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Committee on Sustainable Energy

Group of Experts on Renewable Energy

First session

Geneva, 18–19 November 2014

Item 10 of the provisional agenda

Report of the meeting

Report of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy on its first session

I. Introduction

1. The first session of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy (GERE) was held on 18–19 November 2014¹.

II. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by 79 experts from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and United States of America.

3. A representative of the European Union (EU) also participated.

4. Experts from Iran participated under Article 11 of the Commission's Terms of Reference.

5. Representatives of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Bank for Investment and

¹ 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 renewable energy website: <http://www.unece.org/energy/se/gere.html>.

Development (EBID), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the International Chamber of Commerce, the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations Foundation also participated.

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

7. The Director of the ECE Sustainable Energy Division provided the Group of Experts with an update on the relevant decisions adopted by the ECE Executive Committee (EXCOM), including on the Group of Experts' work plan for 2014–2015. The Director drew attention to the overarching mandate of the Committee on Sustainable Energy to provide access to affordable and clean energy to all, in line with the "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, and to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon footprint of the energy sector. He noted that the Group of Experts is undertaking concrete and results-oriented activities as per its mandate.

8. The secretariat presented key deliverables and activities carried out including two brainstorming meetings with key thought leaders, three informal papers on the status of development of renewable energy, on access to energy and best practice policies in the ECE region and two memoranda of understanding signed with key partners. The secretariat presented a project proposal for a status report on renewable energy in the ECE region in cooperation with the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21).

9. The GERE focussed its first session on what is the right way to develop and deploy renewables, on how those communities with no access to energy in the ECE region can be supported and how a competitive market environment for renewables can be improved.

III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2014/1

10. The provisional agenda as contained in ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2014/1 was adopted without amendment.

IV. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

11. The Group of Experts elected Mr. Ulrich Benterbusch as its chair (Germany), Mr. Nazir Ramazanov (Azerbaijan), Ms. Maria Raytcheva (Bulgaria), Mr. Andrei Miniankou (Belarus), Mr. Zeljko Juric (Croatia), Mr. Martin Scigan (Poland) as vice chairs for two years. The Group of Experts agreed to invite other stakeholders.

12. The Group of Experts invited other stakeholders to participate in the Bureau for two years to strengthen its activities. The following persons have agreed to join the Bureau for two years: Mr. Paolo Frankl (IEA), Mr. Jeffrey Skeer (IRENA) and Ms. Christine Lins (REN21).

13. Other stakeholders who express an interest may also participate in the Bureau meetings or may opt to be consulted regularly and closely associated with the on-going work of the Bureau. The agendas and reports of the Bureau meetings will be posted on the ECE website.

14. The Group of Experts appreciated the invitation by the Bureau of the Committee on Sustainable Energy to be represented on the Bureau *ex officio* by its Chair.

15. The Chair delivered introductory remarks, outlining the Group of Experts' work plan for 2014–2015 and its concrete objectives.

V. Status of development of renewable energy in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region (agenda item 3)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2014/4 – Report on selected international actors on renewable energy in the ECE region. Informal document: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2014/INF.1 - Status of Renewable Energy in the ECE Region

16. The Group of Experts discussed the state of development of renewable energy in the ECE region pointing out knowledge gaps and ways forward for the Group of Experts. Focus was given to partnerships with key international actors already active in the ECE region and to data quality and consistency in the region.

17. The Executive Secretary of the REN21 delivered a keynote presentation announcing the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the ECE and REN21 on 19 November 2014. She took the participants through some of the main highlights featured in this year's Global Status Report which provides a comprehensive and timely overview of renewable energy market, industry, investment and policy developments worldwide.

18. The consultant from the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ) summarised the key elements and findings of the documents prepared to provide the Group of Experts with information on the status of renewable energy development in the ECE region based on existing data and to identify future activities in full complementarity with the other main actors in the renewable energy field.

19. The representative of the IEA provided an overview of recent renewable energy developments and forecasts. He pointed out how the last decade was a success for the renewable energy sector. However, in non-OECD countries the growth of renewable energy is not as fast as it could be. A stable policy framework and the consideration of the link between policy risk and investment is essential to increase the uptake of renewable energy.

20. The representative of the IRENA suggested ways to accelerate renewable energy deployment, with a particular focus on South-Eastern Europe. He stressed the need to show utilities and regulators that renewable resources are abundant and can be developed in cost effective fashion. He also noted the importance of opening electricity markets on an equitable basis to renewable project investors of all sizes. Multiple regulatory and administrative barriers should be addressed, transmission infrastructure should be expanded, and innovative financing options should be developed. In the building sector, energy efficiency and renewable energy audits can help identify the range of measures with attractive payback for small businesses and homeowners.

21. The Group of Experts expressed appreciation for the report on the renewable energy status in the ECE region prepared for the first session of the Group of Experts with the support provided by the GIZ, acknowledged important data gaps for the region and recommended future work with relevant partners, including the REN21, the IEA and the IRENA. The Group of Experts invited the secretariat to prepare a Renewable Energy Status Report for the ECE Region in 2015 in collaboration with key partners as a concrete tool aimed at further increasing the uptake of renewable energy in the region and invited governments and other organizations to provide financial and/or in-kind expert support to the preparation of this Report.

22. The Group of Experts invited the secretariat to explore possible ways and means to prepare a study on the potential and competitiveness of renewable energy technologies in the ECE region in cooperation with the IEA, the IRENA the REN21, additional key international stakeholders and other subsidiary bodies of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, subject to the availability of funding.

23. The Group of Experts invited the secretariat to prepare during the biennium 2016-2017 a tracking progress report of renewable energy deployment in the ECE region as follow-up to the Renewable Energy Status Report, and to explore possible ways and means to raise funds for the preparation of this report on a regular basis.

24. A representative of the International Sustainable Energy Organisation (ISEO) informed the delegates on the need for the Group of Experts to cooperate with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), and participate in developing standards. ECE has over 50 liaisons with the ISO Technical Committees (e.g., in transport and trade).

VI. Energy access in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region (agenda item 4)

Documentation: Informal document: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2014/INF.2 - Access to Energy in the ECE Region

25. The discussion on energy access pointed out that access to energy services is limited in only few countries. In fact, the ECE region scores high electrification rates, from 98,6 to 100 percent although total access to energy services has not yet been achieved.

26. The expert from Armenia presented key features of renewable energy development in his country, with special focus on the development of the renewable energy to increase energy independence and reliability. He provided an overview of the key objectives in the energy sector, including renewable energy, of the Government of Armenia.

27. The expert from Kazakhstan presented an overview on the system for promoting renewable energy and the concept of the transition to a green economy in Kazakhstan. She reported on the law which promotes the use of renewable energy and on the targeted assistance provided by the Government of Kazakhstan.

28. The representative of the IFC informed the Group of Experts on the Balkan Renewable Energy Program (BREP) and on the comprehensive approach applied by the IFC to unlock renewable energy market in the Balkans through ad hoc advisory and investment services.

29. The representative of the EU indicated that energy efficiency and renewable energy are key to the EU's long-term energy and climate policies. It is important to indicate clearly what we want, why we want it and how we want to achieve it. On the first question (what), the EU and its Member States had a positive experience with setting out an overall strategy with clear targets. The 2008 EU's 20-20-20 strategy is likely to deliver, by 2020, on the targets of 20% of energy consumed generated by renewable sources and on around 18-19% of energy efficiency improvements relative to 1990 levels. In October 2014, the European Council adopted a new strategy to seek, by 2030, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below the 1990 level, reach a share of at least 27% from renewable energies, and increase energy efficiency by at least 27% relative to 1990. On the second question (why), a positive political message and a positive narrative is required. Energy efficiency is good for sustainable energy, key for reversing climate change, instrumental for diversified energy system and it makes perfect economic sense because it reduces production costs and creates jobs and growth in a greening economy. On the third question (how), decision makers,

both in the public sector (national, provincial and municipal) and in the private sector, should have a menu of very concrete successful high-impact renewable energy measures and technologies. The menu should cover all areas (lighting, cars, heating, utilities, industry, buildings, etc.) and significant results could be achieved in the short term on buildings and industry, which use 40% and 25% of total energy in the EU respectively, and utilities. The EU possesses valuable support instruments and work on policy frameworks and financial measures should be left to other international actors like the Eastern Partnership, the "Central Asia Sustainable Energy Programme", the Neighbourhood Investment Facility and the Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA).

30. Access to reliable and modern energy services is one of the SE4ALL initiative's basic concepts. Based on research seeking to identify communities that have no access to energy in the ECE region, the Group of Experts is invited to suggest ways to ensure that these communities have access to renewable or alternative sources of energy, possibly through an Action Plan for "Access to energy for all" in the ECE region.

31. The Group of Experts took note of the paper prepared on energy access in the ECE region and noted the need to identify those communities with no access to energy and subsequently to develop a "Access to energy for all" action plan, suggesting concrete ways to support those communities.

32. The Group of Experts invited the secretariat to include the consideration of data and information on the communities with no access to energy in the Renewable Energy Status Report for the ECE region 2015 through a questionnaire sent to interested member States to collect data and information if necessary, as well as to initiate a multi-stakeholder dialogue with the help of the private sector, academia, civil society and other international actors.

33. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to work with a range of stakeholders in renewable energy to identify best practices on the use of renewable energy in areas without access to energy and help stakeholders identify and develop proper solutions for those communities with no access to energy at the present.

VII. Best practices in renewable energy in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region (agenda item 5)

Documentation: Informal document: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2014/INF.3 - A Framework for Developing Best Practice Guidelines to accelerate Renewable Energy Uptake

34. Presentations were made by representatives of the German Energy Agency (Dena), Abengoa, BP Biofuels, the EIB and the FAO Global Bioenergy Partnership.

35. Renewable energy is integrating progressively into the global energy mix although there is much more to be done. The Group of Experts is invited to exchange lessons learnt about renewable energy policies as the vision for renewables energy and the processes for enhancing its uptake are ever changing. The Group of Experts is invited to discuss best practices, high-impact measures and procedures for an energy transition towards significantly increasing the use of renewable energy, with a view to establishing ECE standards for renewable energies in the long-term.

36. The Group of Experts noted the preliminary work undertaken by the secretariat and agreed to develop a menu of efficient and economic technologies and policies to promote them and encourage the exchange of experiences, lessons learned and best practices between experts of member States as a step to significantly increase energy production from renewable sources as a means of sustainable development and climate change mitigation.

37. The Group of Experts recommended to set up a Task Force on Best Practice Policies, mainly working through electronic consultations, with representatives of main stakeholders from government, non-governmental, financial and international organizations as well as from energy companies and academia to develop a menu of efficient and economic technologies and policies to promote them, with a possible view of establishing ECE standards for renewable energy in the long-term.

VIII Cross-cutting issues and coordination of work on renewable energy (agenda item 6)

38. The nature of renewable energy technologies has far reaching consequences for a variety of sectors. How to tackle cross-cutting areas like sustainable housing also involving energy efficiency or the interconnectedness with gas was the subject of this session. The Group of Experts discussed such cross-cutting themes and was informed on the coordination within the Committee on Sustainable Energy, with other Sectoral Committees of the Commission and with other key stakeholders in the context of the draft work plan.

39. The Group of Experts agreed to strengthen the cooperation and synergies with other subsidiary bodies of the Sustainable Energy Subprogramme, in particular with the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency, the Group of Experts on Gas and the Expert Group on Resource Classification on the application of the United Nations Framework Classification for Fossil Energy and Mineral Reserves and Resources 2009 (UNFC-2009) to renewables as well as with other ECE subprogrammes, in particular the ECE-FAO Forestry and Timber subprogramme, the Housing and Land Management subprogramme and the Statistics subprogramme, and within the overall ECE contribution to the post-2015 development process.

40. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the strengthened cooperation between ECE and relevant partners, including through specific agreements such as the Memorandum of Understanding with the REN21, Memorandum of Understanding with the IRENA and Letter of Agreement with the IEA.

41. The Group of Experts invited the Chair of the GERE and the Chair of the Group of Experts on Gas to explore ways to strengthen the cooperation for the implementation of the respective work plans, and it further recommended that they develop a proposal for joint work that would benefit from synergies of both groups and avoid duplication, bearing in mind that renewable energy and gas are inextricably linked.

IX. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's role in achieving the objectives of the United Nations Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All Initiative (agenda item 7)

42. The Representative of the SE4ALL Initiative in New York made a keynote presentation on the call for action by the United Nations Secretary-General's SE4ALL Initiative in the ECE region. The Group of Experts discussed how to contribute to the achievement of SE4ALL objectives and of those agreed or to be agreed through other global processes, including the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

43. The Group of Experts was informed of the Joint Statement of the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Regional Commissions at the Fifth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development, held in Hammamet, Tunisia, on 4–7 November 2014 and, in particular, of its renewable energy aspects.

X. Draft Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2014–2015 (agenda item 8)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2014/3 – Draft Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2014–2015

44. The Group of Experts agreed on the Work Plan of the GERE for 2014–2015, and requested the secretariat to submit the work plan for endorsement by the Committee on Sustainable Energy and subsequent approval by the Executive Committee of ECE.

45. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat, in coordination with the Bureau of the Group of Experts and in coordination with member States to prepare a Draft Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2016–2017 for the next session of the Group of Experts.

XI. Other business (agenda item 9)

46. There was no other business.

XII. Report of the meeting (agenda item 10)

Documentation: GERE-1/2014/INF.1 – Unofficial room document: Draft Conclusions and Recommendations for the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy, First Session as at 18–19 November 2014.

47. The Chair, with the assistance of the secretariat, summarized the previously agreed conclusions and recommendations. The report of the meeting was adopted, including conclusions and recommendations, subject to any necessary editing and formatting. After editing it will be posted on the ECE renewable energy webpages²

XIII. Dates of the next meeting (agenda item 11)

48. The Group of Experts noted the challenge to complete its work in one day and recommended that consideration be given to increasing the duration of future meetings of the Group of Experts to two days per year.

49. The second session of the Group of Experts is tentatively scheduled to take place on 12–13 October 2015 in Geneva.

² <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35377>

Annex I

Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2014–2015

I. Introduction

1. Annex II of the Executive Committee decision on matters relating to the Committee on Sustainable Energy (ECE/EX/7) establishes the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy which is mandated to carry out concrete result-oriented activities that, in line with the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative of the Secretary-General, help significantly increase the uptake of renewable energy in the region and that help achieve the objective of access to energy for all in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region.
2. According to its Terms of Reference, the Group of Experts will focus on a) regulatory and policy dialogue and b) sharing of best practices on various renewable energy sources, including biomass, with a view to increasing the share of renewables in the global energy mix.
3. The mandate is approved until December 2015, with the possibility of extension.

II. Concrete activities

4. The Bureau of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and nominated candidates to the Bureau of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy propose to undertake the following activities:

A. Identification of the state of development of renewable energy sources in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

Description: The Group of Experts will identify the state of development of renewable energy sources to establish a baseline for further activities. This work will be conducted together with the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21).

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Conduct a review of relevant studies/analyses to establish a baseline of renewable energy in the ECE region; and
- (b) Within the context of the review and if needed, conduct a survey of ECE member States on the national situation, plans, framework conditions, and instruments that help significantly increase the uptake of renewable energy in the region.

Deliverables: A report submitted for consideration by the Group of Experts.

Timeline:

(a) Literature review at regional level: Preliminary report based on existing data by November 2014; Substantive report on the Status of Renewable Energy in the Region with key partners by November 2015 subject to resource availability;

(b) Presentation of the results to the Committee on Sustainable Energy: 2014-2015 Sessions.

B. Identification and support to those communities in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region that have no access to energy

Description: Upon request, the Group of Experts will assist member States to identify those communities that have no access to energy. The Group will further suggest ways to ensure that these communities have access to renewable or alternative sources of energy as soon as possible. The private sector could be asked to help achieve that objective.

Work to be undertaken:

(a) Map those communities in the ECE region that have no access to energy;

(b) Initiate a multi-stakeholder dialogue on supplying electricity and heat from renewable energy sources to those communities. Identify and contact stakeholders from government, non-governmental, financial and international organizations as well as from the private sector and academia;

(c) Draw up an Action plan “Access to Energy for All” in the ECE Region in collaboration with the other groups of experts and the Committee and start implementation with the help of the private sector, academia, civil society, other international actors, so as to accelerate energy access for those communities ; and

(d) Identify, by means of an interactive electronic exchange with these stakeholders, a menu of efficient and economic technologies and policies to promote them which may support the use and installation of renewable energy technologies in areas of the ECE region where there is no access to energy.

Deliverables:

(a) A map of communities without access to energy;

(b) Menu of efficient and economic technologies and policies to promote them;

(c) An Action plan for access to energy for all in the ECE Region.

Timeline:

(a) Preliminary overview of communities with no access to energy: November 2014; on-going mapping of communities from November 2015;

(b) Menu of efficient and economic technologies and policies to promote them which may support the use and installation of renewable energy in areas without access to energy: First draft based on existing work of other international actors: February 2015;

(c) Further development and implementation of the Action plan: on-going:

C. Exchange of know-how and best practices in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region on how to help significantly increase the uptake of renewable energy.

Description: The Group of Experts will encourage the exchange of know-how and best practices between member States, relevant international organizations and other stakeholders on how to significantly increase energy production from renewable sources as a means of sustainable development and climate change mitigation. This work will be undertaken collaboratively with other organisations including IRENA, IEA, and the World Bank Group.

Work to be undertaken:

(a) Identify and contact main stakeholders from government, non-governmental, financial and international organizations as well as from energy companies and academia and/to work with them (through an interactive electronic exchange) to/and develop a menu of efficient and economic technologies and policies to promote them, which may contribute to significantly increasing the uptake of renewable energy;

(b) Produce a menu of efficient and economic technologies and policies to promote them, also indicating the countries already implementing them so as to facilitate exchange of experiences between all experts in the region; and

(c) Based on the above, assist countries at their request with the development of national renewable energy action plans that contribute to a significant improvement in the uptake of renewable energy and an energy transition in the ECE Member States. This work will be carried out in cooperation with other actors such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);

(d) Identify work on renewable energy and efficiency standards and linking labelling that is on-going in other organisations (such as the Energy Saving Certificate (ESC), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC), etc.) and develop suggestions on establishing ECE standards for renewable energy, in cooperation with international standardization organizations.

Deliverables:

(a) A menu of efficient and economic technologies and policies to promote them on how to significantly increase the uptake of renewable energy and countries implementing them;

(b) Support the development of national renewable energy action plans upon request;

(c) Suggestions for further work on developing and establishing ECE standards for renewable energies in the long-term.

Timeline:

(a) Present first version of the menu with key action areas at the first formal meeting of the Group of Experts: March 2015;

(b) Improve/complete the menu of efficient and economic technologies and policies to promote them: from February 2014 onwards;

(c) On that basis provide support for renewable energy action plans upon request: from February 2015 onwards;

(d) Preliminary suggestions for further work on best practices and on possible ways to develop standards: November 2015.

D. Further activities

5. Member States may further decide to develop other concrete and results-oriented activities of the Committee on Sustainable Energy within agreed mandates, including in cooperation with IRENA, IEA, United Nations Industrial Development Organization , the World Bank Group, the International Sustainable Energy Organization and other relevant actors, conduct an analysis of the potential and competitiveness of renewable energy technologies in the region, relative to energy production from fossil fuels;

6. The activities of the sustainable energy subprogramme are complementary to and implemented in cooperation and coordination with other ECE subprogrammes, in particular with the ECE-Food and Agricultural Organization, Forestry and Timber subprogramme, the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme and the Statistics subprogramme.
