

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Twenty-fourth session

Geneva, 29–31 January 2019

Summary¹ of the outcomes and the decisions

(as approved by the Committee on 31 January 2019)

The Committee on Environmental Policy:

(a) Adopts the agenda for its twenty-fourth session (ECE/CEP/2019/1), taking into account the proposed timetable, as presented in information paper No. 1;

(b) Expresses appreciation to the Bureau for its good work in fulfilling the mandates assigned to it by the Committee and to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) secretariat for the support provided to the Bureau;

(c) Welcomes the report prepared by the ECE secretariat on “Environmental performance reviews: progress made in conducting the third cycle” (ECE/CEP/2019/8), and:

(i) Appreciates progress achieved since the Batumi Conference in conducting the third cycle of reviews;

(ii) Welcomes the positive experience gained in integrating the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets in the environmental performance reviews conducted since 2017;

(iii) Also welcomes the commencement of activities to assist reviewed countries in the implementation of recommendations emerging from their reviews;

(iv) Welcomes the holding of a peer-learning workshop “Policies for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: exchange of best practices on the basis of UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews” (Minsk, 21–22 November 2018) and the sharing of lessons learned in implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

(v) Invites countries to benefit from the Environmental Performance Review Programme by undertaking further reviews and inform the ECE secretariat of their interest;

(vi) Requests the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews to start working, in cooperation with the reviewed countries, on proposals for the fourth cycle of Environmental Performance Reviews and to prepare a paper on this issue to the Committee’s twenty-sixth session, taking into account the suggestions made by the members of the Committee during its current session;

(d) Welcomes the interactive discussion held on the ECE MEAs, expresses its appreciation to Chairs and other members of the Bureaux of MEAs for their contributions, and takes note of the information provided with regard to efforts made thus far under each MEA to support the 2030 Agenda;

¹ This document was not formally edited

(e) Also welcomes the background document, prepared by the secretariat, providing an overview of how the ECE multilateral environmental agreements being implemented in support of the 2030 Agenda (ECE/CEP/2019/9, and:

(i) Recognizes the important role of MEAs in assisting Governments to achieve SDGs and the need to allocate sufficient resources for that purpose;

(ii) Encourages ECE Member States to promote MEAs at the upcoming ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (March 2019), dedicated to SDG 16 among other Goals, as effective tools to develop strong institutions;

(iii) Notes that the SDG 16 is not mentioned (i) in the document “on main directions of the UNECE work on further SDG alignment”, submitted by the secretariat to 98th meeting of the ECE Executive Committee, and (ii) on ECE website dedicated to SDGs, and requests the secretariat to add SDG 16 among priority Goals for the work of ECE and reflect this accordingly in the above mentioned;

(iv) Reassures its commitment to strengthen cooperation in support of implementing the 2030 Agenda;

(v) Welcomes the operationalization in 2016 of the amendment to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) allowing accession to all United Nations Member States;

(vi) Also welcomes the accession by Chad and Senegal to the Convention in 2018 and the interest to accede by 20 countries officially expressed at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Astana, 10-12 October 2018);

(vii) Expresses support for the request by the Meeting of the Parties to the secretariat to take all necessary measures, including the provision of additional human and financial resources from the regular budget, to ensure effective management and full implementation of the Convention’s programme of work at the global level.

(f) Welcomes the background documents on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) and the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA): “Implementing the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy” (ECE/CEP/2019/4), “Activities to support countries in their efforts to green their economies and achieve sustainable development” (ECE/CEP/2019/5), and “Implementation of the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air: fostering progress towards improved air quality” (ECE/CEP/2019/6) prepared by the UNECE in cooperation with UNEP and OECD, and:

(i) Affirms that the two initiatives continue providing solid mechanism for the implementation of the decisions of the Batumi Ministerial Conference;

(ii) Notes with satisfaction the active participation of stakeholder countries and organizations in the reporting on the two initiatives;

(iii) Welcomes the progress achieved in implementing voluntary commitments by the member States and organizations participating in BIG-E and BACA;

(iv) Calls upon the member States and other stakeholders to continue active participation in the two initiatives;

(v) Welcomes the Batumi Talk Show for promoting the two Batumi initiatives and invites interested countries and organizations to consider organizing a Batumi Talk Show at relevant events, as appropriate;

- (vi) Expresses appreciation to the countries (i.e., Croatia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, and Kazakhstan) and organizations (GGKP, OECD, WHO) that participated in the Batumi Talk Show for sharing their experience in implementing their commitments under the two initiatives and announcing new commitments;
- (vii) Welcomes and supports active involvement of civil society in the implementation and monitoring of Batumi initiatives
- (g) Welcomes the “Mid-term review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System” (ECE/CEP/2019/7) prepared by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment with the support of the secretariat, appreciates the progress achieved in Europe and Central Asia since the Batumi Conference, and:
 - (i) Welcomes the self-assessment of progress by the majority of ECE member States and, in particular, by all countries in the region with economies in transition;
 - (ii) Greatly appreciates the continued harmonization and improved accessibility of relevant data flows, improvement in the quality of selected environmental indicators and underpinning data flows and use of data flows for multiple purposes in support to regular environmental assessments and reporting by countries;
 - (iii) Notes that countries still need assistance to fully implement the pillars and principles of the Shared Environmental Information System and for the regular production and sharing of relevant data flows associated with the ECE environmental indicators by 2021;
 - (iv) Welcomes the support provided by the European Union and the European Environment Agency, UNEP and the United Nations Development Account in building the necessary capacity in countries with economies in transition;
 - (v) Encourages its members to increase the use of the set of ECE environmental indicators in state-of-the-environment reporting and further harmonize data flows across the region, including in view of reporting obligations and for use in thematic assessments at different geographical levels;
 - (vi) Requests the Working Group to lead a further review of progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia in advance of the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

(h) Adopts the recommendations in the Third Environmental Performance Review of Kazakhstan (information paper No. 3);

(i) Adopts the recommendations in the Third Environmental Performance Review of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (information paper No. 4);

(j) Welcomes the information provided on activities of the Environmental Performance Review Programme, and expresses its appreciation to the secretariat for the excellent work in support of the Programme;

(k) Greatly appreciates the work of the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews in 2018;

(l) Welcomes the commencement of the third environmental performance review of Uzbekistan;

(m) Adopts the renewed mandate and terms of reference of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (ECE/CEP/2019/12) and requests the secretariat to submit it to the ECE Executive Committee for approval;

(n) Invites members of the Committee to nominate their representatives to the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews;

(o) Takes note of the information provided by the secretariat on resource mobilization for the Environmental Performance Review Programme in 2018 and in particular thanks:

(i) Germany, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland and the European Union for their financial support;

(ii) Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, UNEP, the World Health Organization and OECD for providing expertise;

(iii) Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Switzerland for having delegated their experts to the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews;

(iv) UNDP for logistical support;

(p) Appreciates the close cooperation of the ECE Sustainable Energy, Forests, Land and Housing, Statistics and Sustainable Transport Divisions with the Environmental Performance Review Programme;

(q) Encourages delegations to provide in-kind (expert) and financial support to the Environmental Performance Review Programme;

(r) Welcomes the background document (ECE/CEP/2019/11), prepared by the secretariat, providing an overview of the cross-sectoral activities of the Economic Commission for Europe Environment subprogramme, and:

(i) Takes note of the information provided on the work of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development and to encourage its members from the countries participating in the Strategy to stay informed on the process at the national level through establishing and maintaining working contacts with the Steering Committee members and focal points from their national administrations and non-governmental organizations;

(ii) Also takes note of the information provided and welcomes the work under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme. Furthermore, encourages support the Programme and encourages the participation of ministers of environment in the High-level Meeting in 2019 and of experts in the preparatory process for the High-level Meeting;

- (iii) Encourages the nomination of national focal points to the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme from the environment side;
- (iv) Notes the information provided with respect to the Environment and Health Process and reconfirms its commitment to contribute to the Process;
- (v) Also notes the information provided with respect to gender mainstreaming across ECE activities and in environmental activities carried out by the Environment Division since the Committee's last session and : (a) recognizes the importance of gender mainstreaming in environmental activities, particularly in the light of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and emphasizes that gender equality is both a goal in itself and a means to contribute to achieving sustainable development; (b) supports international initiatives to promote gender equality and welcome continued cooperation and coordination with the United Nations bodies and other relevant international forums and actors to that end; (c) agrees to continue to mainstream a gender perspective in its activities;
- (vi) Considers organizing an international conference, in cooperation with all relevant ECE subprogrammes, and in particular with the support of the Housing and Land Management Unit, the ECE-Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Forestry and Timber Section and the Energy Division, on green building, with a view to exploring all aspects of and opportunities to facilitate a transition in the ECE region towards green building.
- (s) Takes note of the information on the developments in the ECE region linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), and:
 - (i) Calls for active participation in the preparation and conduct of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region (21-22 March 2019, Geneva) aligned with the theme of the 2019 High-level Political Forum "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality";
 - (ii) Welcomes the information on Georgia's Strategy on Green Economy delivered by the delegation of Georgia, and expresses appreciation of the efforts of the Government of Georgia in facilitating the transition to the Green Economy;
 - (iii) Notes with interest the presentation on the first findings of the report "Environmental impacts of the Belt and Road Initiative in Central Asia and beyond", prepared by Zoï Environment Network together with UNEP, and expresses interest in being informed on the future developments on this subject;
 - (iv) Notes with interest the information by the secretariat about the environmental impact of the garment industry, on the activities of the UN Alliance on Sustainable Fashion, and the UNECE activities in this regard, and expresses interest in further information on the subject to be presented at the meetings of the Committee as appropriate;
 - (v) Welcomes the information by the EU delegation on a new 4-year programme – EU4Environment – to be launched in 2019 with a contribution of EUR 19.5 million from the European Union for six countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine) and with five international partners (OECD, UN Environment, UNECE, UNIDO, and the World Bank) to implement the programme;
 - (t) Welcomes the information provided by UNEP about developments in preparing the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4), and invites UNEP to continue informing the Committee about relevant developments under the Assembly, and in particular about the outcomes of UNEA-4 at the next session of CEP;

(u) Takes note of the outline of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment activities up to 2021 (information paper No. 12) and the annual timetable of its activities for 2019 (Information paper No. 13);

(v) Takes note of the strong concerns expressed by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment regarding the availability of funds for the financial support of meeting participants, especially from South-Eastern Europe but also from other subregions;

(w) Reiterates the invitation to member States and relevant organizations to participate actively in the activities and meetings of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, and invites those member States that are not represented in the Working Group to nominate their representatives by 1 March 2019 to the secretariat;

(x) Greatly appreciates the work of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, and:

(i) Welcomes the Joint Task Force's request to the secretariat to make relevant environmental information available in the database of the ECE Statistical Division;

(ii) Takes note of the capacity-building activities related to environmental statistics and indicators, being carried out by the secretariat, UNEP, the European Environment Agency and OECD;

(y) Invites member States and organizations to provide in-kind and financial support to the environmental monitoring and assessment programme and thanks, in particular, the European Union through the European Environment Agency, Austria, Norway, the Russian Federation and Switzerland for their financial support, and also UNEP and the European Environment Agency for their substantive support to the programme;

(z) Takes note of the draft concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment (Information paper No. 15) and the suggestions made by the Working Group for the modalities, scope and form of the assessment;

(aa) Requests the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, with the support of the secretariat, working in close cooperation with the EEA and UNEP, to prepare a detailed proposal, including a timetable, budget and expanded outline, to be presented to the Committee at its next session;

(bb) Decides to elect the Bureau of the Committee as stated in the information paper No.7. Rev.3;

(cc) Expresses appreciations to the outgoing members of the Bureau: Ms. Marie-Charlotte Delvaux, Mr. Nicolas Fairise, Mr. Vladimir Ivlev, Mr. Alexander Mayer, Ms. Maria Nagornii, Ms. Gordana Petkovic, Ms. Marina Philipuyuk, and Mr. Bulat Yessekin;

(dd) Approves the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events as presented in the Information paper No. 10 and asks the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to periodically verify the availability of data for 2017 and, if available for all countries with economies in transition, to prepare revised criteria for financial support for approval by the Committee by email through a silent procedure;

(ee) Welcomes the information provided by the Secretariat on the status of the trust funds in the biennium 2016–2017 and requests the secretariat to provide the information at the next relevant session of the Committee (i.e. in 2020);

(ff) Takes note of the information on Reform of the UN planning and budgeting process as presented in the Information paper No. 6;

(gg) Decides to organize the Committee's twenty-fifth session in Geneva in the week of 11-15 November 2019;

(hh) Approves the proposed schedule of CEP and its Bureau meetings until 2021 (information paper No.8);

(ii) 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 next session;

(jj) Expresses appreciation to ECE for organizing a side event on the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP);

(kk) Expresses appreciation for the work of the ECE secretariat in preparation of the present meeting.