

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Twenty-fifth session

Geneva, 13–15 November 2019

Summary¹ of the outcomes and the decisions

(as approved by the Committee on 15 November 2019)

The Committee on Environmental Policy:

(a) Adopts the agenda for its twenty-fifth session (ECE/CEP/2019/14), taking into account the proposed timetable, as presented in information paper No. 16/Rev.1;

(b) Expresses strong appreciation to the Bureau for its good work in fulfilling the mandates assigned to it by the Committee, especially for the excellent work undertaken with regards to the selection of themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, and to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) secretariat for the support provided to the Bureau, and, in particular, thanks Portugal for hosting an additional Bureau meeting in Lisbon in September 2019;

(c) Expresses its gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Cyprus for the proposal to host the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, in Cyprus, and:

(i) Welcomes the information provided by the delegation of the Republic of Cyprus regarding the proposal;

(ii) Decides to organize the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, in Nicosia on 3–5 November 2021;

(iii) Encourages the member States, partner organisations, and all interested stakeholders to actively participate in the preparation and conduct of the Conference;

(iv) In regard of the document ECE/CEP/2019/19 on organizational issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, recommends reducing the maximum size of delegations for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference by 20 per cent;

(iv) Asks the secretariat to follow up with the present decision and to keep the Committee and the Bureau informed on the progress of all necessary preparations;

(v) Invites the Republic of Cyprus to actively participate in the future meetings of the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

(d) Welcomes the document ECE/CEP/2019/20 on the Proposed framework for preparing the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

(e) Expresses strong appreciation of the work undertaken by the Bureau with the assistance by the secretariat together with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to prepare the information paper No. 20 on mapping the work of OECD, ECE and UNEP on the short-listed themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

¹ This document was not formally edited

(f) Agrees on the following two themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference:

(i) Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure;

(ii) Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism.

(g) Mandates the Bureau, with support from the secretariat and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to proceed with the necessary organization of the Conference, including preparing for the next session of the Committee:

(i) The first drafts of the two background thematic documents;

(ii) A first draft of the provisional annotated agenda for the Conference;

(iii) Other documents that might be recommended by the Bureau.

(h) Invites OECD, UNEP and other stakeholders to contribute to the preparation of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

(i) Welcomes the Information paper No. 19 on estimated resource requirements for preparing the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and invites interested countries and organizations to make contributions (in cash and in kind) for the preparation of the Conference;

(j) Welcomes the pledge by Serbia to financially contribute to the work of the Committee on Environmental Policy;

(k) Welcomes the background document (ECE/CEP/2019/17), prepared by the secretariat, providing an overview of the cross-sectoral activities of the ECE Environment subprogramme, and:

(i) Takes note of the information provided on, and welcomes the work carried out under, the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme, supports the Programme and encourages the participation of ministers of environment in the Fifth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment in 2020 and of experts in the preparatory process for the High-level Meeting;

(ii) Continues to encourage the nomination of national focal points to the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme from the environment side;

(iii) Takes note of the information provided with respect to the Environment and Health Process, reconfirms its commitment to contribute to the Process and expresses its wish to receive more information on the Process;

(iv) Takes note of the information provided with respect to the Environment and Security Initiative;

(v) Takes note of the information provided on, and appreciates the progress in, the work of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, and encourages members of the Committee on Environmental Policy to cooperate with the Steering Committee, especially in view of the preparations for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

(vi) 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 for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and to emphasize 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 welcomes 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.

(l) Approves the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events as presented in the Information paper No. 21;

(m) Requests the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to periodically verify the availability of data for 2018 and, if available for all countries with economies in transition, to prepare revised criteria for financial support for approval by the Committee at its next session;

(n) Approves the proposed schedule of meetings of the Committee and its Bureau until 2022 (information paper No.18);

(o) Decides to organize the Committee's twenty-sixth session in Geneva on 9–11 November 2020;

(p) Requests the Bureau to explore possibilities of other times of year for the next sessions of the Committee starting with the twenty-seventh session;

(q) Takes note of the information on the developments in the ECE region linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and:

(i) Calls for active participation in the preparation and conduct of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region (19–20 March 2020, Geneva);

(ii) Notes with interest the information provided by UNEP on the follow-up activities with regard to the Resolution of the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme on sustainable infrastructure and expresses interest in being informed on the future developments on this subject;

(r) Adopts the recommendations in the Third Environmental Performance Review of Uzbekistan (information paper No. 17/Rev.1);

(s) 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;

(t) Greatly appreciates the work of the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews in 2019;

(u) Welcomes the commencement of the third environmental performance reviews of Romania and Azerbaijan;

(v) Takes note of the requests to host their next environmental performance reviews made by Armenia, Morocco and Ukraine;

(w) Welcomes progress achieved in implementation of the project "Evidence-based environmental governance and sustainable environmental policies in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in South-East Europe" funded by the United Nations Development Account;

(x) Supports the proposal of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews to organize, in the first half of 2020, a survey and a meeting to discuss possible options for the fourth cycle of Environmental Performance Reviews;

(y) Approves the document "Environmental Performance Reviews beyond the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region" (information paper No. 25) as amended during the session and requests the secretariat to process it as an annex to the report of the session;

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

(aa) Takes note of the information provided by the secretariat on resource mobilization for the Environmental Performance Review Programme in 2018–2019 and in particular thanks:

(i) Austria, Germany, Norway, Portugal, 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) Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Romania and Switzerland for having delegated their experts to the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews;

(iv) The United Nations Development Programme for logistical support;

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

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

(dd) Welcomes the information provided by UNEP on the outcomes of the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (Nairobi, 11–15 March 2019) and the ongoing preparations for the fifth session, and invites UNEP to continue informing the Committee about relevant developments under the Assembly;

(ee) Welcomes the information provided by Norway in its present capacity of the Presidency of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme on the ongoing preparations for the fifth session;

(ff) Takes note of the annual timetable of activities for 2020 of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (Information paper No. 23);

(gg) Expresses concerns about the impact on the ECE Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the current freeze on the recruitment of the staff member responsible for managing the Programme;

(hh) Expresses appreciation for the work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment;

(ii) Expresses appreciation for the work of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, with support from the secretariat, especially with regard to the revision of the ECE Guidelines for Application of Environmental Indicators, and

(i) 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 others;

(ii) Invites member States and organizations to provide in-kind and financial support to the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment programme;

(iii) 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;

(jj) Expresses its appreciation to the European Environment Agency for the presentation of its publication “Paving the way for a circular economy: insights on status and potentials”;

(kk) Encourages all member States in Europe and Central Asia to report on their progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System, using the online reporting tool;

(ll) Invites the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to oversee the preparation of a final review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia for consideration by the Committee, with a view to its subsequent forwarding to the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference as an information document;

(mm) Welcomes the information provided by the secretariat and UNEP on the next pan-European environmental assessment, and

(i) Selects option 3 among the options for the next pan-European environmental assessment set out in the document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6, subject to the availability of resources;

(ii) Requests the secretariat and UNEP, working in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency, to prepare a light indicator-based and thematic assessment, and to inform the Bureau regularly on progress made;

(iii) Encourages all member States to provide the necessary funding to enable the preparation of the assessment.

(nn) Decides to elect the Bureau of the Committee as stated in the information paper No. 26/Rev.1;

(oo) Expresses strong appreciations to the outgoing member of the Bureau, Mr. Lukas Pokorny;

(pp) Takes note of the Draft annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2020 as presented in the document ECE/CEP/2019/18, and notes that the template for the programme of work could be adjusted to better reflect the work done by the subprogramme;

(qq) Expresses concerns about the impact of the current financial situation in the United Nations system on the activities under the Environment subprogramme;

(rr) 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;

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