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### **Economic Commission for Europe**

#### **Committee on Environmental Policy**

##### **Twenty-fourth session**

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda

##### **Cross-sectoral activities**

### **Cross-sectoral activities of the Environment subprogramme**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

##### *Summary*

The Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy, meeting in an extended format on 28 February 2018, requested the secretariat to prepare a briefing note on the cross-sectoral activities of the Economic Commission for Europe Environment subprogramme for the Committee's consideration at its twenty-fourth session. The present document presents the recent developments and plans for the future related to these activities and contains recommendations to the Committee concerning the future work under their auspices.

## Introduction

1. The present document presents the recent developments, plans for the future and the expected decisions by the Committee with regard to the cross-sectoral activities under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Environment subprogramme. These activities include education for sustainable development, the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme, the European Environment and Health Process, environment and security, mainstreaming a gender perspective in environmental activities and green building. The text reflects comments made by the Bureau at its meeting on 26 and 27 September 2018 in Geneva.

## I. Education for sustainable development

### A. Overview of recent developments

2. The thirteenth meeting of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (Geneva, 3–4 May 2018) was attended by delegations from 21 member States of ECE and representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia and seven non-governmental organizations.

3. At the meeting the Committee considered the main developments at the regional level regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the progress made by countries in the implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development since the Committee's previous meeting based on informal reporting by stakeholders. Participants also discussed capacity-building activities, including a capacity-building workshop held on 19 and 20 April 2018 in Yerevan, supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation. Furthermore, participants shared information about the outcomes of recent global and regional activities to promote education for sustainable development, including the UNESCO report on the implementation of education for sustainable development (A/72/130) and the resulting General Assembly resolution 72/222, monitoring on Sustainable Development Goal 4 and target 4.7 and other processes concerning the future of education for sustainable development. The Committee moreover looked at the issue of the mainstreaming of gender issues in education for sustainable development and financial issues, including the status of the trust fund and resource requirements. Finally, the Steering Committee adopted the workplan for implementation of the first phase of the post-2015 implementation period of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2018/3).

4. Within the framework of continuing cooperation with the education for sustainable development-related processes in the region, the secretariat took part in the first meeting of the Mediterranean Committee for Education for Sustainable Development (Nicosia, 22–24 November 2017).

5. Cooperation with UNESCO, as the lead organization for the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, has been continuing through the participation in the Partner Networks established to help implement the Programme.

6. The Chair and some members of the Steering Committee actively participated in the preparations and proceedings of the UNESCO-organized Technical Consultation Meeting on the Future of Education for Sustainable Development (9–10 July 2018) in Bangkok and provided their feedback for reviewing the draft concept paper on the future direction of education for sustainable development to be subsequently submitted to the UNESCO

Executive Board, the General Conference and the United Nations, for approval through their respective processes in 2019.

## **B. Goals and challenges**

7. In 2016, at the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries in Batumi, Georgia, the mandate for cooperation on education for sustainable development across the region was extended to 2030, with the timeline to be aligned with other global commitments including the Sustainable Development Goals. Since then, efforts have been made so that the work under the ECE Strategy is aligned with and supports the UNESCO efforts within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014) and the follow-up efforts under the Global Action Programme.

8. There is continuing interest among ECE member States in regional cooperation for the implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development as part of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 4 and target 4.7 but also target 12.8. Key challenges to this work include: encouraging balanced subregional participation; securing the involvement of ministries of both education and environment; the need to take a fresher and more in-depth approach to engagement with education for sustainable development themes and processes; optimizing the format of the meetings, to make them more effective and increase participation; and relaunching the work of the expert groups under the process, for example, the expert groups on monitoring and evaluation and on indicators, as their work is among the most valuable and relevant to the needs of members and other education for sustainable development stakeholders.

9. At its thirteenth meeting, the Steering Committee decided to establish an ad hoc strategic planning group to define the new focus and direction of regional collaboration on education for sustainable development. The Netherlands will host a meeting of the ad hoc group.

10. It is vital to establish good cooperation among the Steering Committee members and country focal points, to liaise at the national level with relevant authorities and stakeholders and to include education for sustainable development considerations in national contributions to regional and global events, such as the ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the high-level political forum on sustainable development based in New York.

## **C. Planned activities**

11. The establishment of the ad hoc strategic planning group is presently under way. The group will consist of about 12 individuals, based on the expression of interest from member States and non-governmental organizations, with a balanced geographical representation. The first meeting will be held in late 2019.

12. The fourth mandatory reporting cycle under the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development is now concluding. On 1 November 2018, the participating member States are due to submit their national implementation reports for the present implementation phase, with a synthesis report to be presented at the fourteenth meeting of the Steering Committee in May 2019.

13. The secretariat, the Steering Committee Chair and the Bureau will follow the preparatory process for the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in 2019 with a view to finding the most effective way to participate.

14. The capacity-building efforts will continue, with the next workshop planned to be held in Georgia in early 2019 with the support from Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation.

#### **D. Decisions expected from the Committee on Environmental Policy**

15. The Committee on Environmental Policy is invited to take note of the information provided on the work of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development and to encourage its members from the countries participating in the Strategy to stay informed on the process at the national level through establishing and maintaining working contacts with the Steering Committee members and focal points from their national administrations and non-governmental organizations.

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

### **A. Overview of recent developments**

16. The Bureau of the Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) met in an extended format on 10 and 11 July in Vienna. The main topic of the meeting was the preparation of the High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Vienna, 22–24 October 2019).

17. The participants discussed:

(a) The themes of the High-level Meeting and the elements to include in the draft declaration;

(b) The outcome of ongoing work and activities to be presented and adopted at the High-level Meeting;

(c) A schedule for the negotiation of the outcome documents of the High-level Meeting.

18. The Bureau also agreed on workshops and other activities until the end of the year and adopted the draft documents to be formally submitted to the sixteenth meeting of the Steering Committee (Geneva, 12–14 December 2018). Furthermore, it welcomed a publication linking the Programme to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

19. THE PEP Partnership on cycling presented a third draft of the pan-European master plan for cycling promotion to be adopted at the High-level Meeting.

20. The secretariat also informed the participants that a save-the-date letter had been sent on 28 June 2018, through the Permanent Missions in Geneva, to ministers representing the three Programme sectors. As well as informing member States about the date of the High-level Meeting with the aim of securing the attendance of representatives at high level, the letter requested member States to nominate or confirm focal points under the Programme.

21. A technical briefing, entitled “Healthy people through environmentally sustainable urban transport: towards the Fifth High Level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment” was organized during the sixty-eighth session of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee for Europe (Rome, 17–20 September 2018) on 18 September.

22. Two relay-race workshops took place, one in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, on 23 October 2018 and one in Rimini, Italy, on 6 November 2018.

## **B. Goals and challenges**

23. The main goal for the end of 2018 is to elaborate a sound draft of the declaration of the High-level Meeting and agree on the text of the draft pan-European master plan for cycling promotion.

24. A key challenge is the need for sustainable financial resources to support member States in implementing the Programme's Priority Goals. The Bureau members are also aware that the differences between countries in the region make the implementation of the Priority Goals more complex, with different solutions needed in the subregions and individual countries.

25. THE PEP aims to position itself as one of the processes that member States can rely on to implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and selected Sustainable Development Goals, notably when working on decarbonization and on sustainable transport in sustainable cities.

## **C. Planned activities**

26. The following Programme activities will be organized between September and December 2018:

(a) A workshop on "Strengthening the integration of health and environmental aspects into transport policies in Central Asian countries" (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 20–21 November 2018);

(b) A meeting of THE PEP Partnership on cycling (Geneva, 11 December 2018);

(c) The sixteenth session of the Steering Committee (Geneva, 12–14 December 2018).

27. The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme will continue working on a study on integrating transport planning into land-use planning. The study, financed by the Russian Federation, is led by the ECE Sustainable Transport Division. The ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management is also involved.

28. The findings from the economic modelling for a new study on green jobs in green transport are expected to be discussed at the sixteenth session of the Steering Committee. The study focuses on jobs derived from the electrification of transport and increased public transportation. The results of the study are to be presented at the High-level Meeting in 2019.

29. In 2019 the following activities are envisaged:

(a) Two meetings of the Bureau in an extended format, preliminarily scheduled for early spring and June or July 2019;

(b) A relay-race workshop, possibly in late spring 2019;

(c) Activities to promote the High-level Meeting, in the first half of 2019;

(d) A special session of the Steering Committee, to be held in Vienna on 21 October 2019;

(e) The Fifth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment, to be held in Vienna from 22 to 24 October 2019.

30. Member States are to conclude negotiations on the outcome documents for the High-level Meeting by early summer 2019. By that time, the studies on integrating transport planning into land-use planning and on green jobs in green transport will have been completed. A publication on THE PEP Partnerships is to be issued in the first half of 2019.

#### **D. Decisions expected from the Committee on Environmental Policy**

31. The Committee on Environmental Policy is invited to take note of the information provided and to welcome the work under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme. Furthermore, it is invited to support the Programme and encourage the participation of ministers of environment in the High-level Meeting in 2019 and of experts in the preparatory process for the High-level Meeting.

32. The Committee is also invited to encourage the nomination of national focal points to the Programme from the environment side.

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

#### **A. Overview of recent developments**

33. The European Environment and Health Task Force held its eighth meeting on 20 and 21 March 2018 in Bonn, Germany. It was the first meeting of the Task Force since the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava, Czechia, 13–15 June 2017).

34. A representative of the ECE Environment Division informed the members of the Task Force of the outcomes of discussions on the Environment and Health Process at the twenty-third session of the Committee on Environmental Policy. In particular, he referred to the decision by the Committee to maintain the status quo and remain a strong partner of the Process, without ECE joining the secretariat of the Process at present, and to consider the issue again should there be extrabudgetary resources made available by interested countries for additional work by ECE on the Process.

35. The Task Force elected members of the Bureau. Representatives of the environment ministries of Austria, the Netherlands and Serbia and representatives of the health ministries of Armenia, Israel, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland were elected to the Bureau. Representatives of ECE and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are also members of the Bureau.

36. Also at the meeting, the Task Force adopted a workplan for the period 2018–2019 and discussed the development of national portfolios of actions on environment and health by the end of 2018, as decided by ministers in Ostrava, by drawing on a compendium of possible actions included in annex to the Conference Declaration. Some delegations reported progress in the development of their national portfolios and participants discussed how to leverage existing platforms to support the development of their national portfolios.

#### **B. Goals and challenges**

37. The Task Force requested its Bureau to implement the workplan for the period 2018–2019 and to support the development of a communication strategy.

38. The Task force also aimed at collecting information on the implementation of the portfolios of actions, without creating an additional reporting burden on member States. The Task Force agreed in principle to use a survey, as piloted by WHO, as a basis for reporting on the development of the national portfolios.

### **C. Planned activities**

39. The Task Force is to meet annually. Member States requested a meeting of the Bureau to be organized in autumn 2018.

### **D. Decisions expected from the Committee on Environmental Policy**

40. The Committee on Environmental Policy is invited to note the information provided with respect to the Environment and Health Process and to reconfirm its commitment to contribute to the Process.

## **IV. Environment and security**

### **A. Overview of recent developments**

41. At present, ECE is only participating in one project under the Environment and Security initiative. The project, being carried out in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), seeks to support Georgia in ratifying and implementing the ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and to strengthen transboundary water cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia.

42. A main obligation of the Water Convention is for Parties to establish bilateral agreements on the management of shared waters in transboundary basins. A major focus of the Environment and Security project therefore is to establish an agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia on cooperation in the field of protection and sustainable use of the water resources of the Kura River basin. With the support of ECE and OSCE, negotiations have been held, and a draft agreement on the management of the Kura River has been prepared.

### **B. Goals and challenges**

43. On 31 December 2017, the memorandum of understanding of the Environment and Security initiative expired. As over recent years funding has declined to a level that does not allow for new project activities, the Management Board of the initiative decided to revise the partnership agreement. As a result, Environment and Security initiative partners are working on a new, lighter arrangement for cooperation.

### **C. Planned activities**

44. The ongoing project on the ratification and implementation of the Water Convention in Georgia will continue as long as there are resources for it. While negotiations are currently stalled, it is expected that, with the support of ECE and OSCE, negotiations will continue between Azerbaijan and Georgia and the draft agreement can be finalized.

45. There are a number of other projects in the pipeline under the Environment and Security initiative, but until a new agreement on cooperation among the partners is signed, no new activities can be started under its umbrella. However, if one of the Environment and Security initiative partners receives funding for a project, the receiving organization can seek cooperation with the other partners to benefit from existing experience.

## **V. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in environmental activities**

### **A. Overview of recent developments**

46. Following up on the objectives in the ECE Gender Action Plan for 2016–2017, the Environment Division reported on the implementation of activities in 2017 as part of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).

47. The secretariat continuously promoted a gender balance in the governing bodies of the multilateral environmental processes that it services. In the period 2017–2018, the majority of the chairs of the governing bodies of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements were women. In the same period, the chairs of the Committee on Environmental Policy, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators were women, whereas the chairs of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews and the THE PEP Steering Committee were men. The secretariat also strived to ensure equal opportunities for the participation of women and men in meetings, capacity-building seminars, workshops and trainings organized under the auspices of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements.

48. The gender dimension was incorporated in the ECE environmental performance reviews undertaken in 2018 – the third reviews of Kazakhstan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – through a gender section in the introduction and in other chapters.

49. At a meeting of the Bureau of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (Vienna, 10–11 July 2018) members discussed how to incorporate gender issues in the Programme workplan and a planned relay-race workshop (Rimini, Italy, November 2018) was identified as an occasion to mainstream a gender perspective in the Programme's work.

50. A gender perspective was mainstreamed in the activities on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health to the Water Convention. The gender dimension was discussed in the assessment of the situation of equitable access in Bulgaria (January–July 2018), and in the context of a discussion on progress in the region held at the fifth meeting of the Expert Group on Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation (Paris, 26–27 June 2018).

51. Gender disparities were addressed at the special session “International Mechanisms and Procedures to realize the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation” co-organized by the secretariat of the Protocol on Water and Health and the United Nations human rights special procedure mandate holders at the Eighth World Water Forum (Brasilia, 18–23 March 2018). Furthermore, a guidance document “Protocol on Water and Health and the 2030 Agenda: practical guide for joint implementation”, under development in 2017–2018, emphasizes the gender dimension of water and health issues.

### **B. Goals and challenges**

52. Major challenges in mainstreaming a gender perspective in environmental activities include the lack of national policies addressing gender and the environment and the absence of gender disaggregated data on environmental issues, such as access to water and sanitation, access to energy, access to land and coverage by waste collection in the countries of the region.

### **C. Planned activities**

53. Following up on the 2016–2017 plan, a new ECE Gender Action Plan for 2018–2019 was developed to implement the ECE gender policy. The Plan's strategic actions include the promotion of a gender perspective and raising the importance of taking a gender perspective into account in the different activities and events under the Environment subprogramme, as appropriate.

### **D. Decisions expected from the Committee on Environmental Policy**

54. The Committee is invited to note 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 to:

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

(b) Support international initiatives to promote gender equality and welcome continued cooperation and coordination with the United Nations bodies and other relevant international forums and actors to that end;

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

## **VI. Green building**

55. While the activities on green building are cross-cutting, and have direct implications for and links to the environment, these activities are carried out under the other ECE subprogrammes, including Forests, Land and Housing and Sustainable Energy. Information paper No. 11 contains more information on the activities on green building.<sup>1</sup>

### **Decisions expected from the Committee on Environmental Policy**

56. The Committee on Environmental Policy is invited to consider organizing an international conference, in cooperation with all relevant ECE subprogrammes, and in particular with the support of the Housing and Land Management Unit, the ECE-Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Forestry and Timber Section and the Energy Division, on green building, with a view to exploring all aspects of and opportunities to facilitate a transition in the ECE region towards green building.

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<sup>1</sup> The information paper is available on the web page for the Committee's twenty-fourth session ([www.unece.org/index.php?id=50063](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50063)).