

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

Fifty-seventh session

7-10 May 2002

**ECE ANNUAL SESSION**

Report by the Chairperson of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work

Reaffirming the principles of the Plan of Action of 1997 and taking into account the experience of the last four ECE Annual Sessions the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work has discussed the ways of improvement of work of the Annual Sessions and agreed on following recommendations to be considered by the Commission at its fifty-seventh session, item 6 of the agenda "Strengthening the Organization", in addition to the Conference Room Paper 3 of the secretariat on this issue.

Objectives of the Annual Session should be:

1. To allow for a broader exchange of views among member States, partner institutions, business community and NGOs on strengthening cooperation within the ECE region; as part of this exchange of views, a debate should be organized on a major economic issue pertinent to all countries of the region, if possible, on a topic similar or related to that of the Spring Seminar;
2. When necessary, to consider and make recommendations on a topical or new/emerging policy issue for the region;
3. To elaborate and update, if necessary, the strategic vision of UNECE's role and place in the regional and global scene in the context of globalization, taking into account the decisions taken by UN and related to the ECE activities;
4. To assess in a comprehensive manner the work of the Commission in the inter-sessional period (achievements/constraints); this would include, in particular, a review of the work of Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs), and would aim at mapping perspectives for the year ahead, adjusting the work programme and providing orientations for the preparation of the biennial programme budget;
5. To allow for a dialogue with the Chairpersons of PSBs on cross-sectoral concerns and intersectoral issues and activities;
6. To review and evaluate the technical assistance activities and provide directions for their future development.

### Time, Duration and Structure of the Annual Session

1. The secretariat should provide the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work with possible alternatives for the dates of the annual session with a view to ensuring the proper coordination with other events in the international calendar, holidays, etc. and the proper preparation and circulation of documents. The Group will consider these alternatives and provide recommendations to be adopted by the Commission at its Ad Hoc Informal session.
2. The Group of Experts reconfirms the advisability of organizing a 3-4 day session, including a pre-sessional one-day Seminar and a follow-up High-level policy discussion, as agreed in the Plan of Action of 1997.
3. The topic for the High-level policy dialogue should be one that is of importance to all countries of the region and approved by the Commission at its Ad Hoc Informal session.
4. The agenda of the Annual Session should include the following clusters of items:

#### Policy segment

- High-level policy dialogue on current situation in the ECE region and selected theme/emerging issue and its possible implications for the work of the Commission
- Based on the report of the Executive Secretary, discussion on major policy directions of ECE's work;

#### General segment

- Report of the Executive Secretary on the achievements of, as well as constraints on, the work of the Commission during the inter-sessional period, and perspectives for the following year cycle;
  - Report of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work, including the possible adjustments to the current programme of work of the ECE;
  - Guidance for PSBs and sectoral priorities. The Chairpersons of the PSBs should report to the Commission on a biennial basis;
  - Operational activities (technical assistance) including priorities, funding and review of effectiveness;
  - Cooperation and coordination with other international, regional and sub-regional organizations and institutions, as well as other relevant partners;
  - Election of the Bureau and adoption of the final report.
5. Discussions at the Steering Committee should be a part of the Annual Session.

### Level of Participation

The thematically oriented «Policy Segment», including the discussion on strengthening of the Commission and its activities, should aim at the most effective participation possible including, when appropriate, at the ministerial level. Similar to the existing practice in other UN bodies, representatives of other organizations and institutions, academia, NGOs, business community etc. should be involved in the discussions on relevant issues.

### Documentation

1. Each substantive item for consideration at the session (including programme and management related issues) should be supported by concise and action-oriented documentation, prepared according to current UN norms in terms of translation into all ECE official languages, publication and distribution. All the documents should be also placed on the web-site as soon as possible.
2. In order to ensure a balanced approach in the documentation, the Secretariat should make every effort to incorporate the concerns of all countries and groups of countries of the region, and to reflect their views when necessary. The same balanced approach should apply to data presentation. If needed, the Secretariat may consult with member States on the main features of selected documents prior to their preparation.
3. Informal documents (non-papers, conference room papers, backgrounders...) may be produced to support particular agenda items in order to provide additional information, statistics etc. but should not be used as a substitute for normal parliamentary documentation.
4. A standard set of documents should include:
  - Annual report of the Executive Secretary on the work of the Commission (approximately 10-15 pages) which should present and assess the major ECE activities, including those of the PSBs, and provide directions for future work. It should also review ECE's cooperation and coordination with other international, regional and sub-regional organizations and institutions, as well as other relevant partners. These various elements could be presented either as parts of a same report, in annexes, or in separate reports, as appropriate; in the case of technical assistance, a note or report by the Executive Secretary on technical assistance with analysis of its effectiveness and necessary data, conclusions and possible recommendations to be considered by the Commission;
  - Proposals for adjustments in the programme of work, if any;
  - Economic Survey of Europe with a special chapter related to the theme of the «Policy segment»;
  - Report of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work.

### Outcome

1. The High-level policy dialogue should normally be recorded in the form of Chairman's summary. The nature of the outcome of the discussions on other substantive items of the agenda (Chairman's summary, recommendations, decisions...) will be considered at the Ad Hoc Informal session of the Commission after the discussion of the provisional agenda of the Annual Session.
2. Reports by the Commission's inter-sessional and Ad Hoc bodies, including the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work, should be included, as appropriate, into its final report.

### Preparations

The Bureau, through appropriate consultations with member States, should play an active role in ensuring timeliness and transparency in the organization and preparations for the Annual Session and Seminar (including the choice of the dates, topics of discussion, submission of documentation, invitation of civil society representatives to the Seminar and discussions) and report to the Ad Hoc Informal session of the ECE. It should closely collaborate with the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work in making proposals on substantive aspects of the Annual Session and Seminar (selection of topics, agenda, programme of meetings, outcome).