catchment Management Project to be implemented in North Darfur. The Wadi El Ku Project is a collaborative effort between UNEP, the European Union and the Government of Sudan to improve the livelihoods of over 80,000 conflict-affected people in North Darfur, and to demonstrate sustainable and replicable approaches to natural resource management in the region. The project, which has a budget of €6.45m, funded by the European Union, will be implemented over a 3 year period from October 2013 by UNEP in partnership with the Government of North Darfur, the Darfur Regional Authority, and non-governmental and civil society organizations.

The Wadi El Ku Project is the culmination of 6 years of programme work in Sudan, which started in 2007 with a national post-conflict environmental assessment, conducted by UNEP at the request of the then Government of National Unity. The assessment provided an important environmental baseline for Sudan, by evaluating the state of the country’s environment and identifying the key environmental challenges that lay ahead.

The EU mission emphasized the project will be critical for supporting peace and sustainable development and will help build the capacity of local governments to manage natural resources and develop agriculture and livestock in the region.

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II. UNEP ON THE GROUND

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The international community welcomes Dr Briggs as new Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands

About 90 members of the environmental community of Geneva, including representatives of Permanent Missions to the UN, international organizations and NGOs met on 18 October to welcome Christopher Briggs as the new Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands at an event convened by the Geneva Environment Network Secretariat.

Participants to the event described the crucial role wetlands play in water management and supply, biodiversity and the protection against natural disasters, and climate change, but also the food, transport and pleasures wetlands provide.

Mark Halle, Executive Director of IISD-Europe, opened the session by highlighting that wetlands have great political and economical importance as well as biological value. He underlined the potential of the mandate of the Convention on Wetlands in protecting all these assets and the potential for an increased role for the Convention, given the increased importance of water in the sustainable development debate.

Sibylle Vermont, Deputy Head of Global Affairs at the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, expressed Switzerland’s support to the global water agenda, and warned that any sustainable development goals on water must not be limited to people’s rights to water and sanitation, but also include the ecosystems that deliver our water and manage our water system – namely our Wetlands.

Christopher Briggs highlighted the diversity of wetlands and the role they play in our everyday lives as they provide a wide range of services including our food, transport and enjoyment. Wetlands provide and manage the water we rely on to survive every day, but they also clean up dirty water and give us resilience against external shocks to all other ecosystems. Introducing the future directions of the Convention, Dr Briggs mentioned more direct and closer collaboration with new and old partners including the private sector, funders, environmental conventions and UN organizations, and increased direct communications and outreach to ensure worldwide ownership of the issues to find champions to maintain wetlands and widen efforts to save this shared resource.

The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands has additionally recently launched the World Wetlands Day 2014 campaign on “Agriculture and Wetlands”. More information and files to download are available here.

UNEP Brussels celebrates UN Day with sustainable food and recipes

On 20 October, the UNEP Brussels Liaison Office joined other UN offices at one of Brussels’ central points, the Grand Place, in celebrating the 68th anniversary of the United Nations and informing the public about the UN’s work. In line with the Think.Eat.Save campaign which was launched by UNEP and the FAO in January, UNEP’s stand this year revolved around the environmental impact of food waste and sought to promote, in a delicious and educative manner, the consumption of seasonal and vegetarian food, as well as yesterday’s leftovers.

Globally, an astonishing one third of the food produced for human consumption every year - approximately 1.3 billion tonnes - gets lost or wasted, with attendant negative social and environmental effects. Households and consumers can play an important role in addressing this problem through smart shopping and cooking. In order to raise awareness about this issue, members of the public were asked to participate in a small quiz on food waste before being offered a tasty sample of roasted butternut squash, apple crumble, fried leftover rice balls, or leek and feta quiche. Informational leaflets on food waste were distributed in French, Flemish and English, as well as various sustainable recipes for people to try at home.

A short video interview on the day with Chris Vanden Bilcke, head of the UNEP Liaison Office to the EU, can be found here.
UNEP side events on UNEA and Post-2015

UNEP organized two side events on the preparations of the First Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP and UNEP’s contribution to the Post-2015 development agenda and update on the implementation of 10YFP in the margins of the nineteenth session of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) on 24 and 25 October in Geneva. The event brought together several government representatives from the European region as well as others outside of Europe.

• UNEP side event on UNEA, 24 October

The UNEA event focused on the state of preparations for the 1st session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to UNEP (UNEA1) that will be held in Nairobi from 23 to 27 June 2014 and in particular the proposed structure, programme and themes of the session. Delegates acknowledged the Rio+20 outcome that led to strengthening UNEP with a universal character and reaffirming its authoritative role for setting the global environment agenda within the UN system. In that context, as UNEP prepares for the UNEA, member states highlighted three main issues that should further be addressed: the role of Ministers at UNEA, including themes to be discussed and structure of the outcome to gather political leadership at the highest level and keep the momentum; synergies between UNEA and HLPF; and meaningful stakeholders engagement in UNEA.

The event attracted several member states that do not have accreditation in Nairobi, but contributed actively to the discussion and requested additional opportunities for such substantive and equally informative dialogue on a regular basis.

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• Side event on Post-2015 development agenda and 10YFP on sustainable consumption and production, 25 October

At the Rio+20 Conference, member states decided on and adopted wide ranging measures for implementing sustainable development. UNEP is actively engaged in a number of activities to support and ensure the implementation of the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference agreed by member states. Two important issues are: the development of the post-2015 development agenda with sustainable development at its centre, and the adoption of the 10 Years Framework of Programmes (10YFP) on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) to accelerate the shift towards SCP patterns.

UNEP presented an overview of its contribution to the post 2015 development agenda based on its recently published discussion paper on embedding the environment in sustainable development goals (SDGs), which provides the latest scientific advice and guidance on how environmental sustainability can be integrated in SDGs. The objective of the event was to stimulate dialogue on integrated SDGs, and to stress the interlinkages of sustainable development, rather than to propose specific goals. During the interactive session, several governments, UN organizations and other stakeholders took the floor to express their appreciation for the integrated approach proposed by UNEP.

The second part of the side event provided updates on the implementation of the 10 Years Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10YFP) for which UNEP is serving as Secretariat and administering its Trust Fund. UNEP presented the 10YFP global framework of action to enhance international cooperation to accelerate the shift towards SCP in both developed and developing countries, and its overarching goal to support capacity building, and facilitate access to technical and financial assistance for developing countries for this shift, as well as to develop, replicate and scale up SCP and resource efficiency initiatives, at national and regional levels, decoupling environmental degradation and resource use from economic growth, and thus increase the net contribution of economic activities to poverty eradication and social development. Delegates were pleased with the work UNEP is doing to implement this intergovernmental mandate from Rio+20 and appreciated the approach taken to involve all actors in the implementation of the 10YFP activities (government, private sector, civil society, researchers, UN agencies, financial institutions, and other major groups).

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IN FOCUS

A partnership for action on Green Economy

PAGE partners at Governing Council, Nairobi, 19 Feb 2013

European Development Days (Brussels, 26-27 November)

UNEP will be involved in two events at the European Commission’s European Development Days, held 26-27 November in Brussels. The theme for this year is “A Decent Life for All by 2030 - Building a Consensus for a New Development Agenda”.

• Green economy and trade roundtable, 26 November

An inclusive and sustainable approach to trade is urgently needed. This roundtable discussion, held at the European Development Days, focuses on UNEP’s “Green Economy and Trade” Report: a response to Rio+20 where countries recognised green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as an important tool for achieving sustainable development.

The session will draw on reports and consultations on the Post-2015 development agenda and the various proposals for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will gather speakers’ views on trade, as well as the ‘means of implementation’ that many feel were missing from the Millennium Development Goals and which will be an important component in realising the SDGs and associated targets/indicators. Panellists include Ms Marcela Andia, Counsellor at the Embassy of Peru and Ms Anja von Moltke, Acting head of UNEP’s Trade, Policy and Planning Unit in the Economics and Trade Branch. More information here.

• DG CLIMA Panel on “Poverty Eradication and Climate Change: Friends or Foes?”, 27 November

The European Commission’s Directorate General for Climate Action has organized a panel discussion featuring Mr Ibrahim Thiaw, UNEP Deputy Executive Director, on possible synergies and conflicts between climate change adaptation and mitigation in development cooperation with poverty eradication. Other speakers include Ms Connie Hedegaard, EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Ms Aisa Kirabo Kacyira, UN-Habitat Deputy Executive Director.

More information here.
Second European Forest Week, 9-13 December. Be aware! Get involved!

The “European Forest Week” is an initiative by a group of 15 partners to promote sustainable forest management and raise awareness of how the forest sector contributes to a green economy. This year the theme is “The role of forests and forest products in a Green Economy”.

Interested stakeholders can contribute to the Week by holding side or parallel events during “Metsä2013”, the joint session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) European Forestry Commission in Rovaniemi, Finland, as well as by organizing national celebrations throughout Europe. A list of side and parallel events taking place in Rovaniemi is available on the UNECE website.

National stakeholders are invited to organize events to address forest issues of national relevance. In-country activities may include: celebrations of forests at the national and local levels; specific events by private or public organizations; competitions, exhibits, fairs, school activities; videos and publications.

Interested stakeholders can upload their events and share them on a FAO web-based platform. There, they can also find suggested key messages of the Week, a quiz and other communication tools.

For more information and if you wish to organize an event, please contact the UNECE/FAO joint secretariat at efw-see@unece.org.

“PAGE responds to country-led demand for support and training on how to implement green economy policies,” said Stone. “Countries will hear something on green economy, and ask us, for instance, “How do we reposition ourselves with respect to commodity markets where prices are declining?”

“When we talk about green economy policies, we talk about policies which bring sustainability into the heart of economic and fiscal policy making,” he continued. “It’s about taxes, and investments, and expenditure from the public sector that create jobs and wealth without depleting the natural resources of a country.”

Drawing on expertise of its various members, PAGE assists to build enabling conditions in participating countries by shifting investment and policies towards the creation of a new generation of assets, such as clean technologies, resource efficient infrastructure, well-functioning ecosystems, green skilled labour and good governance.

Read the full “Voices & Views” article, and watch the video interview with Steven Stone here.