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Preface

The ECE Committee on Environmental Policy included the Environmental Performance Review of Latvia in its work programme in May 1997. In September of the same year, the preparatory mission for the project was organized, and a team of both national and ECE experts was formed to carry out the review. The Governments of Finland, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Ukraine made national experts available for the task. The Commission of the European Communities funded an adviser on EU practices. The Bilthoven Division of the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health contributed its expertise and resources for the preparation of the review of environmental health issues. The travel expenses of the experts from countries in transition and from the ECE secretariat were covered by extra-budgetary funds, which had been provided by Finland, Italy, and Norway. The successful conclusion of the project would not have been possible without the generous support from all these sources.

The review team prepared a report on the environmental performance of Latvia before, during and after the review mission in Riga in April 1998. The Latvian partners in discussion with the review team did not spare time or effort in responding to the queries and requests made. The report by the review team, including draft recommendations for the solution of existing problems in national environmental policy and management, was submitted for evaluation to the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy at its annual session in Geneva, on 1 October 1998. A high-level delegation from Latvia attended this session. It was headed by the State Minister for Environmental Protection and also included representatives of the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Welfare. The evaluation by the Committee was based on the in-depth preparation by two reviewing countries, Portugal and Ukraine. At the end of its evaluation, the Committee agreed on a final set of recommendations for inclusion in this publication.

The consideration of the EPR report confirmed the strategy that has been applied to Latvian environmental policy and management during the transition period. The inherited acute environmental problems have been tackled essentially on a case by case basis. The long-term solution of the problems will have to be accompanied also by strategic orientations for environmental policy. The development of such orientations in co-operation with both governmental and non-governmental partners is a need also related to the efforts by Latvia to approach European practices of environmental management. The Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development is fully aware of the considerable resources that are required at all levels for the full transformation to such practices.

The ECE Committee on Environmental Policy and the ECE review team wish the Latvian environmental managers success in implementing and following up the policy recommendations that are included in this review.

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The preparatory mission for the project took place from 3-5 September 1997. The review mission was organized from 31 March to 9 April 1998 and the Peer Review was held in Geneva on 1 October 1998. The ECE Committee on Environmental Policy adopted the recommendations set out in this publication.

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