“The Future for Our Children”

Developing the agenda for the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health

Extended meeting of the Budapest Working Group
Lucca, Italy, 18-19 April 2002

Report
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1. Introduction

The European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) decided at its fifth meeting in November 2001 in Istanbul that an intergovernmental meeting in spring 2002 would offer an excellent opportunity to get input from countries regarding priority issues for the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, to be held in 2004 in Budapest, the overarching theme of which is “The future for our children” within the context of sustainable development. The meeting in Lucca, Italy was organized by the EEHC in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Environment and with the financial assistance of that ministry as well as of the European Commission.

The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss issues that should be addressed under the Conference theme, taking into account that they should fit within the theme, be priority issues, be policy/intervention oriented, and be feasible (i.e. financial/human resources available; country/organization ready to take it forward). An initial selection of priority issues identified by countries in a questionnaire distributed in August 2001 was made by the EEHC: Working Papers BWG/Lucca 1-18 are brief proposals on how those priorities could be taken forward to the Budapest Conference.

A total of 117 people participated in the meeting, including 74 representatives from 43 countries, as well as representatives from 6 intergovernmental and international organizations and 6 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The scope and purpose, programme, list of working papers and list of participants are given in Annexes 1-4, respectively. The meeting documents are available on the EEHC website (www.eehc.dk).

2. Opening session

The meeting was opened by Corrado Clini, Co-chair of the EEHC, who welcomed the participants on behalf of Italy and noted that they now had the opportunity to promote strategies to protect the health of children across Europe. Mr. Pietro Fazzi, Mayor of Lucca, also welcomed participants to his historic city. The Hon. Altero Matteoli, Minister for the Environment, Italy, pointed out that, as was recognized by the G8 nations in their 1997 Declaration on Children’s Environmental Health, the environment is a decisive influence on human health. Some 30-40% of children are affected by asthma or other respiratory diseases, while passive smoking, chemical substances and endocrine disruptors also represent threats to health. He further noted that people are at the core of policies, and protecting children should be the first task of governments. Hon. Girolamo Sirchia, Minister of Health, Italy, underlined Italy’s support for the issue of children’s environment and health. In particular he noted that children in urban areas are exposed to pollution which is linked to bronchial disease and allergies. In closing, he noted that economic development can no longer be to the detriment of today’s and future generations and their environment.

Marc Danzon, WHO Regional Director for Europe, also emphasized the importance of protecting the health of future generations through actions taken now to address environmental risks. He noted that children are paying a high price for a poor environment as can be seen, for example, in the high rates of asthma. The relationship between children’s health and the environment is well illustrated in the new monograph published jointly by WHO and the European Environment Agency (EEA) “The environment and children’s health: a review of the evidence” The Budapest Conference will build upon such evidence to develop action-oriented
strategies to help ensure an environment that promotes the health of children and thus the general population in Europe.

A joint statement was read from Commissioner Margot Wallström, in charge of Environment at the European Commission (EC), and Commissioner David Byrne, Health and Consumer Protection at the EC, underlining the importance the EC places on children’s health and the environment. An integrated strategy for health and environment policy is being developed, taking into account multi-channels and multi-pollutants, with the aim of dramatically reducing the risk to human health posed by several hazardous pollutants. Within this strategy, children and pregnant women will be given special emphasis as vulnerable groups. The upcoming Communication on environment and health will be reinforced by a new public health strategy on addressing environment as a health determinant. International collaboration, in particular with the G8 and WHO, will be an essential part of this strategy. The EC is committed to providing technical support for the Budapest Conference.

Anna Paldy representing Hungary, reported that the loss of Alan Pinter, former Vice-chair of the EEHC, had been a great blow, but an executive committee for the Conference has now been set up to carry forward the work to be done. She noted that Hungary had its first law on public health in 1876, and it now has a national health and environment action plan. In addition, some integrated environment and health studies have been conducted, one of which is to assess the relationship between allergy and indoor air for children. She stressed the importance of determining the influence of, inter alia, environmental chemicals on children’s health.

Heinz Schreiber, Co-chairman of the EEHC, pointed out that environment and health should be an important agenda item at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in September 2002 and that the outcomes would have relevance for the Budapest Conference. He noted that while the impact of the environment on children’s health is complex, it was clear from the completed questionnaires from governments and nongovernmental organizations on possible themes and priorities of the Budapest Conference that the countries of the European Region were prepared to work together to tackle it.

3. Children in environment and health strategies

This session aimed to inform participants about initiatives taken nationally and internationally to address the issue of children’s health and the environment. In doing so, it provided an overview of current initiatives that could be useful in identifying where there are gaps or where additional work is needed, as well as preventing possible overlaps of activities when preparing for the Budapest Conference.

3.1 In the EU

Veronique Angot of DG Environment noted that the EU is committed, under the current sixth programme to build an environment and health policy. All action that reduces environmental threats benefits children, and technical and scientific assessments should take children’s special sensitivities into account. This was the approach of the Water Framework Directive, the Clean Air for Europe Directive, the White Paper on Chemicals and the Tobacco Advertising Directive. Additionally, special measures are needed for children. Some of the measures adopted by the EU are related to implementing the Miami Declaration of the G8, notably on lead and endocrine disrupters. A Communication on endocrine disrupters has been prepared and 40 million Euros have been devoted to help fund research projects, including endocrine disrupters in drinking-water, test method development, data-gathering and in-depth evaluation, and assessment of specific substances. The EU has also developed regulations on toy safety and a strategy on
Recognizing the importance of involving children as well as raising their awareness, the Commission has organized several initiatives including videos, booklets and the Youth Environmental Council. The new public health strategy, which will address the environment as a determinant of health, includes in its priorities asthma, allergy (including food allergy), disease from bathing water, and noise-induced health effects. The EC will encourage research and monitoring, education/information and will cooperate with international partners.

3.2 In the countries of central and eastern Europe (CCEE)

Janos Zlinsky of the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) for Central and Eastern Europe noted that the Second Ministerial “Environment for Europe” Conference in Lucerne in 1993 raised questions about how the environment affects health and to what extent. These questions were addressed by the national environmental action plans in 1995, which aimed, among other issues, to reduce nitrates, lead and air pollution. In 1998, the Organization for Economic Development (OECD) reported on environmental exposures to substances affecting health such as lead, nitrates and sulfur dioxide in the newly independent states (NIS) and the CCEE. He further noted that there are significant gaps in life expectancy between western Europe and the NIS and CCEE and the role of environmental exposures needs to be better addressed. In the CCEE, sulfur dioxide and heavy metals, waste and lack of access to clean drinking-water are problem areas. In some countries, for example, 50% of the population has no access to clean drinking-water.

Many government sectors are involved in dealing with these issues, which presents challenges. Although national health programmes prioritize children and reducing children’s exposure to air pollution is third out of seven national priorities identified in the CCEE, the resources dedicated to accomplishing this objective do not reflect this. Out of 27 national programmes, no more than four deal directly with children’s environmental health. However, existing tools may better be used to help progress: for example, strategic impact assessments for environment and health may help to improve policy development and bring international support; and Agenda 21 in which children have their own programme chapter can, in the experience of REC, provide a very fruitful organizing principle.

3.3 In the newly independent states (NIS)

Anna Golubovska-Onisimova of the Ministry of Environment, Ukraine, outlined the difficulties facing these countries as the economy has shifted to a new market economy following the collapse of the USSR. For decades, inadequate protection of the population from, inter alia, industrial pollution created serious health problems. Today, health and environment could be protected if strict pollution control/abatement measures were introduced, but this is difficult within the current economic situation. For example, in the Ukraine air pollution is down, but the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is now half its former level. Foreign help is needed to put into place policies that help the environment and human health. This may include rescheduling of foreign debt, and as the NIS environment ministers endorsed in at the Second Ministerial “Environment for Europe” Conference in Lucerne in 1993, the priority is to take action on pollution control, harmonized environmental legislation and information dissemination.
She further informed that Ukraine’s priorities are air pollution, sewage and drinking-water: these issues will be discussed at a meeting, under the aegis of the EU on 1 July 2002, about a task force action plan in which WHO’s participation would be welcomed.

3.4 In the Aral Sea area

Oral Atanyiazova of Center Perzent noted that the Aral Sea, once one of the largest inland seas in the world, has now shrunk to half its size, creating a surrounding desert contaminated by toxic substances such as DDT. Only 57% of people have piped drinking-water; however available water contains over 6 grammes per litre of salt. Over 90% of schools have no safe drinking-water. In addition, 95% of pregnant women are anaemic and a large proportion of children is reported to have birth defects. In light of the pressing health problems and the fact that some 43% of the population is under 15 years of age, she suggested that the Budapest Conference could address specifically the needs of children in the Aral Sea area.

She also took the opportunity to inform participants that the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE) and the International Network for Children’s Health and Environment (INCHES) have been working to establish a formal structure to address the issue of children’s environment and health and as part of this will hold the third international conference on children’s health and environment in November 2003 in Nairobi, the outcomes of which should also be considered in preparing for the Budapest Conference.

3.5 In the USA

Ms Catherine Allen of the US Environment Protection Agency pointed out that a number of milestones, nationally and internationally, have brought children’s health and the environment onto its agenda, including the 1997 Declaration of the Environment Leaders of the Eight on Children's Environmental Health in Miami, Florida, and the Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children set up by President Clinton and extended by President Bush until 2003. In the United States, the leading concerns are asthma, birth defects, cancer and unintentional injuries, and a number of initiatives are being taken to address them. Work is being done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, to better understand children’s exposure. In addition, 12 research centres on children and voluntary chemical and prevention programmes have been initiated with the voluntary participation of 20 industries: 23 chemicals have been identified as putting children at risk, of which 12 are under particular scrutiny. Recognizing the importance of the home environment, the Smoke Free Home Pledge has been launched. Environment and health indicators are being updated, in liaison with paediatricians and other health professionals. Research data collected in the Children's Environmental Health & Safety Inventory of Research are available at [http://oaspub.epa.gov/chehsir/chehsir.page](http://oaspub.epa.gov/chehsir/chehsir.page).

3.6 In Canada and the G8 actions

Ms Julie Charbonneau of Environment Canada noted that the country had experienced a fourfold increase in asthma in 20 years and an increase in childhood thyroid and testicular cancer. In addition, 28% of children up to age 11 have at least one identifiable learning or behavioural problem and 16% of children aged 4 to 5 show delayed vocabulary skills. On the other hand, only 23% of the 3000 high-production chemicals have been tested for potential neurobehavioral effects.

To help address these problems, Environment Canada is developing strategies, undertaking a gaps analysis, and conducting workshops; it has also produced a booklet on actions taken
following the 1997 Declaration of the Environment Leaders of the Eight on Children's Environmental Health (for more information see www.ec.gc.ca). In addition, a new Pesticides Control Act will address children, as will a new UV Safety Index.

3.7 Discussion

During the panel discussion, several issues were touched upon, including the importance of developing children’s environment and health indicators which was taken up in detail later (see section 4.3). In addition, the relevance of education on environmental health for children, medical professionals and the general public was stressed. Education issues will be addressed at the Fifth Ministerial “Environment for Europe” Conference in Kiev in 2003 (hereafter called the Kiev Conference), and could form part of the Budapest Conference. Education can help address some other aspects of children’s health such as diet and lack of physical activity.

4. From London to Budapest – development of the environment and health process

4.1 Setting the agenda for Budapest – and beyond

Roberto Bertollini from WHO introduced this agenda item with a summary of the environment and health process so far. The First Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Frankfurt in 1989 brought ministers of health and of the environment together for the first time, adopted the European Charter on Environment and Health and established the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health. At the next conference in Helsinki in 1994, ministers adopted the Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe, committed to developing national environment and health action plans, and established the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC). The third conference in London in 1999 focused on action in partnership by adopting the legally binding Protocol on Water and Health, the Charter on Transport, Environment and Health, and the Declaration covering a number of priority areas for action, as well as by renewing the EEHC. Environment and health is now one of the four priorities of the Sixth Environment Action Programme of the EC, and the UN Millennium Declaration, adopted by the General Assembly in 2000, addresses the issue of environment and health, noting “we must spare no effort to free … all our children and grandchildren from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably spoilt by human activities…” (paragraph 21). In addition, in the WHO strategy for 2002 –2005, one of the four strategic directions commits to “…promoting an effective health dimension to social, economic, environmental and development policy”. The next landmarks of high relevance for the environment and health process will be the WSSD in Johannesburg and the Kiev Conference.

The Lucca meeting is the next step in the consultation process with countries and involving intergovernmental as well as nongovernmental organizations (see Annex 1 for details). In looking at the issues to be on the Budapest Conference agenda, the challenge will be to focus on those that will better protect the health of future generations, addressing children’s vulnerability through adequate and specific protective measures and advocating the health of children as an indicator of sustainability for the whole population.

It was proposed that the priority issues being considered for agenda of the Budapest Conference fit well into four major subthemes that could serve as sessions. The first would focus on progress made in Europe on environment and health, with a situation analysis of environment and health in Europe and an examination of what has been achieved since the London Conference. The next session would aim at strengthening the policy-making base by providing tools and evidence-based knowledge through assessing the burden of disease, developing
environment and health indicators, assessing the impact of international environment and health policy-making, health impact assessment, and the use of the precautionary principle. The third session could focus on emerging priority issues, such as health and global change, housing and health, and tourism, environment and health. The fourth session would identify the way forward by streamlining existing environment and health processes and identify ways to protect children from environmental hazards. This could include an action plan for children, merging existing processes, deciding on a regional summit at prime minister level or continuing with the current five-year cycle. The overall goal will be to set the environment and health agenda for the 21st century.

Discussion

Looking to the success of the London Conference in 1999, the meeting noted the need for strong political commitments at the Budapest Conference. While technical input would form the basis for the Budapest Conference, the outcomes should be focused on political commitments by the ministers. While the overall context of sustainable development was considered essential, there was a consensus that a clear and strong relevance to children’s health and the environment needed to be woven into each priority issues being considered for the agenda of the Budapest Conference. Specific areas of policy where actions for children’s health and environment can make a difference need to be identified. There should be specific measures to benefit children, with key actions identified to assess progress. For example, within the broad area of transport, environment and health, the specific issue of traffic accidents is of particular importance to children. Countries could set specific targets for improving the situation: for example, in the Netherlands each year some 20 to 30 children are killed by trucks that lack side mirrors.

There was general support for a children’s environment and health action strategy. The process of developing this could begin by identifying the major environmental risks to children’s health, then identifying existing actions (e.g. good practice) and important gaps, and then developing the strategy itself to address the identified needs.

In light of the above, a children’s health and environment strategy could be a viable approach to securing political commitment to concrete actions. Such an approach could be developed as a separate initiative or one that could fit within the national environment and health plans which most countries have or are developing. The education and information of children could be addressed under each topic.

4.2 Progress made on priority issues from the London Conference

A number of topics have been followed up since the London Conference, monitored by the EEHC. Progress reports on them are covered under documents BWG/Lucca/1-9. Participants were invited to discuss how further progress could be made in implementation of these topics before the Budapest Conference. Comments to specific papers are given below.

a) Protocol on Water and Health (BWG/Lucca/1): Taking into account the long-term support of Hungary to the issue, and the expectation that ratification should be achieved the end of 2003 it would seem particularly appropriate if the first meeting of the Parties could be held back-to-back with the Budapest Conference. It was suggested that Hungary take this possibility into consideration.

The meeting recognized the need to provide support to the Signatories of the Protocol to meet their obligations under Article 7 and Article 6 related to reporting. In this context and noting the programme of work developed by the Bureau of the Water Convention, the meeting requested
that the Working Group on Water and Health draft a report format for countries to report on their implementation of the Protocol. This would then be submitted to the Second Meeting of the Signatories, tentatively scheduled for 2003, and the subsequent formal report would be submitted to the First Meeting of the Parties and to the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Budapest in 2004.

It was further suggested that actions targeting children could be brought under the Protocol work: for example, the EU is developing programmes on water and sanitation aimed specifically at women which would also benefit children.

b) Transport, environment and health (BWG/Lucca/2): The processes underway under the London Charter on Transport, Environment and Health and the Vienna Plan of Joint Action on Transport and Environment are being streamlined and joint priorities being identified for pan-European action within the WHO and UNECE framework. This will take the form of a Transport, Health and Environment pan-European Programme (THE PEP), the successful implementation of which will depend on the availability of appropriate resources and strong political commitment to energize this new and challenging process. In view of the Budapest Conference and its focus on children, consideration could be given to aspects related to children’s road safety.

c) Implementing NEHAPs (BWG/Lucca/4): A number of participants noted the importance of the NEHAP process and expressed support for the establishment of a Steering Committee on NEHAP evaluation. In this regard, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Malta, Russian Federation and Switzerland noted their interest in participating in the Steering Committee.

d) Workplace health (BGW/Lucca/9): Concern was expressed about the lack of participation by enterprises in the environment and health process. A suggestion was made that workplace hazards that threaten women’s reproductive health would be a relevant issue for the Budapest Conference.

4.3 Strengthening the policy-making base

Based on the country/NGO questionnaire results and further consideration of the criteria for topics, the EEHC decided at its 5th meeting in November 2001 in Istanbul on a number of topics that could be developed under the theme “The Future for Our Children” within the context of sustainable development for the Budapest Conference. Documents BWG/Lucca/10-15 were prepared to serve as the basis for discussion on the further development of these six topics.

Hugo Von Meijenfeldt, Chair of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy, addressed the issue of policy-making itself, outlining four basic elements that are needed: facts, objectives, instruments and finance. The many facts on environment and health need to be marshalled and brought into one context. Objectives, targets and timetables need to be decided, and the precautionary principle has to be part of the procedure. Legally binding instruments, such as conventions and protocols are also needed. Article 6 of the EU Treaty calls for environmental protection requirements to be integrated into the definition and implementation of other policies, including market-based policies such as labelling. As for finance, it is stretched, as is governance, with the numerous initiatives and processes – the WSSD, Environment for Europe, the EU and its growth, Environment and Health, Transport and Environment, etc. He suggested that the various processes could be brought together through annual ministerial conferences, perhaps in Geneva, devoted to a specific theme or area.
David Stanners from the European Environment Agency addressed the issue of streamlining indicator reporting to strengthen policy support. He noted that, of the mass of facts available, few of them are on the effectiveness of measures. There are 300 major pieces of environmental legislation but little reporting on measures, or scenarios. The purpose of indicators is to help answer policy questions, so it is essential to identify the policy questions first, then work out the data, assessments and models needed, and finally to develop a shared information system. Only then is it possible to plot progress against targets and benchmark between countries, thus raising awareness. What is needed is streamlined reporting, timely support, less duplication and better quality of information.

Discussion

There is a need for a harmonized environment and health information system in Europe, a good knowledge base of environment and health indicators that includes burden of disease and presents a comprehensive assessment of the situation in a clear, uniform way. This could be a major commitment for the Budapest Conference, and a pilot study for a reporting platform would also be useful. It was noted that 14 Member States in the current WHO project have already endorsed a core set of environment and health indicators. Sharing of the data between various agencies is essential. The system should facilitate health impact assessment, using science-based information on health significance of exposures (exposure-response functions, exposure limits etc.).

It was pointed out that the G8 Environment Ministers at their Banff meeting on 14 April 2002 renewed their commitment to environment and health, and their ad hoc group is committed to work on children’s environment and health indicators, as are the Pan-American Health Organization and the US EPA, and collaboration with them would be useful in developing such indicators for the Budapest Conference. Children are a high-risk group, and good evidence on children’s health and the environment is of great importance. The development of children’s environment and health indicators and the production of an annual report on children’s health and the environment were commitments made at the London Conference, and the EEA and WHO are jointly taking them forward. The EU and EEA have a study on reporting on the effectiveness of measures (REM report focusing on improving the identification of policy-relevant information) as well as pilot studies which develop key indicators that can be used by prime ministers who want a very short list of indicators to measure progress. In the context of the new yearly reporting to the Spring European Council, the Commission has asked Eurostat and the EEA to develop more indicators and this could include a health component. The EEA will provide inputs to the reporting to the Spring European Council next year (using its reports Signals 2002 and 2003), which will include the candidate countries from 2003. It was noted that the OECD’s Environmental Outlook includes human health and the environment as one of its cross-cutting issues.

It was considered important but difficult to involve big business, except at the very top level; yet business is accustomed to working with its own financial indicators. This year the EC produced a Communication on "The Lisbon strategy - making things happen" which reported back on the Lisbon process whose goal is to make the EU the most dynamic, competitive and sustainable economy in the world. Following the strategy for sustainable development adopted at the Gothenberg European Council meeting decision in June 2001 (which also added an environment dimension to the Lisbon process), the recent Spring Council meeting in Barcelona March 2002 confirmed that the Lisbon process will be using 36 structural indicators, including six for environment, six social indicators and six economic indicators. It further called for relevant indicators to be developed on public health, particularly in relation to chemicals.
There was general support for guidelines on how the precautionary principle that could be operational particularly in relation to children as an outcome of the Budapest Conference. In this regard, the EEA publication *Late lessons from early warnings: the precautionary principle 1896–2000* would provide valuable background, as would the work initiated by the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health in Rome.

The Russian Federation would be interested in hosting an international symposium on the environment and health situation in the post-Soviet period, if WHO can provide financial assistance.

### 4.4 Emerging priority issues

Based on the country/NGO questionnaire results and further consideration of the criteria for topics, the EEHC decided at its 5th meeting in November 2001 in Istanbul that the following emerging issues should be further developed: housing and health; tourism, environment and health; and health and global changes in the environment. Papers BWG/Lucca/16-18 were prepared to serve as the basis for discussion on the further development of these three topics.

#### a) Housing and health (BWG/Lucca/16):
Housing received widespread support as a major environmental health issue. However, the intersectoral nature of the issue raised some reservations on whether the Budapest Conference would be the right forum for it because ministries in some countries have only indirect responsibility for housing.

There was concern about the major impact that housing conditions have on respiratory disease, particularly asthma and respiratory allergies. The pollution may come from many sources such as petrol heaters or wood-burning stoves, polluting substances emitted from furniture, mould or radon. Lack of ventilation is also a problem, with buildings sealed against the cold or heat. Asbestos in central Asia needs to be addressed, and it was noted that housing renovation programmes should address health as a priority.

The impact of various housing conditions throughout the European Region on human health needs to be better documented. The Budapest Conference could introduce harmonizing regulations and legislation on environmental health standards, including on building materials and design. However, housing conditions are affected not only by house structure but by the way of life of the inhabitants and interfering with private life is a key political barrier, so the issue should be approached in a broad sense.

The initiative on housing and health received support from a wide range of countries across the European Region.

#### b) Tourism, environment and health (BWG/Lucca/17Revised):
The paper reviewed travel-related risks, the impact of tourism on environmental quality, and environmental health risks to travellers including infectious diseases, zoonoses and parasitic diseases. The issue of tourism, environment and health was strongly welcomed by a number of countries for whom it is a major economic sector. There are many concerns, one of which is the pollution of recreational water. Only four of the eight Mediterranean countries are in the EU, the other half are therefore not regulated in the same way; compliance to the Barcelona Convention is poor. There are also concerns about food safety, the threat of legionnaires’ disease, and sunstroke. Malta proposed an action plan on tourism, environment and health and offered support by setting up a centre to address the issue through developing tools, health impact assessments, etc. This would benefit the whole Region Europe is the world's leading tourist destination. Some concern was expressed that while the issue is interesting, the focus would need to be more clearly on children.
c) **Health and global change** (BWG/Lucca/18): Type 2 Preparatory Initiatives are being prepared for WSSD, and the commitment to global change and health as an issue should be a clear call from WHO and from the EEHC. It was felt that global change should be on the Budapest Conference agenda because it will build on the “Environment for Europe Conference in Kiev and the WSSD and would address particularly the health impacts on present and future generations. It was agreed that a steering group be created.

d) **Food safety:** The issue of food safety was raised by WHO for discussion. The importance of the issue to human health was strongly acknowledged by many participants, but concerns were raised about the considerable efforts being made in other fora, as well as the fact that the issue often comes under the responsibility of ministries other than health or environment. However, the session Chair invited WHO to prepare a background paper outlining how the issue could be approached within the context of the Budapest Conference for the next meeting of the EEHC.

5. **The way forward**

Building on the previous sessions, there was general support for the development of a children’s health and environment action plan as outlined in section 4 of this report. Children’s health was seen as important in its own right, and children are also an obvious gateway to sustainable development. There was also general support for the development of a system of environment and health indicators as an important outcome of the Budapest Conference, and for work on the application of the precautionary principle in relation to children’s health.

In addition, it was considered important to “keep the door open” for issues related to the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The issue of possible merging of the Environment and Health process and Environment for Europe process should also be further considered.

6. **Conclusions and wrap up**

In summary the Working Papers BWG/Lucca/1-18 were accepted as a basis for further development of the respective priority issues, taking into regard the comments made at this meeting. The issues will be taken forward for consideration at the next meeting of the EEHC. In doing so, it was important to focus on action-oriented outcomes. It is also important to encourage and maintain the commitment of countries to the various issues. To help ensure this and to ensure transparency in the work of the EEHC, a list of potential Budapest Conference outcomes/products should be produced and web-based information covering ongoing work (meeting dates, working group members, etc.) on each be made available. The outcomes of other relevant conferences such as the WSSD and the Kiev Conference will also need to be taken into account. Finally, the issue of possible merging of the Environment and Health and Environment for Europe processes should be explored further.

The next meeting of the EEHC will take place on 13-14 June in Sofia, where the outcomes of the Lucca meeting will be discussed in preparation of submission of the agenda to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy in autumn 2002.
Annex 1

Scope and purpose

As agreed by ministers of health and of the environment at the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment in London in 1999, the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health will take place in Budapest in 2004. As also agreed at the London Conference, the European Environment and Health Committee (EEHC) should present detailed proposals for the Budapest Conference to all Member States in 2002, through the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy.

Preparations for the Budapest Conference are well underway. At its June 2001 meeting, the EEHC agreed to serve as the Steering Committee for the Budapest Conference. Recognizing the need for a subgroup to be more directly involved with the detailed planning (e.g. agenda items, topic development, budget, practical arrangements), the EEHC decided to establish the Budapest Working Group, with EEHC representatives from Hungary, Italy, United Kingdom, European Commission, UN/ECE and the European Public Health Alliance. The EEHC Secretariat serves as secretariat for the Budapest Working Group.

In summer 2001, a questionnaire on possible topics and overall theme of the Budapest Conference was sent to both the ministry of environment and the ministry of health of WHO European Member States. This questionnaire, based on several brainstorming sessions of the EEHC and on internal consultation within WHO, was initiated because the EEHC fully recognized that the interests, concerns and needs of Member States should be duly reflected in the programme of the Budapest Conference. To help ensure this, input from Member States at an early stage in the planning of the Budapest Conference was desirable. A similar questionnaire was also sent to NGOs and major groups through the European Health and Environment Network (eHEN).

The results of the country questionnaire, as well as the findings of the civil society questionnaire and the deliberations of the Budapest Working Group, formed the basis for discussion at the 5th session of the EEHC in November 2001. The EEHC decided that the overall theme of the Budapest Conference should be “The Future for Our Children” within the broader context of sustainable development.

A large number of possible topics that would support this overall theme were identified from the questionnaires. In order to assist the Budapest Working Group in selecting the specific agenda items for the Conference, Dr Corrado Clini, Co-Chair of the EEHC, offered to host an extended meeting of the Budapest Working Group to which all WHO Member States would be invited to participate and make their views known. In this way, the meeting would provide an excellent opportunity for countries to contribute further to the development of a Budapest Conference agenda to ensure that their priority concerns within the conference theme are adequately addressed.

The meeting will focus on identifying the priority topics that should be addressed under the Conference theme, taking into account that they should fit within the theme, be priority issues, be policy/intervention oriented, and be feasible (i.e. financial/human resources available; country/organization ready to take it forward). Participants, in plenary session and if appropriate in subgroup work, may wish to focus on the following areas:

- From London to Budapest - progress made on the priority topics: Discussion on follow up on actions taken since the London Conference.
• Strengthening the policy-making base – Discussion on such issues as, assessing the environmental burden of disease, assessing the environment and health situation in the NIS streamlining country reporting and development of environment and health indicators, dealing with uncertainty and the precautionary principle, and impact of international decisions on policy-making (conventions, declarations, protocols, etc).

• Emerging priority issues – Discussion on new issues or those that are gaining importance in Europe, such as housing and health; and tourism, environment and health.

• The way forward – Discussion on how the decisions taken at the Budapest Conference could be taken forward (e.g. Conference Declaration; action plan for children, environment and health; regional summit on sustainable development).

The expected outcome of the meeting is agreement on priority topics to be developed under the Conference theme.
Annex 2

Programme

Thursday, 18 April 2002

8:30 – 9:30  Registration

9:30 – 11:00  Welcome and opening statements:
- Hon. Altero Matteoli, Minister of Environment, Italy
- Hon. Girolamo Sirchia, Minister of Health, Italy
- Dr Marc Danzon, Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for Europe
- Statement from Commissioner Margot Wallström, Environment, and Commissioner David Byrne, Health and Consumer Protection

Scope and purpose of the meeting – Dr Corrado Clini, Dr Heinz Schreiber, Dr Anna Paldy

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee/tea break

11:30 – 13:00  Children in environment and health strategies -
- In the EU, by Dr Veronique Angot
- In the countries of central and eastern Europe, by Dr Janos Zlinsky
- In the Aral Sea area, by Dr Oral Ataniyazova
- In the newly independent states, by Ms Anna Golubovska-Onisimova
- In the USA, by Ms Catherine Allen
- In Canada and the G8 actions, by Ms Julie Charbonneau

- Panel discussion

Chairs: Dr Corrado Clini & Dr Heinz Schreiber

13:00- 14:30  Lunch

14:30 – 15:30 Discussion to be continued if necessary

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee/tea break

16:00 – 19:00 From London to Budapest -

- Introduction, by Dr Roberto Bertollini

- Discussion on progress made on priority issues from the London Conference – working papers BWG/Lucca/1-9

- Discussion on setting the agenda for Budapest – and beyond

Chair: Ms Sibylle Vermont
Friday, 19 April 2002

9:00 – 10:45 Strengthening the policy-making base
- Interactions between the UN/ECE Conventions/protocols and the strategies for children’s environmental health protection, by Mr Hugo von Meijenfeldt
- Streamlining indicator reporting to strengthen policy support, by Dr David Stanners
- Discussion on relevant issues including working papers BWG/Lucca/10-15

Chair: Dr Heinz Schreiber

10:45-11:15 Coffee/tea break

11:15 – 13:00 Emerging priority issues
- Discussion on relevant issues including working papers BWG/Lucca/16-18Revised

Chair: Ms Anna Golubovska-Onisimova

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00 The way forward
- Discussion on possible overall outcomes (Declaration; Children, environment and health action plan; high-level regional summit on sustainable development; etc.) of the Budapest Conference

Chair: Dr Anna Paldy

16:00 – 17:00 Conclusions and wrap up session

Summations by session chairs and final discussion

Chairs: Dr Heinz Schreiber & Dr Corrado Clini
### Annex 3

#### List of working papers

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Annex 4

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