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Economic Commission for Europe
Committee on Sustainable Energy
Group of Experts on Renewable Energy
Seventh session
Geneva, 22-25 September 2020
Item 11 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of Conclusions and Recommendations

DRAFT Conclusions and Recommendations arising from the seventh session of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy [1]

Agenda item 1: Adoption of the agenda

1. Noting that its seventh session was held under unprecedented circumstances caused by COVID-19 in a different format and in collaboration with the Groups of Experts on Energy Efficiency, on Gas, and on Resource Management during the period 22-25 September, the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy adopted its agenda (ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2020/1).

Agenda item 2: Election of Officers

2. The Group of Experts elected a new Bureau with effect from the close of the seventh session for two years comprising the following members: Mr. Kostiantyn Gura (Ukraine) as Chair, and Mr. Adrian Bylyku (Albania), Mr. Andrei Miniankou (Belarus), Mr. Admir Softić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Ms. Margalita Arabidze (Georgia), Mr. Tibor Fischer (Germany), Ms. Ainur Sospanova (Kazakhstan), Mr. Georgy Ermolenko (Russian Federation), Mr. Miloš Banjac (Serbia), Mr. Paolo Frankl (International Energy Agency), Mr. Gurbuz Gonul (International Renewable Energy Agency), Ms. Rana Adib (Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century), and Ms. Michela Morese (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/Global Bioenergy Partnership) as Vice-Chairs.

3. The Group of Experts noted with appreciated the contributions of the outgoing Chair, Mr. Nazir Ramazanov (Azerbaijan). Mr. Felice Cappelluti (Italy) also was thanked for his contribution during his time as Vice-Chair.

Agenda item 3: Understanding renewable energy resource projects, portfolios and investments – applying the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources.

4. The Group of Experts:

(a) Noted the benefits of standardised renewable energy resource classification and management, including: the tracking of common milestones by project developers; harmonised monitoring of project pipelines by portfolio managers in utilities and integrated energy companies; having improved information on project maturities and risks for investors, banks and regulators; and, directly comparable information on resource potentials for policy makers.

[1] These draft conclusions and recommendations were developed by the Bureau of the Group of Experts and are not intended in any way to prejudice the discussions at the seventh session, but rather to provide a draft text that will be updated as the meeting progresses.

(b) Noted that the use of standardised resource classifications including common project milestones and harmonised reporting, promises to reduce transaction costs while improving the quality of information being shared between businesses and governments and further noted the importance of this in the post-COVID-19 green recovery.

(c) Noted the importance of further testing the classification of renewable energy projects using the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) and agreed to facilitate case studies or pilot projects by ECE member States for presentation at its eighth session.

(d) Agreed that a member of the Bureau of the Group of Experts will join the Renewable Energy Working Group of the Expert Group on Resource Management.

(e) Agreed to work with the Expert Group on Resource Management to prepare and issue a joint study on the benefits and challenges for governments applying UNFC to renewable energy projects and resources. Such a study would serve to highlight the alignment of UNFC with the Sustainable Development Goals.

(f) Requested the secretariat to facilitate coordination between the two Groups of Experts.

Agenda item 4: Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings – the role of renewable energy in high performance buildings

5. The Group of Experts:

(a) Welcomed the improvements to the United Nations Framework Guidelines for Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings, specifically those related to taking account of the buildings' value chain for more accurate calculation of energy efficiency (*i.a.*, the amount of energy consumed to produce building materials); orientation on low-carbon technologies to encourage utilization of clean and potentially renewable energy-based technologies to lower greenhouse gas emissions, and; recognition of the impact that buildings have on human health.

(b) Recognized the potential for its collaboration with the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency on buildings' energy supply, with a view to apply a holistic, systems approach to building design, delivery and operation and thereby align buildings with the highest standards of health, comfort, well-being and sustainability (including improving energy productivity and reducing emissions).

(c) Requested the secretariat to facilitate coordination between the two Groups of Experts.

Agenda item 5: Guidelines and best practices for micro-, small and medium enterprises in delivering energy-efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment in the post-COVID-19 recovery phase

6. The Group of Experts:

(a) Took note of the recommendations to governments for developing policy guidelines and establishing financial incentives schemes for MSMEs. The Group acknowledged that these recommendations, if tailored to the national contexts of ECE member States, could enable a more secure development environment for MSMEs to deliver energy-efficient products and provide renewable energy equipment.

(b) Welcomed development of a publication on this topic based on the findings of the study being undertaken by ECE.

(c) Expressed appreciation to the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency for its participation in the discussions under this agenda item and reiterated the request to the secretariat to facilitate further cooperation between the two Groups of Experts.

Agenda item 6: Achieving carbon neutrality on the pathway to sustainable energy

7. The Group of Experts:

(a) Outlined its intention to engage in the joint work on the transition of the energy sector in line with the results of the ECE project "Pathways to Sustainable Energy" and objectives of the "Carbon Neutrality" project, supporting member States to meet their commitments under international agreements and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

(b) Noted with appreciation the implementation of the project on "Carbon Neutrality" being overseen by the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems and agreed to support further development and to engage in a technology and policy dialogue on attaining carbon neutrality in the ECE region, taking into account the significant role that renewable energy is expected to play in a future energy system.

(c) Noted with appreciation the interventions by delegates on their experiences and views on how to improve integration of renewable energy into energy systems, in particular given the interlinkages and synergies among renewable energy, natural gas and cleaner electricity production.

Agenda item 7: Decarbonization that harnesses synergies between renewable energy (electricity and gas) while using gas infrastructure as the backbone of a low-carbon energy system

8. Recognizing the drive towards decarbonization and electrification of end-use and noting that, increasingly, decarbonized gases will be a key energy vector for the foreseeable future, the Group of Experts welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with the Group of Experts on Gas on this topic.

9. The Group of Experts:

(a) Noted the importance to facilitate international and cross-sectoral collaboration to increase awareness and public acceptability of hydrogen and accelerate the transition towards a future hydrogen economy.

(b) Recognized the critical role of gas in decarbonising the energy sector and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

(c) Acknowledged that the concept of "gas" should be broader and include not only natural gas but also low-carbon, decarbonized and renewable gases. Technology development and economies of scale will foster progressive growth in the use of decarbonized and renewable gases. The use natural gas with carbon capture (use) and storage CC(U)S technology also could lead to desired outcomes.

(c) Acknowledged that biogas/biomethane and hydrogen could make significant contributions. Biogas/biomethane has the added benefits of contributing to the circular and rural economy and valuing waste. Hydrogen is expected to increase its contribution progressively with multiple potential sources of hydrogen production.

(d) Offered support to ECE member States to disseminate best practices in the achievement of the interlinked model and to develop effective policies to support, when necessary, technological developments and to accelerate decarbonisation of the energy system.

(e) Requested the secretariat to facilitate continued coordination between the two Groups of Experts.

Agenda item 8: Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2020-2021

10. The Group of Experts:

(a) Noted with appreciation the work of the Bureau and the secretariat and their efforts to manage and direct the Group's work plan between annual sessions despite human and financial resource constraints and the unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

(b) Further noted with appreciation the concrete activities the Group has implemented to help increase the uptake of renewable energy significantly across the ECE region.

(c) Noted the significant progress in implementing its work plan for 2020-2021.

(d) Noted with appreciation the cooperation with the ECE subprogramme on Environment in helping to achieve better management of resources, including an increase in the share of renewable energy, taking into consideration intersectoral opportunities and effects in the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus. The Group welcomed the tool for policymakers "Towards sustainable renewable energy investment and deployment: Trade-offs and opportunities with water resources and the environment" (ECE/ENERGY/127, ECE Energy Series No. 63) and agreed to continue further strengthening the potential role of renewable energy in promoting the nexus approach as well as links to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the implications for climate change mitigation. The Group supported continued cooperation with the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus under the ECE Water Convention to disseminate the tool for policymakers across the ECE region and beyond.

(e) Noted with appreciation implementation of the project on "Transboundary energy cooperation through introduction of wind and solar energy into power systems of the CIS countries to support achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7". The Group of Experts agreed to continue supporting market development of renewable energies in ECE countries through identification of obstacles to renewable energy uptake and promotion of multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Agenda item 12: Adoption of the report and close of the meeting

11. The report of the meeting was adopted subject to any necessary editing and formatting.