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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Committee on Environmental Policy

#### Twenty-second session

Geneva, 25-27 January 2017

## Report of the Committee on Environmental Policy on its twenty-second session

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## I. Introduction

1. The Committee on Environmental Policy held its twenty-second session from 25 to 27 January 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. The present report is based on a summary of the session's outcomes and the decisions taken, which the Committee approved on 27 January 2017.<sup>1</sup>

### A. Attendance

2. Delegations from the following 36 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) attended the meeting: Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine, United States of America and Uzbekistan.

3. The Chairs or other representatives of the following ECE multilateral environmental agreements participated in the session: the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention); the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention); the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention); the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention); the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers; the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment; and the Protocol on Water and Health.

4. From the United Nations system, representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Europe, the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Group on Earth Observations were present.

5. Other national, regional and international organizations and bodies were represented at the meeting, including the European Union represented by the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Environment Agency and the European Investment Bank; the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus; and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia.

6. In addition, representatives of the following environmental civil society associations participated: Eco-Accord; European ECO Forum; Green Liberty; and Zoï Environment Network.

### B. Opening of the session and organizational matters

7. In an opening address, the Executive Secretary of ECE congratulated the Committee on the successful organization of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016). The Environment for Europe process played a valuable role in enhancing environmental governance and fostering cross-sectoral cooperation, and the two Batumi initiatives would be of great practical value in supporting

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting documents and other information on the session, including the summary of decisions, are available on the web page for the session ([www.unece.org/index.php?id=42766](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42766)).

countries' efforts to improve air quality and green the economy, while contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Reflecting on the Commission's achievements, he noted that the seventieth anniversary of ECE would be celebrated during the sixty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva, 26-27 April 2017), marking seven decades of outstanding work that had bettered the lives of people, including by improving the environment.

8. The Committee Chair welcomed participants, recalled the main objectives of the session and noted that the meeting was a paperless event.

9. A side event, "Following up on the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E): sharing knowledge and good practices", was organized jointly by Switzerland, ECE, UNEP and the Green Growth Knowledge Platform on 25 January.

10. The Committee adopted the agenda of its twenty-second session (ECE/CEP/2017/1), along with the proposed timetable (information paper No. 1).

## **II. Outcomes of the work of the Bureau**

11. The Chair reported that the Bureau had worked by means of electronic consultations to prepare the current session of the Committee, and had held a half-day meeting on 24 January 2017 to address pending issues. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the outcomes of the Bureau's work under the respective agenda items.

12. The Committee expressed appreciation to the Bureau for its good work in fulfilling the mandates assigned to it by the Committee, and to the ECE secretariat for the support provided to the Bureau.

## **III. Sustainable development in the region**

13. The Principal Adviser to the ECE Executive Secretary, in her capacity as ECE focal point for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), presented the recent developments in the ECE region in connection with her mandate. The preparation of the ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (Geneva, 25 April 2017)<sup>2</sup> was ongoing. The Regional Forum would consist of a policy segment, including a cross-sectoral panel discussion with a focus on prosperity, health and well-being and gender, and a peer-learning segment run in three parallel round tables focusing on (a) adapting the Sustainable Development Goals to national and local circumstances, (b) subregional cooperation, and (c) data and monitoring. The outcomes of the Regional Forum would constitute the contribution of the ECE region to the fifth meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (New York, 10-19 July 2017).

14. The delegates of Belarus, Czechia and Kazakhstan shared their experience and practical ways for delivering on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals with a particular focus on Goals 3, 9 and 17. In 2016, Belarus had adopted its National Strategy on Sustainable Socioeconomic Development 2030, supported by the Programme on Socioeconomic Development for 2016-2020. The National Action Plan for the Development of Green Economy in Belarus until 2020 had been approved in December 2016 to increase people's well-being based on increasing the competitiveness of the economy, attracting investment and innovative development. Also, Belarus was working on reviewing and adapting its national indicators to the new global indicators for measuring progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

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<sup>2</sup> Information and documents are available at [www.unece.org/index.php?id=45198](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45198).

15. Czechia had pursued an integrated approach to implement the 2030 Agenda, including the establishment of an inclusive Governmental Council for Sustainable Development under the Prime Minister's office with the participation of all relevant stakeholders. To develop the integrated approach, broad consultations had been organized in 2015, as a result of which six national clusters had been identified covering all 17 Goals, i.e.: people and society; economic model; resilient ecosystems; municipalities and regions; global development; and good governance. To be successful, such an approach would require strong coordination and leadership, awareness-raising among all ministries and institutions, a new way of working that enabled vertical coordination (from local to global) and the establishment of a network to engage all relevant stakeholders.

16. Kazakhstan was implementing its long-term Strategy for Development 2050, including the establishment during the first decade of the Strategy of a new development model for the country. On Goal 3 (good health and well-being), Kazakhstan had made good progress during the past 10 years in improving air quality by introducing clean technologies for industry. Also, in 2015 a new law had been adopted for the production of organic products to ensure a rational use of land, a healthy diet and the protection of the environment. Regarding Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), Kazakhstan was developing a strategy for the country's participation in the fourth industrial revolution "Industry 4.0". A governmental programme on the innovative development of industry 2015-2019 was already being implemented. The Green Bridge Partnership Programme was leading the achievement of Goal 17 (partnerships for the Goals), and an international centre for green technologies was being established under the Programme.

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

18. The Committee took note of the developments in ECE activities linked to the 2030 Agenda. It welcomed the information shared by Belarus, Czechia and Kazakhstan on their experience in identifying practical ways and means of approaching national implementation of the 2030 Agenda and relevant Sustainable Development Goals from an environmental perspective, and invited Committee members to continue such exchanges of experience and good practice on that topic at its future meetings. Also, the Committee invited relevant partners to share information on their activities in support of the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals that would be reviewed by the high-level political forum on sustainable development during that year.

19. Furthermore, the Committee invited countries to consider the Committee's role in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and to continue to discuss the matter at future meetings. In that regard, the Committee requested the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to prepare a short background document to facilitate further discussion on the topic at the Committee's twenty-third session in November 2017.

#### **IV. Multilateral environmental agreements**

20. Opening the discussion on multilateral environmental agreements, the Chair of the Air Convention summarized the discussions at the most recent meeting between the representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements and the Committee on Environmental Policy held on 24 January 2017 in Geneva. Participants had discussed follow-up to the Batumi Conference, the role of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, activities jointly implemented under two or more treaties and activities to broaden the scope of the treaties beyond the ECE region.

21. In an interactive discussion with the chairs and other representatives of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements, participants considered the efforts undertaken thus

far under each treaty to define its role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the importance of transparency, including easy access to information, in regard to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. Speakers underscored that cooperation at the national and international levels between relevant sectors, including effective engagement of stakeholders, was key to the coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

22. The Committee welcomed the interactive discussion on the ECE multilateral environmental agreements, and in particular:

(a) Appreciated the opportunity to have an open exchange of views during the Committee session with the participation of the chairs and other representatives of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements;

(b) Welcomed the steps being taken under the ECE multilateral environmental agreements to align, as appropriate, their activities, strategies, work programmes and workplans with the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Invited the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements to seek synergies and coordination with the relevant activities of other international organizations, including within the United Nations system;

(d) Recognized the importance of transparency, including easy access to information, for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(e) Underlined that cooperation at the national and international levels between relevant sectors (e.g., a nexus approach), including effective engagement of stakeholders, was key to the coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(f) Took note of the recent developments at the informal joint meetings between the representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements and the Committee, and encouraged the continuation of such coordination, including on possible additional synergies and horizontal challenges, especially on information accessibility;

(g) Encouraged countries to ratify or accede to, and to implement, as appropriate, the ECE multilateral environmental agreements, and emphasized that further work was needed, particularly at the national level, in order to enhance the full implementation of those agreements.

## **V. Follow-up to the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and preparation of the mid-term review of the Conference's main outcomes**

23. The Chair recalled that the Batumi Conference had addressed two themes: “Greening the economy in the pan-European region”; and “Improving air quality for a better environment and human health”. In addition, a high-level meeting on education for sustainable development had been held within the Conference framework (see para. 59 below). The key Conference outcomes included the Batumi Ministerial Declaration; the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and its Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E); the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA); the Batumi Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development; and the framework for the future implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development.

24. Delegates discussed activities following up on the Batumi outcomes. Highlighting good practices in the implementation of the two Batumi Initiatives — BACA and BIG-E — countries shared their experiences, including at a dedicated side event (see para. 9 above). Germany, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland and Uzbekistan shared valuable

experience in implementing their BIG-E commitments. Belarus, Georgia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Sweden and the Pistoletto Foundation shared their good practices in implementing their BIG-E commitments during the side event. France announced its commitments in joining BIG-E. The Chair noted that at the time of the Committee's session, 115 voluntary commitments had been made to BIG-E by 25 countries and 12 organizations, and 88 voluntary commitments had been made to BACA by 29 countries and 3 organizations. The initiatives remained open for new stakeholders to join or for current participants to commit to additional actions to improve air quality and green the economy.

25. The Chair of the Air Convention informed the meeting about activities to promote BACA, including an exchange of experiences on implementing commitments under the initiative during the thirty-sixth session of the Executive Body for the Convention in December 2016.

26. The OECD representative of the Green Economy and Environment (GREEN) Action Programme Task Force informed the Committee about developments in the work of the Task Force, focused on activities in the area of green economy.

27. Delegates discussed the preparation of the Environment for Europe mid-term review of the Batumi Conference main outcomes in 2018. In addition, participants considered the usefulness of conducting a survey to assess lessons learned from the preparation, organization and running of the Batumi Conference with a view to improving the preparation of the next conference.

28. The Committee appreciated the excellent organization and successful outcomes of the Batumi Conference and, in that regard:

(a) Expressed its gratitude to Georgia for its warm hospitality and efficient preparation of the Conference;

(b) Congratulated its members and observers on the successful and memorable Conference, which demonstrated the continuing relevance of the Environment for Europe process;

(c) Greatly appreciated the work of the ECE secretariat in organizing the Conference;

(d) Appreciated the role of partner organizations in organizing the Conference, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP, the World Bank and WHO, from the United Nations system, but also the European Environment Agency, OECD, the Regional Environmental Centres and the non-governmental organization, European ECO Forum;

(e) Agreed to carry out the survey contained in document ECE/CEP/2017/L.3 to assess lessons learned from the preparation, organization and running of the Batumi Conference, with a view to improving the preparation of the next conference, and requested the secretariat to launch the survey in February 2017, with a one-month deadline for responses, and to prepare an analysis of the responses received for consideration by the Committee at its next session;

(f) Requested the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to prepare a document proposing the scope, format and modalities for organizing a mid-term review of the Batumi Conference main outcomes for consideration by the Committee at its next session;

(g) Welcomed the information provided by the Chair of the Air Convention on activities to promote BACA, and reiterated the invitation to countries and organizations to join the initiative by submitting actions to improve air quality;

(h) Expressed appreciation to Germany, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland and Uzbekistan for sharing their experience and progress in implementing their commitments to BIG-E, and invited countries and organizations to continue implementing their BIG-E commitments and sharing their experiences and good practice at Committee meetings;

(i) Welcomed the increasing number of BIG-E stakeholders, noting with appreciation that France has joined BIG-E, and invited countries and organizations to consider joining BIG-E or submitting additional actions on green economy;

(j) With regard to greening the economy, stressed the importance of the active involvement of the private sector and of other stakeholders across the pan-European region and at the global level;

(k) Welcomed the information provided by the GREEN Action Programme Task Force secretariat, hosted by OECD, and invited the Task Force secretariat to inform the Committee regularly about the Task Force's activities;

(l) Invited ECE and UNEP, in cooperation with OECD and other relevant partners and in consultation with interested countries and organizations, to report on activities to promote and implement the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and BIG-E at the Committee's next session;

(m) Expressed appreciation to Switzerland, ECE, UNEP and the Green Growth Knowledge Platform for organizing a side event on sharing knowledge and good practices in implementing BIG-E;

(n) Invited countries and organizations to promote BACA and BIG-E at relevant national and international meetings and events, as appropriate, with a view to enhancing the potential and impact of those initiatives, in particular as they provided practical support to the achievement of relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

## **VI. Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting**

29. A representative of the Environment Division presented the progress achieved by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment since the last annual session of the Committee in October 2015 (see ECE/CEP/2017/3). The Vice-Chair of the Working Group presented the updated terms of reference of the Working Group (*ibid.*, annex), which had been prepared taking into account comments made the Committee at its session in 2015, subsequent consultation with member States and organizations and relevant outcomes of the Batumi Conference. Furthermore, the secretariat informed the Committee about the main outcomes of the work of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators.<sup>3</sup>

30. The representative of the Group on Earth Observations hosted by WMO presented the main activities of the Group, which aimed at supporting decisions and actions with information derived from coordinated, comprehensive and sustained Earth observations.<sup>4</sup>

31. The representative of the ECE Statistical Division reported on the Division's activities related to the environment and presented developments regarding the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, including a joint OECD-ECE seminar on implementation of the System organized in October 2016.

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<sup>3</sup> See [www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environmental-monitoring-and-assessment/meetings-and-events](http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environmental-monitoring-and-assessment/meetings-and-events).

<sup>4</sup> See <http://earthobservations.org/index.php>.



32. The Committee greatly appreciated the work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. It adopted the revised mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group for 2017-2021 and requested the secretariat to submit the renewed mandate to the ECE Executive Committee for approval. In addition, the Committee:

(a) Invited ECE member States and relevant organizations to participate actively in the activities and meetings of the Working Group, and welcomed the idea of organizing a workshop in mid-2017 with the participation of relevant actors from the region;

(b) 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;

(c) Requested that the new terms of reference for the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment be annexed to the report of the Committee's twenty-second session (see annex II).

33. Furthermore, the Committee greatly appreciated the work of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators. It welcomed the information provided regarding the work of the Group on Earth Observations and the use of geospatial environmental information, and also the information on developments under the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. The Committee appreciated, moreover, the close cooperation of the ECE Statistics Division and its contribution to the activities of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators.

34. The Committee further appreciated the leadership of the Russian Federation in the ECE Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme. It invited member States and organizations to provide in-kind and financial support to the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme. The Committee thanked the European Union, Norway, the Russian Federation and Switzerland for their financial support, and also UNEP, the European Environment Agency and OECD for their substantive support to the Programme.

## **VII. Environmental performance reviews**

35. The Secretary to the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews presented an overview of the activities carried out during 2016. The Third Environmental Performance Reviews of Belarus and Georgia had been published and launched in June 2016 in Minsk and Batumi, respectively. The review missions for the third reviews of Tajikistan and Bulgaria had taken place in November 2015 and in April 2016, respectively. The ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme had celebrated its twentieth anniversary of successful work during the Batumi Conference. A report on lessons for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, based on 20 years of environmental performance reviews, had been produced by ECE jointly with UNEP for the Batumi Conference and presented there at a side event.

36. Presenting planned activities for 2017, the Expert Group Secretary said the work on the third reviews of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina would continue, with missions taking place from 31 January to 8 February and 28 March to 5 April 2017, respectively, and peer reviews in November 2017. The preparatory mission for the third environmental performance review of Kazakhstan would be carried out in September 2017. Romania had requested a third review and Mongolia — which was not an ECE member State — had requested ECE to undertake an environmental performance review of the country, the second time ECE has received an invitation from a country outside the region to do so. The review of Mongolia would be organized in close cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Environmental

Performance Reviews of Tajikistan and Bulgaria would be published during the first half of 2017.

37. The representative of Ukraine informed the Committee of his country's interest in undergoing a review.

38. The Expert Group Secretary also wished to acknowledge the contributions, expertise and training provided by countries and partner organizations for activities under the Programme.

39. The Committee welcomed the information provided on activities under the Environmental Performance Review Programme, and expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for its excellent work in that regard.

40. Furthermore, the Committee took note of the information provided by the secretariat on resource mobilization for the Environmental Performance Review Programme in 2016 and in particular thanked:

(a) Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland for their financial support;

(b) Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, UNEP, the Joint UNEP/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Environment Unit and WHO for providing expertise;

(c) Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Sweden and Switzerland for having delegated experts to the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews;

(d) UNDP for logistical support.

41. The Committee encouraged delegations to provide in-kind (expert) and financial support to the Environmental Performance Review Programme.

42. In addition, the Committee welcomed the ongoing third environmental performance reviews of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina and took note of the preparatory work to conduct a third review of Kazakhstan. It furthermore welcomed the request from Romania to undergo its third environmental performance review, the request from Mongolia to undergo a review and the close cooperation with ESCAP in preparing that review, and the expression of interest by Ukraine in undergoing a third review.

43. The Committee also appreciated the close cooperation of the ECE Sustainable Energy, Forests, Land and Housing, Statistics and Sustainable Transport Divisions with the Environmental Performance Review Programme.

44. Furthermore, the Committee greatly appreciated the work of the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews in 2016, and invited delegations to nominate their representatives to the Group.

45. Subsequently, the Committee proceeded with the peer review of the environmental performance of Tajikistan and Bulgaria.

46. The rapporteur for the review (Switzerland) summarized the main findings and recommendations of the Third Environmental Performance Review of Tajikistan, conducted by the Expert Group in Geneva on 7 and 8 December 2016. Since the second review in 2011, Tajikistan had improved its performance in providing access to water and sanitation, in establishing a framework for river basin management and in developing several policies, laws and standards in support of environmental protection. Forest and protected areas' management, environmental monitoring, the adverse impacts of the environmental pollution on human health, greening the economy and accession to

remaining multilateral environmental agreements were among the main challenges to be tackled.

47. The Deputy Chair of the Committee on Environmental Protection under the Government of Tajikistan gave an overview of key environmental issues in her country, focusing particularly on climate change — the key pressure on natural resources in Tajikistan. She also highlighted the main achievements in response to the recommendations made in the second review of the country's environmental performance. Concerning next steps, programmes for the development of economic sectors included in the National Development Strategy until 2030 would be analysed and reviewed with a view to adapting them in accordance with the recommendations of the third review to ensure that environmental protection was mainstreamed in specific economic sectors and in education.

48. Following a discussion on the review, the Committee adopted the recommendations in the Third Environmental Performance Review of Tajikistan (information paper No. 3).

49. The rapporteur for the review (Sweden) summarized the main findings and recommendations of the Third Environmental Performance Review of Bulgaria, conducted by the Expert Group in Geneva on 6 December 2016. Since the second review in 2000, Bulgaria had made progress in developing its environmental policy framework, monitoring air quality and noise, treating wastewater, reducing overall air emissions, increasing protected areas and using renewable energy. The remaining challenges included the need to reduce urban air pollution from particulate matter and emissions into the air from thermal power stations, finalize and implement biodiversity- and climate change-related policies, revise the legislation regarding access to justice in environmental matters and ensure that municipal waste collection fees were based on the volume of waste generated.

50. The Director of the European Union Affairs and International Cooperation Directorate in the Ministry of Environment and Water of Bulgaria highlighted that the country's accession to the European Union in 2007 had resulted in well-developed legislative, policy and institutional frameworks. The country's main achievements in the area of the environment included: the establishment of a national environmental monitoring system; joining nearly all major global and regional multilateral environmental agreements; implementing the principle of integrated water management at the basin level; developing a marine strategy; reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides into the air; decreasing the generation of municipal waste; and increasing the protected areas. The third review would provide valuable help in addressing the key remaining challenges, in particular: the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; the development of a national strategy on adaptation to climate change; fully implementing the polluter pays principle; tackling the excessive levels of particulate matter; finalization of the regional waste management systems; further extending the network of protected areas; and successfully implementing the national environment programme for 2014-2020.

51. Following a discussion on the review, the Committee adopted the recommendations in the Third Environmental Performance Review of Bulgaria (information paper No. 2).

52. The representative of the Republic of Moldova then reported on the implementation of the 41 recommendations from its third review, carried out in 2013. Over 80 per cent of the recommendations had been implemented fully or partially. Developing or revising the environmental legislation and the policy and institutional framework had been at the core of efforts to improve the country's environmental performance. Challenges to implementing the remaining eight recommendations, several of them related to the agricultural sector, included a lack of financial resources, the limited capacity of national experts and a high degree of fluctuation of staff in an unstable political environment. Considerable investments were needed, in particular in the waste management and climate adaptation areas.

53. The Committee welcomed the information provided by the Republic of Moldova on the implementation of recommendations contained in its Third Environmental Performance Review, conducted in 2013.

54. The representative of Switzerland presented the outcomes of the discussion on the role of environmental performance reviews in supporting the achievement and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, held by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews, which had met in an extended format in Geneva on 9 December 2016.

55. The Committee approved the draft document “Role of environmental performance reviews in supporting the achievement and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals in the pan-European region” (ECE/CEP/2017/L.2) prepared by the Expert Group, and requested the secretariat to process it in its final edited version for the next session of the Committee.

56. As part of the discussions on environmental performance reviews, the Committee engaged in a peer-learning discussion on “Countries’ cooperation with the international community: lessons learned from the environmental performance reviews”. A professional moderator facilitated the discussion. Participants discussed challenges in implementing countries’ cooperation with the international community, identified by the environmental performance reviews conducted after the Astana Conference, and shared experiences on ways to overcome the difficulties.

57. The Committee welcomed the exchange of experience and good practices during the peer-learning discussion related to cooperation with the international community, and:

(a) Recognized the challenges encountered by countries in the implementation of review recommendations related to accession to multilateral environmental agreements, and stressed the importance of pre-accession assistance, including training and capacity development;

(b) Emphasized the importance of synergies and coordination in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements at both the national and international levels;

(c) Recognized the need for stronger efforts to engage the private sector in international cooperation on the environment and the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements;

(d) Acknowledged the role of environmental performance reviews in assisting countries to strengthen their cooperation with the international community;

(e) Welcomed the interactive format of the peer-learning discussion, and recognized the role of environmental performance reviews as a mechanism for peer learning.

## **VIII. Cross-sectoral activities**

58. The Committee was informed about recent developments under a number of ongoing cross-sectoral activities undertaken under the leadership of ECE, or in partnership with other organizations.

### **A. Education for sustainable development**

59. The Secretary to the Committee presented developments under the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development since the Batumi Conference. In 2016, the work

under the Strategy had focused on organizing the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries within the framework of the Batumi Conference. At the High-level Meeting, ministers and heads of delegation had considered progress in implementing the Strategy from 2005 to 2015 and had adopted the framework for the future implementation of the Strategy. They had also adopted the Batumi Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development, a joint commitment of member States to continue national implementation of the Strategy to support achieving sustainable development in the region. In 2017, activities on education for sustainable development would concentrate on the follow-up to the outcomes of the High-level Meeting.

60. The Committee took note of the information provided and welcomed the progress of work under the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, while noting with concern the difficult situation with regard to mobilizing voluntary contributions sufficient to enable the continuation of the regional intergovernmental platform and other activities to share experience and good practice with a view to advancing education for sustainable development across the region.

## **B. Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme**

61. A representative of the Environment Division presented activities carried out under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) since the Committee's twenty-first session, including the main outcomes of the thirteenth and fourteenth sessions of THE PEP Steering Committee (Geneva, 17-18 November 2015 and 7-9 November 2016, respectively).<sup>5</sup>

62. Activities had centred on the follow-up to the outcomes of the Fourth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Paris, April 2014), including the implementation of a new fifth goal "to integrate transport, health and environmental objectives into urban and spatial planning policies", which had also been translated into a new THE PEP Partnership. The Partnership on Cycling Promotion was continuing its work towards the preparation of a pan-European Master Plan for Cycling Promotion and related policies in the ECE member States. THE PEP Academy — a new implementation mechanism, linking science, policy and practice and building on experience already gained — was starting to build up its content. THE PEP Relay Race workshops had been organized in the Russian Federation in Petrozavodsk (May 2016) and Vladivostok (October 2016) and in Austria in Vienna (July 2016). Also, on the margins of the meetings of the Steering Committee on Transport, Health and Environment thematic symposiums were being organized, most recently in November 2016 focusing on contributing to economic development and stimulating job creation through investment in environment and health-friendly transport.

63. The Committee took note of information provided, welcomed the progress of work under THE PEP and invited its interested members to consider joining the Bureau of the Steering Committee of THE PEP.

## **C. Environment and security**

64. The Director of the ECE Environment Division gave an overview of recent developments under the Environment and Security Initiative (information paper No. 4/Rev.1). Through the Initiative, which included five partner agencies, ECE worked to

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<sup>5</sup> See [www.unece.org/index.php?id=43119](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=43119) and [www.unece.org/index.php?id=40554](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=40554).

promote cooperation between neighbouring countries on the management of natural resources in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

65. ECE activities under the Initiative's umbrella sought to promote the ECE multilateral environmental agreements through projects and capacity development in the areas of transboundary natural resources, climate change adaptation, hazardous substances and industrial installations and public information and participation in decision-making.

66. The Committee took note of the information provided with regard to the Environment and Security Initiative and the technical assistance provided to the member States within its framework.

#### **D. European Environment and Health Process**

67. The representative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe presented progress in preparing the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava, Czechia, 13-15 June 2017). The European Environment and Health Task Force served as the convening body for the preparatory process of the Conference. In preparing the Conference, the primary challenge was reconciling the complexity of the underlying global issues with the need to deliver a strong and clear outcome of a ministerial conference focused on a limited number of targeted commitments.

68. The priorities identified for the Conference included the development of a national portfolio of action based on the following seven issues: air quality; water use, sanitation and hygiene for all; chemical safety; waste and contaminated sites; resilience to climate change; sustainable and healthy cities; and environmental sustainability of health systems. The Conference was expected to result in a ministerial declaration, including an implementation plan and institutional arrangements under the European Environment and Health Process.<sup>6</sup> Regarding the proposed future institutional arrangements under the Process, the European Environment and Health Task Force proposed the establishment of a joint secretariat between ECE and WHO. In addition, the proposed future institutional arrangements under the Process did not include the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board.

69. The representative of Czechia informed the Committee about preparations to host the Conference in June 2017. The Conference would take place in the GONG Conference Centre, located in the Dolni Vitkovice area of Ostrava.<sup>7</sup>

70. The Committee took note of the information provided and welcomed the developments under the European Environment and Health Process with regard to the preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. In that connection, the Committee:

(a) Invited countries and organizations to participate in the upcoming Ostrava Conference;

(b) Asked the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau to assess the implications of establishing a joint secretariat between ECE and WHO for servicing the European Environment and Health Process and to prepare a short information note for the Committee's consideration at its next session;

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<sup>6</sup> For information, see [www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2017/06/sixth-ministerial-conference-on-environment-and-health](http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2017/06/sixth-ministerial-conference-on-environment-and-health).

<sup>7</sup> For information, see [www.dolnivitkovice.cz/en/o-nas](http://www.dolnivitkovice.cz/en/o-nas).

(c) Decided to postpone the appointment of ministers from the environment sector to the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board to the next session of the Committee, pending the outcomes of the Ostrava Conference.

## **E. Green building**

71. A representative of the ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division presented the work of the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management, in particular in the area of green, energy-efficient buildings. Main activities had included the organization of regional and national workshops and supporting the development of national action plans on sustainable housing and land management, including energy-efficiency in buildings. To advance the work, a Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings had been established in cooperation with the Committee on Sustainable Energy and the ECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies. The Joint Task Force work concentrated on developing a strategy and road map for ECE activities in the area of energy efficiency, identifying steps needed to reach energy-efficiency goals across the ECE region, harmonizing the markets and standards related to energy efficiency and increasing public awareness.

72. The Acting Chief of the joint ECE and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Forestry and Timber Section presented recent developments in the implementation of the Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector in a Green Economy.<sup>8</sup> The aim of the Action Plan was to support efforts to green the forestry sector by 2020. In that regard, a workshop on measuring the value of forests in a green economy, including the forest-based value chain and the related quantitative indicators for sustainable forest management, had been organized in Geneva on 21 October 2016. Participants at the workshop had concluded that measuring the forest sector's contribution to green economy remained a major challenge, and that it was necessary to identify synergies and information gaps in order to align the forest sector's activities to green economy needs.

73. The Committee took note of the activities of the ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management and the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry, in particular the progress of the work on energy efficiency in buildings and with regard to the forestry sector in the green economy, and welcomed a closer cooperation with those Committees.

## **IX. Programme of work of the Environment subprogramme**

### **A. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into environmental activities**

74. A representative of the ECE Sustainable Development and Gender Unit presented key elements of the ECE policy for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The objectives of the ECE policy were to advance equal participation in decision-making in ECE and in all areas of work, to mainstream a gender perspective in the substantive work of the Sectoral Committees and to contribute to reducing gender inequalities and ensure that benefits of development favoured both women and men. Subsequently, the secretariat reported on activities carried out in 2016 to raise awareness and promote gender mainstreaming in environmental activities.

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<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=37180&L=0>.

75. The Committee 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 last session, and:

(a) Recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming in environmental activities, particularly in the light of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and emphasized that gender equality was both a goal in itself and a means to contribute to achieving sustainable development;

(b) Supported 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;

(c) Agreed to continue to mainstream a gender perspective in its activities.

## **B. Overview of resources for environmental activities and criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events**

76. The Secretary to the Committee announced that he continued to be unable to report on the status of resources of the Environment subprogramme for the biennium 2014-2015 at the present session, as requested. The new United Nations "Umoja" enterprise resource planning system, in place for ECE since November 2016, was still not fully functional and that had prevented the preparation of the requested report.

77. The Committee took note of the information provided about problems in reporting on the status of resources for environmental activities, and:

(a) Expressed concern about the difficulties arising from the fact that Umoja was not fully operational;

(b) Requested the secretariat to provide information on the status of resources in the Environment subprogramme for the biennium 2016-2017 at the Committee's next session;

(c) Invited countries and other stakeholders to consider making voluntary contributions to the Environment for Europe trust fund to support participation of eligible participants in the meetings of the Committee and its Bureau, and in that regard expressed gratitude to Luxembourg, Norway and Switzerland for their financial contribution to support secretariat activities under the Environment for Europe process.

78. The Chair informed delegates that the Bureau had considered the updated criteria for participation in meetings and events and had recommended that the Committee adopt them. The Committee subsequently adopted the revised criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events as included in information paper No. 7, and requested that the text be annexed to the report of the Committee's twenty-second session (see annex I).

## **X. Presentation and exchange of views on the United Nations Environment Assembly**

79. The Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe moderated a panel discussion on the preparations for the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (Nairobi, 4-6 December 2017). Panellists included the representatives of the Assembly's Bureau from Czechia, Montenegro and the United States.

80. The Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe said that a series of preparatory meetings and consultations were being organized, including several meetings of



the Assembly's Bureau and the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The European consultation for preparing the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly would be organized on the margins of the Ostrava Conference on Environment and Health in June 2017. Based on inputs from over 100 Member States and accredited representatives of civil society, a "pollution-free world" would be the theme of the third session. To support discussions at the session, a pollution-free planet report would be prepared that would look into evidence of a polluted planet in terms of the impact on human health, ecosystems and economies, and provide solutions regarding the transformative actions needed and the leadership required to achieve a pollution-free planet.

81. The Committee welcomed the information provided by UNEP about developments in preparing the third session of United Nations Environment Assembly, and:

(a) Expressed appreciation to the members of the Assembly's Bureau and other speakers participating in the panel discussion for their interesting presentations on the preparation and framing of the Assembly's third session;

(b) Invited countries and organizations to promote the work of ECE related to the themes of the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly at that session, including, *inter alia*, the ECE multilateral environmental agreements (in particular, the Water Convention and the Air Convention) and recent initiatives launched under the Environment for Europe process, namely, the Astana Water Action (AWA), BACA and BIG-E;

(c) Invited UNEP to continue informing the Committee about the preparations for the third session of the Assembly, in particular at the Committee's next session.

## **XI. Terms of reference**

82. The Chair reported that the Bureau had discussed the issue of revising the Committee's terms of reference and had found the current terms of reference to be still relevant, with only some minor changes needed. Concerning the process of revising the terms of reference, the Bureau recommended circulating the terms of reference to the Committee members and observers for comments, which should be provided to the secretariat. The secretariat would consolidate the comments received and submit them to the Bureau. Subsequently, the Committee would receive draft revised terms of reference for consideration.

83. The Committee mandated the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to prepare a first draft of the Committee's revised terms of reference for the Committee's consideration at its twenty-third session. In that regard, the Committee asked the secretariat to circulate the current terms of reference to Committee members and observers for comments by 28 February 2017, and to compile the comments received for consideration by the Bureau.

## **XII. Rules of procedure**

84. The Chair reported that the Bureau had considered the draft rules of procedure and had recommended the Committee to mandate it to continue working on the text in square brackets, and to again revise the draft for consideration by the Committee at its next session. Following the request from the Bureau, the secretariat presented the current draft of the rules of procedure.

85. The Committee decided to further consider the need for specific rules of procedure and to postpone its decision on the matter to its next session.

### **XIII. Election of officers**

86. The Committee decided to postpone elections of officers to the Committee's next session, with the current composition of the Bureau continuing until then.

### **XIV. Calendar of meetings**

87. The Chair presented the schedule of meetings of the Committee and its Bureau for the period until 2019.

88. The Committee approved the proposed schedule of Committee and Bureau meetings until 2019, as presented in information paper No. 9/Rev.2, and agreed to organize the Committee's twenty-third session in Geneva from 14 to 17 November 2017.

### **XVI. Closure of the meeting**

89. Supported by the secretariat, the Chair compiled a summary of the outcomes of and decisions taken by the Committee at its twenty-second session, which was projected on a screen in the meeting room. Following a discussion, the draft summary was finalized and approved.<sup>9</sup>

90. 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 in 2017.

91. The Chair informed delegates that the report of the present meeting and the list of participants would be posted on the ECE website after the meeting. The Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.

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<sup>9</sup> The approved summary was circulated to the Committee by e-mail on Tuesday, 31 January 2017, and was also made available on the ECE website. The present report was prepared based on the approved summary. The text has been officially edited since adoption. Any changes are strictly editorial and do not affect the substance of the decisions.

## Annex I

### Countries eligible for financial support to participate in meetings and events

1. For the purposes of this paper, “partial financial support” includes daily subsistence allowance (DSA) only; and “full financial support” includes DSA and travel expenses.
2. The lower threshold for financial support is US\$ 4,500. Representatives of member States with annual gross domestic product (GDP) per capita below the lower threshold are entitled to full<sup>a</sup> financial support to participate in relevant meetings and events. Other approaches may be applied under projects where donors have earmarked their contributions with particular conditions.
3. The upper threshold for financial support is US\$ 5,500. Representatives of the member States with annual GDP per capita between the lower and upper thresholds are entitled to partial<sup>b</sup> financial support to participate in relevant meetings and events.

#### List of countries eligible for financial support, showing category of assistance and per capita gross domestic product

<i>Country</i>	<i>GDP per capita, 2015 (US\$)<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Number of countries</i>
<i>Travel expenses and DSA</i>		
Tajikistan	926	1
Kyrgyzstan	1 106	1
Republic of Moldova	1 821	1
Ukraine	2 111	1
Uzbekistan	2 230	1
Armenia	3 497	1
Georgia	3 757	1
Albania	3 945	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4 247	1
<b>Subtotal (countries receiving travel expenses and DSA)</b>		<b>9</b>
<i>DSA only</i>		
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	4 854	1
Serbia	5 237	1
Azerbaijan	5 498	1
<b>Subtotal (countries receiving DSA only)</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>Total (countries receiving financial support)</b>		<b>12</b>

*Note:* Countries are listed in ascending order of GDP.

<sup>a</sup> Per capita GDP values were calculated using the online ECE Statistical Database (<http://w3.unece.org/PXWeb/en>, accessed on 14 December 2016).

<sup>a</sup> Travel expenses and DSA, subject to availability of extrabudgetary resources for this purpose.

<sup>b</sup> DSA only, subject to availability of extrabudgetary resources for this purpose.

## **Annex II**

### **Mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment**

#### **I. Mandate**

1. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment shall serve as the environmental knowledge and assessment network for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, under the oversight of the Committee on Environmental Policy. It shall report annually to the Committee on its achievements and the implementation or modification of the objectives and activities set out herein. These terms of reference are valid for a period of five years, until the Committee's regular session in 2021.

#### **II. Objectives**

2. The aim of the Working Group, under the oversight of the Committee, is to:

(a) Assist in the establishment and operation of national information systems in line with the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in Europe and Central Asia by 2021;

(b) Lead a process of consultation on the regular pan-European environmental assessment and the streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting by 2020;

(c) Initiate a process of consultation between ECE member States and other institutions and networks with relevant expertise in the area, as appropriate, on the development of a regional environmental information and assessment network of networks and, as part of this process, develop an inclusive platform for countries to discuss the integration of environmental, economic and social considerations with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, the green economy and other related areas of work;

(d) Engage in capacity-building assistance with regard to specific challenges in environmental monitoring and assessment, including the development and improvement of national environmental monitoring systems, their technical specifications and modernization, and the collection of environmental knowledge through national monitoring systems in the ECE countries. The Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators (Joint Task Force) will continue to carry out all activities relating to statistical capacity development for countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

#### **III. Planned activities and outputs**

3. The Working Group shall:

(a) Assist in the establishment and operation of national information systems in line with SEIS in Europe and Central Asia, and in particular:

(i) Continue supporting the establishment of SEIS with regard to its specific content and principles in support of regular environmental assessment processes and reporting;

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- (ii) Continue cooperating with the Joint Task Force in its work on environmental statistics and indicators, associated data sets and accompanying environmental information and data necessary to establish SEIS;
  - (iii) Regularly evaluate the performance of ECE countries in establishing and implementing SEIS against the SEIS targets and performance indicators adopted by the Committee;
  - (iv) Contribute to the process of the Environment for Europe mid-term review of the Batumi Conference main outcomes in 2018;
  - (v) Prepare a mid-term and a final report for the Committee on the establishment and implementation of SEIS leading up to 2021;
  - (vi) Provide annual recommendations on how SEIS can be further strengthened in European and Central Asian countries;
- (b) Lead a process of consultation on the regular pan-European environmental assessment and the streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting by 2020, and in particular:
- (i) Bring together experts involved in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Environment Outlook process and the European Environment Agency's European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET), including interested parties, to discuss and oversee the regular pan-European environmental assessment;
  - (ii) Discuss and detail regional priorities concerning the streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting, involving also other thematic networks, including those under the multilateral environmental agreements, in the discussion;
  - (iii) Oversee the implementation of proposed recommendations and guidance provided through the consultation process on the regular pan-European environmental assessment and the streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting;
- (c) Initiate a process of consultation on the development of a regional environmental information and assessment network of networks and, as part of this process, develop an inclusive platform to discuss the integration of environmental, economic and social considerations regarding the 2030 Agenda, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, the green economy and other related areas of work, and in particular:
- (i) Coordinate a consultative process, involving all relevant thematic networks and interested parties, including secretariats of conventions and other institutions, at both the regional and national levels, to elaborate the working modalities of a regional network of networks;
  - (ii) Cooperate with the Joint Task Force to ensure that all planned and future activities are synergetic and streamlined;
  - (iii) Develop capacities to engage other communities and networks, such as the Group on Earth Observations, to discuss how environmental, social and economic information and data can be integrated and utilized in decision-making and how to present environmental information on geospatial platforms;
  - (iv) Operationalize proposed recommendations and guidance provided through the consultative process to ensure the sustainable implementation of a regional environmental information and assessment network of networks;
  - (v) Publish outcomes from the Working Group's collaborative activities (e.g., best practices, guidelines and lessons learned) to share outputs and guide future activities in the area;

(d) Engage in capacity-building assistance addressing specific challenges related to environmental monitoring and assessment and environmental knowledge maintained through national monitoring systems in the European and Central Asian countries. The identification of specific challenges (e.g., air quality, water and waste monitoring) will depend on regional and national capacity gaps and the identification of priority areas for action to be defined by the Working Group members. In particular, the implementation of all subsequent activities will depend on the mobilization of resources to enable the Working Group to organize and offer additional capacity-building assistance to enhance environmental monitoring and assessment capabilities. Such activities include:

(i) Detailing regional and national capacity gaps, in collaboration with the Joint Task Force, in information and data needed for producing the ECE set of environmental indicators, the European Environment Agency core set of indicators, OECD green growth indicators and Sustainable Development Goal indicators. This will include identifying data and information gaps in the target countries;

(ii) Supporting countries in the development of regional and national indicator frameworks to monitor the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, and activities to support their implementation, including the review and establishment of national reporting mechanisms, procedures and methodological approaches associated with the Sustainable Development Goal indicators in all ECE countries;

(iii) Engaging and liaising directly with other relevant knowledge-sharing actors working on capacity-building in related areas of work, such as the Group on Earth Observations, Global Environment Facility-funded Cross-Cutting Capacity Development projects and UNEP Live, throughout the pan-European region;

(iv) Implementing capacity-building activities to provide assistance in accordance with priority areas of action identified for targeted ECE countries.

4. The following outputs will be achieved leading up to 2021:

(a) SEIS data sets, as contained in the ECE Online Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators, will be gradually reviewed in collaboration with the Joint Task Force and as part of refining SEIS progress reporting;

(b) Assistance will be provided to target countries for reporting on SEIS establishment and starting preparations for the mid-term and final SEIS performance reports in 2018 and 2021, respectively;

(c) Recommendations and advice will be provided to ECE countries to improve their SEIS performance;

(d) Working modalities of the regional environmental information and assessment network of networks will be defined and operationalized;

(e) Assistance will be provided in the preparation of the regular pan-European environmental assessment and other relevant state-of-the-environment reports;

(f) Support will be given for the preparation of regional and national indicator frameworks to monitor the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda and the establishment of national reporting mechanisms, procedures and methodological approaches associated with Sustainable Development Goal indicators;

(g) Thematic conferences, meetings and workshops will be organized to prepare publications that address the integration of environmental and economic data, subject to the availability of funding;

(h) Focused capacity-building activities will be carried out to address specific national priorities, including the preparation of training materials and the provision of advisory services, subject to the availability of funding.

## IV. Timetable

5. The Working Group shall prepare an annual timetable of activities and achievements, as an official document, and regularly report to the Committee. This will ensure that the Working Group can accommodate new demands over time and allow the Committee to comment and monitor ongoing and future activities. The Working Group shall also endeavour to submit a mid-term review of progress of its work to the Committee as a stocktaking exercise.

6. During 2017 the Working Group shall:

(a) Assist in the review of the ECE core environmental indicators and associated data sets identified as priority areas by the Joint Task Force, taking into account the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting;

(b) Operationalize the online SEIS reporting application through UNEP Live, in collaboration with UNEP, and present the outcomes to the Committee at its twenty-third session;

(c) Present the working modalities of the regional environmental information and assessment network of networks to the Committee at its twenty-third session;

(d) Organize a consultation and workshop to detail regional and national priorities regarding monitoring and assessment capabilities needed for compiling environmentally related Sustainable Development Goal indicators as part of defining priority areas of action for the Working Group for 2018;

(e) Organize a thematic workshop that addresses how environmental and economic data can be integrated, and engage other communities and networks, such as the Group on Earth Observations, in these activities;

(f) Continue efforts to mobilize resources and support from regional and international organizations to enable the Working Group to increase its capacity-building assistance.

7. The new mandate of the Working Group will be reviewed and amended by the Committee following the Environment for Europe mid-term review of the Batumi Conference main outcomes in 2018.

## V. Methods of work

8. The Working Group shall meet at least once annually. It shall also communicate through e-mail and other electronic collaborative platforms, such as its newsletter and social networks, in the period between meetings.

9. Additional meetings, workshops and capacity-building activities will be organized subject to the availability of funding.

## VI. Membership

10. The Working Group shall be composed of members from all of the ECE member States. They should represent the national institutions dealing with environmental monitoring, knowledge and assessment.

11. The Working Group shall also involve representatives of programmes and 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 — as well as expert teams.

12. The Working Group shall elect a chair and two vice-chairs for a term of up to two years, ensuring a regional balance in the nominations. The chair and vice-chairs shall be eligible for re-election for one additional term.

## **VII. Secretariat support and resources**

13. In its operation, the Working Group shall be serviced by the ECE secretariat, supported by UNEP and the European Environment Agency, and guided by the relevant procedures established by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy.

14. Donors will be invited to provide support for the Working Group's activities.

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