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**Economic Commission for Europe****Committee on Sustainable Energy****Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane****Fifteenth session**

Geneva, 22-25 September 2020

**Report of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane****I. Introduction**

1. The fifteenth session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane (CMM) was a part of the 2020 UNECE Energy Week and was held for one day during the period 22-25 September 2020. The session was originally scheduled to be held on 23-24 March 2020 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. This report summarizes the discussions on the work of the Group of Experts at its fifteenth session. All the documents and presentations of the session are available on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) website<sup>1</sup>.
3. Due to the unprecedented circumstances caused by COVID-19, the Group of Experts held an unofficial online meeting in English only ahead of the official session to allow more time for discussion on activities in the work plan for 2020-2021.

**II. Attendance**

4. The meetings of the Groups of Experts reporting to the Committee on Sustainable Energy held during the period 22-25 September 2020 were attended by more than 350 experts from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, and Uzbekistan.
5. Experts from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Cameroon, Chad, the People's Republic of China, Colombia, Comoros, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Uganda, United Arab Emirates,

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<sup>1</sup> Official documents of the session are available at <http://documents.un.org/>. Unofficial room documents and presentations delivered at the meeting are available on the ECE website at: <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53263>.

United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen participated under Article 11 of the Commission's Terms of Reference.

6. Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNEP-DTU Partnership, Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) attended. The European Union was represented. Representatives from the European Commission (EC), from the EC Directorate-General (D.G.) for Energy, D.G. for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, and D.G. Joint Research Centre, and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) RawMaterials also participated.

7. Representatives of the following organizations participated: Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia (CCOP), EuroGeoSurveys (EGS), International Energy Agency (IEA), and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

8. The meeting also was attended by representatives of non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector, as well as by independent experts.

### **III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2020/1

9. Noting the unprecedented circumstances caused by COVID-19, the Group of Experts adopted a revised version of the agenda (ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2020/1) including the following items:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Election of officers.
3. Opening remarks.
4. Report on implementation of the 2020-2021 work plan.
5. Future of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane.
6. Tenth joint meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and the Global Methane Initiative Coal Subcommittee
7. Preparations for the sixteenth session of the Group of Experts.
8. Any other business.
9. Adoption of conclusions and recommendations.
10. Adoption of the report and close of the meeting.

### **IV. Election of officers (agenda item 2)**

10. The Group of Experts elected Ms. Volha Roshchanka representing the United States of America to join the Bureau and serve until the end of the sixteenth session in 2021.

### **V. Opening remarks (agenda item 3)**

11. The Group of Experts 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 in spite of human and financial resource constraints and the unprecedented situation caused by COVID-19.

## **VI. Report on implementation of the 2020-2021 work plan (agenda item 4)**

12. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the success of the workshop “Post-Mining Perspectives: Capture and Use of Abandoned Mine Methane and Mine Reclamation and Revitalization of Post Mining Areas” that was delivered within the framework of the XXIX School of Underground Mining, on 26 February 2020, in Cracow, Poland.

13. The Group of Experts further noted that implementation of the work plan for 2020-2021 was on track.

## **VII. Future of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane (agenda item 5)**

14. The Secretary of the Committee on Sustainable Energy briefed the Group of Experts on the positions of member States towards fossil fuels and their role in the future energy mix, as well as their contribution to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

15. Observing that 80% of today’s primary energy is fossil-based and the majority of the world’s population and national economies depend on fossil energy, the Group underlined the importance of maintaining a debate on the social, environmental, and economic aspects of extraction and use of fossil fuels that is open, inclusive and fact-based. At the same time, the Group recognized the need for modernization of the global energy sector with a special focus on coal and carbon-intensive industries in order to ensure progress on the essential transition towards a green economy and low-carbon society. The Group of Experts noted that any further work on the letter intended to bring these matters to the attention of the ECE Executive Secretary and the Secretary-General of the United Nations was dependent on obtaining support for such an initiative from the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

16. The Group of Experts decided that the work plan for 2022-2023, which is to be discussed at the upcoming 16th session, should include the task of developing a concept (strategy) for the effective dissemination and promotion of best practices for degassing, capturing and using methane from operating and abandoned coal mines. The Strategy shall involve an active role of the established International Centers of Excellence and consider development of an online repository of best practices allowing for a quick access to them.

17. The Group thanked the International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane (ICE-CMM) in Poland for providing funds for implementation of the project “Strengthening national capacity of the UN member States for environmentally responsible methane management through coordination of activities of the International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane in Poland.” The Group of Experts welcomed the pledge from ICE-CMM in China to provide funds for a similar project strengthening oversight and coordination of the activities of the Chinese Centre with the current work plan and the needs of the Group. The Group of Experts thanked the Committee on Sustainable Energy for endorsing its efforts to establish this project and requested the secretariat to undertake all necessary steps to have it implemented at the earliest opportunity in order to assure the uninterrupted work of the Group.

18. The Group of Experts offered to contribute within the scope of its expertise to the extrabudgetary project on Enhancing understanding of the implications and opportunities of moving to carbon neutrality in the UNECE region across the power and energy intensive industries by 2050 (Carbon Neutrality Project) that is being implemented by the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems. The Group discussed the need for financial support from the project.

19. The Group of Experts reviewed the recommendations that it made within the framework of the Pathways to Sustainable Energy project and requested the Committee on Sustainable Energy to endorse the final document containing policy recommendations arising from that project.

20. The Group of Experts discussed development of Rules of Procedure for the Group and its Bureau, as well as their potential content. It observed that common Rules of Procedures should preferably be developed for all the subsidiary bodies of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and offered to work with the other Groups of Experts on a common text that could be presented to the Committee for its approval.

21. The Group of Experts repeated its strong support for the secretariat's efforts for having an International Year or Decade of Methane declared by the UN General Assembly in the near future.

22. The Group of Experts decided to further explore the proposal made by the European Commission to jointly develop best practices on: (1) monitoring, reporting, and verification of methane emissions from the coal sector on the facility level, (2) monitoring methane emissions from surface mines, and (3) mine closure. The Chair requested experts to volunteer to prepare a project proposal for the project on monitoring, reporting, and verification of methane emissions from the coal sector. The secretariat was requested to gather submissions and coordinate the work on that matter.

23. The Group of Experts approved the text for a proposed United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decision to be submitted to the Committee on Sustainable Energy as a first step to seeking ECOSOC's endorsement of the "Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Recovery and Use from Abandoned Coal Mines" developed by the Group. The secretariat was requested to monitor progress on this matter. In this context, the Group:

(a) Endorsed the "Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Recovery and Use from Abandoned Coal Mines";

(b) Recommended the secretariat to take appropriate measures to support worldwide application of the Best Practice Guidance; and

(c) Invited the ECE Committee on Sustainable Energy and the Executive Committee to consider submitting to ECOSOC the draft decision on this issue for consideration and possible endorsement.

## **VIII. Tenth joint meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and the Global Methane Initiative Coal Subcommittee (agenda item 6)**

24. The Group of Experts thanked the Coal Subcommittee of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) and its members for their continued support and collaboration.

25. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the added value and success of the event organized in cooperation with GMI within the framework of the extrabudgetary project "Dissemination of best practices in the abatement, recovery and use of methane, Phase II", namely a workshop titled *Post-Mining Perspectives: Capture and Use of Abandoned Mine Methane and Mine Reclamation and Revitalization of Post Mining Areas*, delivered on 26 February 2020, at the XXIX School of Underground Mining in held Cracow, Poland.

26. The Group of Experts expressed interest in continuing to develop joint projects with GMI and requested the secretariat to ensure, facilitate, and coordinate continued cooperation between the two entities.

27. The Group of Experts expressed its interest in participating in the Global Methane Forum 2021. The Group requested the secretariat to make ensure that the topics related to CMM are featured in the event's agenda.

## **IX. Preparations for the sixteenth session of the Group of Experts (agenda item 7)**

28. The sixteenth session will be held on 22-23 March 2021 in Geneva.

29. The Group of Experts endorsed the proposal for its sixteenth session to be organized within the framework of the Global Methane Forum 2021, provided that the latter will be held in March 2021 in Geneva as currently planned, and that the Group can reserve sufficient time to discuss its own matters.

## **X. Any other business (agenda item 8)**

30. The Group of Experts noted the need to expand its membership from both within and beyond the ECE region, and to secure additional extrabudgetary resources. Both are prerequisites to be able to deliver on the work plan for 2020-2021. The Group requested the secretariat to work, in cooperation with the Bureau, to identify new members encompassing all aspects of diversity, as well as potential sources of funding.

## **XI. Adoption of conclusions and recommendations (agenda item 9)**

*Documentation:* CMM-15/2020/INF.1 - Unofficial room document: Draft Conclusions and Recommendations arising from the Fifteenth Session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane dated 11 August 2020.

31. The conclusions and recommendations were adopted and are included under the relevant agenda items highlighted in this report.

## **XII. Adoption of the report and close of the meeting (agenda item 10)**

32. The report of the meeting was adopted, including the conclusions and recommendations, subject to any necessary editing and formatting.

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