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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Committee on Environmental Policy

#### Twenty-fifth session

Geneva, 13–15 November 2019

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

#### Cross-sectoral activities

## Cross-sectoral activities under the auspices of the ECE Environment subprogramme

### Note by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

The Committee on Environmental Policy Bureau meeting in an extended format (Geneva, 28 February 2018; ECE/CEP/2019/3) requested the secretariat to prepare a briefing note as an official document on all cross-sectoral activities under the auspices of the ECE Environment subprogramme. The first document under such a format (ECE/CEP/2019/11) was considered by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-fourth session (Geneva, 29–31 January 2019).

The Committee on Environmental Policy Bureau meeting (Geneva, 6 June 2019) requested the secretariat to continue this practice and prepare a similar document for the twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy. Following up on that request, the current document elaborates on the recent developments, plans for the future and the expected decisions by the Committee.



## **I. Education for sustainable development**

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

1. The fourteenth meeting of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (Geneva, 2 and 3 May 2019) was attended by delegations from 27 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia and seventeen non-governmental and academia organizations.
2. The Steering 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.
3. The Chair of the Steering Committee, representing Cyprus, presented the preliminary findings of the progress report for the fourth mandatory reporting cycle (2017–2019, fourth phase of implementation of the Strategy) based on the analysis of national implementation reports from 24 member States (Information paper 1).<sup>1</sup>
4. The secretariat informed the Committee about the outcomes of the peer learning round table “The Power of Knowledge for Change: Education and Learning as Drivers of Sustainable Development and ‘learning to live together’”, which was organized in cooperation with the members of the Steering Committee and partner organizations in the framework of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE Region held in Geneva on 21–23 March 2019.
5. The Ad hoc Working Group for Strategic Planning continued its work and its first meeting was organized with the support of the Government of the Netherlands (The Hague, Netherlands, 27 and 28 November 2018). The group prepared the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework and the outline of the draft workplan for implementation of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development after 2019. The Steering Committee discussed outcomes of the work of the Group.
6. At its fourteenth meeting, the Steering Committee decided to establish the Ad Hoc Working Group on Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development, with a mandate to elaborate the new reporting format. The draft revised format will be presented at the fifteenth meeting of the Steering Committee in May 2020.
7. Participants also discussed capacity-building activities, including a capacity-building workshop, held on 5 and 6 April 2019 in Tbilisi, on the promotion of education for sustainable development at the national level, supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation.
8. Furthermore, participants shared information about the outcomes of recent global and regional activities to promote education for sustainable development. The Committee also discussed other issues, including the status of the trust fund and resource requirements.

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

9. At the second High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Batumi, Georgia, 8 June 2016) 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.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.unece.org/environmental-policy/education-for-sustainable-development/meetings-and-events/education-for-sustainable-development/unece-steering-committee/2019/fourteenth-meeting-of-the-unece-steering-committee-on-education-for-sustainable-development-salle-vii-palais-des-nations-geneva-switzerland/doc.html](http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/education-for-sustainable-development/meetings-and-events/education-for-sustainable-development/unece-steering-committee/2019/fourteenth-meeting-of-the-unece-steering-committee-on-education-for-sustainable-development-salle-vii-palais-des-nations-geneva-switzerland/doc.html).

10. 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. With the activities of the Steering Committee intensifying, the participation in both the process and the meetings of the Steering Committee has been increasing, and the work of the expert groups has begun to deliver practical results. However, some key challenges that remain are: more balanced subregional participation; involvement of ministries of both education and environment; and efficient involvement of stakeholder groups.

11. The challenges as outlined in the key findings of the preliminary report of the fourth mandatory reporting cycle include: efficient coordination at the national level of various policies in support of education for sustainable development; the involvement of various stakeholders; application of the whole institution approach in practice; the establishment of networks promoting cooperation on education for sustainable development at the national level; the establishment of the quality control criteria for related tools and materials; financial and time constraints in implementing the national implementation plans.

12. In addition, mobilization of stable and predictable extrabudgetary funding in support of the secretariat services for the Steering Committee remains a challenge; however, the trend is positive and the number of member States contributing financially and in-kind to the work of the Committee is increasing.

### **C. Planned activities**

13. The second meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Strategic Planning is to be held during September 2019 in Cyprus. The Netherlands will host the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Indicators for Education for Sustainable Development in October 2019.

14. The deadline for completing the progress report for the fourth mandatory reporting cycle was extended at the request of several member States. The final document is expected to be submitted to the fifteenth session of the Steering Committee (May 2020).

15. Capacity-building efforts will continue through the organization of national workshops, in agreement with the donor and beneficiary member States.

16. The Committee will undertake efforts to engage youth in advancing the education for sustainable development agenda and particularly in the processes under ECE, possibly through organizing a youth meeting in 2020 in the Republic of Cyprus.

17. The Steering Committee will start preparations for the Third High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries of the ECE region, which is to be held in the framework of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Meeting; in this regard the Steering Committee will work in close cooperation with the Committee on Environmental Policy.

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

18. 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 remain informed of 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 (NGOs).

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

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

19. The Bureau of the Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) met in an extended format on 2 and 3 May 2019, in Valletta; a meeting at which it continued the preparations towards the Fifth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment.

20. The Bureau also mandated a drafting group, created under its auspices, to continue working on the draft declaration and other main outcomes of the High-level Meeting. The drafting group met in The Hague, Netherlands, on 6 and 7 June 2019.

21. At its meeting on 1 and 2 July in Bonn, Germany, the Bureau discussed and approved the proposal by the representative of the Government of Austria, as host of the High-level Meeting, to postpone the event to 2020. The decision was taken after the dissolution of the Government and the calling of parliamentary elections in Austria.

22. In view of the above decision, the Bureau, started preparing the seventeenth session of the PEP Steering Committee (Geneva, 21–23 October 2019), to be convened in the absence of a high-level meeting in 2019.

23. The main task of the PEP Steering Committee was to support negotiations among member States on the outputs of the High-level Meeting, which include:

- (a) A draft declaration;
- (b) A draft Pan-European Master Plan for Cycling Promotion;
- (c) Policy recommendations for eco-driving;
- (d) Conclusions and recommendations from a handbook on sustainable transport and urban planning;
- (e) Results of a study on green and healthy jobs in transport;
- (f) A draft workplan for the period 2020–2025;
- (g) Results of a study on international best practices on mobility management.

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

24. The work under THE PEP was to continue to focus on the lead up to the Fifth High-level Meeting and its outputs, with the Bureau maintaining the interest of representatives of member States in the negotiations.

25. The need for sustainable financial resources to support member States in implementing the Programme's Priority Goals remains a challenge for THE PEP. More sustainable resources would allow a more tailored approach to support member States, particularly those with economies in transition.

26. Member States intend to use the forum provided by the High-level Meeting to position THE PEP as one of the processes that member States can rely on to implement the Paris Agreement and selected Sustainable Development Goals, notably when working on decarbonization and on sustainable urban transport.

### **C. Planned activities**

27. The next relay race workshop was to take place in Kazan, Russian Federation, on 12 September 2019, with the title "Smart urban mobility: the prospects for use of modern information and transport technologies to improve safety and quality of transport services".

28. The seventeenth session of THE PEP Steering Committee was scheduled to take place in Geneva, on 21–23 October 2019.

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

29. 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 2020 and of experts in the preparatory process for the High-level Meeting.

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

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

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

31. The Bureau of the European Environment and Health Task Force met three times in 2019. Twice, on 22 January and on 4 March, in a virtual format, and the third time on 12 June in a face-to-face meeting. The ECE secretariat participated in all three meetings remotely.

32. The Bureau took note that all World Health Organization (WHO)/ Europe activities on environment and health, including THE PEP, had been moved to the WHO office in Bonn, Germany, headed by Ms. Francesca Racioppi.

33. The Bureau discussed:

(a) The implementation of national portfolios of actions on environment and health – developed following the adoption of the Declaration of the sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health<sup>2</sup> (Ostrava, Czechia, 13–15 June 2017) – and replies to a survey launched to better understand priorities and challenges of member States;

(b) The programme, dates and venue for the meeting of the Task Force;

(c) The work of its two working groups;

(d) The development of a communication strategy.

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

34. The Bureau of the European Environment and Health Task Force is to complete and implement a communication strategy for the Process. Further analysis will need to be carried out of the results of the survey on the national portfolios of actions, including on how to monitor the progress on environment and health using the Sustainable Development Goals.

35. The Bureau was also to prepare the next meeting of the Task Force. At the time of preparing this document the dates were not known, but it was expected to take place in early December 2019.

#### **C. Planned activities**

36. The Task Force was to meet by the end of 2019. The WHO/Europe secretariat was starting to work on a pilot school on environment and health.

<sup>2</sup> See [www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2017/06/sixth-ministerial-conference-on-environment-and-health/documentation/declaration-of-the-sixth-ministerial-conference-on-environment-and-health](http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2017/06/sixth-ministerial-conference-on-environment-and-health/documentation/declaration-of-the-sixth-ministerial-conference-on-environment-and-health).

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

37. 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 Initiative**

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

38. On 31 December 2017, the Environment and Security Initiative memorandum of understanding came to an end. Based on discussions in the Environment and Security Initiative Management Board, a new memorandum of understanding was to be elaborated. This process took longer than expected due to the new approach of having a “light” version; two other Initiative partners (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) engaging heavily with their legal departments; and one partner, Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, withdrawing from the initiative.

39. In July 2019, the new memorandum of understanding was circulated among the Initiative partners, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, UNEP, UNDP and ECE for signing.

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

40. The new memorandum for understanding, effective until 31 December 2021, will coin a partnership to align the Initiative with new developments in the area of environment and security and in particular with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (in particular with regard to Sustainable Development Goals 1,6,7,11,12,13,15,16 and 17), which among other things, sets the goal for revitalizing partnerships for sustainable development; the Paris Agreement; and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

41. The Initiative sees itself as a unique mechanism for multi-agency cooperation that provides effective integrated response to traditional and emerging environmental challenges that may have an impact on security, stability and peace, and thus acts as a role model for Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

42. The Initiative will continue its work based on a growing understanding that increasing pressure on natural resources, the impact of climate change and environmental degradation pose multifaceted security challenges within and across national borders.

43. The Initiative will work to assess and address environmental problems, which threaten or might potentially threaten security, societal stability and peace, human health and/or sustainable livelihoods, within and across national borders.

### **C. Planned activities**

44. Collaboration between the Partner Organizations towards coordinated programming in their respective activities in the areas covered by the Initiative may result in joint activities or other forms of cooperation, which will be formalized through separate legal instruments between the Partner Organizations involved, to define and implement such activities, projects and programmes, further to and in accordance with their respective regulations, rules, policies and procedures.

45. Each of the Partner Organizations at its discretion will collaborate with respect to the Initiative, in line with its mandate and comparative advantages through its expertise, capacities and projects in the areas of natural resources management, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, hazardous substances and information and participation,

with particular focus on their security implications with the aim of reducing risks to security and enhancing cooperation within and across borders.

46. In the reporting period, ECE and OSCE continued their activities to support transboundary water cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia in the Kura River Basin, by engaging with the relevant authorities in the countries at both the political and technical levels with a view to a possible launch of formal negotiations on finalizing the draft agreement between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Georgia on Cooperation in the Field of Protection and Sustainable Use of the Water Resources of the Kura River Basin. This activity has been historically supported through the Initiative and more recently also through the European Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership programme.

## V. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in environmental activities

### A. Overview of the recent developments

47. Following up on the objectives in the ECE Gender Action Plan 2017–2018, the Environment Division reported on the implementation of activities in 2018 as part of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

48. The secretariat continuously promoted a gender balance in the governing bodies of the multilateral environmental processes that it services. In the period 2018–2019, 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 and 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 training sessions organized under the auspices of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements.

49. The gender dimension was incorporated in the third environmental performance review of Uzbekistan undertaken in 2019 through gender sections in several chapters.

50. Under THE PEP, gender issues were discussed during a relay-race workshop (Rimini, Italy, 9 November 2018) and during a capacity-building activity on “Strengthening the integration of health and environmental aspects into transport policies in Central Asian countries” (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 20 and 21 November 2018).

51. A gender perspective was mainstreamed in the activities on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. The gender dimension was reflected in the *Action plan to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation in the region of Šumadija and Pomoravlje* (Serbia), which was endorsed in early 2019. The gender dimension is also mainstreamed in the new publication *The Human Rights to Water and sanitation in practice: Findings and lessons learned from the work on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health in the pan-European region*, which is currently being finalized.

52. Gender disparities were further addressed in the guidance document *Protocol on Water and Health and the 2030 Agenda: a practical guide for joint implementation*,<sup>3</sup> which emphasizes the gender dimension of water and health issues in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.19.II.E.15.

## **B. Goals and challenges**

53. 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. With regard to the availability of gender disaggregated data, the situation is slightly improving as countries start collecting and disclosing gender disaggregated data on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **C. Planned activities**

54. 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**

55. 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.
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