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Preparations for the Seventh “Environment for Europe”

Ministerial Conference: Conference outcomes

Proposal for a “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme under the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative

Note by the Government of Kazakhstan

Summary

The present document proposes a set of basic principles for a “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme under the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative. A draft Partnership Programme will be discussed at the first Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative Partnership Meeting, which will be held in early May 2011 back to back with the Fourth Astana Economic Forum.

The Committee on Environmental Policy is invited to consider a proposal for a “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme under the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative contained in part II of the present document and to decide on a transmission of an agreed text to the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference.

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to a decision taken at the Sixth “Environment for Europe” (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Belgrade, 2007), the Seventh EfE Ministerial Conference will be held in Astana, Kazakhstan, from 21 to 23 September 2011.
2. As noted in the Reform Plan of the “Environment for Europe” process, the added value of the EfE process is its close links with other regional and subregional initiatives and processes, which help to integrate environmental and sectoral policies.¹ In accordance with the EfE Reform Plan, conference outcomes might include, among others, statements, initiatives, agreements, pledges by interested ministers and stakeholders on specific subjects and/or for specific subregions, policy tools, including strategies, action plans with time frames, guidelines, recommendations, best practices and lessons learned that are presented to the Conference by interested countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region and/or organizations taking the lead on these issues.²
3. Kazakhstan, as the host country of the Seventh EfE Ministerial Conference, intends to present for the attention of the Conference a “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme for the period 2011–2020. The main aim of the programme is the development of integration between countries of the Europe and the Asia and the Pacific region to develop plans for transition from traditional economic models to include the concepts of green growth and mechanisms to unite economic processes and environmental protection within the general framework of the Partnership Programme.
4. The Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative was approved at the sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific (MCED-6), organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Astana from 27 September to 2 October 2010. The UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy, at its seventeenth session (2–5 November 2010, Geneva), agreed to Kazakhstan’s proposal to include the “Green Bridge” Initiative in the draft agenda for the first day of the plenary session, and invited interested stakeholders to actively participate in the process of development of the Partnership Programme of Work of the Initiative, which might become one of the Conference outcomes.³ Following recommendations of MCED-6 and the seventeenth session on the Committee on Environmental Policy, the Government of Kazakhstan proposed to develop a preliminary draft of the 10-year “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme.
5. The Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative aims to stimulate regional, trans-regional and intersectoral cooperation, and to enable implementation of principles of “green” economy in relation to changing political and economic conditions, environmental priorities and the growing needs of the countries of Europe, Asia and the Pacific.
6. The key thematic areas of the Initiative include: (a) eco-efficient use of natural resources and investment in ecosystem services; (b) low carbon development and adaptation to climate change; (c) promotion of sustainable urban development;

¹ ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, para. 1.

² ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, para. 14.

³ ECE/CEP/161, para. 51.

(d) promotion of green business and green technology; and (e) promotion of sustainable lifestyles and improvement of the quality of life.⁴

7. A wide range of strategic approaches are proposed to achieve the main goals of the initiative, including (a) catalysing high-level, high-visibility policy dialogues on emerging and persistent issues; (b) undertaking research on emerging and cutting-edge policy solutions and tools; (c) building the capacity of policymakers to further develop, adopt and implement green-growth policies, while taking stock of best practices/methodologies and legislative and economic instruments; (d) developing new and strengthening existing mechanisms for technology transfer that will contribute to the preservation of European, Asian and Pacific ecosystems of global environmental significance; and (e) developing mechanisms to attract green investments and innovative environmental management approaches, including cross-border adjustments and the application of economic incentives, taxes and fees.⁵

8. The Government of Kazakhstan confirmed its commitment to the advancement of the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative and presented it to the seventeenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy, held in November 2010. Within the framework of implementation of decisions of MCED-6, the Council of Sustainable Development of Kazakhstan, chaired by the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, approved a concept of the Partnership Programme on implementation of the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative⁶ and the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Kazakhstan created an Astana “Green Bridge” Office.⁷ The Office provides informational-advisory services, participates in an information network along with State bodies, business associations and civil society, and promotes the implementation of the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative and the preparation of the Partnership Programme of countries of Europe, Asia and the Pacific with support from ESCAP.

9. According to the schedule for the preparation of the Partnership Programme of the Astana Initiative, Kazakhstan is organizing on 4 May 2011 a session on “Green Growth — Post-Kyoto perspectives” within the framework of the Fourth Economic Forum in Astana and, on 5 May 2011, a first meeting of partners to consider issues of the promotion of the “green growth” concept and to discuss a draft Partnership Programme. A revised draft of the Partnership Programme, incorporating the comments and suggestions of all stakeholders, will be presented at the Seventh EfE Ministerial Conference.

10. The Partnership Programme is expected to cover the following components: mechanisms of coordination and management of programmes and projects, including financing and transfer of new technologies and a package of investment projects and projects of “green” economy; enabling the legal and other conditions necessary for the Programme’s implementation by interested partners from countries of Europe, Asia and the Pacific.

II. Proposal for a “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme

11. *Principles.* The “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme will be a flexible tool to address current and emerging issues, which can be adapted to address growing needs and

⁴ See E/ESCAP/MCED(6)/13, chap. IV.

⁵ E/ESCAP/MCED(6)/13, para. 16.

⁶ Protocol of the seventh session of the Council of Sustainable Development of Kazakhstan of 28 December 2010.

⁷ Ministry of Environmental Protection Order # 006 of 13 January 2011.

changing political and economic conditions, as well as environmental priorities in Europe, Asia and the Pacific. Information on the preparation, implementation, monitoring of implementation of activities, management and funding will be available to all partners. Funding for the various modules/components of the Programme can be implemented through grants, technical assistance, investment, Government budgets, loans, contributions of donors and trust funds, charitable contributions and other financial sources. It is assumed that responsibility for project implementation and financial risk will be shared between partners participating in the Programme.

12. *The overarching goal* of the Partnership Programme is to facilitate implementation of the Astana “Green Bridge” Initiative and to enable establishment of the partnership framework towards an environmentally sustainable, equitable and prosperous future in both the European and the Asia and the Pacific regions. This will be achieved by promoting the transfer of intellectual resources, networking and the exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as through national, subregional and regional projects.

13. *Green Bridge Partnership Programme participating parties.* All stakeholders have an important role to play in the effort to achieve sustainable development and will be invited to join the partnerships on a voluntary and equal basis. It is proposed that developed countries of both regions could play a leading role in promotion of knowledge transfer, experience, new technologies and best practices. Civil society organizations, the private sector, public-private partnerships, community cooperatives, the academic and scientific communities, international organizations and institutions and national and international financial institutions will play an important role in implementation of the Partnership Programme.

14. *Targets and time frame.* A decade-long initial implementation process will incorporate the following short-, medium-, and long-term targets:

(a) *In the short term* (two years, 2011–2012), the following activities will be undertaken: collection of best practices and their analysis; development and implementation of pilot projects; development of mechanisms for coordination and management of the Programme and projects, including funding; and establishing enabling conditions for Programme implementation by interested partners. Proposals will be made on how to increase the positive ratio of “green” versus “brown” investments in countries of Europe, Asia and the Pacific (see para. 11 above);

(b) *In the medium term* (five years, 2011–2015), recommendations and mechanisms will be elaborated to establish a sustainable partnership to implement priorities of “green growth”; and the implementation of pilot projects on conservation and rehabilitation of ecosystems, and rational use of natural resources by the application of resource-, water-, energy-saving and alternative technologies will continue;

(c) *In the long term* (10 years, 2011–2020) the implementation mechanism of the Green Bridge Partnership Programme will help to implement long-term and large-scale projects to: counteract environmental degradation and rehabilitate the environment; ensure rational use of natural resources through “green” policies and new practices; and attract investments directed at replacement of traditional unsustainable models of consumption and production by “green” economy approaches.

15. *Components.* The proposed Partnership Programme mechanism may include the following three components: (a) a governance component for coordination and management of the Partnership Programme, including projects implementation and transfer of technologies; (b) a funding component to implement investment and strategic projects promoting a green economy; and (c) an implementation component to set up enabling conditions for a green economy and interaction between interested partners in countries of Europe, Asia and the Pacific.

16. The *Governance Component* of the Partnership Programme would be based on multi-stakeholder cooperation and include all participating partners and shareholders, as well as an International Coordinating Council and an Oversight Committee.

17. *Funding component.* Partnership Programme activities would be funded through existing effective and newly established financial institutions and various financial instruments, including trust funds, private funds and contributions from countries, individuals and entities. Financial resources could be collected in the form of technical support, grants, investments, budget funds, loans and contributions from donors and trust funds, charities and other financial sources.

18. The *Implementation Component.* The Green Bridge Partnership Programme will create the necessary enabling legal, administrative, economic and other conditions and mechanisms. When necessary, for each specific proposal and project, an appropriate implementation mechanism will be determined or specified.

19. Once all stakeholders and shareholders have been identified, the “Green Bridge” Office will be registered as an international organization, and will provide technical support to the Programme and information, consultation and other services to all the participants of the Programme.

20. *Monitoring and Evaluation* of the Partnership Programme will be implemented through the Oversight Committee, which will ensure compliance with the principles of open governance according to international standards of accountability and transparency. Indicators of the Partnership Programme will be developed for a green growth and eco-efficiency, including a Green Growth Index.

III. Issues, requiring the attention of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe member States

21. Kazakhstan, as the initiator of the development of the Partnership Programme of countries of Europe, Asia and the Pacific, will support, in close cooperation with ESCAP and UNECE and other interested partners, regional, subregional and national green economy projects, and create necessary mechanisms for conservation of the environment in the two regions.

22. It is expected that after the development of the “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme it will be supported, on a voluntary basis, by countries of ESCAP and UNECE, the private sector and international institutions, including the Asian Development Bank, the Global Environment Facility, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the programmes of the United Nations.

23. The Astana “Green Bridge” Partnership Programme will also be an interregional input to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in May 2012 in Rio de Janeiro.
