

# **Economic Commission for Europe**

## **Committee on Environmental Policy**

### **Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment**

#### **Twenty-first session**

Geneva, 6 and 7 May 2019

## **Report of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment on its twenty-first session**

### **I. Attendance**

1. Environmental experts and statisticians from the following countries attended the meeting: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Finland, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
2. Representatives of the European Commission, European Environment Agency and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also attended the meeting.
3. Furthermore, the National Council for Science and the Environment and St. Petersburg State University participated in the meeting.

### **II. Organizational matters**

4. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Katerina Nikolovska (North Macedonia).
5. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment adopted the agenda for its twenty-first session, as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/1.
6. The following substantive topics were discussed at the meeting:
  - (a) Implementing the mandate and terms of reference;
  - (b) Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System to support a regular process of environmental assessment;
  - (c) The regular pan-European environmental assessment and streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting supported by the Shared Environmental Information System;
  - (d) Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
  - (e) Guidance and information on environmental statistics and indicators;
  - (f) Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment, including institutional and regulatory mechanisms and infrastructure at the national level;
  - (g) Other business.

### **III. Decisions and recommendations for work**

#### **A. Adoption of the report of the twentieth session**

7. The representative of the Russian Federation requested that the word “produce” in paragraph 66 of the meeting report of the twentieth session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2018/2), or its Russian translation, be amended to indicate that no new information was collated when preparing the country factsheet for his country. The Working Group adopted the report.

#### **B. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference**

8. The Working Group took note of the revised outline of activities leading up to 2021 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/3). The representative of Switzerland requested that item B.1. in the annual timetable of activities for 2020 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/4) be changed from medium to high priority. The Working Group then adopted the annual timetable for 2020.

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

9. The Working Group decided that the third option for performance scoring – with scores by the three pillars of the Shared Environmental Information System (content, infrastructure and cooperation) – be used in the assessment framework for use in the final review of progress in establishing the System in Europe and Central Asia.

10. The Working Group decided on the following timeline for the finalization of the assessment framework:

(a) Members of the Working Group might send comments on the assessment framework by email to the secretariat until 31 May 2019. Especially welcome would be proposals to limit the number of questions or to elevate them from the data flow level to the thematic or macro level;

(b) In June 2019, a small group comprising representatives of [...] will review comments, revise the questionnaire and agree on the dataflows to be assessed in the final review of progress;

(c) The secretariat will prepare a draft outline of the final review of progress to be considered by the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators at its sixteenth session (28–29 October 2019);

(d) Data collection for the final assessment of progress might begin in December 2019.

11. The Working Group agreed that a written silence procedure would be applied for the approval of the following:

(a) The finalized assessment framework to be used for the final review of progress, including the questions to be posed, the indicators and data flows to be reviewed and the application of the chosen scoring system, in July 2019;

(b) The outline for the final review of progress, in November 2019.

12. The Working Group requested UNEP, in close coordination with the secretariat, to finalize the online reporting tool in time for the sixteenth session of the Joint Task Force.

13. The Working Group agreed that the online reporting tool would be used as the primary tool for data collection for the final review of progress. It was highlighted that the tool would need to be able to upload content from a file, such as an Excel or PDF document.

14. The Working Group approved the proposed outline for a publication on progress in establishing SEIS in Central Asia and Europe – a mid-term perspective – and requests the secretariat to circulate the draft publication for review and to allow for a period of commenting before the finalisation of the publication.

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

15. The Working Group decided to recommend that option 2 from the draft concept for next pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6), an indicator-based and thematic assessment, be used as a basis for preparing a detailed proposal on the pan-European assessment. The proposal would need to include an annotated table of contents, timeline for the assessment, costs for the elements of the assessment and the foreseen outputs. The proposal should be presented in such a way that it would make clear how the assessment would be affected if inadequate financial resources would be made available.

16. The Working Group requested the secretariat to inform the Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-fifth session (12–14 November 2019) on the outcome of this agenda item and the recommendation made for the pan-European assessment.

17. The Working Group requested the secretariat to share the detailed proposal with potential donors leading up to the session of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

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

18. The Working Group suggests that the green growth indicators are considered during the next session of the Working Group.

#### **F. Guidance and information on environmental statistics and indicators**

19. The Working Group decided that no further action is taken with regards to the establishment of a web-based portal and that existing resources are utilized to update relevant content on the ECE website when possible.

20. The Working Groups took note of the progress made in revising the ECE Guidelines on Environmental Indicators and approves the suggested changes to the metadata sheet. The Working Group further agrees to use the presented database for the production of the metadata sheets.

21. The Working Group agreed to stop using the environmental indicator production templates once the revisions of the ECE Guidelines on Environmental Indicators has been completed and requests that the Joint Task Force discuss the process of phasing out the use of the production templates during its next session.

#### **IV. Next meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment**

The Working Group took note that its next session was planned to be held in Geneva on 4 and 5 May 2020.

#### **V. Other business and closure of the meeting**

The Working Group approved the decisions made during the twenty-first session.

The Working Group and the secretariat thanked Austria, Norway, the Russian Federation, Switzerland and the European Environment Agency for their financial support.

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