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**Economic Commission for Europe****Committee on Sustainable Energy****Thirty-second session**

Geneva, 13-15 September 2023

Item 9(b) of the provisional agenda

**Looking ahead: Future work of the Committee on Sustainable Energy:****Approval of documents****Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for  
2024-2025****Prepared by the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy****I. Introduction**

1. Since its first session (November 2014), the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy (GERE) has been implementing concrete activities to help significantly increase the uptake of renewable energy in the region and therefore contribute to fulfil the obligations of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and achieve goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. According to its Terms of Reference, the Group of Experts focuses on activities related to (a) regulatory and policy dialogue and (b) sharing of best practices on various renewable energy sources with a view to increasing the share of renewables in the global energy mix.
3. The Group of Experts requests the Committee on Sustainable Energy to renew its mandate until 31 December 2025, with the possibility of extension.
4. The Group of Experts will take into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis as well as the mid-term review of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 which shows how progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was already too slow in the region before these crises.

**II. Concrete activities**

5. Building on the activities of the Work Plan for 2022-2023 and the recommendations from the Group of Experts and its Bureau, the Group of Experts will undertake the following activities in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region. In addition, following the recommendation of the Committee on Sustainable Energy to strengthen the cooperation among its subsidiary bodies, the Group of Experts will engage, within the scope of its expertise, in the joint work on transition of the energy sector. It will also continue to actively participate in the implementation and follow-up work to the decarbonization of the economy, in line with international agreements and in support of the 2030 Agenda for



Sustainable Development and the achievement of the SDGs, as well as their follow-up and review by the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

6. The Group of Experts will continue to support and promote the role of renewable energy in attaining the SDGs – and in particular Goal 7 – to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. The Group of Experts will contribute to achieve the specific target 7.2: *By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix*. In addition to Goal 7, renewable energy is relevant to attaining many other SDGs, such as: Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 2 (zero hunger), Goal 5 (gender), Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), Goal 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), Goal 11 (inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities), Goal 12 (sustainable consumption and production patterns), and Goal 13 (climate action).

## A. Tracking progress in the uptake of renewable energy sources

### Description:

7. The recent Policy Brief on Advancing SDG 7 in the UNECE Region confirms a slow progress and a growing gap in achieving the renewable energy and the energy efficiency targets. As measured before the current energy crisis, reliance on renewable energy was increasing (indicator 7.2.1) and energy efficiency was improving (indicator 7.3.1), but not quickly enough to meet 2030 targets. Most energy targets are progressing too slowly to be achieved, and acceleration of efforts is critical to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

8. Since 2014, UNECE has been publishing the Renewable Energy Status Report in collaboration with the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21). Since then, three editions have been issued in 2015, 2017 and 2022.

9. The Group of Experts will continue to monitor progress on the uptake of renewable energy in the region, following key findings of the reports and policy briefs issued in 2022 and 2023. This work will continue in collaboration with key partners, including REN21, the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Commission, the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) and the German Energy Agency (dena).

10. In addition, activities related to tracking progress on renewable energy will support strengthening local capacities of data gathering as well as creating a network of regional data partners.

### Work to be undertaken:

(a) Review the state of development and monitor the progress of renewable energy uptake in the region as well as the consideration of the perception of future renewable energy development by key stakeholders. This will include building on key findings from the Renewable Energy Status Report 2022 for selected countries and further investigating a selected number of key issues as well as contributing to existing global and regional monitoring frameworks;

(b) Undertake a more profound review of the renewable energy status and trends in individual countries in order to have a better understanding of the factors determining the current situation of renewable energy in those states and to identify difficulties as well as opportunities in meeting their national objectives and targets;

(c) In cooperation with IRENA, dena and other relevant international actors identify obstacles for the development of renewable energy in the selected countries via business dialogue fora, propose concrete solutions for the removal or reduction of such barriers at the national and regional levels, and exploit the existing untapped renewable energy potential in the targeted States.

**Deliverables and Timeline:**

- (a) A new edition of the REN21 ECE Renewable Energy Status Report, subject to availability of extrabudgetary funding, by December 2025;
- (b) One or more Renewable Energy Performance Reviews of a selected country, in and outside the UNECE region on a demand driven basis and subject to availability of extrabudgetary funding, by December 2025;
- (c) Policy and business recommendations provided through organization of, or participation in workshops on selected local energy issues, identified by the dedicated Renewable Energy Hard Talks bringing together key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, by December 2025.

**B. Exchange of experiences and good practices, and multi-stakeholder dialogues on how to increase the uptake of renewable energy****Description:**

11. The Group of Experts will continue to serve as a platform for exchanging experiences and good practices on renewable energy development among member States, relevant international organizations, other key stakeholders, renewable energy communities and self-consumers. It will consider cross-cutting and nexus issues to increase energy production from renewable sources as a means of sustainable development and climate change mitigation. This work will be undertaken collaboratively with other organisations, such as IRENA, IEA, REN21, GBEP, UNDP, the other United Nations Regional Commissions, and other relevant organizations, including dena, and multilateral development banks. A set of capacity development activities will be implemented to increase know-how on renewable energy among stakeholders from the public and private sectors in the ECE region. The Group of Experts will further contribute to future ECE initiatives in assessing the progress and prospects for sustainable energy within the region.

**Work to be undertaken:**

- (a) Organize a discussion within the Group of Experts for exchanging information on the renewable energy policies and measures aiming to fight climate change, decarbonize economies, achieve both: the SDGs, as well as the national renewable energy targets, and develop/implement the renewable energy national action plans and/ or national energy and climate plans, which have already been developed in the ECE region. This includes consideration of existing gaps between the current status and the set targets, as well as policy options to achieve sustainable energy;
- (b) Promote information sharing activities through workshops, seminars, and roundtables; and develop documentation facilitating exchange of experience on best practices and policies at such fora as the International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development and the Committee on Sustainable Energy;
- (c) Facilitate inter-sectoral coordination and cooperation with relevant organizations and organize specific multi-stakeholder dialogues/Hard Talks, upon countries requests and subject to availability of extrabudgetary resources, to disseminate the findings of the Renewable Energy Status Report and enable an open dialogue among stakeholders;
- (d) Strengthen cooperation between the public and private sectors to promote suitable market conditions, build capacities for identification, development and promotion of renewable energy investments, and provide matchmaking activities to support renewable energy investments (dependent on extrabudgetary funding).

**Deliverables and Timeline:**

- (a) Ad hoc workshop or discussion within the annual session of the Group of Experts and written contributions on adaptive and cross-cutting policy options, by December 2025;

(b) Presentation of information on policies experiences with, and good practices on renewable energy in the ECE member States during four workshops and/or seminars organized by relevant organizations, by December 2025;

(c) Hard Talks and/or follow-up activities in the ECE countries with participation of key stakeholders, on a demand-driven basis and subject to availability of extrabudgetary resources, aiming to enhance cross-sectoral synergies and strengthen cooperation within the UN system as well as with other international actors, by December 2025;

(d) Promotion of, as well as organization and/or participation in capacity-building activities on renewable energy projects' development, and dissemination among developers, investors and financial institutions of relevant materials and information on at the relevant workshops and/or matchmaking event(s), subject to availability of extrabudgetary resources, by December 2025.

### **C. Contribute, in cooperation with other Groups of Experts and under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, to work on building resilient energy systems in the ECE region**

#### **Description:**

12. The challenges that the ECE region is currently facing provide a unique opportunity for member States to rethink the existing energy infrastructure and design resilient energy systems that provide access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all (SDG 7) and that help to reduce GHG emissions and the carbon footprint of the energy sector in the region. Resilient energy systems must be based on three pillars: (i) energy security, (ii) quality of life, and (iii) environmental sustainability. While each of these pillars contributes to attaining sustainable energy, none of them alone fully describes sustainable energy, which is a golden thread that underpins the delivery of all the SDGs. Finding a balance between the three pillars is a complex social, political, economic, and technological challenge. A dialogue that has recently started under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy is conceived as a vehicle enabling member States to work jointly on addressing that challenge in a coordinated and effective manner.

#### **Work to be undertaken:**

(a) Contribute, as requested by the Committee on Sustainable Energy and within the scope of the Group of Experts' expertise, to work on building resilient energy systems in the ECE region;

(b) Engage, within the scope of the Group's mandate and expertise, in cooperation with the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition and under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, in work facilitating transformation and greening of ECE member States' industries along the coal value chain and of coal-dependent regions in accordance with the principles of just transition.

#### **Deliverables and Timeline:**

(a) Contribution, within the scope of the Group of Experts' expertise and upon the Committee on Sustainable Energy's request indicating the expected input, to the work on building resilient energy systems in the ECE region undertaken under the umbrella and leadership of the Committee, by December 2025 in accordance with the Committee's request;

(b) Established working engagement with the other Group of Experts operating under the umbrella of the Committee on Sustainable Energy ensuring that the just transition angle is properly reflected in their respective work on building resilient energy systems in the ECE region, by December 2025.

## **D. Cross-cutting cooperation to substantially increase the uptake of renewable energy and strengthen their integration in resilient energy systems**

### **Description:**

13. The Group of Experts will continue to work on improving the integration of the various renewable energy technologies into present and future energy supply systems and different sectors, including electricity generation, heating and cooling, gas and liquid fuel distribution, as well as autonomous energy supply systems. The Group of Experts will continue to work recognizing the importance of a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources in achieving the SDGs, supporting economic prosperity and resilience, addressing environmental pressures, mitigating climate change, and building back better in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Group of Experts will promote the increase of the renewable energy uptake taking within the context of the work on transition of the fossil fuels-based industries in the ECE region. A shift towards a green economy will have an enormous impact on the social strata, the wellbeing of which over the last decades has been associated with the existence and prosperity of legacy industries.

14. This activity is implemented in cooperation with other ECE bodies, with the Group of Experts leading or contributing to the work and in close cooperation with other relevant actors.

15. The Group of Experts will cooperate with the Expert Group on Resource Management to enhance the application of the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) and the United Nations Resource Management System (UNRMS) to renewable energy resources to understand the renewable energy system's potential and its benefits on different levels, whether national, regional, or global. (Co-leaders: Expert Group on Resource Management and Group of Experts on Renewable Energy).

16. The Group of Experts will cooperate with other Groups of Experts, notably with the Group of Experts on Gas and the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems, in the implementation of activities related to renewable energy within the respective work plans, supporting possible synergies to enhance the uptake of renewable energy and to promote the development of green hydrogen and biomethane (Co-leaders: Group of Experts on Renewable Energy, Group of Experts on Gas, Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems, and Expert Group on Resource Management).

17. The Group of Experts will participate in the work of the Task Force on Digitalization in Energy of the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency which aims to provide a clear and balanced view on digitalization in order to improve efficiency of the overall energy system while simultaneously ensuring its security and sustainability.

18. The Group of Experts will assess opportunities for more sustainable and environmentally friendly renewable energy, including bioenergy and hydro, through inter-sectoral synergies (nexus), in cooperation with relevant activities of other ECE subprogrammes, notably with the Task Force on Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus and the Team of Specialists on Wood Energy (Lead: Task Force on Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus, the Team of Specialists on Wood Energy, and the Expert Group on Resource Management) as well as with the Global Bioenergy Partnership of FAO.

### **Work to be undertaken:**

(a) Outreach activities on specifications for the application of UNFC to the various renewable energy technologies (bioenergy, solar, hydro, wind) (under the lead of the Expert Group on Resource Management) and to critical raw materials relevant for the renewable energy uptake;

(b) Develop recommendations on inter-sectoral synergies to deploy renewable energy and support the relevant SDGs within an integrated nexus approach and future energy system (under the lead of the Task Force on Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystem Nexus and the Team of Specialists on Wood Energy);

(c) Contribute to promote the digitalization application to renewable energy technologies in the ECE member States;

(d) Share experiences with interested ECE member States, supporting development of production strategies and capacities for green hydrogen, including on the legal framework and latest developments in hydrogen taxonomy, in cooperation with the UNECE Group of Experts on Gas;

(e) Engage, within the scope of the Group's mandate and expertise, in cooperation with the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition and under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, in work facilitating transformation and greening of ECE member States' industries along the coal value chain and of coal-dependent regions in accordance with the principles of just transition. In particular, explore how of greater uptake of renewable energy and development of hydrogen-based economy can help with facilitating the process of just transition of the regions currently dependent on legacy industries based on coal;

(f) Support the initiative to launch concrete mechanisms and measures for the effective development of bioenergy in ECE countries, in close cooperation with the Global Bioenergy Partnership of FAO and the Biofuture Platform.

**Deliverables and Timeline:**

(a) Documentation and/or case studies that support UNFC application to renewable energy sources and/or promotion of application of UNFC to renewable energy at specific renewable energy meetings or workshops, by December 2025;

(b) Documentation on water-energy nexus challenges, as well as guidelines for renewable energy development, including recommendations focused on large hydropower and hydroelectric energy storage, subject to availability of extrabudgetary resources, by December 2025;

(c) Contribution of GERE experts to the Task Force on Digitalization in Energy of the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency, by December 2025;

(d) Dissemination of good practices and policies on renewable energy, and active engagement in the debate on the role of all kind of gases, including green hydrogen and biomethane in building resilient energy systems in countries of the ECE region, by December 2025;

(e) Contribution, within the scope of the Group's mandate and expertise, to a study on how greater uptake of renewable energy and development of hydrogen-based economy can help with facilitating the process of just transition of the regions currently dependent on legacy industries based on coal, by December 2025 (under the lead of the Group of Expert on Coal Mine Methane and just Transition);

(f) Dissemination of good practices and policies on bioenergy development in the ECE member States and assessment of the possibility of developing quality standards on biofuels (dependent on extrabudgetary funding), by December 2025.

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