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Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Nineteenth session

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Implementing the renewed mandate and terms of reference

Annual timetable of activities for 2018

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At its twenty-second session (Geneva, 25-27 January 2017), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy renewed the mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment for five years (2017-2021). The terms of reference require the preparation of annual timetables of activities, taking into account the financial and human resources available.

The present document provides a draft annual timetable of activities for 2018 for consideration by the Working Group during its nineteenth session. It complements a detailed outline of activities leading up to 2021 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2017/3). The annual timetable of activities for 2018 will be submitted to the Committee on Environmental Policy for its consideration at its twenty-third session (Geneva, 14-17 November 2017).

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Introduction

1. The present document sets out a timetable of activities to be carried out by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in 2018.
2. The 2018 timetable of activities set out herein is based on the renewed mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, forthcoming), the outline of the Working Group's activities leading up to 2021 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2017/4) and the vision document for the Working Group (ECE/CEP/182, forthcoming).
3. The Working Group will implement the activities in close collaboration with national and international governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including youth organizations, research institutes and academia, and other relevant United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) bodies, such as the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators.
4. Member States and organizations that agree to lead activities outlined below will need to facilitate, with the assistance of the ECE secretariat, the implementation of the activities and report to the Working Group on the progress made and challenges faced in implementing these activities.
5. During 2018, the Working Group will:
 - (a) Pilot the updated Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) assessment framework (see ECE/CEP/AC.10/2017/5) and the reporting application in advance of the fifteenth session of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators and Statistics (Geneva, 3-4 May 2018), with the support of the secretariat, the European Environment Agency and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Based on the data collected and outputs from the piloting of the SEIS assessment framework and reporting application, the secretariat will prepare:
 - (i) Country profiles on SEIS establishment as part of national recommendations on how SEIS can be further strengthened in countries of Europe and Central Asia. The profiles will include an evaluation of the performance of the countries in establishing and implementing SEIS against the SEIS targets and performance indicators adopted in the updated SEIS assessment framework;
 - (ii) A mid-term report on the establishment and implementation of SEIS leading up to 2021;
 - (b) Consider the country profiles and mid-term report during its twentieth session (Geneva, 23-24 October 2018) and forward them to the Committee on Environmental Policy for its consideration at its twenty-fourth session (Geneva, second half of 2018);
 - (c) Consider guidelines on the SEIS reporting application, including information on any updates made to the ECE set of environmental indicators, during its twentieth session, on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat. The guidelines will be drafted in conjunction with the preparation of the mid-term report on the establishment and implementation of SEIS;
 - (d) Oversee the organization, by the secretariat with the support of the European Environment Agency and UNEP, of events for the regional environmental information and assessment network of networks (venues and dates to be determined). The organization of the events is subject to any agreement reached during the workshop on the working modalities of the regional environmental information and assessment network of networks (autumn 2017, to be confirmed);

(e) Oversee the organization by the secretariat of a regional conference on reviewing the use, harmonization and streamlining of indicator-related methodologies, data collection and quality assurance and quality control aspects of environmental data and indicators for national and international reporting obligations. The regional conference is expected to be held back to back with the twentieth session of the Working Group. The conference will be part of a United Nations Development Account project on strengthening national capacities of selected countries in Europe and Central Asia for the production of environmental indicators to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(f) Oversee the organization by the secretariat of seven national workshops on streamlining the production of regionally and internationally agreed environmental data flows and indicators in a manner coherent with the principles of SEIS for indicator-based assessments and reporting. These workshops will be organized throughout 2018 as part of the above-mentioned United Nations Development Account project;

(g) Support the secretariat in its continuing efforts to mobilize resources and support from regional and international organizations and member States to enable the Working Group to increase its capacity-building assistance;

(h) Decide on a timetable of activities for 2019 at its twentieth session, based on a draft prepared by the secretariat. The timetable of activities for 2019 will be submitted to the Committee on Environmental Policy for its consideration at its twenty-fourth session.
