


Economic Commission for Europe
Committee on Environmental Policy
Twenty-fifth session

Geneva, 13–15 November 2019

**Report of the Committee on Environmental Policy on its
 twenty-fifth session**
Contents

| | <i>Page</i> |
|---|-------------|
| I. Introduction | 3 |
| A. Attendance | 3 |
| B. Opening of the session and organizational matters | 3 |
| II. Outcomes of the work of the Bureau..... | 4 |
| III. Sustainable development in the region..... | 4 |
| IV. The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference | 5 |
| A. Selection of the themes for the Conference | 5 |
| B. Organizational issues | 6 |
| C. Resource requirements..... | 7 |
| V. Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting | 7 |
| VI. Environmental performance reviews..... | 9 |
| VII. Cross-sectoral activities..... | 10 |
| VIII. Criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events | 11 |
| IX. Review of subprogramme performance and programme planning | 12 |
| X. Presentation and exchange of views on the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme | 12 |
| XI. Calendar of meetings..... | 12 |
| XII. Election of officers | 13 |
| XIII. Other business | 13 |
| XIV. List of decisions | 13 |
| XV. Closure of the meeting | 13 |



Annex

Environmental performance reviews beyond the United Nations Economic Commission
for Europe region 14

I. Introduction

1. The Committee on Environmental Policy held its twenty-fifth session in Geneva, from 13 to 15 November 2019. The present report is based on a summary of the session's outcomes and the decisions taken, which the Committee approved on 15 November 2019.¹

A. Attendance

2. Delegations from the following 41 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) attended the meeting: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine, United States of America and Uzbekistan.

3. From the United Nations system, representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Europe were present.

4. Other national, regional and international organizations and bodies were represented at the meeting, including: the European Union, represented by the European Commission, the European Environment Agency and the European Investment Bank; and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

5. Representatives of the following civil society organizations participated in the session: Eco-Accord; European ECO Forum; International Network of Liberal Women; and Zoï Environment Network.

B. Opening of the session and organizational matters

6. In his welcoming remarks, the Director of the ECE Environment Division highlighted the importance of the current session as a milestone in the preparatory process towards the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. The Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy welcomed participants and recalled the main objectives of the session.

7. The Chair proposed to the Committee the following changes and amendments to the agenda (as recommended by the Bureau):

(a) Under agenda item 4: "The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference", taking into consideration that, in September, a formal proposal had been made for hosting the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, to place agenda item 4 (b): "Organizational issues" before agenda item 4 (a): "Selection of the themes for the Conference";

(b) Under agenda item 6: "Environmental Performance Reviews", to hold a brief discussion on the proposal by the secretariat on a procedure for conducting environmental performance reviews in countries beyond the ECE region (the current procedure had been in force since 2011; the proposal for an updated text was contained in information paper No. 25).

(c) The addition of new agenda item 15: "Election of officers". The Committee was informed that, according to information formally received on 12 November 2019, one member of the Bureau could not continue to serve on the Bureau in 2020. In the light of that information, it was proposed that a new agenda item 15: "Election of officers" be formally added to the current agenda of the meeting and considered on the last day of the meeting. The Committee was also informed that the secretariat had prepared an information paper

¹ Meeting documents and other information, including the summary of decisions, are available on the session web page: www.unece.org/index.php?id=52014.

presenting the list of candidates for the Bureau to be elected by the twenty-fifth session of the Committee (information paper No. 26).

8. The Committee adopted the agenda of its twenty-fifth session (ECE/CEP/2019/14), taking into account the proposed time schedule as presented in information paper No. 16/Rev.1.

II. Outcomes of the work of the Bureau

9. The Chair reported that the Bureau had worked by means of electronic consultations and had held meetings in Geneva, on 6 June 2019, and in Lisbon, on 19 and 20 September 2019, to prepare the current session of the Committee. The outcomes of the Bureau's work were presented in document ECE/CEP/2019/16. In addition, the Bureau had held a half-day meeting in Geneva, on 12 November 2019, to address pending issues. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the outcomes of the Bureau's work under the respective agenda items.

10. The Committee expressed 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 regard to the selection of themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, and to the ECE secretariat for the support provided to the Bureau, and, in particular, thanked Portugal for hosting an additional Bureau meeting in Lisbon, in September 2019.

III. Sustainable development in the region

11. The Principal Adviser to the ECE Executive Secretary, in her capacity as ECE focal point for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, presented developments related to the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region, including the key outcomes of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (Geneva, 21 and 22 March 2019) submitted as the contribution of the ECE region to the high-level political forum on sustainable development (New York, 9–18 July 2019).

12. The Committee was informed that the next ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development "Accelerating action and delivery for sustainable development in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region" would take place in Geneva, on 19 and 20 March. The outcomes of the 2020 session of the Regional Forum would constitute the contribution of the ECE region to the 2020 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (New York, 7–16 July 2020).

13. The representative of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe informed the Committee of the recent activities with regard to United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/5 on sustainable infrastructure. In particular, UNEP had convened an expert working group to: take stock of existing normative guidance on sustainable infrastructure; identify gaps; and develop consolidated, streamlined, internationally applicable normative guidance on integrated, upstream, systems-level approaches to sustainable infrastructure. Under the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, UNEP would produce a publication containing case studies highlighting best practices and lessons learned from sustainable infrastructure development around the world. Throughout 2020, and with support from the Government of Switzerland, UNEP would hold a series of regional consultations with member States to:

(a) Consult with them on the development of the guidance framework and get feedback;

(b) Collect examples of best practices and case studies for potential inclusion in the publication;

(c) Identify opportunities to provide direct technical support to member States and opportunities for South-South triangular cooperation. The first regional consultation was planned to take place in Central Asia in the first quarter of 2020.

14. In the ensuing discussion, delegations asked questions and considered the information provided.

15. The Committee took note of the information on developments in the ECE region linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and:

- (a) Called for active participation in the preparation and conduct of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region (Geneva, 21 and 22 March 2020);
- (b) Noted with interest the information provided by UNEP on the follow-up activities with regard to United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/5 on sustainable infrastructure and expressed interest in being informed of future developments in that regard.

IV. The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

A. Selection of the themes for the Conference

16. The Chair recalled that the Committee on Environmental Policy Bureau meeting in Geneva on 6 June 2019 had discussed the procedure of selecting themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and had recommended soliciting ideas concerning the themes for the Conference from the ECE member States, partner organizations and ECE multilateral environmental agreements through a simple online survey. Document ECE/CEP/2019/20 had largely been prepared based on the outcomes of the survey to facilitate the selection of themes for the next Conference.

17. It was recalled that the Bureau meeting held in Lisbon, on 19 and 20 September 2019, had used the draft of document ECE/CEP/2019/20, screened the long list of the proposed themes for the Conference and recommended for further consideration by the Committee the following:

- (a) Theme 1 (the Bureau had consensus): Greening the economy in the pan-European region: reducing environmental risks from big infrastructural projects;
- (b) Theme 2 (the Bureau proposed selecting a theme from the following shortlist):
 - (i) Theme 2a: Sustainable energy – environmental aspects;
 - (ii) Theme 2b: Sustainable cities – environmental aspects;
 - (iii) Theme 2c: Sustainable tourism;
 - (iv) Theme 2d: Circular economy and zero waste approaches.

18. The Committee was informed that the Bureau had asked the secretariat to prepare an information paper mapping the work of OECD, ECE and UNEP on the above shortlisted themes; consequently, information paper No. 20 had been prepared by the secretariat in cooperation with UNEP and OECD. The secretariat briefly presented information document No. 20.

19. The representatives of ECE, OECD and UNEP presented experiences, activities and priorities of their respective organizations with regard to the shortlisted themes of the Conference.

20. In the ensuing discussion, representatives of Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czechia, France, Germany, Italy, Monaco, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United States of America, the European Union and European ECO Forum took the floor.

21. The Committee welcomed document ECE/CEP/2019/20 on the proposed framework for preparing the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, and:

- (a) Expressed appreciation for the work undertaken by the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, OECD and UNEP, to prepare information paper No. 20 on

mapping the work of OECD, ECE and UNEP on the shortlisted themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

(b) Agreed 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;

(c) Mandated 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 the following:

(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;

(d) Invited OECD, UNEP and other stakeholders to contribute to the preparation of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

B. Organizational issues

22. The Chair recalled that the Environment for Europe reform plan set out the provisions for the preparatory process and for the organization of Environment for Europe Ministerial Conferences (ECE/CEP/S/152 and Corr.1, annex I). Based on the provisions, the secretariat had prepared document ECE/CEP/2019/19, presenting the main organizational issues for the next Conference with a view to guiding the preparations for and the organization of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

23. The Committee was informed that the Government of Cyprus had formally expressed its readiness to host the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries. The corresponding letter had been sent by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, His Excellency Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, to the Executive Secretary of ECE, Ms. Olga Algayerova, on 5 September 2019. At its meeting in Lisbon on 19 and 20 September 2019, the Bureau had been officially informed of the offer by Ms. Aravella Zachariou, the representative of Cyprus and the current Chair of the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development.

24. The Committee was further informed that the Bureau meeting in Lisbon had also discussed potential time slots for the next Conference and recommended that it be organized in the first week of November 2021 (tentatively, 3–5 November 2021).

25. The representative of Cyprus presented the proposal to host the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, in Cyprus.

26. The representative of the European Union proposed a 20 per cent reduction in the size of delegations for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

27. The Committee expressed its gratitude to the Government 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:

(a) Welcomed the information provided by the delegation of Cyprus regarding the proposal;

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

(c) Encouraged the member States, partner organizations and all interested stakeholders to actively participate in the preparation and conduct of the Conference;

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

(e) Asked the secretariat to follow up on the present decision and to keep the Committee and the Bureau informed of progress regarding all necessary preparations;

(f) Invited Cyprus to actively participate in the future meetings of the Bureau.

C. Resource requirements

28. The Chair recalled that the Environment for Europe reform plan stipulated that, for the preparatory process of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and the Conference itself, the necessary extrabudgetary financial resources would have to continue to be provided to ECE to supplement the United Nations core budget resources. The plan also stated that the host country should assume relevant financial commitments (ECE/CEP/S/152, para. 12 (g) and (h)).

29. The Committee was informed that information paper No. 19 provided an estimate of extrabudgetary costs for supporting the core services provided by the ECE secretariat in preparing the Conference.

30. The Committee welcomed information paper No. 19 on estimated resource requirements for preparing the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, invited interested countries and organizations to make contributions (in cash and in kind) for the preparation of the Conference and welcomed the pledge by Serbia to contribute financially to the work of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

V. Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting

31. The Chair informed the Committee that the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment had met in Geneva, on 6 and 7 May 2019. It had prepared an annual timetable of activities for 2020 (see information paper No. 23). The report of its twenty-first session was also available on the website under “Other materials”.

32. The Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment briefed the Committee on the progress of the work of the Working Group and presented its annual timetable of activities for 2020.

33. The Committee was informed that the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators had met in Geneva, on 28 and 29 October 2019, with information paper No. 24 providing an informal record of the decisions taken and the recommendations made at that time.

34. The secretariat presented progress achieved by the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators in 2019, in particular on the continued revision of the ECE set of environmental indicators.

35. The Committee was also informed that the European Environment Agency had recently published a report entitled “Paving the way for a circular economy: insights on status and potentials”.² The representative of the European Environment Agency presented the publication.

36. The Chair informed the Committee that the Working Group and the Joint Task Force had advanced preparations for a final review of progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System. A document setting out the framework to be used in assessing progress was available on the meeting website under “Other materials” (ECE/CEP-

² Mieke De Schoenmakere and others, European Environment Agency Report No. 11/2019 (Luxembourg, 2019).

CES/GE.1/2019/3). The representative of UNEP and the secretariat briefed the Committee on the status of preparation.

37. The Committee:

(a) Took note of the annual timetable of activities for 2020 of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (information paper No. 23);

(b) Expressed concern 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;

(c) Expressed appreciation for the work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment;

(d) Expressed 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 the Application of Environmental Indicators;

(e) Took 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;

(f) Invited member States and organizations to provide in-kind and financial support to the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme;

(g) Thanked, in particular, the European Union through the European Environment Agency, Austria, Norway, the Russian Federation and Switzerland for their financial support, as well as UNEP and the European Environment Agency for their substantive support to the Programme;

(h) Expressed 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”;³

(i) Encouraged 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;

(j) Invited 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;

(k) Welcomed the information provided by the secretariat and UNEP on the next pan-European environmental assessment, and:

(i) Selected option 3⁴ from among the options for the next pan-European environmental assessment set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6, subject to the availability of resources;

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

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

³ Ibid.

⁴ A light indicator-based and thematic assessment, which would be limited to the review of progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System and to addressing the two conference themes by using the conference background papers that are foreseen to be produced for the next ministerial conference.

VI. Environmental performance reviews

38. The Committee proceeded with the peer review of the environmental performance of Uzbekistan.

39. The rapporteurs for the review (Estonia and Switzerland) summarized the main findings and recommendations of the third environmental performance review of Uzbekistan, conducted by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews in November 2019. The Chair of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Ecology and Environmental Protection presented key achievements to date and main challenges encountered by his country in advancing the environmental agenda for sustainable development, within the substantive framework of the third environmental performance review of Uzbekistan. Following a discussion on the review, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained in the third environmental performance review of Uzbekistan (information paper No. 17/Rev.1).

40. The Secretary to the Expert Group gave an overview of activities in 2019. In 2019, the third environmental performance reviews of Kazakhstan and North Macedonia had been published. The third environmental performance review of Kazakhstan had been launched in Nur-Sultan in June 2019 and the third environmental performance review of North Macedonia in Skopje in November 2019. The review mission for the third environmental performance review of Uzbekistan had taken place in March 2019 and that of Romania in December 2019. Activities had been launched for the second phase of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project on “Evidence-based environmental governance and sustainable environmental policies in support of the 2030 Agenda in South-East Europe”. In particular, missions to Montenegro and North Macedonia had been carried out to validate respective needs assessments. Montenegro was working on a package of policies on health, air quality and energy, Serbia on a package of policies on circular and green economy and North Macedonia on a programme of measures for improving environmental inspection and the development of a new law on environmental inspection.

41. Presenting planned activities for 2020, the Expert Group Secretary said that the implementation of the UNDA project on environmental performance reviews would continue with the validation of the needs assessments and the review of policy packages for the four countries concerned. A mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina was planned to perform tasks related to the first phase. The review mission for the third environmental performance review of Azerbaijan would take place from 20 to 30 April 2020. Preparatory and review missions for the second environmental performance review of Morocco would be held in spring and autumn 2020, respectively.

42. The Secretary informed the Committee that a survey and a meeting would be organized in the first half of 2020 to discuss possible options for the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews and encouraged countries to participate.

43. The Chair recalled that, in 2011, the Committee had approved the procedure for conducting environmental performance reviews in countries beyond the ECE region (ECE/CEP/S/2011/2, para. 71 and annex II) and informed the Committee that, in the light of the experience gained with the environmental performance reviews of Mongolia and Morocco, an updated text (contained in information paper No. 25) had been prepared by the secretariat to guide the process of carrying out further environmental performance reviews in non-ECE member States.

44. The Committee:

(a) Welcomed the information provided on the activities of the Environmental Performance Review Programme;

(b) Expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for the excellent work in support of the Programme;

(c) Also expressed its sincere appreciation for the work of the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews in 2019;

(d) Welcomed the commencement of the third environmental performance reviews of Romania and Azerbaijan;

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

(f) Welcomed progress achieved in the implementation of the UNDA-funded “Evidence-based environmental governance and sustainable environmental policies in support of the 2030 Agenda in South-East Europe” project;

(g) Supported 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;

(h) Approved the document “Environmental Performance Reviews beyond the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region” (information paper No. 25) as amended during the session and requested the secretariat to process it as an annex to the report of the session;

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

(j) Took note of the information provided by the secretariat on resource mobilization for the Environmental Performance Review Programme in 2018–2019 and, in particular, thanked:

(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 serve in the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews;

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

(k) Expressed appreciation for the close cooperation of the ECE Forests, Housing and Land, Statistics, Sustainable Energy and Transport Divisions with the Environmental Performance Review Programme;

(l) Encouraged delegations to provide in-kind (expert) and financial support to the Environmental Performance Review Programme.

VII. Cross-sectoral activities

45. The Chair informed the Committee that, as per established practice, the secretariat had prepared a briefing note on the cross-sectoral activities under the auspices of the ECE Environment subprogramme, for the Committee’s consideration at its twenty-fifth session (ECE/CEP/2019/17). The note presented the recent developments and plans for the future related to those activities and contained recommendations to the Committee concerning future work under its auspices.

46. The Chair of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development informed the Committee of the recent developments and plans regarding education for sustainable development. The secretariat briefed the Committee on the recent developments and plans under the European Environment and Health Process and the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) and on mainstreaming a gender perspective into environmental activities.

47. The Committee welcomed the background document prepared by the secretariat providing an overview of the cross-sectoral activities under the auspices of the ECE Environment subprogramme (ECE/CEP/2019/17), and:

(a) Took note of the information provided on, and welcomed the work carried out under, THE PEP, expressed support for the Programme and encouraged the participation of ministers of environment in the Fifth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Vienna, 26 and 27 November 2020) and of experts in the preparatory process for the High-level Meeting;

(b) Continued to encourage the nomination of national focal points to THE PEP from the environment side;

(c) Took note of the information provided with respect to the European Environment and Health Process, reconfirmed its commitment to contribute to the Process and expressed its wish to receive more information on the Process;

(d) Took note of the information provided with respect to the Environment and Security Initiative;

(e) Took note of the information provided on, and appreciated the progress in, the work of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development, and encouraged 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 (Nicosia, 3–5 November 2021);

(f) Noted 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 twenty-fourth session (Geneva, 29–31 January 2019), and:

(i) Recognized 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 emphasized that gender equality was both a goal in itself and a way of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development;

(ii) Expressed support for international initiatives to promote gender equality and welcomed continued cooperation and coordination with the United Nations bodies and other relevant international forums and actors to that end;

(iii) Agreed to continue to mainstream a gender perspective into its activities.

VIII. Criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events

48. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-fourth session, the Committee had approved the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events and had requested 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 (ECE/CEP/2019/2, para. 69).

49. Furthermore, the Chair informed the Committee that the Bureau had fulfilled its mandate (ECE/CEP/2019/1, para. 26) and prepared, with support from the secretariat, the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events, which were presented in information paper No. 21.

50. The Committee approved the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events, as presented in information paper No. 21, and requested 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.

IX. Review of subprogramme performance and programme planning

51. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-fourth session, the Committee had been informed of the implications for its work of the change in the United Nations Organization from a biennial to an annual budget period on a trial basis from 2020 onwards (information paper No. 6).⁵

52. Furthermore, the Chair informed the delegates that the draft annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2020 was contained in document ECE/CEP/2019/18. The secretariat briefed the Committee on the document.

53. The Committee took note of the draft annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2020, as presented in document ECE/CEP/2019/18, and noted that the template for the programme of work could be adjusted to better reflect the work done by the subprogramme.

X. Presentation and exchange of views on the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

54. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-fourth session, the Committee had welcomed the information provided by UNEP about developments in preparing the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, and invited UNEP to continue informing the Committee of relevant developments under the Assembly, and in particular of the outcomes of the fourth session of the Assembly (Nairobi, 11–15 March 2019), at the next session of the Committee (ECE/CEP/2019/2, para. 75).

55. The representative of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe informed the Committee of the outcomes of the fourth session of the Assembly and the ongoing preparations for the fifth session of the Assembly (Nairobi, 22–26 February 2021).

56. Norway, as a part of its Presidency of the fifth session of the Assembly, provided information on the ongoing preparations for that event.

57. The Committee welcomed the information provided by UNEP on the outcomes of the fourth session of the Assembly and the ongoing preparations for the fifth session, and invited UNEP to continue to inform the Committee of relevant developments under the Assembly.

58. The Committee welcomed the information provided by Norway, as a part of its Presidency of the fifth session of the Assembly, on the ongoing preparations for that event.

XI. Calendar of meetings

59. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-fourth session, the Committee had approved the proposed schedule of Committee and Bureau meetings until 2021. She informed the Committee that the proposed schedule of meetings of the Committee and its Bureau for the period 2020–2022 was presented in information paper No. 18.

60. The Committee approved the proposed schedule of meetings of the Committee and its Bureau for the period 2020–2022 (information paper No. 18).

61. The Committee decided to organize the Committee's twenty-sixth session in Geneva, from 9 to 11 November 2020.

62. The Committee requested the Bureau to explore the possibility of holding future sessions of the Committee at other times of the year, starting with the twenty-seventh session.

⁵ Reform of the United Nations planning and budgeting process, available at <https://www.unecce.org/index.php?id=50063>.

XII. Election of officers

63. The Chair informed the Bureau that, based on the interest expressed by the current Bureau members and the new nomination received, the secretariat had prepared an information paper presenting the list of candidates for the Bureau to be elected by the Committee (information paper No. 26/Rev.1).

64. The Committee decided to elect the Bureau of the Committee, as stated in information paper No. 26/Rev.1.

65. The Committee expressed its sincere appreciation to the outgoing member of the Bureau, Mr. Lukáš Pokorný, for his work.

XIII. Other business

66. The Director of the ECE Environment Division informed the Committee that, since July 2019, when the Secretary-General had informed all staff and member States about the troubling financial situation facing the United Nations regular budget, the United Nations Secretariat had been facing significant financial challenges due to delayed contributions from some member States. He brought to the Committee's attention the fact that the financial crisis would continue to impact ECE under all sections of the Regular Budget until the end of 2019. The current cash conservation measures in place in ECE, such as deferred recruitment and other non-post financial commitments, would continue until the situation had improved.

67. The Committee expressed concern about the impact of the current financial situation in the United Nations system on the activities under the Environment subprogramme.

XIV. List of decisions

68. Supported by the secretariat, the Chair compiled and presented a summary of the outcomes of the twenty-fifth session and the decisions taken. Following a discussion, the draft summary was finalized and approved. The document was uploaded to the web page of the twenty-fifth session of the Committee.

XV. Closure of the meeting

69. The Committee requested 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.

70. The Committee expressed appreciation for the work of the ECE secretariat in preparing the present meeting.

71. The Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.

Annex

Environmental performance reviews beyond the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

General considerations

1. An environmental performance review of a State not a member of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is a cooperative activity involving the State concerned, ECE, the respective regional commission and possibly other partners, with the following main goals:

(a) Countries outside the ECE region benefit from an environmental performance review;

(b) Other regional commissions acquire experience in, and knowledge of, environmental performance review methodology from ECE.

2. Any non-ECE member State wishing to undergo an environmental performance review with ECE should inform its regional commission.

3. The ECE Committee on Environmental Policy would consider and decide on a case-by-case basis on any requests to carry out environmental performance reviews in non-ECE member States taking into consideration the aim of accession to and/or implementation of the relevant ECE multilateral environmental agreements that were open to all States Members of the United Nations, subject to availability of resources.

4. Sufficient resources must be available to carry out the whole review process. In case of limited availability of human and financial resources to carry out an environmental performance review, an ECE member State requesting an environmental performance review would have priority over a non-ECE member State.

Procedure

5. ECE would be fully responsible for the environmental performance review of a non-ECE member State.

6. The non-ECE member State should discuss with ECE its interest in having its environmental performance reviewed by ECE and inform its regional commission accordingly. The non-ECE member State should subsequently submit a request for the review to the ECE environmental performance review secretariat and to the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy, which is the governing body of the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme.

7. Following agreement by the Committee on Environmental Policy, ECE would be responsible for and would carry out all operations related to the review, which would include a preparatory mission, a main review mission, an expert group review, a peer review and a launch event.

8. ECE would be responsible for choosing the experts for the mission. However, the respective regional commission, ECE member States and international partner organizations, such as the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization, might recommend or provide experts in specific fields.

9. ECE would liaise with the national authorities of the non-ECE member State undergoing the environmental performance review.

10. The regional commission of the non-ECE member State could:

(a) Acquire expertise through training provided by the ECE environmental performance review secretariat and through participation in the review mission and process;

(b) Assume responsibility for handling the formatting, translation into a local language and publication of the environmental performance review report and the launch event.

11. The expert group review would be carried out by the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews and the peer review would be carried out by the Committee on Environmental Policy, with representatives of the respective regional commission in attendance or participating by virtual means, if possible and as appropriate, as well as representatives of the non-ECE member State undergoing review.
