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Committee on Environmental Policy

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Regular pan-European environmental assessment supported by the Shared Environmental Information System

Revised updated draft outline of the next pan-European assessment

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment has been tasked by the Committee on Environmental Policy with leading a process of consultation on the regular pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 2 (b)) for consideration by the Committee and leading up to the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

At its twenty-fifth session (Geneva, 13–15 November 2019), the Committee welcomed the information provided by the secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the next pan-European environmental assessment, and selected option 3 from among the options for the next pan-European environmental assessment set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6, subject to the availability of resources. Furthermore, it requested the secretariat and UNEP, working in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency, to prepare a limited indicator-based and thematic assessment and regularly inform the Bureau of progress made (ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 37 (k) (i) and (ii)).

The present document aims to facilitate the Working Group's agreement on the outline for a limited indicator-based and thematic assessment and subsequent oversight of the preparation of the assessment. The outline was prepared based on the draft concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6), decisions taken during the twenty-fifth session of the Committee and written feedback received from member States in May 2020.



I. Introduction

1. The series of environmental assessments of the pan-European region provide up-to-date and policy-relevant information on the interactions between the environment and society. The assessments were a consistent feature of the Environment for Europe process from 1995 to 2016. The 2009 reform of the Environment for Europe process identified the pan-European assessment as one of the three substantive documents to be prepared for each ministerial conference, together with up to two theme-specific reports (ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, para. 12 (a) and (d)).
2. Following the Seventh Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nur-Sultan, 21–23 September 2011), responsibility for the drafting of the assessment shifted from the European Environment Agency to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).
3. During the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016), the launch of the European regional assessment of the Global Environment Outlook as the regular pan-European environmental assessment was welcomed (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2/Add.1, para. 10). The sixth *Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) Assessment for the Pan-European Region* provides a picture of environmental factors affecting human health and well-being at the regional level.¹
4. Following the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy adopted the revised mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment for the period 2017–2021 (ECE/CEP/2017/2, para. 32 and annex II).
5. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment was tasked by the Committee on Environmental Policy with leading a process of consultation on the regular pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 2 (b)) for consideration by the Committee and leading up to the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. This responsibility set the basis for a first draft concept paper on possible options for the seventh pan-European environmental assessment, produced in 2018.²
6. At its twentieth session (Geneva, 3 and 4 September 2018), the Working Group considered the first draft concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment³ and requested the secretariat and UNEP, in consultation with the European Environment Agency, to develop a revised concept to be shared with the Working Group at its following session. The Working Group also requested the secretariat to inform the Committee on Environmental Policy of the outcomes of the discussion and suggestions made for the pan-European assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2018/2, paras. 34 and 52).
7. During its twenty-first session (Geneva, 6 and 7 May 2019), the Working Group considered the revised draft concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6) and recommended that option 2 – an indicator-based and thematic assessment – be used as a basis for preparing a detailed proposal on the pan-European assessment. The Working Group also requested the secretariat to inform the Committee on Environmental Policy, at its twenty-fifth session (Geneva, 13–15 November 2019), of the outcome of the agenda item and the recommendation made for the pan-European assessment and to share the detailed proposal with potential donors prior to the Committee’s session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/2, paras. 37–39).
8. At its twenty-fifth session, the Committee on Environmental Policy welcomed the information provided by the secretariat and UNEP on the next pan-European environmental assessment and selected option 3 from among the options for the next pan-European environmental assessment set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6, subject to the

¹ United Nations Environment Programme, *Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6) Assessment for the Pan-European Region* (Nairobi, United Nations Office at Nairobi, 2016).

² See www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environmental-monitoring-and-assessment/meetings-and-events/environmental-monitoring/enveuropemonitoringmeeting/2018/20th-session-of-wgema/doc.html.

³ Ibid.

availability of resources. It furthermore requested the secretariat and UNEP, working in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency, to prepare a limited indicator-based and thematic assessment and to regularly inform the Bureau of progress made. The Committee encouraged all member States to provide the necessary funding to enable the preparation of the assessment (ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 37 (k) (i)–(iii)).

9. The Committee selected the two following specific themes for the Ministerial Conference and, consequently, the assessment:

(a) Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure;

(b) Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism (ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 21 (b)).

10. The present document aims to facilitate the Working Group's agreement on the outline for a limited indicator-based and thematic assessment, subject to the availability of resources, and subsequent oversight of the preparation of the assessment. The outline was prepared based on the draft concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6), decisions made during the twenty-fifth session of the Committee and written feedback received from member States in May 2020. The outline, revised as necessary, will be presented to the Committee during its meeting in Geneva, from 9 to 11 November 2020. Given the limited time and funds available until the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, the updates are expected to allow the Working Group to lead the process of consultation on the next pan-European environmental assessment in the period 2020–2021.

II. Updated draft outline of the next pan-European assessment

11. The draft table of contents of the assessment is set out in the box below.

12. Various chapters and sections, especially those in chapter III of the publication, will consider cross-cutting issues and examine the relevance of the information for sustainable development and a green and circular economy, as appropriate.

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