International Forum on Strategies and Priorities for Environmental Industries
Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 12-14 June 2002

Co-hosted by the Government of Slovakia - Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic – and UNIDO with organizational support from Slovak Environmental Agency (SAZP) and in cooperation with the Slovak Cleaner Production Centre (SCPC)

The Forum will be formally opened at 13.00 hours on 12 June 2002 with addresses by Mr. Mikuláš Dzurinda, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic and Mr. Carlos Magariños, Director-General of UNIDO, after which introductory remarks will be made by Mr. László Miklós, Minister of Environment of the Slovak Republic and Mr. L’ubomír Harach, Minister of Economy of the Slovak Republic.

Background

The objective of Forum is to address common environmental issues shared by non-EU European countries and discuss opportunities for enhancing regional and sub-regional cooperation and the potential for new and increased partnerships between UNIDO and other international organizations with the countries of the region. The need for committed collaboration and mutual support to upgrade regional capacities in the areas of cleaner production, elimination of persistent toxic substances (PTS) and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in particular and waste and water management and treatment is of prime importance in view of the challenges presented by accession to the European Union. There is still much work to be done in many areas to comply with EU environmental legislation. One such area is the elimination of POPs which still constitute a major burden on the environment - in the CEE countries there is an estimated stockpile of at least several hundred thousand widely scattered tonnes of obsolete pesticides which could contaminate water resources and pose a serious health and environmental hazard.
International and Inter-regional Cooperation Vital

Addressing these and other environmental problems which will be discussed at the Forum requires financial resources and technical capacities which are currently beyond the means of any one country. Yet the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and large-scale investments in the industrial infrastructure are central to the process of sustainable long-term socio-economic development in the region. This process can only evolve with the support of a range of environmental industries. By fostering cooperation with and among economies in transition to facilitate this technology transfer and the creation of networks of environmental industries, UNIDO and other fellow international organizations can help the countries of the region to achieve their development objectives.

Role of UNIDO

UNIDO in particular has practical, hands-on experience in working with developing countries and economies in transition to implement state-of-the-art technologies and industrial process changes, substitute or modify materials and products, introduce cleaner production methods and upgrade waste and water management techniques. In the area of POPs elimination in particular, UNIDO has already initiated a dialogue with the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) regarding co-financing for a wide-reaching project to dispose of stockpiles in CEE.

Structure of Forum

The Forum will consist of a series of roundtable discussions commencing with a High-level Roundtable on Innovation and Industrialization in the New Global Setting which will be chaired by Mr. Carlos Magariños, Director-general of UNIDO. He will reaffirm UNIDO’s commitment to using its expertise in the CEE countries to improve the competitive position of industries, whilst stressing the need to promote efficiency throughout the economy whilst ensuring equal distribution of benefits and deference to environmental concerns. UNIDO’s forthcoming Industrial Development Review will be presented and attention drawn to its new Competitive Industrial Performance Index to permit countries to assess their industrial performance relative to other countries and over time.

Other specialized roundtables will focus on specific issues concerning the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and related technical assistance programmes in the areas of disposal of persistent organic pollutants, water management and waste water technologies and waste management and recycling. Issue papers will provide technical background information on the roundtables which will be organized as follows:

Roundtable I:
Regional Initiative: Establishment of a Fund for the Disposal of Obsolete Stockpiles of Persistent Organic Pollutants in Central and Eastern Europe

Chairperson: Mr. László Miklós, Minister of Environment of the Slovak Republic

Roundtable II:
International Water Management and Waste Water Treatment-related Technologies

Chairperson: Ms. Martina Motlová, Deputy Minister of Environment of the Czech Republic,
Roundtable III: Waste Management, Recycling Schemes and Related Technologies

Chairperson: Mr. Božo Kovacevic, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Croatia

Background papers will be presented at each roundtable by UNIDO and Slovak experts and the European Commission will be represented by a senior official from its Directorate General on Environment. Expert panelists will briefly share their experience and views on the individual issues.

Economic and Environmental Issues Interlinked

Very significantly the Forum brings together economic and environmental experts at ministerial and other senior levels, reflecting the importance of both areas for balanced long-term growth and development in the region.

The Forum also has the distinction of being one of a series of related events on environmental issues in the region: the International Centre for Science and High Technology (ICS) and UNIDO organized an expert group meeting on the status of remediation of polluted sites in CEE countries in Trieste in July 2001 and will be following up with a forthcoming workshop on remediation technology application for heavily polluted sites in the region also in the Slovak Republic on 24 – 26 June next. These events and the present Forum are therefore important links in the chain of dialogue and exchanges of views which is so vital in the region to ensure close partnerships and cooperation in both economic and environmental fields.