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Water, one of Earth's most precious resources

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## Government reshuffle in Norway

**E**rik Solheim, of the Socialist Left Party (SV), was replaced as Minister of International Development and Minister of the Environment.

Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg marched out of the weekly Council of State at the Royal Palace on 23 March with three new members of the coalition government he leads. "Sometimes it's necessary for change and renewal," Stoltenberg said.

Stoltenberg described the Government's new ministers Inga Marte Thorkildsen, Bård Vegar Solhjell and Heikki Holmås as all "energetic" and committed politicians who have more experience than their relatively young ages would imply. Thorkildsen, age 36, will take over the ministry in charge of children's and equality issues, Solhjell, age 40, will lead the environmental ministry and Holmås, age 39, will take over a ministry dealing with development and foreign aid. The changes take effect immediately.

Erik Solheim is tipped to be named Norway's next ambassador to the United Nations.

Source: [www.newsinenglish.no](http://www.newsinenglish.no)



## Austria seeks Europeans to sign a petition against nuclear power

**A**ustrian Chancellor Werner Faymann expects petitions to abandon nuclear power to start in at least six European Union Member States this year.

Under the EU's Lisbon Treaty, petitions including at least one million signatures can seek legislative proposals from the European Commission, and Faymann said such rules should be ratified by June.

This would pave the way for anti-nuclear activists to start garnering support for a Europe-wide exit from nuclear energy. The road to the dismantling of all nuclear plants in the EU will be a long one, but immediately there should be funds only for safety and the exit plan.

Austria is a vocal opponent of nuclear energy and banned atomic plants in 1974.

Germany has decided to close all its reactors by 2022 and Italians have voted to ban atomic power for decades to come, but Britain and France remain committed to the technology. Energy policy in the EU is primarily a matter for national governments.

A draft UN report says that eighty percent of the world's nuclear power plants are more than 20 years old, raising safety concerns, a year after Japan's Fukushima disaster. About 70% of the world's 254 research reactors have been in operation for more than 30 years "with many of them exceeding their original design life," it said.

However, many operators have begun programmes, or expressed their intention, to run reactors beyond their planned design lifetimes, said the International Atomic Energy Agency document.

Source: EMP Weekly Market Review



## Greek Finance Minister quits for election

Greek Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos resigned his government job on 19 March 2012 after being elected to lead the Greek Socialist Party (PASOK) in the run-up to elections. Opinion polls suggest that PASOK will do badly in the elections because it has been involved in imposing deep austerity measures in the last two-and-a-half years since the beginning of a debt crisis left by the conservative predecessors. Greece still faces huge challenges in enacting reforms linked to its second bailout put in place about a week ago under interim Prime Minister Lucas Papademos, who has led a coalition between the socialists - in power up to late last year - and the conservative New Democracy party. The interim coalition government was established to restore confidence, negotiate a second rescue move and ensure promises to reform are applied. Early legislative elections are to be held by mid-May under an agreement between the conservatives and PASOK, which underpins the interim arrangement headed by PM Papademos, a former central banker. The number two at the Ministry of Finance, Philippos Sahinidis, who had been in his job since October 2009, became Minister of Finance on 21 March 2012. Sachinidis was among the ministry officials overseeing the budget and in charge of the austerity measures implemented in Greece in exchange for loans from the EU and the IMF.

Sources: 9News, 20 March 2012 and GlobalPost.com, 21 March 2012





## Finally Moldova has a new President

On 16 March 2012, an independent judge, Nicolae Timofti, who heads Moldova's supreme council of magistrates, was elected president of Moldova in a parliamentary vote, ending nearly three years of political stalemate. The 39 Communist MPs, who reject the Government's goal of integration with the EU, boycotted the vote. The former Soviet republic has had no full-time president since Vladimir Voronin, a Communist, resigned in September 2009. Mr Timofti secured 62 votes in the 101-seat parliament - one more than the minimum needed. Before the election on 16 March 2012, Moldova had had three acting presidents. Russian-speaking separatists controlling the breakaway Trans-Dniester region do not recognise the Moldovan Government in Chisinau.

Source: BBC news

## New Executive Secretary for UNECE

Sven Alkalaj, a national of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has been appointed as the new Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), located in Geneva. Mr Alkalaj served as Foreign Minister of his country and Ambassador in Washington and Brussels, and has dealt with political and economic issues at the national, regional, and international levels.



## Denmark aims to get 50% of all electricity from wind power

The country aims to supply 35% of its total energy from renewables by 2020 and 100% by 2050.

The Danish Government has stepped up its green energy and carbon reduction targets for 2020, hailing the plan as the "broadest, greenest, and most long-term energy agreement" it has ever reached.

The Danish minister for climate, energy and building, Martin Lidegaard, confirmed on 23 March that Parliament had agreed a new set of goals designed to wean the country off oil and gas.

The deal's purpose is to see Denmark cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 34% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels, and decrease energy consumption by more than 12% compared to 2006.

It also aims at supplying 35% of its total energy from renewables, with half of its electricity delivered by wind farms. The agreement also covers advances in renewable heat, smart grids and biogas, among other green technologies.

"Denmark will once again be the global leader in the transition to green energy," said Mr Lidegaard. "This will prepare us for a future with increasing prices for oil and coal. Moreover, it will create some of the jobs that we need so desperately, now and in the coming years."

The agreement will help Denmark achieve its goal of supplying 100% of its energy from renewables by 2050, including electricity, heating, industry and transport.

Mr Lidegaard added that the commitments would prevent consumer energy bills from soaring, by reducing the country's dependence on the volatile price of fossil fuels.

The commitment could also provide a boost to efforts across the European Union to increase its carbon emissions reduction target to 30% from the current 20%.

Earlier in March, Poland was the only state to vote against the shift, arguing the EU should wait for other countries to take similar measures first.

Source: BBC news

## Ozzy and Zoe Ozone visited the World Meteorological Organization

Ozzy and Zoe Ozone, UNEP's cartoon characters whose mission is to defend our planet, dropped down from their home in the stratosphere on 22 and 23 March to deliver important messages to children and adults about how they can protect the environment. During the 9th International Weather & Climate Forum and the World Meteorological Day, they enlisted children in their mission to combat ozone depletion, climate change and a group of 12 nasty chemicals called Persistent Organic Pollutants. Their goal is a safer, healthier and less polluted world for children and mums and dads, too. They have got a lot of cool ideas and tips on how to do all this, which can be found online at <http://www.ozzyozone.org/>





### Experts from Europe part of UNEP mission to study Japan earthquake debris

A year after a massive 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami struck Eastern Japan, European experts in post-disaster waste management headed to the affected area as part of a UNEP international mission.

Organised at the request of the Government of Japan, the week-long UNEP expert mission to the post-disaster zone included visits to waste management and debris recycling facilities, and meetings with local authorities and other parties involved in the clean-up effort.

An unprecedented volume of debris was generated by the Great East Japan Earthquake. Estimated to cost above 10 billion dollars, this will be most expensive disaster debris management project in history.

The expert mission had two objectives: firstly to bring global experience in disaster response to the Japanese officials who are handling this massive challenge; and secondly to document and share the methods and lessons learned in Japan to help other countries be better prepared to handle debris generated by future natural disasters.

The mission was led by Muralee Thummarukudy, Chief of Disaster Risk Reduction at UNEP's Post-Conflict and Disaster Management Branch in Geneva, which jointly staged the mission with UNEP's International Environmental Technology Centre, in Osaka, Japan. Also part of the eight-member expert team were David Smith, a UK asbestos specialist; Yves Barthelemy, Head of the Geomatics Department at Paris-Est University; Mario Burger, Head of Physics at Switzerland's Speiz Laboratory; and Thorsten Kallnischkies, a German industrial waste management expert.

The mission is also the first step in setting up an international network of disaster-debris management specialists.

In conjunction with Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNEP will produce a video and a report containing the key successful initiatives and technologies deployed in Japan.

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See also [www.unep.or.jp](http://www.unep.or.jp) or [www.unep.org/disastersandconflicts](http://www.unep.org/disastersandconflicts).

### Defining the roadmap for the future of the Caspian Convention

The Tehran Convention for the protection of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea has entered a crucial phase in strengthening the ownership of the process by the littoral states. Delegations of Azerbaijan, the I.R. of Iran, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan met in Moscow from 12 to 15 March to define the roadmap in preparation of the fourth Conference of the Parties (COP4) to be held in the Russian Federation at the end of 2012. Back-to-back on 16 March 2012, the countries also held the final Steering Committee Meeting of the UNDP/GEF "CaspEco" project, which supported the Tehran Convention process over the last three years and whose actions will be followed-up thereunder. With decisions to be taken on the location of the Secretariat in the region, on the signing of three Protocols to the Convention (land-based sources of pollution, transboundary environmental impact assessment and biodiversity) as well as on the establishment of an environmental monitoring framework, COP4 will be a decisive event in shaping the future work to protect the Caspian Sea environment.

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## Solutions-focus at 2012 World Water Forum

Over 25,000 participants from all over the globe met in Marseille between 12 and 17 March to discuss the water challenges of 2012. Solutions were the clear focus, helping to put water issues higher on all political agendas. The solutionsforwater.org platform echoed the conference discussions and innovations presented in the Forum's "village of solutions" - making information widely available. The Forum produced a ministerial declaration calling for a "new approach" to water policy ahead of Rio+20.



UNEP's Thierry Lucas from the joint European Commission/UNEP project "KNOSSOS" was at the Forum to present a recent policy brief on water scarcity. The project focuses on bridging the gap between science and policy, therefore providing important scientific research to policymakers in discussions on future planning and crafting roadmaps for achieving commitments.

The UNEP report, entitled "Releasing the Pressure: Water Resource Efficiencies and Gains for Ecosystems Services", which was produced by researchers at the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), urges policymakers and resource managers to shift from the traditional focus on water productivity per unit of agricultural yield ("more per crop drop"), to a broader view of the concept, which would include ecosystem services.

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## Environment and Security Initiative at the 6<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) presented some of its most recent results at the 6th World Water Forum on 12-17 March in Marseille, France.

On the first day of the Forum, ENVSEC's work in the Dniester river basin was featured by the delegations of Moldova and Ukraine at the high-level event "Adapting to climate change in Europe", co-chaired by the acting head of UNECE and the EU Commissioner for climate change.

ENVSEC results in the Dniester basin included:

- Basin-wide analysis of the river monitoring system, joint expedition from the source to the mouth of the Dniester, joint water sampling by health authorities and joint field ichthyological research
- The development of a pilot Dniester geo-information system (GIS) and the first Atlas of the Dniester River basin
- Capacity building of a number of authorities in Moldova and Ukraine (training workshops conducted, equipment, computers and software purchased for health authorities and other partner organisations)
- A number of festivals and youth art competitions, the Day of the Dniester, a tree-planting campaign, and a press tour with the resulting comprehensive media coverage; 47 information boards were produced and installed throughout the basin as means for raising public awareness.

More information about the 6th World Water Forum:  
<http://www.worldwaterforum6.org/en/>

More information on ENVSEC Dniester Project: <http://dniester.org/>  
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## UN-led meeting on managing e-waste in Africa

On 16 March, priority actions for reducing the environmental and health impact of growing levels of electrical and electronic waste (e-waste), alongside promoting the sector's potential for green jobs and economic development were agreed by representatives from 18 African states, the United Nations, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and academia.

The actions were agreed on the final day of the Pan-African Forum on E-Waste, which was held at the Nairobi headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Organised by the Secretariat of the Basel Convention, based in Geneva, and UNEP, with support from the Government of Kenya and private sector companies including Dell, HP, Nokia and Philips, the forum was the first event of its kind on the continent. It focused on long-term solutions to the rising levels of obsolete mobile phones, refrigerators, televisions and other e-products in Africa.

Increasing domestic consumption of electronic products, coupled with the ongoing import of waste electronics into Africa from other regions, means that the continent is set to generate a higher volume of e-waste than Europe by 2017.

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## 22 March 2012: World Water Day

On the occasion of the World Water Day 2012 on Thursday 22 March, UN staff in Geneva were invited to visit the stand in front of the Cafeteria entrance at the Palais des Nations, where representatives of UNOG, the Geneva Green Group and the Services Industriels de Genève (SIG) provided information on the recently-launched campaign "Drink tap water, Reduce waste!". Visitors were reminded that drinking tap water using glass bottles, glasses or mugs is reducing our daily impact on the environment significantly.

Consider drinking tap water, act now and make the difference!

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## Architects and engineers meet at the Regional Ozone Network for Europe and Central Asia



Group photo of last year's ECA network meeting in Belgrade showing building individual split-systems in the background

The phase-out of ozone-depleting hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) is one of the remaining challenges under the Montreal Protocol. For the first time, refrigeration & air-conditioning (RAC) experts and architects met to explore the potential benefits of closer cooperation at the early design stage of sustainable buildings and cities. This would require moving away from the traditional sequential work sharing between architects, city planners and RAC engineers, fitting the technical equipment into already designed buildings. Such cooperation could result into optimised, integrated and not-in-kind solutions for sustainable buildings including aspects of energy efficiency and waste management. The building sector is one of the fastest growing economic sectors and a significant share of the HCFCs as well as energy is consumed in buildings. Once design and investment decisions are taken, it is usually difficult and costly to take corrective actions during the lifetime of buildings, which in most cases exceeds 50 years by far. It is therefore welcome that organisations such as REHVA and the Finnish Green Building Council promote sustainable RAC solutions in the building sector. For more detailed information on the meeting of the Regional Ozone Network for Europe & Central Asia (ECA network) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 27-30 March 2012, please refer to the meeting website at: [www.unep.org/ozonaction/ecanetwork/](http://www.unep.org/ozonaction/ecanetwork/)

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## Timber and aquatic species dominate CITES scientific meetings

*Experts recommend measures to reduce unsustainable trade in valuable timber, agarwood, corals, dolphins, sharks and seahorses, among other species.*

Over 150 experts met in Geneva from 15 to 20 March to attend the first part of the 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Animals Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The five-days in Geneva focused heavily on aquatic species and experts recommended cautious export quotas for a variety of species and countries, including seahorses from Southeast Asia, giant clams from the Pacific and sturgeons from the Caspian Sea. Furthermore, the Committee recommended that exports of live dolphins from Solomon Islands should be limited to a maximum of 10 animals a year. The Committee discussed a list of shark species submitted by member States that may require additional action to enhance their conservation and management.

The Animals Committee then moved to Dublin, Ireland for a joint meeting with the Plants Committee, focusing on common challenges. This joint meeting was opened by Jimmy Deenihan, Irish Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The Committees agreed important guidelines on sustainable use and a statement for the upcoming meeting about the establishment of an Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). The Plants Committee ended this series of scientific meetings analysing trade in mahogany, cedar and agarwood and formulating recommendations to put before the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES to be held in Bangkok, Thailand in March 2013.

CITES Secretary-General, John E. Scanlon, said: "It is essential that we provide CITES Parties with sound science and the best available information and advice upon which to base their decisions at the 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties. We are most grateful to the Committee for the scientific expertise they bring to the work of CITES, which is a critical part of the success of our Convention".

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*Irish Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, CITES Secretary-General and Co-Chairs of Plants and Animals Committees*



# UK Government donor visits UNEP projects in Sudan

The British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, Stephen O'Brien, visited Sudan in early March and his programme included site visits and briefings on joint efforts with UNEP to improve the sustainable and equitable governance of natural resources.

The Republic of Sudan is facing serious natural resource challenges in the face of population growth, urbanisation, climate change and the legacy of conflict.

UKaid from the Department for International Development is the major donor to UNEP in Sudan. Steady progress with restoring traditional livelihoods, sustainably managing scarce water resources and adapting to climate change were among the tangible environmental improvements conveyed to Mr O'Brien.

Officials from UNEP and the Government accompanied Mr O'Brien to sites in Darfur where he viewed progress on repairs to dams damaged and neglected over the past years of conflict.

With large movements of people to Darfur's camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) during the conflict years, stress on the groundwater aquifers has become acute, with some water tables dropping by as much as 10 metres.

Mr O'Brien learned about groundwater monitoring and drought contingency planning at camps where UNEP has raised major concerns over dwindling water supplies, but is working with local authorities and humanitarian organisations to improve the management of water resources.

"This is an excellent example of how the British people's well-targeted development support will meet the needs of the Sudanese people in El Fasher and Abu Shouk," Mr O'Brien said.

UNEP's Sudan Programme Manager, Mr Robin Bovey, said that at this time of upheaval for Sudan, progress with managing natural resources provides hope for environmentally sustainable recovery and development, and he thanked Mr O'Brien for the British Government's ongoing support.

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## Environmental challenges of political relations in Central Asia

Jan Dusik, Acting Director, UNEP Regional Office for Europe, together with Laura Rio, Senior Manager, Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC), participated in a seminar on "Sustainable development: A key factor for stability and peace in Central Asia" organised by the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Democracy for Central Asia in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and delivered a presentation on various forms of UNEP's engagement in the Central Asian subregion. Using the occasion, the UNEP delegation met with Uzbek representatives, observed the environment and health issues in the Surkandarya region bordering Tajikistan, and met with representatives of the Government of Tajikistan in Dushanbe. Potential solutions for resolving transboundary environmental issues could be found through ENVSEC under UNEP's leadership, subject to agreement with all partners and mobilization of adequate resources.

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## €30.2 million agreement with European Commission – ENRTP partnership

UNEP's new strategic cooperation with the European Commission launched last December has now been operationalized. The partnership brings the two institutions together for programming where priorities for projects overlap and can therefore be implemented collaboratively. The operation is financed by the Commission's so-called "ENRTP" (Thematic Strategy for the Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources). Representatives of UNEP and MEA Secretariats met with Commission's counterparts in the Directorate-Generals for Environment, Development and Climate Action on 29 March 2012. This second annual joint committee meeting discussed the details of implementation and approved some 30 projects. UNEP's Office for Operations head, Christophe Bouvier, introduced Sandrine Marques as the ENRTP coordinator sitting in UNEP's Brussels office.

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## Legally binding agreement on Europe's forests discussed in Vienna

The first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe took place from 27 February to 2 March in Vienna, Austria. His Excellency, Mr Lars Peder Brekk, Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food, made the opening speech and reminded the delegates of the Oslo Ministerial Decision, which was taken at the Forest Europe Ministerial Conference in Oslo in June 2011, establishing the INC. The Chair of the INC, Mr Jan Heino, was introduced to the Committee and he, in turn, introduced the delegates representing the countries designated as bureau members by the Ministers in the Oslo Ministerial Mandate: Austria, France, Poland, Norway, Czech Republic, Turkey, Ukraine, Russian Federation, and Spain (as permanent observer given its role as current Chair of the Forest Europe process).

The meeting focused on the "non-paper" that had been developed by a working group set up by Forest Europe during the Norwegian chairmanship, containing possible elements for a legally binding agreement on forests. UNEP participated as observer and gave inputs from the floor. At the end of the meeting, based on the discussion about the "non-paper", the Secretariat was requested to draft a negotiating text to be discussed at the Second Session to be held in Bonn in September 2012 at the invitation of the Government of Germany. The Government of Turkey offered to host the Third Session at a date to be determined during the next meeting. UNECE and UNEP called for clarification of the independence of the INC process, so as to be able to provide secretariat services using UN human and financial resources. However, the INC did not take a decision on this matter and left it up to the INC Bureau to explore re-allocation of the responsibilities of the secretariat as defined by the rules of procedure of the Oslo Ministerial Mandate.

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## Global Human Development Forum in Istanbul

On 22 and 23 March, UNDP held the Global Human Development Forum in Istanbul, co-hosted by the Turkish Ministry of Development.

The Forum's main objective was to better link the 2011 Human Development Report's global findings and proposals to specific policy conversations at the global and country levels, and to the Rio+20 Conference deliberations. The Forum sought to bring together a diverse group of policymakers, academics and leading personalities from around the world, and place human development at the core of the discussions of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainability. The two-day meeting concluded with the adoption by consensus of an "Istanbul Declaration" articulating commonly agreed goals and priorities for the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in June.

Giving the keynote address for the panel on a "Social Contract: Building Equity and Sustainability," Ms Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland and co-chair of the SG's High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability said: "you can't choose your gender, you are either a man or a woman, but you CAN choose equality..."

UNEP was a member in the panel of a special event on 23 March to introduce the pan-European Rio+20 inter-agency report: *From Transition to Transformation: Inclusive and Sustainable Development in Europe and Central Asia*. UNEP presented the recommendations of Chapter IV on Sustainable Consumption, one of its contributions to the inter-agency report.

More information: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/forum2012/>  
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Ali Babacan,  
Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey

## Eastern Europe and Central Asia should transition towards sustainable development now or pay more in the future, says UN report

Europe and Central Asia need to remove fossil fuel subsidies, invest in "green" jobs, and establish social protection floors to ensure a sustainable future, according to the findings of a UN report launched on 23 March in Istanbul, Turkey.

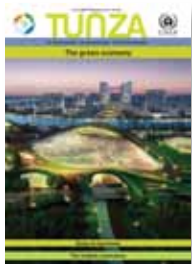
The report, *From Transition to Transformation: Sustainable and Inclusive Development in Europe and Central Asia*, was launched at the first Global Human Development Forum held in Istanbul on 22-23 March, which brought together high-level experts from governments, corporations, civil society and international organisations, to examine the global policy changes required to ensure a sustainable future for people today and for generations to come.

The report reveals that a sustainable economy can increase competitiveness, and lower the incidence of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. It also demonstrates that, by removing harmful subsidies, it can create savings that can increase equity.

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## UNEP flagship magazine for young people on green economy



The latest issue of the UNEP flagship magazine for young people is devoted to Green Economy and features practical examples of how a shift to a green economy enhances our efforts to achieve sustainability and improve human well-being and social equity, whilst reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. We invite you to read and learn about inspiring projects and activities undertaken by young people to correct that disconnect in "business-as-usual". Download a free copy at [http://www.unep.org/pdf/Tunza\\_9.4\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.unep.org/pdf/Tunza_9.4_Eng.pdf)

## International Olympic Committee Continental Seminar on Sport and Environment for Europe



The Sport and Environment Seminar for Europe was organised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Polish Olympic Committee (POC) in collaboration with UNEP and the city of Wroclaw (Poland), on 1 and 2 March. The seminar brought together 32 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) from Europe and several stakeholders representing the City of Wroclaw, the Environment Ministry, the Euro 2012 Championship (Poland), and the Innsbruck 2012 and Lillehammer 2016 Youth Olympic Games (YOG).

The seminar was organised in the framework of the IOC's policy on sustainable development to strengthen the role of European National Olympic Committees to raise awareness and take the necessary actions toward enhancing environmental governance, policies and engagement with regard to sustainability in sports. It focused on the implementation of the recommendations of the 13th Olympic Congress, the IX World Conference on Sport and the Environment; and contribution to the upcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), Rio +20 (June 2012).

The seminar highlighted several sport and environment initiatives, activities and policies implemented by NOCs at the national level in partnership with ministries of sport, youth, environment; sport federations; sport-based academic institutions and NGOs; and schools and clubs. It also included the status of preparations for and integration of sustainability principles and programmes for the Euro 2012 Championship (Poland), the Innsbruck 2012 Youth Olympic Games, and the Lillehammer 2016 Youth Olympic Games respectively.

The participants were briefed on the preparations and the main issues linked to Rio+20 and the important role of the sports movement in the promotion of sustainable development. They were also presented with the findings of one of UNEP's publications "Keeping track of our changing environment" to showcase the significant changes and pressures since the Earth Summit in 1992, and the need for action to protect our natural ecosystems.

Recognising the environment as the third pillar of the Olympic Movement and the movement's contribution to sustainability in the last two decades, the participants committed themselves to lobby with their respective governments to put sustainable development principles high on their agenda as they prepare for Rio+20.

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## National Capacity Self-Assessment in Bosnia and Herzegovina



UNEP, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, organised the closing event of the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) project and the national Rio+20 Conference consultations on 20 and 21 February in Sarajevo, BiH

NCSA forms part of the activities of the Global Environment Fund (GEF), whose main focus is to strengthen the country's capacity to adequately cope with managing priority environmental issues and contribute to the global improvement of the state of environment.

After fifteen months of intensive work, a document was produced containing the state and availability of the current legal and institutional framework and capacities in BiH, an overview of further needs and priorities, as well as an Action Plan for the establishment of such needs.

The event was an opportunity to discuss results of the NCSA process with a wide range of country stakeholders, and open the national consultations on Rio+20. The meeting also served as a platform for co-operation of national and international environmental experts and opened new perspectives for environmental policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

More information:  
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# Meeting on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity scoping study in Tbilisi, Georgia



MEPWA/Albania

On 14 and 15 March, the Ministry of Environment Protection (MOEP) welcomed Nicolas Bertrand and Ivonne Higuero from UNEP to a first round of meetings with potential stakeholders in The Economics of Ecosystem and Biodiversity (TEEB) scoping study supported, amongst others, by UNEP.

The mission had three main objectives: meeting stakeholders and experts to decide, in collaboration with the MOEP, on the governance scheme for the study, including the selection of lead organisations and consultants; gather relevant information on past and/or ongoing projects that could be an asset for the scoping study; and agree with the MOEP on a timetable and the allocation of responsibilities between UNEP and the MOEP.

All the meetings proved to be very useful for UNEP in achieving the three above objectives. All stakeholders showed an interest in TEEB and a strong motivation to take part in the scoping study in their areas of competence. The UNEP team gathered information on existing biophysical data, a first rough assessment of priority ecosystems and a number of valuation-related projects - either just finalised or due to be so in the next few months - that could be useful as input to the study.

At the meeting with the Biodiversity Protection Service and the Deputy Minister of the MOEP, Mr George Zedginidze, it was decided that the WWF-Caucasus Programme was best placed to lead the scoping study in Georgia, with the supervision of an expert that UNEP would hire.

UNEP also pointed out the need for an advisory group that would contribute to the study with their scientific and political knowledge and provide a platform for peer review and validation of data.

The TEEB encourages a systematic appraisal of the economic contribution of biodiversity and ecosystem services to human well-being and is supportive of sustainable development, especially in the context of a transition to a green economy.

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## New proposed transboundary protected area in the Balkans

On 15 and 16 March, in Plav (Montenegro) UNEP Vienna Office – Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention - and NGO Triton (Montenegro) organised the first trilateral stakeholder meeting in the proposed transboundary protected area “Prokletije / Bjeshkët e Nemuna Mountains” under the ENVSEC-SEE Initiative.

The transboundary eco-region of Bjeshkët e Nemuna and Prokletije Mountains is located in the border region of FYR Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo. It encompasses areas of unique alpine landscape and is one of the most important hotspots for the protection of biodiversity in the Balkans, and in the whole of Europe.

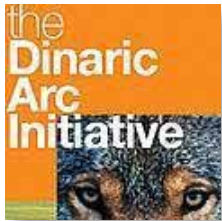
According to a UNEP feasibility study published in 2010, transboundary cooperation on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development of this region can in the future involve six adjacent protected areas and could reach some 200 thousand hectares in size, providing opportunities for common management of natural resources and facilitating the development of sustainable tourism in the region.

Representatives of nature conservation authorities, protected area administrations, local municipality authorities and non-governmental organisations from the neighbouring border regions discussed common priorities of cooperation and developed ideas for joint action in the mountain area of Prokletije and Bjeshkët e Nemuna Mountains.

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## Partner Meeting of the Dinaric Arc Initiative in Vienna



On 30 March, the Dinaric Arc Initiative (DAI) meeting was held at the Vienna International Centre, Austria. The meeting focused on the way forward for strengthening the cooperation on the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions in South Eastern Europe (SEE). The Dinaric Arc Initiative is a partnership of WWF, IUCN, UNESCO-BRESCE, UNDP, UNEP, FAO, EuroNatur, SNV, REC, ECNC, and CIC, whose purpose is to add value to the ongoing programmes and activities of all its partners, and put in place new specific actions aiming at the preservation of the wealth and integrity of the Dinaric Arc eco-region. DAI supports initiatives for conservation, preservation of cultural heritage and diversity, and promotes inter-cultural dialogue and transboundary collaboration and scientific cooperation among local actors in the region.

More information: [http://www.cbddinaricarc.com/pdf/DAI\\_Brochure\\_main4a.pdf](http://www.cbddinaricarc.com/pdf/DAI_Brochure_main4a.pdf)  
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## Judgement day for the Drop by Drop competition



The UN Regional Information Centre (UNRIC) - UNEP joint European ad competition - the Future We Want: Drop by Drop - has closed for submissions, and selection and judging are already underway. Pictured left is a Ukrainian submission from over 3500, which came among the top ones in the public vote that took place (although that is just one stage of the selection process to be continued). Designers from across the Pan-European region who entered will have to wait until World Environment Day on 5 June to find out about the overall winner who will be taking away 5000 Euros provided by the Nordic Council. Browse the entries online at [www.dropbydrop.eu](http://www.dropbydrop.eu)

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## UNEP Brussels Head of Office speaks at climate & security event

On 21 March, in the European Parliament, UNEP Brussels head Chris Vanden Bilcke addressed the audience of a conference on the topic of building institutional preparedness for security risks resulting from climate change. Mr Vanden Bilcke highlighted the need for the EU to stay up-to-date on policy developments in order to respond quickly and emerge as a leader on the issue of climate and security. The resources available to the EU are abundant, he said, and include several UNEP publications such as past and future emissions gap reports, a forthcoming KNOSSOS brief on climate change, developments in the MCA4Climate project, and reports on short-lived climate forcers and increased climatic threats to the Sahel region.

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## Brussels debut of film on plastic marine debris

On 22 March, Cine-ONU, in partnership with UNEP, hosted the world premier 'Plastic Shores', directed by Edward Scott-Clarke from the UK, who completed the film only days before its Brussels showing. The film explored the links between our plastic consumption habits and the mass amounts of plastic debris littering the world's oceans. Significant attention was given to the 5<sup>th</sup> International Marine Debris Conference May 2011 that UNEP co-hosted, and the film features UNEP's ecosystem programme coordinator David Osborn. Scott-Clarke told UNEP representatives that he hopes to extend his exploration of threats to marine habitats in his next film. Check out the film at [www.plasticshoresfilm.com](http://www.plasticshoresfilm.com)

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## Mountain partnership takes action ahead of Rio+20



The Mountain Partnership is a voluntary alliance of partners dedicated to improving the lives of mountain people and protecting mountain environments around the world. UNEP is member of the Mountain Partnership based at FAO in Rome; UNEP provides the environmental reference centre and the Hub for Eastern Europe within the Mountain Partnership Secretariat.

The international community recognised the importance of mountains at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 through adoption of Chapter 13 in Agenda 21. Chapter 13 underscored the role of mountains in global sustainable development. The framework conditions for sustainable development have changed significantly since the Rio summit in 1992. This is the reason why the Mountain Partnership including the Secretariats of the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions have submitted an amendment on para 94 of the zero draft document of Rio+20 that highlights the importance of regional conventions for the protection and development of mountain regions. This contribution is in line with the language of the zero draft document and is supported by several Alpine and Carpathian countries.

At the upcoming 3<sup>rd</sup> Intersessional Meeting of UN CSD in New York, the secretariats of the Alpine and the Carpathian Convention – both members of the MP initiative – will inform member states on the latest developments of international and regional governance mechanisms within and between major mountain regions of the world. The meeting is hosted by the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

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## UN Agencies' Directors meet ahead of Rio+20

Meetings of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism (RCM) for the UNECE region and the Regional UNDG Team for Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) took place on 20 and 21 March in Istanbul, Turkey. The RCM, convened by the UNECE Executive Secretary, brings together regional directors of UN agencies to address issues of high priority on the UN development agenda that call for policy coherence at the regional level and require inter-agency cooperation. The key role of the Regional UNDG Team is to provide leadership, strategic guidance and support to Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) for the achievement of country-level results. The main issues discussed at the RCM were: preparations for Rio+20, cooperation with UN Women at the regional level, post-2015 UN development agenda, development assistance to middle-income countries in the ECE region, and the inter-agency action plan on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The main issues discussed at the Regional UNDC Team meeting were: development and advocacy activities on Roma issues, update on one UN implementation in Albania, inter-agency coordination on HIV/AIDS in the region, Moldova UNDAF and the role of the Regional Directors Team.

Mr Jan Dusik attended the meeting on behalf of UNEP.

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## UK sends its Deputy Prime Minister to Rio+20 conference



UK's Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Nick Clegg, told his Party's (Liberal Democrats) spring Conference on 11 March that he would attend the Rio+20 summit in June 2012 to prevent the UK "playing catch-up" on clean technology. Mr Clegg said he will be arguing "for green growth to create jobs" at the three-day-long summit, which will have a focus on the "green economy" of growth and jobs created by clean technology such as offshore wind farms and energy efficiency. Clegg argued that "going green is not a luxury for the good times. It is the best road out of the bad times". He called for more green jobs in the UK, green apprenticeships and highlighted the Government's energy efficiency project, the green deal, which is due to start at the end of the year. He will be joined in Rio by the Environment Secretary, Caroline Spelman, who earlier said the conference needed to set a series of new goals for a greener economy.

## EP delegation to Rio announced

The European Parliament (EP) has confirmed the members of its delegation to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The Members of Parliament who will attend Rio+20 include Jo Leinen (S&D, Germany) who until recently sat as the chair to the EP's Committee on the Environment. The new Environment Committee chair, Matthias Groote (S&D, Germany) will not attend but has chosen his vice-chair, Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (ALDE, Netherlands), to head the delegation in his place.

## Green Jobs for Youth too

A joint ILO/UNEP event entitled “Green Jobs for Youth too: Working towards Social Equity” will be held during the third Intersessional Meeting of UNCSD. The event is expected to advance understanding of how the green economy approach could address youth unemployment as a major building block for sustainable development and poverty eradication. It will present some of the recent findings of ILO and UNEP work related to youth and green jobs, and will include a country focus.

The outcome of the event is expected to contribute to Rio+20 in three ways: it would bring attention to youth unemployment as a major challenge for sustainable development and poverty eradication; it would explore the potential for a green economy transformation to create additional and decent jobs for all, with a special focus on youth; and it would identify key policy interventions such as skills and entrepreneurship that could unleash the potential for a green economy to generate additional and decent jobs.

It will also articulate actionable and measurable next steps that can be taken in collaboration with governments, international organizations, private sector and other stakeholders to tackle youth unemployment.

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## Environmental protection of the Adriatic-Ionian region

On 22 March, the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII) organised a roundtable in Belgrade ahead of the Rio summit. All's core objective is to enhance collaboration amongst the eight participating countries to better protect the environment in the region. The establishment of the Adriatic-Ionian region as an EU Macro-region, following Baltics and Danube, may be supported during the Italian and Greek EU Presidencies in 2014.

At the roundtable, Jan Dusik, Acting Director, UNEP's regional office for Europe, delivered the opening speech focusing on opportunities and benefits of a green economy and made a presentation on open issues related to the institutional framework for sustainable development. Countries' representatives exchanged views and the status of their country's preparation on Rio+20 topics: both regarding the transition towards greener economies and the debate on sustainable development governance, from national to global level.

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## UNEP talks to Czech students

Naomi Botkin, Communications Assistant for UNEP Brussels, discusses the work of UNEP and the Rio+20 conference with a group of university students from the Czech Republic.

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## Ocean policy an EU priority for Rio+20

The world's oceans have enormous potential to contribute to economic development, but this potential cannot be realized without better management. EU Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Commissioner Maria Damanaki, at a 6 March symposium on oceans and coasts, highlighted the urgency of addressing oceanic threats such as overfishing and pollution. “Oceans have entered a period of consequences,” Damanaki said, “and we have to take immediate action to reverse that trend.” She also highlighted the need for global cooperation to tackle this global problem.

The health of oceans is on the agenda for the upcoming Rio+20 conference, where the EU's position will be “firm and clear”: oceans are a priority, and business-as-usual is not an option. Accordingly, the EU will push for a new multilateral agreement to address conservation and sustainable marine harvest. As Damanaki says, “We need to shift from the traditional perception of open access to marine resources to a concept of shared responsibility over the global commons.”

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## III. ON THE CALENDAR

### Green Week 2012 - coming soon!

"EVERY DROP COUNTS - The Water Challenge" is Green Week's theme in 2012. The conference takes place from 22-25 May in Brussels, and UNEP will again collaborate on a number of sessions and events. UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner will also attend several events. UNEP will be contributing to the One-UN information stand where it will also be displaying the Drop by Drop competition posters in a mini exhibition.

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### Rome: Conference on Heavy Metals

The 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Heavy Metals in the Environment (ICHMET 2012) will take place in Rome, Italy from 23 to 27 September 2012.

More information: <http://ichmet16.iiia.cnr.it>

### Edinburgh: Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant

The 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Mercury as a Global Pollutant (ICMGP) will take place in Edinburgh, Scotland from 28 July to 2 August 2013.

More information: <http://www.mercury2013.com/>

### Sarajevo: State of the Environment Report Meeting

The state of the environment (SoE) in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be at the core of a two-day national workshop held in Sarajevo to discuss the first ever comprehensive SoE report for the country.

The workshop will be conducted on 23 and 24 April 2012, in the scope of the Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F) Programme "Mainstreaming Environmental Governance: Linking Local and National Action in Bosnia and Herzegovina". The meeting will provide the second draft of the State of Environment Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina for review and further development to a wide range of national environmental stakeholders, before the conclusion of the process in September 2012.

A two-year process to prepare the first environmental report for Bosnia and Herzegovina has as its focus the state of the environment in the country. The process is conducted in the framework of the Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F) Programme "Mainstreaming Environmental Governance: Linking Local and National Action in Bosnia and Herzegovina", which is a three-year-long joint programme implemented by five UN Agencies (UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, FAO, UNV).

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