



Bureau Report No. 2020/4
Committee on Sustainable Energy Bureau Meeting
23 July 2020, 15.00-17.30 hrs CET

Attendance

Jürgen Keinhorst, Chair, Margalita Arabidze (for David Tvalabashvili), Jarad Daniels, Gilberto Dialuce, Aleksandar Dukovski, Francisco de la Flor Garcia, Kostiantyn Gura (for Nazir Ramazanov), Sigurd Heiberg (for Dave MacDonald), Raymond Pilcher, Admir Softic, Alexander Tolparov, Barry Worthington, Vice-Chairs, Itay Tagner (nominated)
Also: Lea Bigot, Sergio Garribba, Rafael Guerra, Nikoloz Kholodov, Tamara Sznajdleder

From the secretariat:

Scott Foster, Stefanie Held, Oleg Dzioubinski, Michal Drabik, Igor Litvinyuk, Branko Milicevic, Iva Brkic, Laurence Rotta

SUMMARY AND ACTION POINTS

1. WELCOME

- The Chair and the Director welcomed the Bureau.
- The Agenda was accepted as proposed:

2. Recommendations for the ECE Commission session in April 2021.

Documentation: Chair's letter and annex, already distributed to the Bureau on 19 June.

3. DRAFT Strategic review of the ECE sustainable energy subprogramme (draft)

Documentation: Full draft document ECE/ENERGY/2020/12 discussed by Bureau, distributed 12 June.

4. Pathways to Sustainable Energy policy recommendations (ECE/ENERGY/2019/1)

Documentation: <https://www.unece.org/energy/pathwaystose.html>; document ECE/ENERGY/2019/1 discussed by the Committee; concept note for Phase II.

5. TORs for Committee (ECE/ENERGY/2019/12) and (draft ECE/ENERGY/2020/5)

Documentation: Full draft document ECE/ENERGY/2019/12 discussed by the Committee, Bureau tasked to refine for adoption at the 29th session.

6. Other documents for possible Bureau review

Documentation: Full list of documents to be submitted to the Committee (attached).

7. Forward planning: Next Bureau date meeting: 8 September 20, 15.00-17.00 hrs CET

n.b., Written comments received from Francisco de la Flor, Sergio Garribba, and the Russian Federation complement the discussion points that follow and are included by extension in this report.

2. Recommendations for the ECE Commission session in April 2021

Actions requested of Bureau:

- Complement and refine the draft annex to the Chair's letter with concrete and result-driving actions
- Agree to inform capitals and solicit high-level participation at the Commission session
- Request the Chair to represent the Committee at the UNECE session to advance CSE messages
- Approve submission of a revised annex to the Chair's letter to the EXCOM Bureau

- Agree on submission of the Chair's letter and its annex to the Committee on Sustainable Energy for endorsement and further input

Discussion:

- It is important that the agenda be politically relevant.

One thought would be to convene a ministerial meeting under the auspices of the pathways project. We could use the Commission session to mandate convening a high-level meeting. That would create a possibility for a UNECE-type green deal addressing hydrogen, carbon neutrality, and economic competitiveness. A second observation is that the COVID response and related activities should affect the slate of activities undertaken in the sub-programme. The Executive Office has requested additional inputs regarding the 2021 session of the Commission, circular economy, and the post-COVID response.

- An important agenda item is addressing the issue of gases at global scale, including methane, decarbonised/renewable gases, CO₂. There needs to be a debate on managing molecules and electrons to achieve carbon neutrality. Reference was made to the 50/50/50 challenge, reaching carbon neutrality by 2050 with 50% electrons and 50% molecules.
- It is essential that the expert groups think through what we can contribute individually and collectively that adds value, and what activities relate to the post-COVID recovery.
- The European Union has launched its Green New Deal that links broadly to a number of UNECE instruments. For example, UNECE could engage a dialogue on agreeing on carbon costs, something that would qualify as a UNECE instrument. A number of other UNECE committees have similar needs, and there should be a common ground for a Commission decision(s).
- It is important to focus on a specific action to recommend, for example carbon neutrality or the role of hydrogen in the energy transition.
- Post-COVID recovery is not only about dealing with COVID outcomes, it also is about preparing for the next crisis. In Italy it was clear that the emergency plans did not work – there were not enough people to run the power plants. There is a need for a more resilient system.

Conclusions:

- The Bureau agreed that the inputs to the Commission session should be specific and concrete. There also should be consideration of what kind of follow-up would be needed/required to have a political effect. The three items suggested included:
 - Carbon neutrality
 - Energy subsidies
 - Role of gas and hydrogen in the future.

Bureau members are invited to send proposals for further topics in writing to the secretariat, preferably up to 2 topics per Bureau member. The Bureau agreed to take the final decision regarding the inputs for the Commission at the next bureau meeting.

- The Bureau also agreed it would be useful for the expert groups, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to assemble a matrix of their activities that relate to a post-COVID recovery.

3. DRAFT Strategic review of the ECE sustainable energy subprogramme

Action requested of Bureau:

- Approve submission of draft strategic review to CSE for discussion, input, and endorsement [*n.b.*, the issues related to the roles of nuclear power and fossil fuels in a sustainable energy future need to be discussed – UNECE's positions need to reflect the collective position of UNECE member States.]
- Agree that the draft conclusions and recommendations proposed for consideration by the Committee on Sustainable Energy include:

Requested UNECE member States to increase both financial support for and political

engagement with the Committee on Sustainable Energy and its expert groups.

Discussion:

- The strategic review should set priorities for the expert groups.
- The Russian Federation broadly supports the draft strategic review, with three specific comments:
 - The document is focused on clean energy issues, but there should be more balance in addressing issues associated with production and use of fossil fuels. In paragraph 28, RF proposes to include hydroelectricity in the work of the groups of experts on cleaner electricity systems and renewable energy. There should be greater emphasis on the role that natural gas will play in the future both as a transition fuel and as a destination fuel.
 - In paragraph 25 on the further development of UNFC and the addition of UNRMS, there should be more discussion with the Committee with the invitation of experts. The financial support from the EU is important, and the forthcoming support for other activities also merits mention.
 - What action is the Committee expected to take on the Strategic Review? Take note? Adopt? Endorse?
- It was noted that comments on the strategic review have been provided in writing from the Chair of the Group of Experts on Gas. Natural gas will be a key energy source in the decades to come and should figure more prominently but also more neutrally in the context of gases in the strategic outlook for the Committee. The topics include both using natural gas with carbon capture and storage as part of a decarbonisation strategy and the introduction of decarbonized gases of all types.
- Concern was expressed that it might not be possible for all activities proposed in the strategic review to be done in parallel with current resources. For example, the development of investment guidelines for fossil energy and nuclear energy as financial institutions have own guidelines. The Commission session is an opportunity to confirm mandates for critical activities. For example,
 - The links between energy and the steel sector in Kazakhstan and Ukraine and the implications for a just transition
 - Work on hydrogen as a decarbonisation option for natural gas networks and as a foundation for a shift to a hydrogen economy.
 - There is room for consideration of cross-cutting topics of relevance to other regions.
- Comments in writing also were received from Sergio Garibba and from the Russian Federation.
- The next meeting of the Bureau will take place in September, and five of the expert groups meet 22-25 September. The expert groups can make proposals regarding their priority areas of work in the post-COVID era. Priorities will require the support of member States. The Bureaux should send up to three priorities with the support of the Secretariat.
- It was noted that priorities for the post-COVID recovery have been provided by countries, and all countries in the G20 have provided lists of the measures they are taking. The priorities considered and set should be consistent.

Conclusions:

- The Chair requested that proposals be sent directly to the Director of SED for consolidation in preparation of the next bureau meeting.
- The secretariat was requested to update the strategic review document in light of comments received.
- The request for language soliciting financial support was noted without definitive agreement. It should be raised again at the next Bureau meeting.

4. Pathways to Sustainable Energy policy recommendations

Action requested of Bureau:

- Approve submission of the Pathways Phase 1 policy recommendations to the Committee on Sustainable Energy for endorsement (ECE/ENERGY/2019/1).
- Agree to explore, with the support of the Secretariat, securing support for the various elements of

Phase 2 of the Pathways Programme. Recognize that without further support for the Pathways Programme, the full complement of Phase 2 activities cannot be pursued.

- Agree that the draft conclusions and recommendations proposed for consideration by the Committee on Sustainable Energy include:

Requested UNECE member States and other interested stakeholders to fund the various elements of the Phase 2 of the Pathways to Sustainable Energy Programme

- Request the Secretariat to develop XB project proposals when donors express interest in funding the various elements of the Pathways Programme.
- Request that key messages and findings from Pathways be included in the roadmap for the ECE from 2021.
- Request that the Chair explore with Germany and other member States the possibility to present the findings of phase 1 at the ECE session in the context of circular economy.

Discussion:

- The Chair requested that the secretariat re-file a short document with recommendations only for consideration by the Bureau.
- The Russian Federation will convene Russia Energy Week in October. There will be more information available in August and invitations will be sent then, but they would like to feature a presentation of the Pathways project (phase 1) and to discuss how to proceed with Pathways 2.
- The deep dive on hydrogen that is presented in the concept for Pathways 2 (under the carbon neutrality project) should be part of a broader view on gases – the role of molecules in the future energy system – and should engage the Group of Experts on Gas.
- Phase 2 of the Pathways project should address the issues of all the UNECE countries (severally and individually). There is strong interest in pursuing sub-regional deep-dives building on the results of Phase 1. The first sub-region to be explored would be central Asia, followed by the other sub-regions as resources are made available.
- There are limited resources available so far to support the Pathways Programme. There is a tool produced in Pathways 1 with analysis of a business-as-usual scenario and a 2°C scenario. It appears the gap between the two scenarios is not insurmountable, and that is a very important conclusion.
- It would be useful to develop a full set of terms of reference for Pathways 2 with clarity on how Pathways 1 leads to Pathways 2 to ensure that the outcomes of Pathways 1 are being used.
- It will be necessary to raise funds for all of the elements of Pathways 2, seeking opportunities as well for joint undertakings with other divisions and other regional commissions (notably UN ESCAP). For the TORs for the elements of Pathways 2, the connection to Pathways 1 must be clear and referenced.
- Methane was not part of the architecture of the Pathways 1 project, and it must be addressed.

Conclusions:

- Secretariat will prepare a short, stand-alone paper on conclusions and recommendations emerging from Pathways 1 as an official document for endorsement by the Committee.
- Work on Pathways 2 as set forth in the concept note will depend on availability of funding. TORs for new work must link clearly to the Pathways 1 outcomes.

5. TORs for Committee

Action requested of Bureau:

- Consider if rules of procedure are required. Provide the approach it wishes for the secretariat take to implement decisions.
- The Bureau requested that the draft rules of procedure distributed on 12 June be withdrawn and that the Secretariat re-distribute for comment the original draft terms of reference that were considered by the Committee on Sustainable Energy. (ECE/ENERGY/2019/12).

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- The Bureau requests that the Secretariat prepare a new draft of the terms of reference incorporating comments received following the re-distribution. The new draft should include all comments received on an attributed basis, and the Secretariat is requested to indicate if any of the suggestions received are inconsistent or incompatible with UN and ECE practice.
- The Bureau requests that the new draft be distributed to the Bureau in preparation for the September meeting of the Bureau at which the final documents for the 2020 Committee session will be approved.

The Secretariat requests that the Bureau address the issue of decision-making when in-person meetings cannot be held and implications for the 29th session of the Committee, if an in-person meeting cannot be held or interpretation not be provided.

Discussion:

- Work on the Terms of Reference or Rules of Procedure should focus on procedures that are not covered elsewhere (GA/ECOSOC/ECE), and any proposals should be confirmed to be consistent with UN rules. The key issues are decision-making, the regularity of meetings, and application of procedures that actually already exist.
- The suggestion was made to move existing paras 1-4 to an introductory text box on the first page, to start the rules of procedure with paragraph 5, to make the rules of procedure more concise.
- Regarding the functions of the Bureau, it is not, in fact, a decision-making body. Its role is to oversee implementation of decisions taken by the Committee.
- The importance of in-person Committee sessions cannot be diminished, and the position of the Russian Federation is that inter-sessional decision-making should be excluded.
- The Chair noted that there is appetite for a document and requested the Secretariat to draft a document that focuses on rules that meet needs that are not covered elsewhere. The draft should be cleared with the Executive Office to ensure consistency, and the revised draft rules of procedure should be distributed to the Bureau well in advance for reflection and consideration.
- Bureau members noted that several meetings had been cancelled at the last moment and requested that the rules of procedure address running meetings regularly even in the absence of Bureau members including the Chair.

Conclusions:

- Any further comments by the Bureau are to be provided to the Secretariat.
- The Secretariat will modify the draft document to incorporate comments, focusing on procedures not covered elsewhere, and will re-submit to the Bureau in advance of the next meeting of the Bureau.

6. **Other documents for possible Bureau review**

The Bureau took note of the list of documents to be approved at the 8 September meeting for distribution in preparation for the Committee meeting. No additional documents were added.

7. **Forward planning: Next Bureau date meeting: 8/9/20, 15.00-17.00**

The Bureau noted that the Committee session in November must be interpreted and that with the COVID-19 constraints sessions may be limited to 2-hour blocks separated by 90-minute breaks.
