

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
114<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
Geneva, 12 February 2021

**EXCOM/CONCLU/114**

**CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS**

## FORMAL SEGMENT

### Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda.

1. The provisional draft agenda for the 114<sup>th</sup> meeting was adopted.

### Item 2 – Chair’s conclusions from the last meeting.

2. The conclusions from the 113th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/113/Corr.1) were adopted.

### Item 3 - Update on Special Procedures during COVID-19 period - Extension of Special Procedures during COVID-19 period.

3. The Chair recalled that EXCOM had adopted special procedures in April 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure business continuity, including, inter alia, the submission of decisions taken at informal meetings to a silence procedure for adoption.

4. The Secretary of the Commission informed that, since the last meeting of EXCOM, two silent procedures had taken place related to formal meetings with remote participation, namely the 82<sup>nd</sup> session of the Working Party on Pollution and Energy and the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the Working Party on Noise and Tyres. Silence had not been broken for any of these procedures. Full details were available on the UNECE website.

### Item 4 - Matters relating to the Committee on Environmental Policy:

#### (a) Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy;

5. The Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP), Ms. Elisabete Quintas da Silva, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of CEP over the past year and its plans for the future. She invited EXCOM to approve the Programme of Work of the Environment subprogramme for 2021 as well as the extension of the mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment.

6. The representative of the European Union and its member States commended the work of CEP. She said environmental policy was a key priority for the European Union, especially in light of the European Green Deal, and recalled that the European Union funded a number of relevant UNECE activities. She appreciated the close cooperation between the CEP and the European Environment Agency.

7. The representative of the United States appreciated the work of the CEP, and in particular the Environmental Performance Reviews and the review of the UNECE set of environmental indicators. He highlighted the focus on cross-cutting issues and looked forward to the launch of the nexus flagship publications during the 2021 Commission session. He took note of the successful UNECE/UN Environment side event on ‘Transforming Tourism for a resilient and sustainable post COVID World’, and hoped to see further collaborations with environmental groups and the public. He said that addressing climate change was a core priority of the new U.S. administration, and recalled that the United States had recently rejoined the Paris Agreement and hoped to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

8. The representative of Switzerland supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

9. The representative of the Russian Federation commended the work of the CEP including the development of effective mechanisms for encouraging efforts to protect the environment. He reaffirmed Russia's continuous support for strengthening the capacity of the UNECE including in the context of the development of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). He welcomed the outcome of the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention, and noted with satisfaction the progress on the preparations for the 5<sup>th</sup> High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment. He confirmed that Russia is looking forward to continued constructive collaboration with all partners for a successful 9<sup>th</sup> Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. He supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

10. The representative of Belarus appreciated the expert and technical assistance provided to Belarus by the CEP, including via projects on strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment. He supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

11. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Committee and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

(b) Decisions on matters relating to the Committee on Environmental Policy:

12. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the Programme of Work of the Environment subprogramme for 2021 as contained in document ECE/CEP/2020/5, and the extension of the current mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, as contained in document ECE/EX/2017/L.2, until 30 June 2023.

## **INFORMAL SEGMENT**

### Item 5 – Preparations for the sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe

13. The Executive Secretary provided an update on the preparations for the 69<sup>th</sup> session of UNECE, highlighting that advance copies of key parliamentary documents would shortly be made available on the meeting website to facilitate further preparations. She informed that the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction would deliver a keynote address, with another possible keynote address by the President of the World Economic Forum. Recorded video statements by delegations, including with dubbing in English in case of language barriers, would be accepted given the COVID-19 related restrictions on travel. She reminded of a 3 min. timelimit for the High-level segment to allow all member States to engage in the session. The session would feature three roundtables, one on "Circular Energy, Mobility and Digital Transformation: Towards Cradle -to-Cradle Models"; one on "Supply Chain Traceability and Sustainability, and one on Business Perspectives. Furthermore, there would be a progress report on the work undertaken on the high-level theme of the previous Commission session and an update on the work of the nexus teams. The session would be preceded by a day of virtual knowledge sharing and online discussions on 19 April 2021, featuring various side events and the launch of the four flagship nexus publications. She encouraged delegations interested in hosting a knowledge-sharing or peer learning session around their voluntary commitments to contact the secretariat. Finally, she hoped EXCOM would approve the submission of the draft high-level statement and the tabled draft decisions to the consideration of the Commission.

14. The representative of Belarus underscored the support of his country for the session.
15. The representative of the European Union and its member States welcomed the high-level statement and the draft decision on circular economy, and thanked the secretariat and member States for effective collaboration on their preparation. She said her delegation would gladly share information about the second European Union circular economy action plan and the indicators used for measuring progress. The European Union and its member States confirmed that they were engaged in internal discussions on what else could be presented and as such, were wondering about the practicalities of this exercise, namely whether they would share individual circular economy plans, or how and where the initiatives would be presented.
16. The representative of the United States likewise welcomed the draft high-level statement and the draft decisions and appreciated the collaboration on their preparation.
17. The Chair concluded that EXCOM decides to transmit the draft high-level statement as contained in an advance copy of E/ECE/1497 and the draft decisions as contained in an advance copy of E/ECE/1500 to the 69th Commission session for consideration.

Item 6 – Extrabudgetary projects (for approval).

18. The Chair introduced the two documents before the EXCOM and explained that an extrabudgetary project on the organization of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD), contained in informal document 2019/52/Rev.2, was presented to EXCOM for information. This document was a revision of a project originally approved in December 2019 and was being presented to reflect additional funds recently provided by the Czech Republic. The second document, contained in 2021/5, was for approval.
19. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the revised extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2019/52/Rev.2. EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2021/5.

Item 7 - Briefing by the Executive Secretary: Important new developments and key upcoming events.

20. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the new Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECE, Mr. Dimitry Mariasin, would take up his duties on 1 March 2021.
21. Regarding the preparations for the RFSD 2021, the Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the event would feature 12 virtual peer learning sessions and encouraged member States to present concrete policy actions for discussion. Three hybrid plenary sessions would be held on 17 and 18 March, with participation by the Deputy Secretary-General and the Head of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with a keynote speech by the World Health Organization Regional Director, Mr. Hans Kluge. She asked member States to inform the secretariat if their delegation wished to take the floor in the plenary sessions. There would also be preparatory consultations by civil society, parliamentarians, the business sector, and local governments, and over 20 side events on a broad range of topics.
22. The Executive Secretary also provided a brief update to EXCOM on the preparations for the 83<sup>rd</sup> session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC), to take place from 23 – 26 February 2021.

23. The Executive Secretary recalled that the previous meeting of EXCOM had considered the report of the Chair of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, which mentioned that new Centres of Excellence for the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing were expected to be created in 2021. She informed EXCOM that preparations had advanced and that Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) would soon be signed on these new Centres with Polis University in Albania, York University in Canada, and the LIUC – Cattaneo University in Italy. In addition, the MoU for the Centre hosted by the Estonian Union of Co-operative Housing Associations would be extended.

Item 8 – Any other business

24. The Secretary of the Commission informed EXCOM that a number of decisions related to matters to be discussed at the upcoming ITC session would be tabled for EXCOM's approval at its next meeting on 5 March 2021. This would require the relevant documents to be circulated to member States prior to the ITC session in order to comply with EXCOM's documentation deadlines. She explained that, further to the guidance provided by the EXCOM Bureau, this would be done on an exceptional basis and without prejudice to the outcome of the respective deliberations, in order to ensure business continuity.

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