



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
7 March 2011

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Special session

Geneva, 24–27 May 2011

Item 6 (c) of the provisional agenda

**Environmental Performance Reviews: Environmental Performance
Review Programme: overview of activities**

Environmental Performance Reviews beyond the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

Note by the secretariat

A. Subject

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and its role in carrying out the Environmental Performance Review (EPR) beyond the UNECE region, and sharing the EPR methodology with other regional commissions.

B. General rule

2. As the time and resources of the UNECE are limited, UNECE member countries always have priority over countries belonging to other regional commissions to have an EPR carried out.

C. Criteria

3. In order to conduct an EPR with UNECE, the non-member country should inform its respective regional commission beforehand and enough resources must be available to conduct the whole review process from the preparatory mission to the launch event.

D. Goals

4. An EPR for a non-UNECE country is a pilot project intended to lead to long-term cooperation between UNECE and the respective regional commission. The final goal,

however, is that the regional commission will take over the EPR methodology from the UNECE in order to carry out its own EPR activities.

E. Scenarios

5. In case of a request for an EPR from a country outside of the UNECE region, the possible scenarios could be as set out below.

Scenario 1

6. UNECE would be fully responsible for the EPR of a non-member country.

7. Under this scenario, the country would liaise with its regional commission to inform it that it wants to have its EPR carried out by UNECE. If not yet in place, the respective regional commission and UNECE would conclude an agreement on the EPR procedure. Then the country would submit the request for the review to the UNECE EPR secretariat and to the Committee on Environmental Policy, which is the governing body of the EPR process.

8. Once agreed by the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy, UNECE would be responsible for and would carry out all operations related to the review, which include a preparatory mission, a main fact-finding mission, an expert group, a peer review and a launch event. UNECE would be responsible for choosing the experts for the mission, but the respective regional commission, as well as the international partner organizations, such as the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization, might suggest, recommend or provide experts in specific fields. In order to secure financial and in-kind resources, adequate funding would need to be available to carry out the EPR mission. The country under review and its corresponding regional commission would provide or find possible partners to provide funding.

9. UNECE would liaise with the national authorities of the country undergoing an EPR review.

10. In the agreement with the regional commission, practical issues would need to be agreed upon in advance:

(a) Which regional commission would be responsible for handling the formatting, translation into a local language and publication of the EPR report?

(b) Which bodies would carry out the expert group and the peer review?

Scenario 2

11. The regional commission would be fully responsible for the EPR of its member country.

12. Under this scenario, UNECE would provide the know-how to the respective regional commission.

13. The regional commission could:

(a) Acquire expertise either through the training provided by the UNECE EPR team or by direct involvement of the UNECE EPR team member(s) in its EPR review process;

(b) Participate in an UNECE EPR mission in a UNECE member country as an expert or an observer.

F. Institutional issues

14. Some clarification or modifications of the mandates regarding the expert review and peer review would be needed, as follows:

(a) Would it be appropriate to revise the mandates of the UNECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews and the Committee on Environmental Policy to explicitly include EPR outreach activities beyond UNECE? If so, these new mandates have to be agreed by the Committee on Environmental Policy and subsequently approved by the UNECE Executive Committee;

(b) Could the existing bodies in the respective regional commissions have a mandate to perform the expert and peer review function?

(c) Would the Committee on Environmental Policy recommend establishing a new inter-regional EPR expert group composed of experts from the member countries of the regional commissions involved in the EPR process?

G. Costs of the review process for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

15. An accurate assessment of costs incurred by UNECE in carrying out an EPR are difficult to assess due to the fact that they are dependent on various country-specific factors, such as financial support from other countries, provision of experts on an in-kind basis and assistance provided free of charge by partner organizations, e.g., with regard to translation services or printing, etc.

16. However, the costs (for example, for staff) of UNECE involvement could be approximated by determining its level of participation in the review, as follows.

Scenario 1:

Option (a): If UNECE takes the full responsibility for conducting the review process; the costs would be the same as with a normal EPR for UNECE member countries;

Option (b): This scenario requires only political involvement. If one UNECE staff participates in the main events of the review: preparatory mission (2–3 days), the first 3 days or the full time of the main mission, the peer-review (1 day) and the launch event (1–2 days), UNECE involvement would be between 7 to 9 days where the staff participated only in the first 3 days of the main mission, or between 14 to 16 days in case of participation for the full time of the main mission. Some aspects of the review process, such as proof reading, consolidation of data and liaising with the authorities are carried out by consultants under the UNECE umbrella;

Scenario 2: The respective regional commission covers the financial involvement of the EPR team under this scenario.