



UNEP in Europe

NEWSLETTER

MAY 2013



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New government for Bulgaria



On 23 May, Bulgaria's largest party GERB declined to try to form a new government, paving the way for the rival Socialists to put together a technocrat administration and end a political impasse.

Seeking to break a deadlock that could undermine the European Union's poorest economy, President Rosen Plevneliev immediately passed the baton to the Socialists, whose proposed government was announced on 28 May and elected the following day.

The cabinet is composed of 17 experts headed by Plamen Oresharski, a former finance minister in a Socialist government who is not a party member. The divisions in parliament had prompted concerns that Bulgarians might have to return to the polls therefore a working government is expected to bring some reassurance of stability.

Bibliographer Iskra Mihaylova has been officially nominated to become Bulgaria's new Minister of Environment and Water. Ms Mihaylova was born in 1957 in Sofia.

She was a Movement for Rights and Freedoms lawmaker in Bulgaria's 41st Parliament (2009-2013) and Chair of the Parliament's committee on environment and water.

Hollande calls for EU "harmonisation" on renewable energy



French President François Hollande was recorded as saying that Member States should consider dropping their national support schemes for renewable energies in favour of a harmonised EU approach that would send a clearer signal to investors.

The French President was responding to an attack on EU energy policy led by eight vleading European power companies including French group GDF Suez, German EON and RWE, Eni of Italy, and Iberdrola and GasNatural Fenosa. The energy suppliers stated that EU policy had failed and was destroying parts of the sector. "We are not asking for subsidies, but for visibility, stable and homogenous rules in Europe, and quantified objectives up to 2030 in terms of the fight against climate warming", GDF Suez CEO Gerard Mestrallet said. Francois Hollande said he agreed broadly with Mestrallet's views and German Chancellor Angela Merkel also seems open to some degree of harmonisation on renewable subsidies across the EU.

The EU summit conclusions mention the Commission presenting "guidance on efficient and cost-effective support schemes for renewable energies" but do not provide more details as to substance or timing.

President Putin and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon discuss pressing international concerns



On 17 May, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The two leaders exchanged views and discussed in detail a peace settlement of the Syrian crisis. Also, Mr Putin briefed the UN Secretary-General on his contacts with President of South Africa Jacob Zuma, Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom David Cameron, and President of Egypt Mohamed Morsi.

Both also discussed the situation in the Korean Peninsula and international relations overall, stating unwavering conviction that international law must underpin all peace processes and the settlement of conflicts.

The two leaders also discussed issues pertaining to the development of the United Nations itself.

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EC decision to impose punitive import duties on solar panels from China draws criticism



Chinese solar panel production quadrupled between 2009 and 2011 to more than the entire global demand with Chinese companies capturing more than 80 percent of the European market. It exported 21 billion Euros worth of panels to the EU in 2011; the panels are up to 45 percent cheaper than European-made ones. In response, the European Commission has agreed to impose punitive import duties on solar panels from China in a move to guard against what it sees as dumping of cheap goods in Europe. The EU duties will come into effect once the decision is published in the EU's Official Journal and will be set at around 47 percent.

After prompting a cautious response from Beijing which called for further dialogue on 10 May, German Economy Minister Philipp Roesler called the ruling a "grave mistake" and urged the Commission to work to prevent the eruption of a trade conflict. He said China already warned that the duties on solar panels would harm bilateral trade.

Germany is one of the world's leading export nations and France is also seeking to a solution with Chinese Commerce Minister Gao Hucheng that could entail agreeing on a minimum price to which all solar panel makers adhere, diplomats said.

New Icelandic government takes office

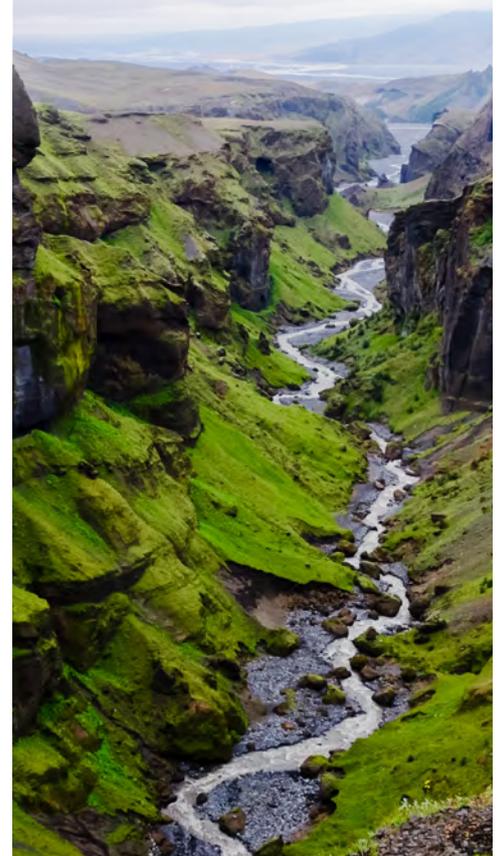


A government of the Progressive Party and the Independence Party has been formed and took office on 23 May.

A comprehensive policy statement of the new government in Iceland has been introduced, where the focus is put on a forward looking policy, aiming at serving the whole of the country and the people. The guiding element will be the improved prospects of the households in Iceland, and promotion of opportunities in trade and employment, which will create added value for the benefit of the nation as a whole.

Nine ministers will take seat in the new government, four from the Progressive Party, and five from the Independence Party. Two of the current ministries, Ministry of Industries and Innovation, and Ministry of Welfare, will have two ministers each.

More information [here](#).





UN Conference moves to strengthen chemical safety globally

The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the three multilateral environmental agreements that govern chemicals and hazardous waste, convened their meetings of the parties from 28 April to 10 May in Geneva. Attended by nearly two thousand participants from 170 countries as well as 80 ministers, the conference adopted 50 separate decisions aimed at strengthening protection against hazardous chemicals and waste.

The conference culminated in a ministerial segment on 9 and 10 May dedicated to the theme of strengthening synergies between the conventions at national, regional and global level. Leaders from UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) pledged to deepen cooperation to raise the profile of chemicals and waste issues, promote green growth and alleviate poverty.

UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner called the conferences of the parties “a unique historic event coming at a time of unprecedented change and progress in the arena of global environmental governance.” The 6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention agreed to list hexabromocyclododecane (HBCD), a flame retardant, to the Convention with specific exemptions for expanded and extruded polystyrene in buildings. Four more chemicals were added to the Rotterdam Convention but no agreement was reached on the addition of chrysotile asbestos and paraquat.

The Parties to the Basel Convention took decisions to strengthen compliance with the Convention, adopted a framework for the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes and other wastes, and agreed to develop technical guidelines on transboundary movement of electronic and electrical wastes (e-waste).

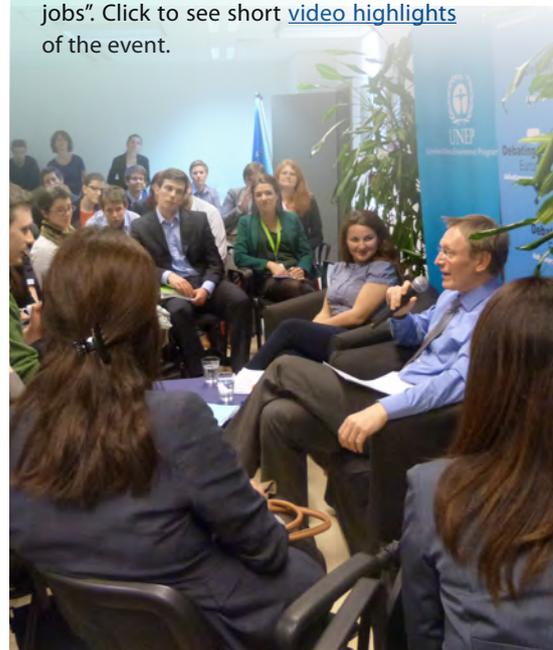
More information [here](#) or email msjones@brsmeas.org

UNEP Brussels interns “talk shop” with EU Environment Commissioner

On 2 May, UNEP Brussels hosted an event with Environment Commissioner Potočnik exclusively for interns from various institutions in Brussels. The event was the latest in a series called “Round Tables Round Cakes”, organized by UNEP interns, which gives those starting out in their career the chance to interact in an informal setting with those at the top of their field.

The topic of the event was “What will you be doing in 2030: the skills and expertise young professionals will need to tackle future environmental challenges”. The Commissioner answered questions from the moderator, Carmen Păun, from the European Youth Press, and then took two video questions from young professionals in Denmark and the Philippines before fielding questions from some of the 100 interns present.

The Commissioner shared experience of his career path, recommending to young interns: “Keep your feet on the ground, fight those above you, and don’t be afraid of having people smarter than you below you”. He said that in future, while there would certainly be more jobs in fields related to environmental challenges such as air and water quality, the growth of resource efficiency in Europe will mean that all jobs will be “green jobs”. Click to see short [video highlights](#) of the event.



Astana Economic Forum hosts world anti-crisis conference, convenes leaders on global growth



Led by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, up to 73 key events were organized as part of the "Eurasian Economic Club of Scientists" – the VI Astana Economic Forum (AEF) and the first anti-crisis World Conference (WAC) with more than 12,000 participants from 132 countries registered. The impressive line-up of delegates included 35 current and former ministers, 10 Nobel Laureates and more than 40 heads of international organizations, corporations and businesses. The resulting Astana Declaration and recommendations will go to the G20 Summit in September 2013 regarding lines of action for responding to current crises, including what President Nazarbayev sees as a "crisis of confidence." The business fora led to about 80 agreements and memoranda on cooperation signed for a total of more than 2.7 billion USD.

In opening the conference President Nazarbayev pointed to the policies of the Strategy "Kazakhstan-2050," whose main objective, he said, is to transform Kazakhstan into "one of the 30 most developed countries progressing through innovative economic and social principles." He reiterated the country's commitment to developing renewable energy and the proposal to establish a Board of Trustees whose mandate would be to fund research for fundamental aspects of the "G-global" communications platform.

At the conference, UNEP's Acting Director for the Regional Office for Europe, Jan Dusik, highlighted the case for a green economy and for investing in new ways to run our economies and industries. "From sustainable food production to renewable energy, a green economy offers us an alternative to the fossil fuel and consumption-driven society that we live in today," said Dusik.

UNEP will now review the new Green Economy Strategy adopted by Kazakhstan and explore ways to support this new avenue in the country as well as in Central Asia.

More information [here](#).

"Love Your Leftovers" social media campaign reaches climax

With more than 50 submissions received, GreenUp's recipe competition closed on Sunday 26 May. GreenUp is a social media campaign that gives people practical everyday tips on how to reduce their personal ecological footprint. In the run-up to World Environment Day (5 June), GreenUp ran "Love Your Leftovers" which included a competition encouraging the public to send in ideas for recipes using leftovers and saving food.

The competition winner will be announced on World Environment Day, whose theme this year is "Think.Eat.Save". The recipes will be collated and used as material for UNEP's "Think.Eat.Save" campaign in future.

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Royal efforts to support fight against illegal wildlife trafficking

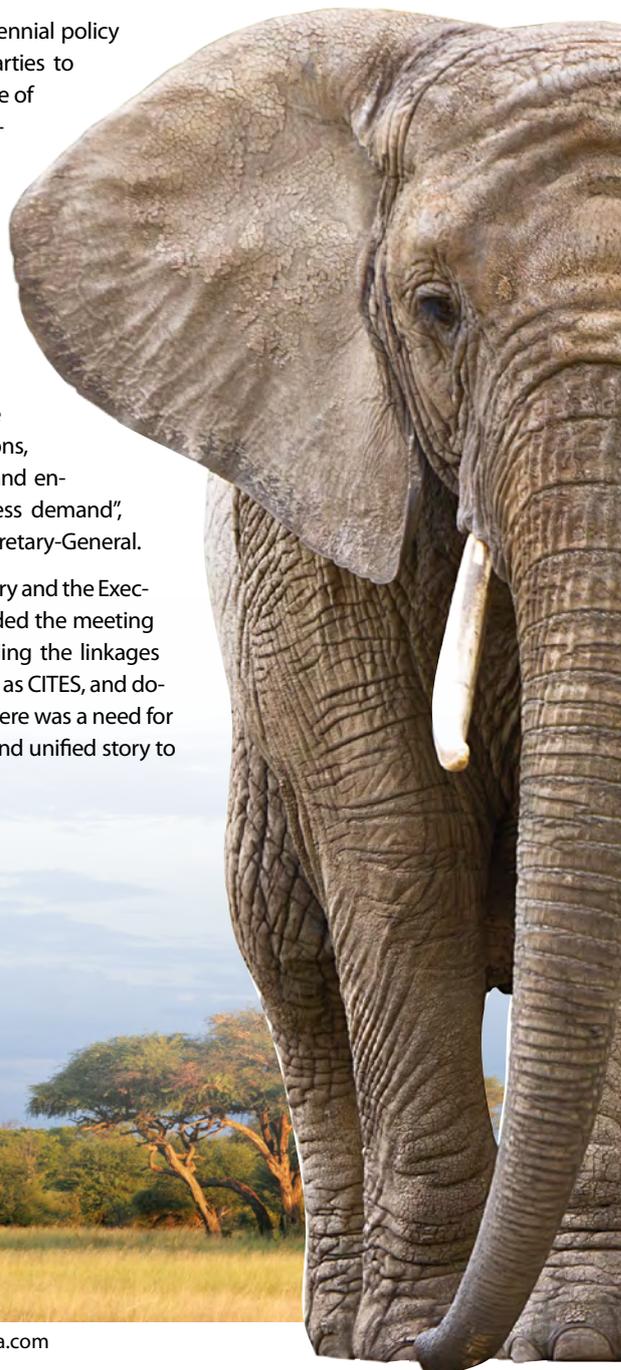
The Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was invited to speak at a conference hosted by HRH The Prince of Wales and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Owen Paterson MP. Held on 21 May, the event called for action at the highest levels to stop the illegal trade in wildlife – an activity that not only jeopardizes the world's conservation efforts but also poses a serious threat to national and regional security and the economy.

The UK Environment Secretary Owen Paterson said: "It is all too easy to think that the extinction of a species is a thing of the past, when it is a very real problem today", adding that the conference "is a real opportunity to get these issues raised at the highest level internationally" in order to reduce demand for endangered wildlife and related products while finding long-term alternatives to their trade.

"Just two months ago, at their triennial policy meeting held in Bangkok, the Parties to CITES took the most powerful suite of decisions in the Convention's 40-year history to combat the current disturbing spike in the illegal trade in elephant ivory and rhino horn, as well as for other species - they must now be fully implemented. Excellent initiatives such as this event can generate greater political momentum to ensure the implementation of agreed decisions, attract much needed financing, and enhance public outreach to suppress demand", said Mr John E. Scanlon, CITES Secretary-General.

The United Nations Under-Secretary and the Executive Director of UNEP also attended the meeting and made an observation regarding the linkages between global agreements, such as CITES, and domestic legislation, and whether there was a need for one overarching global strategy and unified story to combat these crimes.

More information [here](#) or email juan.vasquez@cites.org



Eight countries submit action plans to combat illegal trade in elephant ivory

The Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has received National Ivory Action Plans from the first group of countries identified as primary source, transit and import countries affected by illegal trade in ivory: China, Kenya, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam.

The plans were requested by the CITES Standing Committee in March this year in response to the dramatic rise in the number of elephants poached for their ivory following alarming statistics by the CITES programme for Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) and the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS).

By 15 May 2013 - a deadline set by the Standing Committee - the eight countries submitted plans with timeframes and milestones, specifying activities in the areas of legislation and regulations, national and international enforcement, outreach and public awareness. They are being urged to implement their plans before July 2014 when the CITES Standing Committee will review their implementation.

"Full implementation of the landmark decisions that CITES Member States adopted by consensus last March to combat wildlife crime, together with the complementary decisions taken by the CITES Standing Committee, is key to winning the fight against illegal wildlife trade. The CITES Secretariat will continue to support CITES Parties in their efforts and to rally further political and financial support to assist them with on-the-ground implementation", said Mr John E. Scanlon, CITES Secretary-General.

More information [here](#) or email juan.vasquez@cites.org

Call to action as new report confirms green trade imperative for sustainable development

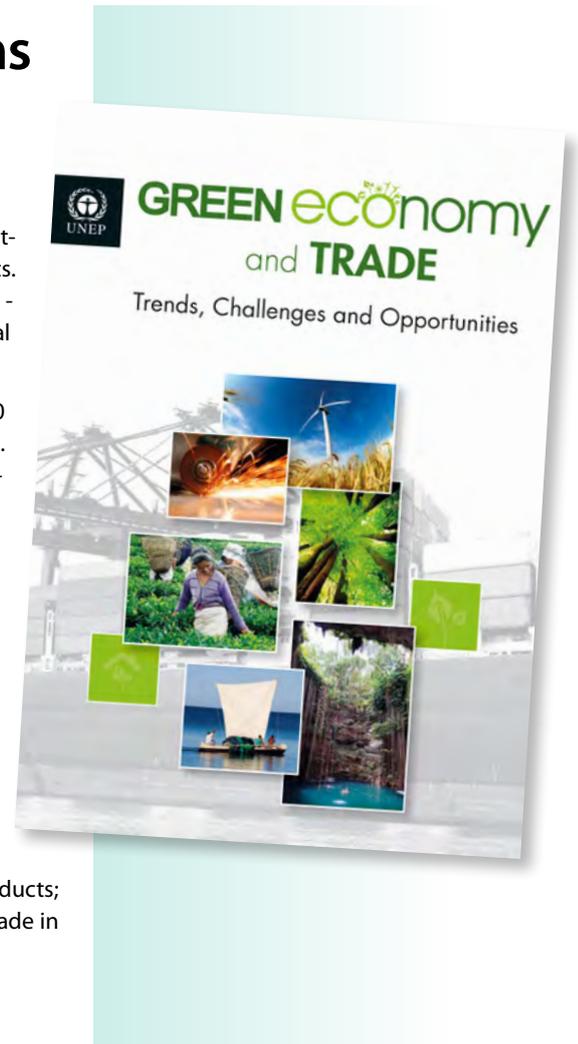
UNEP's Geneva Environment Network (GEN) and Economics and Trade Branch (ETB) hosted a High Level Dialogue on Green Economy and Trade for more than 150 participants. The event on 8 May marked the launch of a new report, "Green Economy and Trade - Trends, Challenges and Opportunities", whose findings confirm that greening global trade is a vital step to achieving sustainable development.

UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner highlighted that global trade represents over 30 percent of global GDP, thus greening trade is imperative for sustainable development. WTO Director General Pascal Lamy, noting that WTO members need to pay more attention to this issue moving forward.

Panellists included Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations and WTO Luis Enrique Chavez; Maldives Minister for Environment and Energy Maryiam Shakeela; Uganda Minister for Water and Environment Ephraim Kamuntu; UNCTAD Director of the Division on International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities Guillermo Valles; and, ICTSD Chief Executive Officer Ricardo Melendez-Ortiz. The Head of UNEP's Trade, Policy and Planning Unit Anja von Moltke opened the session and the Executive Director of IISD Europe Mark Halle moderated the event.

Funded by the European Commission, the UNEP report identifies numerous trade opportunities, especially for developing countries. Opportunities include access to sustainable global supply chains; more efficient manufacturing practices; trade in certified products, such as organic agriculture, sustainable fisheries and forestry products; trade in environmental goods, such as in renewable energy supply technology; and trade in environmental services, such as sustainability certification and tourism.

More information [here](#).



Arctic Council Ministers meet under Swedish Chairmanship

A total of 236 participants participated in the Arctic Council (AC) Ministerial Meeting in Kiruna, Sweden; amongst them representatives of 8 AC member States, 6 Permanent Participants, 6 Working Groups, 10 observer States, 15 observer organizations, the Arctic Council Secre-

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