

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: Limited
11 January 2016

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Environmental Policy****Special session**

Geneva, 23–25 February 2016

Item 3 (g) of the provisional agenda

**The Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference:
proposed Conference outcomes****Draft Ministerial Declaration of the Eighth Environment for
Europe Ministerial Conference****Note by the Bureau of the Committee with support from
the secretariat****Summary*

The Reform Plan of the Environment for Europe process (ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, and Corr.1) adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy in 2009, and subsequently endorsed by ECE, mandated the Committee to act as the convening body for the preparatory processes for the Environment for Europe ministerial conferences.

At its twenty-first session (Geneva, 27–30 October 2015), the Committee invited its Bureau to continue with its preparations for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016). In particular, it invited its Bureau, with support from the ECE secretariat, to prepare a first draft of the ministerial declaration based on the general framework and structure of the proposed elements approved at the meeting, as well as any comments received by 25 November 2015 from Committee members and observers, for submission to the Committee at its special session in February 2016 (see ECE/CEP/2015/2, forthcoming).

The present document was prepared by the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, in accordance with the above mandate. The Committee will be invited to work on the draft ministerial declaration with a view to submitting it to the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference for adoption.

* This note was submitted on the above date owing to the need to consult with external partners.



Draft Ministerial Declaration: “Greener, cleaner, smarter!”

1. We, the ministers and heads of delegation from *[number]* countries in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the representative of the European Commission meeting in Batumi, Georgia from 8 to 10 June 2016 in the framework of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, make the following declaration.

2. We confirm our commitment to improving environmental protection and advancing sustainable development in the ECE region, taking also into account the renewed momentum provided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nation Summit in September 2015. We value the Environment for Europe process as a unique pan-European platform for addressing environmental challenges, improving environmental governance, promoting environmental and cross-sectoral cooperation among countries and as a pillar of sustainable development in the region for 25 years. We reiterate the importance of the active inclusion of civil society in decision-making to improve the environment.

3. We emphasize the urgency of fully integrating the environmental dimension into economic policies, including by greening the economies in the region. We reiterate our commitment to take the lead in the transition to a green economy as a key path to sustainable development and poverty eradication and an approach to redirect investments and trade to support a green and inclusive economy not only in our region, but also globally. Our commitment to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 169 SDG targets and to report on progress implies a fundamental shift in [achieving progress] / [thinking, acting, measuring progress and governance.

4. In greening our economies, we aim to enhance economic prosperity and improve human well-being and social equity, while reducing environmental risks within and outside the region and staying within the limits of the carrying capacity of the planet. We will work towards the full internalization of those externalities that cause the loss of or damage to [global] natural capital, including through measurement and [fiscal instruments] / [the use of environment-related fees, fines and taxes and the elimination of environmentally-perverse subsidies], and will enhance the ecological infrastructure and improve the sustainable use of natural resources. We will foster the circular economy and transparent and responsible business practice, eco-innovation and further work towards cleaner and more resource-efficient production processes. We will develop the human capital for green and decent jobs, including by providing relevant education and training, and increase the availability of such jobs, ensure access to essential services, and [promote] / [guarantee] public participation and education for sustainable development.

5. We therefore [adopt] / [endorse¹] / [welcome] the pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy — a tool equipping countries with knowledge on actions and instruments for achieving green economy objectives and, at the same time, contributing to the implementation of SDGs — and [commit to implementing] / [invite ECE member States to implement] it and to [reporting on progress thereon to the Committee on Environmental Policy] / [informing the Committee on Environmental Policy of progress thereon]. We furthermore endorse the Batumi Green Economy Action and encourage countries to make use of it to facilitate the transition to a green economy. We

¹ In case of endorsement, the Committee would need to adopt the Strategic Framework, i.e. endorsement cannot take place without prior adoption.

commend the good cooperation between ECE and the United Nations Environment Programme and invite the two organizations, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, to support countries in their efforts to green their economies and achieve sustainable development.

6. While praising the good progress achieved in the pan-European region over the past three decades in decreasing emissions of the main air-polluting substances and their impacts, we are concerned that air pollution, both outdoor and indoor, remains the largest environmental health threat and an important risk factor for major non-communicable diseases. We therefore commit to improving air quality for a better environment and human health, including by integrating air pollution reduction measures into financial and development policies as well as other sectoral policies, as appropriate, and through cooperation to address transboundary impacts and enhanced policy coordination and coherence at the national and regional levels. We commend the good collaboration between ECE and the World Health Organization on air pollution and we invite them, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, to support countries in their efforts to reduce air pollution.

7. We endorse the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air and welcome the initiatives launched by interested countries and other stakeholders aimed at improving air quality and protecting public health and ecosystems. We invite countries and other stakeholders to implement the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air and to [report on progress thereon to the Committee on Environmental Policy] / [inform the Committee on Environmental Policy of progress thereon]. We will also strengthen the role of civil society in addressing air pollution and its impacts, and we commit to ensuring adequate monitoring of and access to relevant information on air pollution, in particular ground-level monitoring, as well as assessment and reporting in accordance with the principles of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS).

8. We appreciate progress achieved under the ECE multilateral agreements and recognize the need to strengthen the participation of civil society and the private sector in their implementation. We invite countries to ratify, implement and provide adequate resources for the relevant multilateral environmental agreements, inter alia, the ECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and its three most recent protocols, including their amendments. We recognize the significant opportunities provided by the ECE multilateral environmental agreements to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 SDGs.

9. We recognize the important contribution of the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme as an effective and practical policy tool throughout the past 20 years, and highlight the role it can play in supporting the achievement and monitoring of SDGs in the pan-European region. We express our satisfaction with the progress in the third cycle of reviews, including with regard to environmental governance, green economy, international cooperation, climate protection and environmental mainstreaming in other sectors, and encourage countries to benefit from the Environmental Performance Review Programme by undertaking further reviews.

10. While welcoming progress in developing SEIS to support the regular environmental assessment process with a view to keeping the pan-European environment under review, we invite countries to continue their efforts and to develop their national data systems in order to have the pan-European SEIS in place by 2021. We establish a regular process of environmental assessment in the pan-European region consisting of SEIS as the knowledge base [, UNEP Live as the knowledge-sharing platform] and the Global Environment Outlook European component as the single pan-European environmental assessment product, building on the State of the Environment Report of the European Environmental Agency, regional thematic assessments and national assessments. We also take note of the

key messages of the European component of the Sixth Global Environmental Outlook as well as the *European environment — state and outlook 2015*, and acknowledge the role of these assessments in identifying environmental concerns that need to be addressed in the region.

11. We welcome the work of the Environmental Action Programme Task Force and we invite the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to continue its activities, including supporting countries in their transition to green economy, in cooperation with relevant partners.

12. We recognize the role of Regional Environmental Centres in implementing initiatives to improve environmental governance at the local, national, subregional and regional levels and encourage them to strengthen their activities and to continue playing a valuable role in the pan-European region by supporting the needs of targeted countries.

13. We reiterate the importance of civil society participation in decision-making to improve the environment and promote sustainable development. We appreciate the activities of civil society organizations in the region in this regard and commit ourselves to further develop partnerships with them and create favourable conditions for their operation. We also welcome the contribution of the European ECO Forum to the Environment for Europe process.

14. We acknowledge progress in implementing the Astana Water Action — a useful framework for advancing a sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems — and encourage interested countries and organizations to continue using this initiative according to their needs. We further welcome initiatives supporting countries' efforts under the two themes of the Conference [, such as [*name relevant initiatives, as appropriate*].]

15. We invite the Committee on Environmental Policy to convene in 2018 a mid-term review to assess progress in the implementation of the main outcomes of this Conference.

[16. We invite offers of interest from Governments to host the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in 2021, celebrating 30 years of the Environment for Europe process, for consideration by the Committee.]

[16.] / [17.] We express our gratitude to the Government of Georgia for having hosted this Conference and we wish to thank it and the people of Georgia for the warm hospitality we have received.
