



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 May 2018

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Twentieth session

Geneva, 3 and 4 September 2018

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the twentieth session

To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 10 a.m.
on Monday, 3 September 2018

I. Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs.
3. Adoption of the report of the nineteenth session.
4. Implementing the renewed mandate and terms of reference.
5. Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System to support a regular process of environmental assessment.
6. Streamlining reporting obligations in environmental policy.
7. Regular pan-European environmental assessment and streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting supported by the Shared Environmental Information System.
8. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
9. Regional environmental information and assessment network of networks.
10. Guidance and information on environmental statistics and indicators.

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11. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment, including institutional and regulatory mechanisms and infrastructure at the national level.
12. Other business.
13. Closure of the meeting.

II. Annotations

According to its terms of reference for 2017–2021 (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II), the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment is open to all member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Members of the Working Group represent the national institutions responsible for environmental monitoring and assessment. The Working Group also involves representatives of programmes and policies and multilateral environmental agreements dealing with the collection of environmental data and information and the generation of environmental assessments — whether covering the environment as a whole, or only certain themes — as well as expert teams.

Also invited to participate are representatives of international organizations, such as the European Environment Agency, the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Statistics Division and the World Health Organization European Centre for Environment and Health.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The outgoing Chair, Ms. Katerina Nikolovska (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), will open the twentieth session. The Working Group will be invited to adopt the agenda for the session, as set out in the present document.¹

2. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs

At its sixteenth session (Istanbul, Turkey, 16–17 April 2015), the Working Group elected Ms. Nikolovska as its Chair and Ms. Maia Javakhishvili (Georgia) and Mr. Yuri Tsaturov (Russian Federation) as its Vice-Chairs. Its terms of reference specify that “the Working Group shall elect a chair and two vice-chairs for a term of up to two years, ensuring a regional balance in the nominations. The chair and vice-chairs shall be eligible for re-election for one additional term”. Members of the Working Group will therefore need to elect or re-elect a chair and vice-chairs at the twentieth session. Members are invited to start consultations on possible candidates prior to the meeting.

3. Adoption of the report of the nineteenth session

The secretariat will summarize the outcomes of the nineteenth session of the Working Group (Geneva, 27–28 June 2017) as contained in the report of that session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2017/2) and invite the Working Group to adopt the report.

¹ Documentation for the meeting and other relevant information will be posted on the web page for the meeting on the ECE website: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47577>.

The secretariat will inform the Working Group about the status of implementation of the decisions and recommendations that were made at the nineteenth session, including the consideration of the Working Group's activities by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-third session (Geneva, 14–17 November 2017).

4. Implementing the renewed mandate and terms of reference

The Working Group's terms of reference require that it prepare an annual timetable of activities and achievements. In addition, the Committee on Environmental Policy, at its twenty-second session (Geneva, 25–27 January 2017), asked the Working Group to take into account the financial and human resources available in developing its yearly detailed plans of activities and to develop a more detailed outline of activities leading up to 2021. Such an outline was presented to the Committee at its twenty-third session (ECE/CEP/2017/13). Following its consideration of the document, the Committee requested the Working Group to revise and streamline the outline by including measurable outcomes and giving priority to core activities in accordance with the financial resources available.

Accordingly, the secretariat will present to the Working Group a revised draft outline of activities leading up to 2021 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2018/3), together with a draft timetable of activities for 2019 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2018/4).

The Working Group will be invited to discuss and finalize its timetable of activities for 2019 and the longer-term outline of activities.

The secretariat will provide informal information on the financial resources available to support meetings of the Working Group and its other activities.

In addition, international organizations will be invited to report briefly on extrabudgetary projects that relate to the Working Group's activities.

5. Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System to support a regular process of environmental assessment

One of the four aims of the Working Group, as defined in its terms of reference, is to assist in the establishment and operation of national information systems in line with the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia to be put in place by 2021.

At its nineteenth session, the Working Group discussed the further development of a framework to be used for the mid-term assessment of the Shared Environmental Information System, including its piloting and the drafting of a guidance document, and agreed to review a draft mid-term assessment at its twentieth session. The mid-term assessment will be presented to the Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-fourth session, as part of the mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016). In accordance with the Committee on Environmental Policy's request at its twenty-third session, the mid-term review report should be kept short and focused, but without compromising its quality, in line with a template (ECE/CEP/2017/16, annex II). Additional substantive information can be provided in annexes to the mid-term review report, as necessary.

Accordingly, at the twentieth session the secretariat will report on the piloting of the assessment framework and the consideration of the results by the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators at its fourteenth session (Rome, 2–3 October 2017).

The secretariat will also present the assessment framework (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2018/5) and the resulting draft mid-term assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2018/6).

Members of the Working Group will be invited to report on their experiences in monitoring progress on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System and to comment on both the assessment framework and the draft mid-term assessment, including policy recommendations contained in the latter.

The Working Group will then be invited to agree on necessary revisions to the draft assessment and a process for its finalization.

6. Streamlining reporting obligations in environmental policy

Good environmental policymaking is dependent on high quality data and information that can identify where the problems lie, as well as their magnitude and causes, including information and data on the success of environmental policies themselves. Environmental monitoring and reporting obligations also need to be fit for purpose: the right information needs to be delivered at the right time and in the right format. The Shared Environmental Information System aims to make the whole system of environmental reporting more efficient by collecting information once and sharing it with others for many purposes and by making environmental information readily available to easily fulfil various reporting obligations.

The Working Group will exchange views on the need to streamline environmental reporting requirements and will be invited to reflect on gaps, overlaps and inconsistencies in existing reporting regimes and how the various reporting obligations can be facilitated by the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System. Such overlaps and duplications can exist between reporting requirements under various multilateral environmental agreements, European Union directives or national reporting obligations. The discussion will also provide an opportunity to consider the need to build consistent and transparent strategies and forward-looking planning at the national and regional level.

To support the discussion, the secretariat of an ECE multilateral environmental agreement will be invited to present reporting and other processes requiring the provision of data by ECE member States and how the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System could contribute to greater efficiency and effectiveness in reporting.

The Working Group will be invited to draw some conclusions or make recommendations on how reporting obligations might be streamlined.

7. Regular pan-European environmental assessment and streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting supported by the Shared Environmental Information System

Another aim of the Working Group is to lead a process of consultation on the regular pan-European environmental assessment and the streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting by 2020 supported by the Shared Environmental Information System. Following a short presentation by the secretariat, the Working Group will be invited to discuss steps to be taken in order to achieve this aim. In particular, the Working Group will be invited to discuss possible modalities for a next pan-European environmental assessment in due consideration of the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System and possible links with the “European Environment — State and Outlook” report developed by the European Environment Agency and the next UNEP Global Environment Outlook assessment. The discussion on the next pan-European

environment assessment will be based on a concept paper developed by the secretariat and UNEP, in consultation with the European Environment Agency, prior to the meeting.

The Working Group will also be invited to discuss and make recommendations on how to streamline regular state-of-the-environment reporting with the support of the Shared Environmental Information System. Selected country case studies on latest state-of-the-environment report developments will be presented to support the discussion.

8. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Working Group will address the need for the sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data for environmental policymaking. Participants will, among other things, consider data interoperability (e.g., geospatial and administrative data) and gaps between sectors with regard to variations in terms of the existence of, access to and the content of data.

To support the discussion, a representative of another ECE division will be invited to present activities requiring the provision of data by ECE member States, including for reporting obligations and the development of policy recommendations, in order to explore possible synergies and to explore further areas of work for the Working Group.

The Working Group will also be invited to make recommendations on how it should continue its work on integrating economic, social and environmental data into the Shared Environmental Information System so that it could be used to complement reporting on progress in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Regional environmental information and assessment network of networks

Another aim of the Working Group is to initiate a process of consultation between ECE member States and other institutions and networks with relevant expertise in the area, as appropriate, on the development of a regional environmental information and assessment network of networks. As part of this process, the Working Group aims to develop an inclusive platform for countries to discuss the integration of environmental, economic and social considerations with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, green economy and other related areas of work.

At its nineteenth session, the Working Group noted that efforts should be directed towards improving participation in the meetings of the Working Group and that the establishment of a regional network of networks could only be pursued if adequate human and financial resources were secured. The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its twenty-third session, took note of the modalities for the regional network of networks, as presented in document ECE/CEP/2017/14, and requested the Working Group to encourage and facilitate broadened participation by member States, relevant organizations and existing regional environmental information and assessment networks. It also reiterated the invitation to member States and relevant organizations to participate actively in the activities and meetings of the Working Group. To that end, the Committee invited member States not represented in the Working Group to nominate their representatives and to inform the secretariat by 1 December 2017 of their nominations.

Accordingly, the Working Group will be invited to discuss a possible strategy for broadened participation, including the identification of topics likely to attract participation by countries across the ECE region. Such topics might relate, for example, to indicators for

Sustainable Development Goals, Voluntary National Reviews as part of the follow-up and review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the next pan-European regional assessment. This discussion could be supported by a round-table debate among experts.

10. Guidance and information on environmental statistics and indicators

The Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, at its fourteenth session, requested the secretariat to consider establishing a web-based portal through which users could seek guidance and information on environmental statistics and indicators, while recognizing the secretariat's resource constraints. The Working Group will be invited to discuss how that request might best be satisfied.

11. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment, including institutional and regulatory mechanisms and infrastructure at the national level

The secretariat will present the results of country briefs on the status of the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System developed under a project funded by the Russian Federation. It will also report on the outcome of a European Environment Agency-funded project, including a series of summaries of country assessments developed to support the production and regular update of the ECE core set of environmental indicators, their integration into national, regional and global reporting, including on the Sustainable Development Goals, and strengthening environmental statistics and accounting in the countries of the Caucasus and Eastern Europe.

Members of the Working Group, and especially those representing countries in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, will be invited to share information on major actions taken since the previous meeting regarding:

- (a) The production of environmental reports, analyses and assessments based on environmental information and indicators, including through the use of the Shared Environmental Information System;
- (b) The modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks, in particular those on air, water and soil;
- (c) Improvements in data quality assurance and control, as well as the management of data;
- (d) Improvements in data policy and institutional and regulatory mechanisms and technical solutions for data exchange between various ministries and agencies (ministries of environment, environment agencies and ministries of agriculture, energy, health, industry, transport and water) and with other users, including the public;
- (e) The implementation of recommendations regarding environmental monitoring and assessment made in national environmental performance reviews.

The secretariat will prepare and circulate a template to support oral presentations, as needed. The secretariat will also provide a list of relevant recommendations contained in ECE environmental performance reviews against which countries might report on progress. In addition, countries may be invited to present national experiences in producing environmental reports, analyses and assessments and the benefits reaped and challenges faced.

Furthermore, the secretariat together with UNEP will present upcoming capacity development activities and lessons learned from joint in-country efforts in the field of

environmental monitoring and assessment, the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System and reporting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

12. Other business

The Working Group will be invited to discuss any other business that might be brought to its attention. Members of the Working Group wishing to propose items are invited to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

13. Closure of the meeting

The Chair, with the assistance of the secretariat, will sum up the conclusions and decisions of the Working Group and close the meeting. The report of the meeting and the list of participants will be finalized by the secretariat for circulation to the Working Group after the meeting. These documents will be posted on the meeting website.

III. Organization of work

A detailed organization of work will be released closer to the meeting date and will be posted on the web page for the meeting.
