

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

110th meeting  
Geneva, 3 April 2020

Item 7(c) of the provisional agenda

Informal document No. **2020/15**

**Economic Commission for Europe and partnerships:  
Collaboration with other Regional Commissions**

(for information)

Note by the Secretariat

(March 2020)

1. The ongoing reform of the UN Development System (UNDS) aims to increase impact and optimize support at the global, regional and national level to assist member States in their efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. Inter-regional collaboration is an additional important factor to advance information sharing in the UN development system and to create synergies for greater impact. In the spirit of “One UN”, UNECE has pursued this approach for a long time in the form of institutional coordination, knowledge sharing, joint events and activities, development projects and participation in each other’s high-level governing meetings, to name but some dimensions. This paper provides practical examples of these types of ongoing cooperation to inform EXCOM discussions on partnerships with a view to broadening the impact of UNECE products and accelerate implementation of the SDGs.
3. Going forward, UNECE and its sister Regional Commissions strive to maintain their close contacts and will continue fine-tuning their cooperation to best align with the UNDS reform. Such cooperation will keep yielding benefits, such as access to a wider pool of free expertise, reduction of technical barriers to trade and transport between UNECE member States and other countries, and overall greater visibility and impact of UNECE activities.

**I. Institutional coordination on overarching matters**

4. At the institutional level, the five Regional Commissions are linked via the [Regional Commissions New York Office](#) (RCNYO). RCNYO is a joint office for coordination, representation, and policy advice at the global level for the Commissions. It maintains close coordination among the Commissions to help create synergies in their work, and present common positions at broader UN fora such as ECOSOC and the General Assembly. Regular video conferences of the Executive Secretaries are held several times a year with the secretariat provided by RCNYO. These meetings allow the Commissions to discuss common priority areas and coordinate their participation at global conferences and internal meetings such as the Chief Executives Board.
5. In the ongoing reform of the UN Development System, the five Executive Secretaries participated in the Internal Review Team in charge of determining implementation modalities, and put forward consolidated positions to ensure that the regional level is addressed in the most effective manner.
6. On specific topics, the Executive Secretaries jointly address the broader UN membership in New York on an annual basis. For example, a joint dialogue of the Executive Secretaries with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Committee of the General Assembly is held every October and discusses the contributions of regional cooperation to sustainable development.

7. Schedules permitting, the Executive Secretaries may attend Commission sessions in other regions to keep abreast of developments and explore additional opportunities for collaboration. Each Executive Secretary serves as coordinator of the Regional Commissions on a rotating basis, representing the agreed common position of all five organizations at relevant UN meetings.

8. RCNYO also represents the Regional Commissions on the Steering Committee of the Development Account and coordinates their inputs to global development policy processes and the Secretary-General's reports. These mechanisms allow the Regional Commissions to better support the global agenda with specific regional inputs.

## II. Joint programmes and activities

9. As topics such as energy, trade facilitation, statistics, transport and others are covered by multiple Regional Commissions, a variety of institutionalized arrangements (most of them long-standing) allow for better coordination and joint activities to exchange experience and scale up impact across regions. Examples include:

a) Joint overall support (with ESCAP) to the [UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia \(SPECA\)](#), launched in 1998 to strengthen subregional cooperation in Central Asia and its integration into the world economy. SPECA addresses crucial issues of regional cooperation taking advantage of international legal instruments, norms, standards and recommendations the two Regional Commissions are custodians of, and it combines technical assistance and capacity building by in-house experts of the UNECE and ESCAP with high-level, cross-sector, inter-ministerial policy discussions and regular policy-business- research dialogue. The six SPECA areas of work<sup>a</sup> are supported by the relevant divisions of UNECE and ESCAP in a coordinated and mutually reinforcing way. Since 2016, UNECE and ESCAP have focused their support on assistance to subregional cooperation among the SPECA countries to achieve specific SDGs that can be better implemented through cross-border cooperation.

b) The annual [International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development](#), jointly organized with all Regional Commissions since 2010, provides an opportunity to explore how the UN system can help countries and the business sector achieve the energy-related objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

c) The Steering Committee of the [UN Road Safety Fund](#), established in 2018 as initiated by UNECE with a secretariat hosted at UNECE, includes representation from all Regional Commissions. The five regions are also represented in the Advisory Board. This linkage across regions allows the Fund to gather knowledge on different aspects of road safety across the world in ongoing projects and initiatives, identify the highest risk areas where efforts are most needed, and coordinate priorities for road safety efforts under a comprehensive framework plan. The Fund, in November 2018, approved five pilot projects in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Middle East. In February 2020, the Fund unveiled ten new projects that will target key gaps in the road safety systems of 12 countries in the same four regions.

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<sup>a</sup> Gender and SDGs; Knowledge-based Development; Statistics; Trade, Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity; Water, Energy and Environment.

d) The [Joint UN Regional Commissions Approach to Trade Facilitation](#), launched by the Regional Commissions in 2010, coordinates action for advancing trade facilitation and digital trade around the world. In connection with this, the Regional Commissions cooperate on the UN Global Survey on Digital and Trade Facilitation, to measure UN Member States' progress in the implementation of measures of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and beyond, to harness the potential of paperless trade for trade and economic growth, and achieve the SDGs. Based on the survey results, the Regional Commissions publish one Global Report and five Regional Reports. These reports have become a well recognised assessment tool. As part of this effort, UNECE supported the development of an online interactive platform, which allows users to generate customized data, compare and benchmark their trade facilitation performances.

e) The Statistics Divisions of the five Regional Commissions and DESA have a standing arrangement for working together in support of statistical development at the global and regional level. The Chief Statisticians of the five Regional Commissions together with DESA meet every other month and discuss new or emerging issues, data sharing and flow of data (including for SDGs), data platforms, etc. Joint capacity building workshops are organized (for example, with ESCAP in different areas of in environment statistics) and experts from the Regional Commissions work jointly in areas of common interest (such as poverty, gender, hazardous events and disasters, climate change etc).

f) The Population and/or Social development divisions/units of all five Regional commissions hold regular trimestral (virtual) meetings to exchange on the main activities related to the periodic regional reviews of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the Programme of Action of ICPD, etc. and coordinate inputs to the Secretary-General Reports for the Commission of Social Development and Commission for Population and development.

g) The sections/units dealing with urban development within all Regional Commissions meet regularly and hold joint events at the biennial World Urban Forums. Given the large number of member States they have in common, UNECE and ESCAP also cooperate on projects related to data for evidence-based policies at city level and the localization of SDGs, including one in Bishkek which will result in a sustainable smart city action plan and projects for innovative financing.

### **III. Knowledge-sharing:**

10. Participation by third countries and by the other Regional Commissions in the UNECE subsidiary bodies provides a cost-efficient method for sharing and receiving expertise. Knowledge is also shared on topics where UNECE has accumulated expertise to offer. Through such links, UNECE is able to broaden cooperation even more and share its methodologies and normative production. Examples include:

a) ECLAC is a member in the UNECE Steering Group on climate change-related statistics. Both ECLAC and ESCAP are in the UNECE Task Force on measuring hazardous events and disasters.

- b) Under the UNECE Air Convention, there is a regular exchange of information on air pollution issues in Europe and Asia with ESCAP, particularly its East and North-East Asia Office and the secretariat to the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation.
- c) In 2018, ECLAC member States adopted the Escazu Agreement, which covers access to information, public participation and justice in environmental matters. As the UNECE Aarhus Convention covers the same topics, the secretariat of the Aarhus Convention offered significant support to ECLAC during the negotiations of the Escazu Agreement.
- d) The methodology for the Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs) was exported to the ECA and ESCAP regions when the EPRs of Morocco and Mongolia were carried out in cooperation with the relevant Regional Commissions on the request of the reviewed countries.
- e) UNECE shares its expertise and provides advice to ESCAP on developing tools to measure Inclusive and active population ageing based on the Active Ageing Index development process.
- f) UNECE is cooperating with ECA on the organization of the annual International PPP Forum in 2019 and 2020. The Forum agreed in 2018 that UNECE's normative work on PPPs be shared with ECA and its member States. UNECE's cooperation with ECA stems from the interest by many African countries in PPPs and active participation by over a dozen African countries in UNECE PPP meetings.
- g) UNECE is working with ECA on the organization of regional events in 2020 and 2021 aimed at raising the awareness and use by governments of voluntary standards. Cooperation on an Africa-focused joint event stems from the significant interest in ECA to engage ECE to inform the priorities for standards harmonization, in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
- h) In 2018, UNECE cooperated with ECA and other key international partners for conducting a Forum of the National Trade Facilitation Committees in the African region. This was held at ECA in November 2018 and attended by about 500 experts from 40 countries in the region – a significant success.
- i) Since 2019, to fight food insecurity and the food loss and waste problems in ESCWA's region, UNECE is cooperation with ESCWA through the spread of UNECE and UNECE region's best practices, analysis and capacity-building.
- j) Two Road Safety Performance Reviews (Uganda and Cameroon in 2018, and Ethiopia and Zimbabwe in 2020) were conducted in cooperation with ECA and the United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for Road Safety. ECA and UNECE then co-organized related capacity-building workshops, as well as a regional workshop on road safety and urban mobility in Accra (August 2018) and a national capacity-building workshops in Abuja (March 2019) and Addis Ababa (February 2020). This project allowed UNECE to share its considerable expertise in the area of road

safety with the ECA region, which is the one most afflicted with road fatalities. ESCWA and ECE jointly organized workshop on road safety in 2019.

k) UNECE and ESCAP jointly organized an interregional Forum on Sustainable Transport Connectivity between Asia and Europe in Geneva in September 2019. It exchanged information and shared experience between representatives of the two regions on efforts undertaken to create conditions for improving intermodal transport and logistics in international inland transport supporting the sustainable Euro-Asian connectivity.

#### IV. UN Development Account

11. The Regional Commissions and other UN partners also cooperate in the framework of UN Development Account projects. This allows for joint development of products around well established analytic tools and methodologies. Examples include:

- a) Increased policy coherence and sustainability of national production and consumption patterns in North-South and South-South **agriculture trade**
  - 2018-2021. UNECE (lead agency), ESCAP, ECA, ECLAC.
- b) **Promoting equality**: Strengthening the capacity of select developing countries to design and implement equality-oriented public policies and programmes
  - 2015-2017. ECLAC - lead agency, all UN Regional Commissions.
- c) Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate **border crossing, regional cooperation and integration**
  - 2013-2015. UNECE - lead agency, all UN Regional Commissions.
- d) Program on Statistics and Data: Strengthening the statistical capacity of developing countries to **measure, monitor and report on the SDGs**
  - 2016-2020. UNDESA - lead agency, UNECE, ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UN-ODC.
- e) Sustainable transport connectivity and **implementation of transport related SDGs** in selected landlocked and transit/bridging countries
  - 2018-2020. UNECE – lead agency, ESCWA and ECLAC.
- f) Strengthening the **national road safety management capacities** of selected developing countries and countries with economies in transition
  - 2015-2018. UNECE – lead agency, ECLAC and ESCAP
- g) Inter-regional cooperation for the **implementation of the New Urban Agenda**
  - 2020-2023. UN Habitat, all Regional Commissions

h) **Strengthening innovation policies** for SPECA countries in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

-2020-2023. UNECE, ESCAP

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**The Executive Committee may wish to take note of the information provided.**