

Czech EU Presidency outcomes in the field of the environment - January to March 2009

Climate protection

- **Informal Workshop** - an EU Informal Workshop on Climate Change took place in Prague on 18-20 January; at the workshop, experts from the EU Member States evaluated the results of the Poznan conference, which was held in December 2008, and the Czech Republic presented its priorities in the area of climate change; furthermore, the experts focused on a more detailed discussion of issues related to the financial aspects and the legal form of a future international agreement on climate change, the EU negotiation strategy for 2009 and aspects of the minimization of adverse impacts of climate change.
- **Conclusions of the EU Environment Council/Preparation of the Conclusions for the European Council/Preparation for the Informal Meeting of Ministers** - within the J1 and J2 working parties of the Council, CZ PRES prepared the Conclusions of the Council on the future Copenhagen agreement on climate protection, which were subsequently adopted by the EU Environment Council on 2 March. **A high-level meeting of the representatives of the Ministries of the Environment and Finance of the EU Member States also took place in this context on 24 February** in Prague. In the Conclusions, which served as a basis for the meeting of the Spring European Council, the Environment Council followed up on the Communication of the European Commission "*Towards a comprehensive climate change agreement in Copenhagen*", which was published in January 2009. The topics of negotiations on a future climate change agreement as well as climate change finance and adaptation to climate change were further addressed in the light of preparations for the Informal Meeting of Ministers of the Environment taking place on 14 – 15 April 2009 in Prague and Křivoklát.
- **Participation in events** - a delegation of the Czech Republic led by the Minister of the Environment, RNDr. Martin Bursík, participated in **the Sustainable**

Development Summit, which was held in New Delhi, India on 5-7 February. During the Summit, Minister Bursík also led the **discussion with the Indian Government** on cooperation in the preparation of a new global agreement on climate protection. The visit by the 1st Deputy Minister, Mr. Jan Dusík, to Washington also marked the **beginning of cooperation with the new U.S. administration in the area of climate protection**, which was followed in March by the ministerial negotiations in Washington together with Swedish Minister of the Environment Andreas Carlgren and EU Commissioner Stavros Dimas. In March Minister Bursík also had a meeting on climate change with **representatives of the government of Japan**.

Protection of human health and the environment

- Progress in negotiations on a **proposal for a Directive on industrial emissions (IPPC)** – the negotiations have been continuing within the Council’s working group and the topic was included as one of the main items for political debate at the March EU Environment Council; CZ PRES introduced new compromise proposals at the Working Party on the Environment in the Council and, with respect to discussion of the proposal at the March Council, further changes were made and a new compromise text is being reviewed by the delegations in order to reach Political agreement in the Council.
- Progress in negotiations on the **revision of a proposal for a Regulation on substances depleting the ozone layer** – regular meetings of the Council’s working group took place and a Presidency document serving as the basis for negotiations with the EP was created; preparation for informal dialogues was initiated in the Coreper in mid February and after a series of informal dialogues among the Council, Parliament and Commission the **1st reading agreement was reached**; the Regulation was voted on by the European Parliament at the end of March.
- Progress in negotiations on a **proposal for a Directive on placing biocidal products on the market with respect to the extension of certain time periods** – the working group in the Council was presented with a modified proposal by the CZ PRES, for which a vast majority of the Member States expressed their support. The EP also granted its preliminary consent to this version. **Agreement between the Parliament and the Council was reached in the first reading** in March 2009.

- **Proposal for a Directive on stage II of petrol vapour recovery at filling stations within filling petrol tanks of passenger vehicles (VOC II)** – the CZ PRES discussed the proposal regularly within the Council’s working group and preparations for the start of the dialogues among the EU institutions started in the Coreper at the end of March in order to reach the 1st reading agreement under the current European Parliament at the beginning of May 2009.

- **The 25th meeting of the UNEP Governing Council (UNEP GC)/10th Global Forum of the Ministers of the Environment (16-20 February, Nairobi)** – at the meeting, the Czech Republic managed to negotiate successfully, on the part of the EU, a total of 17 decisions on protection of the environment; **a decision on chemical substances** on the basis of which an intergovernmental negotiation process will be commenced in 2010 with the aim of adopting a new instrument of international law concerning mercury can be considered to be the most important of the mentioned decisions. Other negotiated decisions included decisions on support for Africa in the area of management of environmental protection, on waste management, on South-South cooperation, on the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy, on support for small island developing countries, and a decision promoting UNEP’s goals in the area of environmental law at both the international and national levels. A number of meetings of the EU Troika with global partners took place during the meeting and the CZ PRES organized a meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of EU and Africa.

- **Waste**
 - **Waste recycling** – in response to continuing reduction in the demand for recycled materials, the CZ PRES initiated further discussion on the topic of waste recycling with the Member States and the European Commission. Based on negotiations amongst the stakeholders (representatives of the Packaging Recovery Organization Europe) under the auspices of the CZ PRES and the **subsequent meeting of the directors of waste departments of EU countries** in Prague, the CZ PRES prepared the Presidency Paper. The Paper was discussed by the EU ministers at the March EU Environment Council.
 - **Electronic waste** – the CZ PRES commenced negotiations on the two proposals of Directives on electronic waste (RoHS-Restriction of the use of Hazardous Substances Directive and WEEE-Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive) in the Council working group; the proposals were presented by the European Commission and the Member States expressed their preliminary viewpoints.

- **Biowaste** – at the end of March, CZ PRES started first consultations on the biowaste issue in order to prepare Council Conclusions for the June Environment Council

Sustainable consumption and production

- **Intergovernmental preparatory meeting for the 17th Meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17)** – a meeting took place at the UN in New York on 23-27 February 2009, in which the Czech Republic presented the priorities of the EU from the perspective of sustainable development in the areas of agriculture (the EU was represented by the European Commission in this area), development of rural areas, soil, drought, desertification, Africa and cross-cutting topics. A number of priorities of the EU were reflected in the draft document. The Czech Republic also held bilateral meetings with key regional groups and countries that will play an important role during negotiations at the May CSD-17.
- Negotiations on a **Regulation on voluntary participation of organizations in the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)** – a proposal for the Regulation was discussed by the Council's working group and a major part of the delegations agreed with a compromise wording presented by the CZ PRES; the main problematic areas related to accreditation of environmental verifiers, duties of the Member States and environmental indicators. The negotiations were followed up by informal dialogues with the European Parliament and the Commission and finally the compromise text was agreed upon by the member states in Coreper at the end of May and **voted on in the European Parliament on 2 April in the first reading.**
- Negotiations on a **proposal for a Regulation on eco-labeling** – at the working level, general agreement of the Member States was reached in the Council, during January and February, with respect to a compromise proposal presented by the CZ PRES; two main aspects, namely the extension of the scope to food and the amount of the fees, were further dealt with in March at the working level and negotiations continued in the Coreper and by informal dialogues; **the proposal was agreed to in the 1st reading agreement by the European Parliament on 2 April.**

Biological diversity

- **International biodiversity** – the negotiations in the Council's working group have been successful thus far. The group approved a document, the EU's reply to notification No. 120-2008 – proposal for the operational text of the international contact: Jakub Kašpar, Spokesperson, Ministry of the Environment, Czech Republic |4|
tel.: +420 267 122 040, GSM: +420 724 175 927; e-mail: jakub.kaspar@mzp.cz

regime of genetic ABS (Access and Benefit-sharing), which was evaluated very positively given the complexity of the negotiations. Preparations for the negotiations at the 25th UNEP GC were also successful, where the participants agreed on the need for continued strengthening of the *science-policy interface*. It was agreed at the meeting of the UNEP that it would be necessary to continue negotiations on strengthening the science-policy interface – organization of a second international meeting for these discussions. In April/May, the European Commission will organize an expert meeting concerned with defining the EU's position on this issue. The accompanying informal negotiations on the aspect of ABS at the level of the EU were also appreciated.

- **Progress in negotiations on a framework Directive on soil protection** – the CZ PRES continues to pursue negotiations on this Directive at the Council's working level; it presented a compromise version of the proposal, which is being further elaborated on the basis of comments of the delegations of Member States. Numerous bilateral consultations are being pursued on this proposal.
- **Progress in negotiations on a proposal for a Regulation on trade in seal products** - negotiations on this highly political issue have been taking place in the Council's working group and will be followed by the Coreper meetings and informal trialogues; the negotiations are concerned with the scope of exemptions from the ban on trade and the choice of a legal basis for the Regulation.
- **Biodiversity and Invasive Species** – At the end of March, CZ PRES presented the first draft of the Council conclusions on biodiversity issues (addressing two Communications from the Commission, namely "A mid-term assessment of implementing the EC Biodiversity Action Plan" and "Towards an EU Strategy on invasive species") in order to adopt the Conclusions at the June Environmental Council

Other meetings and negotiations

- On **21 January**, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government and the Minister of the Environment presented, at the **EP's ENVI Committee**, the priorities of the CZ PRES in the area of the environment; both the acceptance and discussion were mostly positive.

- **Cooperation with NGOs**
 - On **20 January**, Minister Bursík met in Brussels with representatives of selected NGOs (a group of 10 most influential environmental organizations in the EU – so called, Green 10), where the priorities of the CZ PRES in the area of the environment were presented and discussed.
 - On **26 January**, Minister Bursík met, at the Ministry, representatives of Czech environmental NGOs with the aim of discussing the position of the CZ PRES prior to the meeting of the EU Environment Council on 2 March.
 - On **1 March**, Minister Bursík met with the representatives of the Green 10, where the main points of the March Environmental Council were presented and topics such as climate change, IPPC, GMO, and Waste recycling were discussed.

- A meeting of the **UN ECE Committee on Environmental Policy** took place in **Geneva** on 27-29 January 2009, **where a reform of the “Environment for Europe” process was approved** – the reform reflects changes in geopolitical and economic conditions in the pan-European region and will allow for more effective functioning of the process in the future. Emphasis will be placed on the active involvement of all stakeholders led by the Member States of the UN ECE and on focusing to resolve the issues of the individual subregions, particularly South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Through this meeting, the CZ PRES successfully concluded more than a year of intensive negotiations on the reform and its role in the negotiations was positively evaluated by all the participants in the Geneva meeting.

- 1st Deputy Minister of Environment Mr. Jan Dusík opened and the representatives of the water protection department took part in the **5th World Water Forum**, which was held in Istanbul on **16-22 March**. The ministers dealt with the issue of water as an essential component of the environment, central to sustainable development, health and well being, peace and security

- From **24-27 March**, 350 delegates from 31 countries as well as representatives of the European institutions and bodies met in the city of **Prague** for the conference **“Towards eEnvironment (Opportunities of SEIS and SISE: Integrating Environmental Knowledge in Europe)**, which was dedicated to information exchange among public administrations, EU institutions, environmental agencies, scientists and businesses involved in developing and using environmental informatics for the delivery of modern eEnvironment services in Europe.