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Committee on Sustainable Energy

Group of Experts on Renewable Energy

Second session

Geneva, 12–13 October 2015

Item 11 of the provisional agenda

Report of the meeting

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

I. Introduction

1. The second session of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy (GERE) was held on 12–13 October 2015¹.

II. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by 53 experts from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan.

3. International Labour Organization (ILO), International Energy Agency (IEA), International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) also participated.

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

¹ Official documents of the session are available at <http://documents.un.org/>. Room documents and presentations delivered at the meeting are available on the ECE Renewable Energy website: <http://www.unece.org/energy/se/gere.html>.

III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2015/1

5. The provisional agenda as contained in ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2015/1 was adopted without amendment.

IV. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

6. The Group of Experts elected Mr. Miloš Banjac (Serbia)² as Vice-Chair to join the Bureau.

7. The Group of Experts expressed appreciation for the services provided by Mr. Marcin Scigan (Poland) who withdrew from his role as Vice-Chair of the Bureau due to new professional assignments.

8. The Bureau of the Group of Experts has the following members: Mr. Ulrich Benterbusch (Germany) as Chair and Mr. Nazir Ramazanov (Azerbaijan), Mr. Andrei Miniankou (Belarus), Ms. Maria Raytcheva (Bulgaria), Mr. Zeljko Juric (Croatia), Mr. Miloš Banjac (Serbia) and Mr. Paolo Frankl (International Energy Agency), Mr. Jeffrey Skeer (International Renewable Energy Agency) and Ms. Christine Lins (Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century) as Vice-Chairs.

V. Report on the implementation of the Work Plan 2014–2015 (agenda item 3)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2014/2 – Annex I, Report of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy on its first session

9. The Chair and the secretariat reported to the Group of Experts on the status of implementation of the Work Plan 2014–2015, outlining the activities that have been accomplished, the on-going activities and those that will continue in the next biennium as reflected in the recommended Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2016–2017.

10. The Group of Experts noted that it had delivered on the concrete activities of the mandate and Work Plan for 2014–2015 and will report achievements and key milestones at the twenty-fourth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy on 18–20 November 2015.

VI. Progress made in the renewable energy uptake: key messages and next steps from the on-going status report in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region (agenda item 4)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/2015/9 – United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Renewable Energy Status Report - Key messages and progress

² Nomination received on 13 July 2015

11. A presentation on key findings and messages of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Renewable Energy Status Report (the Status Report) under preparation set the scene for a discussion about the progress made in the renewable energy uptake in the region. The Group of Experts discussed high-impact areas and key issues to increase the uptake of renewable energy.
12. According to the database of the Global Tracking Framework (GTF), all ECE member States have full access to electricity. On the basis of responses to the questionnaire sent to major stakeholders in 17 selected ECE countries, the Status Report highlighted that some remote settlements and rural communities are reported to lack access to electricity.
13. The Group of Experts discussed how energy access in the ECE region is more related to the quality of energy access, mainly in terms of reliability, affordability and sustainability.
14. The Group of Experts thanked its partners, notably the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) for their commitment in the work of the Group of Experts and its Bureau, with a special mention to the progress made to the Status Report and encouraged future engagement with key partners along these lines.
15. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to explore with member States and potential donors possible ways to track progress on renewable energy for the entire ECE region in collaboration with IEA, REN21, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the World Bank and other partners, including on the multi-agency GTF of the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative (SE4ALL), and produce a report on key issues, potential and opportunities for the region as part of its Work Plan 2016-2017, depending on resource availability. Member States were invited to contribute to the promotion of the ECE Renewable Energy Status Report by hosting specific events in 2016.

VII. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal on energy, and contribute to the global actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation, including the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (agenda item 5)

16. The Group of Experts considered how to contribute to the achievement of the energy-related Sustainable Development Goal 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 (UNFCCC).
17. Presentations by experts provided an overview of concrete examples in member States. The Group of Experts expressed appreciation on the contribution provided by different organizations and partners to the work of the Group of Experts, including the International Sustainable Energy Organisation (ISEO).
18. Renewable energy is integrating progressively into the global energy mix but much more can be done to increase renewable energy uptake in the future energy system. New goals and targets are being set up at the global level and endorsed at the national level for implementation.
19. The Group of Experts recommended that the Committee on Sustainable Energy play a lead role in supporting member States to achieve the global goal on energy and to

contribute to global efforts on climate change mitigation through uptake of renewable energy.

20. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to promote the role of the Group of Experts and of the ECE to increase the uptake of renewable energy at a first outreach event to launch the Status Report at the Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC in Paris in December 2015.

VIII. International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (agenda item 6)

21. The Sixth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development took place on 29 September–2 October 2015 in Yerevan, Armenia, to discuss progress on achieving the goals of SE4All and operationalizing the Joint Statement of the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Regional Commissions to the Fifth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (the “Hammamet Declaration”)³.

22. The Group of Experts took note of the outcome of the Sixth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development and of the action items that relate to renewable energy.

IX. Cross-cutting issues and coordination of work on renewable energy (agenda item 7)

23. An overview of the inter-linkages with other ECE areas of work such as the application of the United Nations Framework Classification for Fossil Energy and Mineral Reserves and Resources 2009 (UNFC-2009) to renewables, the interconnectedness and complementarity of renewable energy with gas and with cleaner electricity production from fossil fuels was presented.

24. Renewable energies were considered by the Group of Experts in close correlation with cross-cutting areas such as the energy-water nexus, forestry and energy related aspects, sustainable housing, in particular on an added value normative work on energy efficiency with a possible view of considering ECE standards also for renewable energies in the long-term.

25. The Group of Experts recognized the importance of cross-cutting issues and agreed to consider renewable energy issues in the future energy mix from a systems perspective.

26. The Group of Experts invited the secretariat to continue to closely collaborate with other bodies of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, in particular with the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency, the Group of Experts on Gas, the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production from Fossil Fuels and the Expert Group on Resource Classification on the application of the UNFC-2009 to renewables, as well as with other Sectoral Committees of the Commission and with other key stakeholders in the context of the recommended Work Plan 2016–2017, including on the possible development of renewable energy standards in housing.

³ See at http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/press/pr2014/Energy_Joint_Statement_Fifth_International_Forum.pdf

27. The Group of Experts agreed to continue the participation in the Task Force on Gas and Renewable Energy of the Group of Experts on Gas in relation to the use of natural gas to support renewable energy uptake.

X. Renewal of Mandate and Draft Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2016–2017 (agenda item 8)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2015/3 – Draft Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2016–2017

28. The Group of Experts recommended to the Committee on Sustainable Energy that its mandate be extended to 31 December 2017, for subsequent approval by the ECE Executive Committee.

29. The Group of Experts recommended that the Work Plan for 2016-2017 be submitted to the Committee on Sustainable Energy for endorsement and then to the ECE Executive Committee for subsequent approval.

XI. Key messages for the Committee on Sustainable Energy (agenda item 9)

30. The Group of Experts conveyed specific conclusions and recommendations for consideration by the twenty-fourth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy on 18–19 November 2015. During the annual session of the Committee, the Chair of the Group of Experts will present information on the status of renewable energy in the ECE region and ECE's role, through a renewed mandate and Work Plan 2016–2017, to contribute to increasing the uptake of renewable energy in ECE member States.

31. The Group of Experts recommended to the Committee on Sustainable Energy to explore possible funding of extra-budgetary projects among ECE member States to strengthen the implementation of its Work Plan 2016–2017, including tracking progress on renewable energy in the region.

32. The Group of Experts recommended to the Committee on Sustainable Energy that its annual sessions be supported by parliamentary documents and reports as needed in relation to the implementation of the Work Plan 2016-2017. The Group of Experts recommended to the Committee on Sustainable Energy that the secretariat be invited to continue supporting its work by, inter alia, the following: organizing planned Work Plan activities, preparing formal documentation required for the development, approval, implementation and reporting of Work Plan activities, including the translation of official documents into the three official ECE languages (English, French, Russian) to service the Group of Experts' meetings.

XII. Other business (agenda item 10)

33. No issues were raised under this item.

XIII. Report of the meeting (agenda item 11)

34. The Bureau and the secretariat drafted the report of the session, including conclusions and recommendations, for discussion and approval by the delegates at the meeting.

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

XIV. Dates of the next meeting (agenda item 12)

36. The Group of Experts recommended that topics for the substantive portion of its third session be developed by the Bureau.

37. The Group of Experts welcomed the proposal made by the Government of Azerbaijan to organize an International Conference on Renewable Energy in 2016 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

38. The third session of the Group of Experts is tentatively scheduled to take place on 20–21 October 2016, Baku or Geneva. The Group of Experts proposed that its meetings may take place in venues outside Geneva.

Annex I

Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2016–2017

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. A Work Plan 2014–2015 was approved at the first session of the Group of Experts on 19 November 2014.
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. At the first session of the Group of Experts on 18–19 November 2014 agreed on the Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2014–2015 and requested the secretariat, in coordination with the Bureau of the Group of Experts, 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 and subsequent Committee on Sustainable Energy in its 24th session on 18–20 November 2015. This decision was endorsed by the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-third session on 19–21 November 2014 and approved by ECE Executive Committee at its seventy-fifth meeting on 10 February 2015. This Draft Work Plan is prepared in accordance with these decisions.
4. The Group of Experts will orient its activities towards the achievement of the Global Goal on Energy and the 2030 Development Agenda.

II. Background

5. The Group of Experts requested to focus the work on the following key areas and activities in the Work Plan 2014–2015:
 - (a) State of development. A report on the renewable energy status based on existing data was presented at the first session of the Group of Experts, acknowledging important data gaps for the ECE. As follow-up, a report on the ECE Renewable Energy Status Report 2015 has been developed in partnership with the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) to fill data gaps and thus establish a more accurate baseline for renewable energy in the region. There seems to be a need to continue on the improvement of data gaps and tracking progress of renewable energy uptake;
 - (b) Energy Access. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Renewable Energy Status Report 2015 has tried to close the information gap on the communities with no access to energy, as pointed out in a first report presented at the first session of the Group of Experts, and to facilitate a multi-stakeholder dialogue on possible ways to supply electricity and heat from renewable energy sources to those communities.

As issues related to supply electricity and heat from renewable energy sources to communities with no access to energy remain relatively limited in the ECE region compared to other regions of the world, the future work can be directed on how to improve the quality of energy access within the integration of renewable energy in future sustainable energy systems;

(c) Exchange of know-how and best practices. The exchange of information on best practices and lessons learned among experts of member States has been recognized by the Group of Experts as a relevant step to significantly increase energy production from renewable sources as a means of sustainable development and climate change mitigation. A draft menu of efficient and economic technologies and policies to promote them was developed for further inputs by the Group of Experts to become a practical framework for the exchange of relevant information. A follow-up workshop in Azerbaijan is planned to promote the exchange of information and capacity building. This work has raised the need to enhance this exchange of information on best practices on policies and lessons learnt, focusing on the identification of key barriers and options for technological development and related policy support.

III. Concrete activities

6. Building on the activities of the Work Plan 2014–2015 and the recommendations from the Group of Experts, the Bureau of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and the Bureau of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy propose to undertake the following activities:

A. Tracking of the progress made in the uptake of renewable energy sources in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

Description: The Group of Experts will continue to monitor the progress made on the state of development of renewable energy following the baseline established in 2015. This work will be continued together with the IEA, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), REN21, the World Bank Group and other key stakeholders, already partners in this process. This work will help to improve the understanding of renewable energy globally and add to existing global monitoring systems already in place by major partners.

Work to be undertaken:

(a) Review the state of development and monitor the progress made after the baseline 2015. This could include building on key findings and further investigating a selected number of target areas in relation to the progress made, and working with other partners and contributing to existing global monitoring frameworks;

(b) Identify key barriers, options and possible best practices for supplying electricity and heat from renewable energy sources, in particular taking into account regulatory framework and investment conditions in the ECE countries. This work will be based on the findings of the status report 2015 on how to improve access to energy;

(c) Foster cooperative activities with member States to promote and use the baseline report (workshops, seminars, roundtables, etc.) on key needs and obstacles on renewable energy uptake and on energy access with the aim of strengthening a multi-stakeholder dialogue;

(d) Identify ways to support the implementation of national plans and for strengthening 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 at the annual meetings.

Timeline: 2016–2017

B. 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, such as including IRENA, IEA, REN21 and the World Bank Group, the other United Nations Regional Commissions and other relevant organizations. The possible work on standards development will be explored with key partners especially existing Bureau members and bodies involved in standard setting like the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC).

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Identify the key operational policy priorities for member States and provide platforms for collective action;
- (b) Provide an effective platform for expanding already developed policies and measures across countries in the region;
- (c) Identify barriers to and options for technological development of renewable energy in the ECE region;
- (d) Organize information sharing activities (workshops, seminars, roundtables, etc.) for exchange of experience on best practices and policies;
- (e) Identify existing gaps in policies, legislation, standards and regulations and cooperate with other relevant organizations in addressing them.

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

Timeline: 2016–2017

C. Integration of Renewable Energy in Future Sustainable Energy Systems in the region

7. The Group of Experts will continue to work at the achievement of higher renewable energy shares and this can be done through additional integration efforts. These include improved understanding of renewable energy resource characteristics and availability, as well as the system integration of the various renewable energy technologies across the broad range of present and future energy supply systems. The Group of Experts will promote renewable energy integration and investment conditions in ECE Member States by considering the role of renewable energy within the context of future energy systems, developing the instruments for assessing the potential of renewable energy resources and supporting possible synergies between renewable energy and fossil fuels in the energy production. This approach will strengthen the integration of renewable energy technologies in each sector, i.e. electricity generation, heating and cooling, gas and liquid fuel distribution as well as autonomous energy supply systems.

8. The Group of Experts will cooperate with the Experts Group on Resource Classification (EGRC) to allow investments in renewable energy projects through the application of the United Nations Framework Classification for Fossil Energy and Mineral Reserves and Resources 2009 to renewable energy resources and with the Group of Experts on Gas to optimize – economically and environmentally – the cooperation and synergy between renewable energy and gas for required support capacity, working in cooperation with the Task Force on Gas and Renewable Energy of the Group of Experts on Gas. Synergies will be also explored by the Chair of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy and the Chair of the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production from Fossil Fuels.

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Identify best practices about existing policies and policy reform to meet a higher renewable energy share within present and future energy systems;
- (b) Analyze renewable energy investment opportunities within future energy systems and energy market optimization;
- (c) Identify key needs for capacity building to develop renewable energy framework conditions to facilitate market conditions;
- (d) Organize capacity building and information sharing activities (workshops, seminary, roundtables, etc.) on renewable energy investment promotion, the consideration of renewables in energy systems, the assessment of renewable energy potential and costs and the development of hybrid power for increased system efficiency.

Deliverables:

Technical assistance to the national officials and experts through training workshop in renewable energy project development, finance and business planning; a case study about existing policies and policy reform for the increase of the renewable energy share; and organization of a seminar on policy reforms for renewable energy market formation. Technical assistance activities should be provided on a demand-driven basis and on the basis of funds availability, taking into account similar activities already implemented within the Sustainable Energy Sub-programme.

Timeline:

- (a) Organization of a capacity building workshop in 2016 (TBD);
 - (b) Development of case study on the experience of existing policies and policy reforms for higher renewable energy share, in cooperation with national coordinator and national participating institutions by end 2016 (TBD);
 - (c) Organization of a policy seminar focusing on policy reforms to promote renewable energy market conditions financing by 2017 (TBD).
-