

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Twenty-first session

Geneva, 27–30 October 2015

Summary of the outcomes of the twenty-first session and the decisions taken

(as approved by the Committee on 30 October 2015)

The Committee on Environmental Policy:

(a) Adopts the agenda of its twenty-first session (ECE/CEP/2015/1), taking into account the proposed timetable, as presented in information paper No. 1/Rev.2;

(b) Expresses appreciation to the Bureau for its good work, and for efficiently fulfilling the mandates assigned to it by the Committee, and to the ECE secretariat for the efficient and high quality support provided to the Bureau;

(c) Takes note of the developments in ECE activities regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and invites countries to consider the Committee's role in implementing the 2030 Agenda and to continue to discuss the matter at future meetings;

(d) Welcomes the interactive discussion held on the ECE MEAs, expresses appreciation to the Chairs of ECE MEAs for their contributions, and takes note of the information provided with regard to how the ECE MEAs, through their experience in implementation, can facilitate achievement of the SDGs by countries, and:

(i) Recognizes that ECE MEAs can play an important role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(ii) Underlines the importance of using the existing tools, including MEAs and EPRs, to achieve the SDGs, and, at the same time, considering the need to adjust MEA and EPR activities in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(iii) Recognizes national implementation reporting under the ECE MEAs as a valuable tool for monitoring implementation of the relevant SDGs, and underlines the opportunity to align reporting with SEIS and the future indicators for the SDGs;

(iv) Underlines that cooperation between relevant sectors, including effective engagement of stakeholders, is key to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(v) Acknowledges that national-level interdepartmental coordination between all (not just ECE) MEA national focal points would enhance both national implementation and multilateral activities;

(vi) Calls for the strengthening of interlinkages within the Environment subprogramme and for better cooperation across ECE, and specifically with the Statistics subprogramme, with regard to implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(vii) Recognizes the need to promote synergies between the ECE MEAs and to identify points of convergence, while respecting the respective mandates of the different instruments;

(viii) Agrees that the Committee should make more efforts to ensure adequate coordination and political support for the implementation of the ECE MEAs, and to promote the expansion of their membership;

- (ix) Recognizes the importance of cooperation with other United Nations regional commissions, as well as other international organizations, with a view to ensuring synergies;
- (x) Agrees to promote further interlinkages between the EPR recommendations and the ECE MEAs;
- (xi) Takes note of the recent developments under the informal joint meetings between the representatives of the governing bodies of ECE MEAs and the Committee, and encourages the continuation of such coordination;
- (xii) Notes the request emanating from the informal joint meeting on 26 October 2015, and asks the secretariat to respond by preparing an information note for the Batumi Ministerial Conference based on the secretariat's internal mapping of Environment subprogramme processes and activities that might support countries in achieving the SDGs;
- (xiii) Takes note of concerns expressed regarding the financial resources for the MEAs;
- (xiv) Recognizes the need to anticipate and address in advance resource implications when considering amending MEAs to open them to membership beyond the ECE region;
- (e) Appreciates the progress made in organizing the Eighth EfE Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016) and, in that regard:
 - (i) Welcomes the preparations by Georgia for hosting the Conference, and invites interested countries to consider supporting the host country in the organization of the event;
 - (ii) Also welcomes the documents prepared under the greening the economy theme (ECE/CEP/2015/L.2 and ECE/CEP/2015/L.4), and the fruitful cooperation between ECE and UNEP, with the engagement of other partners including OECD and EEA, in developing them, and:
 - a. Invites Committee members and observers to submit to the secretariat by 15 November 2015 possible additional comments to the thematic background document, and requests ECE and UNEP to revise the document for the Committee's special session in February 2016;
 - b. Generally agrees with the strategic part of the draft Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and invites Committee members and observers to submit to the secretariat possible additional comments by 15 November 2015;
 - c. Invites Committee members and observers to submit to the secretariat comments to the proposed voluntary actions to green the economy, which are annexed to the draft Strategic Framework, by 15 November 2015;
 - d. Welcomes the proposal by Switzerland to advance the development of the proposed voluntary actions to green the economy, taking into account comments received, and invites Committee members and observers to express their interest to the secretariat by 15 November 2015 if they wish to join a group of experts in greening the economy that will work by electronic means under the leadership of Switzerland, with support from the ECE secretariat and UNEP. Also, entrusts Switzerland to form and convene the group of experts to prepare a revised draft of voluntary actions to green the economy for the Committee's special session in February 2016;
 - e. Takes note of the information provided by the EAP Task Force secretariat on the ongoing work;

f. Expresses appreciation to ECE, UNEP and GGKP for organizing a side event on green economy knowledge for the pan-European region and beyond, in particular to support discussions on modalities to integrate the proposed voluntary actions to green the economy into existing knowledge platforms, such as GGKP;

(iii) Further welcomes the documents prepared under the cleaning the air theme (ECE/CEP/2015/L.3 and ECE/CEP/2015/L.5) and the active participation of the Bureau of the ECE Air Convention, as well as the engagement of other partners, in developing them, and:

a. Invites Committee members and observers as well as the members of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, to submit to the secretariat by 15 November 2015 possible additional comments to the thematic background document, and requests the secretariat to revise the document for the Committee's special session in February 2016;

b. Welcomes the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air initiative drafted by the Air Convention Bureau, which can serve as one of the relevant instruments to implement the Conference outcomes on clean air, and invites Committee members and observers as well as the members of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to submit to the Air Convention Bureau, via the secretariat, any additional comments to the draft initiative by 15 November 2015. Also, invites the Air Convention Bureau to submit an updated draft of the initiative to the Committee at its special session in February 2016;

(iv) Takes note of the information provided and welcomes progress in preparing the segment on ESD at the Batumi Ministerial Conference, and invites the secretariat to provide an update on preparations at the Committee's special session in February 2016;

(v) Welcomes the documents prepared for the establishment of a regular environmental process in the pan-European region based on SEIS and the active engagement of all relevant partners in developing them, and:

a. Appreciates the work of the Group of Friends of SEIS (ECE/CEP/2015/9) and approves the proposed organization and shape of the regular environmental assessment process based on SEIS (ECE/CEP/2015/10);

b. Welcomes the information provided on the preparation of the European regional assessment of the Sixth Global Environmental Outlook and agrees to launch it as the regional environmental assessment at the Batumi Conference. In that regard, also expresses its wish to be involved in peer reviewing the draft of the assessment and expresses concern about the timing for commenting on the draft assessment;

c. Also welcomes the work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in assessing the progress in developing SEIS across the pan-European region (ECE/CEP/2015/11), and mandates the Working Group to work with the countries and EEA to validate the data and information and continue to monitor progress in developing SEIS with a view to submitting an updated report to the Committee at its special session in February 2016;

d. Expresses appreciation to EEA for organizing a side event on the European Environment — state and outlook 2015 (SOER 2015), in particular to support discussions on the organization and shape of a regular environmental assessment process in the pan-European region;

(vi) Also welcomes the document presenting the proposed outcomes for the Conference (ECE/CEP/2015/8), and:

a. Takes note of the proposed initiatives and contributions for the Batumi Conference, and invites stakeholders to finalize their proposals in time for submission to the Committee's special session in February 2016;

b. Approves the general framework and structure of the proposed elements for the draft ministerial declaration, as contained in the annex to document ECE/CEP/2015/8;

c. Invites its Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to prepare a first draft of the ministerial declaration based on comments received by 25 November 2015 from Committee members and observers, and to submit it to the Committee at its special session in February 2016;

(vii) Further welcomes the draft provisional agenda for the Batumi Conference (ECE/CEP/2015/L.1) and the document presenting formats for interactive discussion (ECE/CEP/2015/14), and:

a. Approves the framework for the Conference as presented in the annex to the draft agenda;

b. Invites its Bureau, with support from the secretariat and in cooperation with relevant partners, to further develop the Conference agenda and the options for the format of the Conference sessions, and to submit a note thereon to the Committee for consideration at its special session in February 2016;

c. Welcomes the proposal by the European ECO Forum to organize a round-table discussion between ministers and NGOs under the green economy theme, and invites the Bureau to work in close consultation with the European ECO Forum on adapting the proposal to the set of questions for discussion under that theme;

(viii) Welcomes and approves the communication plan for the Batumi Conference (ECE/CEP/2015/13), including using the short slogan "Greener, Cleaner, Smarter!", and:

a. Invites countries and other EfE stakeholders to actively promote the Conference and participate in the communication activities for the Conference;

b. Also invites interested countries and organizations to provide in-kind and financial support for some of the communication activities, such as organizing the workshop for journalists and providing IISD daily news bulletins;

(ix) Takes note of the information on the resource requirements for the Conference (information paper No. 2), as well as the information on the resources provided by the host country, and:

a. Notes that, in accordance with the Bureau's recommendation, the secretariat sent official fundraising letters to 55 ministers of environment before the Committee's twenty-first session through the Permanent Missions to the United Nations at Geneva, and requests that a master copy be circulated by e-mail to the Committee;

b. Invites countries and other stakeholders to consider the need for resource mobilization to assist both the host country and the secretariat in preparing for the Conference, and in this regard expresses gratitude to Norway for its financial contribution and Switzerland for its pledge at the session to support secretariat activities under the EfE process, and asks the host country and the secretariat to keep the Committee and its Bureau informed about progress in funding the Conference preparations;

(x) Invites the Bureau, with support from the secretariat and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to continue with the preparation of the Batumi Ministerial

Conference, including preparing for the Committee's next session the documents requested above, as well as any other documents that might be recommended by the Bureau;

(xi) Also invites UNEP and other stakeholders to contribute to the preparation of the Batumi Conference;

(f) Adopts the recommendations in the Third EPR of Georgia (information paper No. 3);

(g) Also adopts the recommendations in the Third EPR of Belarus (information paper No. 4);

(h) Welcomes the information provided by Morocco on the implementation of recommendations contained in the EPR conducted in 2013;

(i) Also welcomes the information provided by Albania on the implementation of recommendations contained in its second EPR, conducted in 2011;

(j) Welcomes in addition the information provided on activities under the ECE EPR Programme, acknowledges the EPRs as a flagship programme of ECE, and expresses its appreciation to the secretariat for the excellent work in support of the EPR Programme;

(k) Takes note of the information provided by the secretariat on resource mobilization for the EPR Programme in 2015 and in particular thanks:

(i) Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland for their financial support;

(ii) Finland, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, UNEP, the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit and WHO for providing expertise;

(iii) UNDP for logistical support;

(iv) Belgium and Portugal for providing training to the EPR Programme secretariat;

(l) Welcomes the ongoing third EPR of Tajikistan, as well as requests from Bulgaria, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to undergo a third EPR;

(m) Also welcomes the offer of Bosnia and Herzegovina to undergo a third EPR in 2017–2018;

(n) Requests the secretariat to develop and publish reviews of lessons learned in implementation of EPR recommendations and to analyse the impact of the implementation of recommended national policies, strategies and initiatives on the state of the environment in the countries reviewed, and welcomes the cooperation with UNEP in this regard to prepare such a document for the Batumi Conference;

(o) Appreciates greatly the work of the ECE Expert Group on EPRs in 2015 and invites delegations to nominate their representatives to the Group;

(p) Encourages delegations to provide in-kind (expert) and financial support to the EPR Programme;

(q) Welcomes the information provided during the high-level round table, "Addressing air quality — working across the environment, transport and energy sectors: 2015 Environmental Performance Reviews of Belarus, Georgia and the Netherlands", and expresses appreciation to the panellists for their contributions, and:

(i) Acknowledges the importance of the effective cooperation between the environment, transport and energy sectors for improving air quality;

- (ii) Also acknowledges the importance of intersectoral cooperation to ensure an integrated approach for the achievement of SDGs, and in particular those related to air quality;
 - (iii) Recognizes the importance of EPRs as a mechanism for review, exchange of experiences and transfer of good practices, which may be useful in reviewing the implementation of SDGs;
 - (iv) Welcomes the information provided by Belarus and Georgia on their plans to join the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone to the ECE Air Convention by mid-2018 and by the end of 2019, respectively;
 - (v) Expresses appreciation of the contribution of the ECE Transport and Sustainable Energy Divisions to the preparation of the EPRs of Georgia and Belarus and for their contributions to the round table;
 - (r) Appreciates greatly the work of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators, and adopts the renewed mandate of the Task Force, including the new name Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, as presented in annex II to document ECE/CEP/2015/12, for two years until the Committee's twenty-third session in 2017, and requests the secretariat to submit the renewed mandate, as amended, in coordination with the Conference of the European Statisticians, to the ECE Executive Committee for approval;
 - (s) Also appreciates greatly the work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, and adopts the renewed mandate and terms of reference for the Working Group, as presented in annex I to document ECE/CEP/2015/12, with the following amendments:
 - (i) The mandate is renewed for one year, until the Committee's twenty-second session in December 2016;
 - (ii) In paragraph 3 of the annex I two additional mandates are given to the Working Group, i.e.:
 - a. To further develop the methods and technical means for monitoring environmental pollution (including automatic monitoring stations) used by national monitoring systems;
 - b. To serve as the regional environmental information and assessment network of networks, bringing together the UNEP Global Environment Outlook expert teams and the EEA European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) to formulate the regional priorities and scope for the pan-European assessments. The Working Group will also link with thematic networks, including those under the MEAs;
- and requests the secretariat to submit the renewed mandate, as amended, to the ECE Executive Committee for approval;
- (t) Requests the secretariat to prepare for the Committee's twenty-second session an updated proposal for terms of reference for the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, including taking into account the outcomes of the Batumi Conference and further consultations with Committee members and observers on possible additional activities to be carried out by the Working Group, as well as to report on activities pursued to increase cooperation with the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, with a view to enhancing the coordination of activities and streamlining and reinforcing the work on environmental monitoring and assessment;
 - (u) Invites member States and organizations to provide in-kind and financial support to the environmental monitoring and assessment programme, and in particular thanks the European Union, Norway, the Russian Federation and Switzerland for their

financial support, as well as UNEP and EEA for their substantive support to the programme;

(v) Takes note of information provided by and welcomes the progress of work under THE PEP;

(w) Also takes note of and welcomes information provided with regard to ENVSEC;

(x) Welcomes the information provided regarding developments under the European Environment and Health Process, including on the outcomes of the Mid-term Review of the European Environment and Health Process (Haifa, Israel, March 2015), and:

(i) Takes note of the reports on the European Environment and Health Process (EUR/RC65/18 and EUR/RC65/11);

(ii) Agrees to allocate more time in the agenda of its twenty-second session to discussing progress in preparing the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (2017);

(iii) Requests the secretariat to solicit interest from the 53 ECE member States also members of the WHO Regional Office for Europe in serving on the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board during the next term (2017–2018) by sending official letters in June 2016 to ministers of environment to seek their views in that regard;

(y) Takes note of the activities of the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management and the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry, in particular the progress of work on green building and greening the forestry sector;

(z) Adopts the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2016–2017 and requests the secretariat to provide information on the status of resources in the Environment subprogramme for the biennium 2014–2015 at the Committee’s special session in February 2016;

(aa) Approves the biennial performance report of the Environment subprogramme for 2014–2015 (ECE/CEP/2015/6);

(bb) Also approves the biennial performance plan of the Environment subprogramme for 2016–2017 (ECE/CEP/2015/5);

(cc) Has reviewed the proposed strategic framework of the Environment subprogramme for 2018–2019 (ECE/CEP/2015/7) and provided comments, in particular noting that, in paragraph 6, the wording “environmental democracy” should be replaced by “public participation”;

(dd) Takes note of the information provided with respect to gender mainstreaming in environmental activities carried out by the Environment Division since the Committee’s last session;

(ee) Adopts the revised criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events as included in information paper No. 7, and requests that the text be annexed to the report of the Committee’s twenty-first session;

(ff) Welcomes the information provided by UNEP/ROE about developments in preparing the second United Nations Environment Assembly, and invites UNEP/ROE to continue informing the Committee about the preparations for that meeting, in particular at the Committee’s special session in February 2016;

(gg) Expresses appreciation to the Bureau and the secretariat for the work on the Committee’s draft rules of procedure (ECE/CEP/2015/L.6), takes note of the comments provided by delegations during the meeting, and decides to postpone the consideration of

the draft rules of procedure until after the Batumi Conference, at the Committee's twenty-second session, on the basis of a revised proposal by the Bureau;

- (hh) Elects a Chair and other members of its Bureau, as follows:

Chair:

Ms. Elisabete Quintas da Silva (Portugal)

Vice-Chairs:

Ms. Martine Rohn Brossard (Switzerland)

Ms. Marie-Charlotte Delvaux (Belgium)

Mr. Nicolas Fairise (France)

Mr. Vladimir Ivlev (Russian Federation)

Mr. Alexander Mayer (United States of America)

Ms. Maria Nagornii (Republic of Moldova)

Ms. Gordana Petkovic (Serbia)

Mr. Lukáš Pokorný (Czech Republic)

Ms. Marina Philipiuk (Belarus)

Ms. Nino Tkhilava (Georgia)

Mr. Bulat Yessekin (Kazakhstan);

(ii) Approves the proposed schedule of Committee and Bureau meetings until 2018 (information paper No. 9), and agrees to organize the Committee's special session in Geneva from 23 to 25 February 2016, its special session in Batumi on 7 June 2016 and its twenty-second session in Geneva from 7 to 9 December 2016;

(jj) Requests the Bureau and the secretariat to follow up on the Committee's decisions, including by preparing the documents and reports necessary for the Committee's work at its sessions in 2016;

(kk) Takes note of the information provided on the Memorandum of Understanding between ECE and UNEP;

(ll) Expresses its appreciation to the secretariat for an excellent organization of the meeting.