



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 April 2017

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Nineteenth session

Geneva, 27 and 28 June 2017

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the nineteenth session

To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 9.30 a.m.
on Tuesday, 27 June 2017

I. Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Election of the Chair and the Vice-Chair.
3. Adoption of the report of the eighteenth session.
4. Implementing the renewed mandate and terms of reference.
5. Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System: data quality, comparability and self-assessment.
6. Streamlining reporting obligations in environmental policy.
7. Integration of economic, social and environmental data.
8. Additional information.
9. Other business.
10. Closure of the meeting.

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II. Annotations

1. According to its terms of reference for 2017–2021 (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, forthcoming), the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment is open to all member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Members of the Working Group represent the national institutions dealing with environmental monitoring and assessment. The Working Group also involves representatives of programmes, policies and multilateral environmental agreements dealing with the collection of environmental data and information and the generation of environmental assessments — whether covering the environment as a whole, or only certain themes — and expert teams in its meetings and activities.

2. Also invited to participate are representatives of international organizations, such as the European Environment Agency, the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Statistics Division and the World Health Organization European Centre for Environment and Health.

1. Adoption of the agenda

3. The Working Group will be invited to adopt the agenda for its nineteenth session, as set out in the present document.¹

2. Election of the Chair and the Vice-Chair

4. The Working Group is expected to elect its Chair and Vice-Chair for the next two years. The members of the Working Group are invited to start consultations on possible candidates prior to the meeting.

3. Adoption of the report of the eighteenth session

5. The secretariat will summarize the outcomes of the eighteenth session of the Working Group (Geneva, 28-29 June 2016), as contained in the report of that session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2016/2),² and invite the Working Group to adopt the report.

6. The secretariat will inform the Working Group about the status of implementation of the Working Group's decisions and recommendations from its eighteenth session.

4. Implementing the renewed mandate and terms of reference

7. Following a request made by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its twentieth-first session (Geneva, 27-30 October 2015), the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment prepared its revised terms of reference, covering the period 2017-2021, at its eighteenth session. The revised terms of reference for the Working Group were adopted by Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-second session (Geneva, 25-27 January 2017) and approved by the ECE Executive

¹ Documentation for the meeting and other relevant information will be posted on the web page for the meeting on the ECE website: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=44829#/>.

² See <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42166#/>.

Committee at its ninety-first meeting (Geneva, 24 March 2017). The terms of reference require that the Working Group prepare an annual timetable of activities and achievements. Also at its twenty-second session, the Committee on Environmental Policy asked the Working Group to take into account the financial and human resources available in developing its yearly detailed plans of activities and to develop a more detailed outline of activities leading up to 2021.

8. The secretariat will present to the Working Group the revised terms of reference as approved by the ECE Executive Committee, together with a draft workplan for 2018 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2017/3) and a draft outline of activities leading up to 2021 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2017/4). The secretariat will also present the outcomes from the consultation leading up to the finalization of the vision document for the Working Group, “Sharing our Vision for the Pan-European Region — Setting Strategic Goals and Objectives for the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment for 2030” (ECE/CEP/182, forthcoming).

9. The Working Group will be invited to discuss and finalize the annual workplan and the longer-term outline of activities.

5. Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System: data quality, comparability and self-assessment

10. At its eighteenth session, the Working Group made several decisions and recommendations regarding reporting on progress in developing the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS). Participants will consider the amended review criteria to assess national SEIS performance, as presented in a background document on data quality (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2017/5). The Working Group will be invited to review the SEIS reporting mechanism and guidelines and the generation of annual SEIS-related performance reports for the Committee on Environmental Policy.

11. The Working Group will also be invited to discuss the provision of information on progress against the SEIS targets and performance indicators adopted by the Committee and the establishment and implementation of SEIS in the ECE member States. The Working Group may also discuss how to build further capacities to strengthen the establishment of SEIS.

12. The secretariat will present progress made in developing a reporting mechanism under UNEP Live.³ It will describe how the reporting mechanism and the self-assessment tool can be piloted in practice, taking into account data quality considerations, the value of data comparability and how data comparability can be improved. The Working Group will be invited to consider how the SEIS reporting process can complement and support regular environmental assessments and reporting, such as measuring sustainable development and green economy initiatives.

13. These issues will be particularly important to discuss as they will affect the overall SEIS review process leading up to the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, the fulfilment of the Batumi Declaration (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2/Add.1), and inputs from the Working Group to the forthcoming mid-term review of the implementation of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016).

³ Now renamed Environment Live.

6. Streamlining reporting obligations in environmental policy

14. Good environmental policymaking is dependent on high-quality information and data that can identify and address problems, their magnitude and causes. This also implies addressing the success or otherwise of environmental policies in dealing with the problems. With this in mind, monitoring and reporting obligations in environment policy need to be fit for purpose. This means that the right information needs to be delivered at the right time and in an efficient and effective manner.

15. The Working Group will be invited to reflect on gaps, overlaps and inconsistencies in existing reporting regimes and to identify potential areas for improvement. For example, overlaps and duplications can exist between reporting requirements under the various multilateral environmental agreements and national reporting obligations. There is consequently potential for improving coherence, consistency and efficiency so as to achieve greater effectiveness of environmental monitoring and reporting in achieving set policy objectives.

7. Integration of economic, social and environmental data

16. In recent years, several major international initiatives have moved towards integrated analysis and policymaking, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Developing appropriate indicators for the integration of economic and social information with environmental issues and policy targets has therefore been a focus of attention for environmental policy.

17. In a discussion on the integration of economic, social and environmental data, among other things, the Working Group will consider the important and complex work of measuring progress towards and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals; data interoperability (e.g., geospatial and administrative data); and pre-existing gaps between sectors regarding the existence of, access to and the content of data (e.g., on air and water) (see ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/8).

18. The Working Group will be invited to consider how to increase the use of the existing ECE set of environmental indicators as a complement to ongoing and future environmental monitoring and reporting. It may also consider the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and how this framework links economic and environmental statistics (e.g., using common classifications). The aim will be to discuss how current policy needs are driving the development of integrated environmental and economic platforms for policymaking.

19. The Working Group will also be invited to make recommendations on how it should continue its work on integrating more social data with the environmental and economic data in order to derive indicators that could be used to complement reporting on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

8. Additional information

20. The Working Group will be informed about the progress in bringing together European environmental monitoring and assessment networks, with a view to enhancing the coordination of activities and reinforcing the work of the Working Group as a “network of networks”.

21. The secretariat will inform the Working Group of the launch of a special issue of the journal *Environmental Science and Policy*, which will provide background for the mid-term assessment of progress in establishing SEIS in support of regular reporting in the pan-European region (due in 2018).

22. In addition, the secretariat will report on the launch of a United Nations Development Account project on capacity-building for Sustainable Development Goal reporting, which will be managed by the ECE Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme.

9. Other business

23. The Working Group will be invited to discuss any other business that might be brought to its attention. Members of the Working Group wishing to propose matters for discussion under this item are invited to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

10. Closure of the meeting

24. The Chair, with the assistance of the secretariat, will sum up the conclusions and decisions of the Working Group and close the meeting. The report of the meeting and the list of participants will be finalized by the secretariat for circulation to the Working Group after the meeting. These documents will be posted on the meeting website.

III. Organization of work

25. A detailed organization of work will be released closer to the meeting date and will be posted on the web page for the meeting.
