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Geneva, 27–30 October 2015

Item 5 (g) of the provisional agenda

The Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference: draft agenda for the Conference

Draft annotated provisional agenda for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At its twentieth session (Geneva, 28–31 October 2014), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) mandated its Bureau, with support from the ECE secretariat and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to proceed with the preparation of the Eighth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016), including preparing a first draft of the provisional annotated agenda for the Conference for consideration by CEP at its twenty-first session (ECE/CEP/2014/2, paras. 84 (b) and 98 (gg) (xi) b).

CEP decided that the two main themes for the Batumi Ministerial Conference would be “Greening the economy in the pan-European region” and “Improving air quality for a better environment and human health”. In addition, a high-level segment on education for sustainable development (ESD), in the form of a High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, will be organized during the Conference with a view to assessing progress during the first 10 years of the ECE Strategy for ESD, and to consider its future development. Progress achieved in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System across the pan-European region will also be considered. The Conference is being organized in accordance with the Reform Plan of the EfE process.

In accordance with its mandate from CEP, the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, prepared the present document. An overview of possible options for interactive formats for discussion is provided in a separate document (ECE/CEP/2015/14).

CEP will be invited to consider the draft agenda, identify preferred formats for an interactive discussion and to provide guidance to its Bureau and the secretariat in finalizing the document for the Conference.

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Please recycle



I. Provisional agenda

1. Opening of the Conference and adoption of the agenda.
2. Getting the pan-European region ready for sustainable development:
 - (a) Keeping the pan-European environment under review;
 - (b) Multilateral environmental agreements, mechanisms, policies and institutions supporting the post-2015 development agenda.
3. Towards a new society: 10 years of education for sustainable development.
4. Greening the economy in the pan-European region.
5. Improving air quality for a better environment and human health.
6. Reporting on the outcomes of the thematic sessions.
7. Adoption of the Conference outcomes.
8. Closure of the Conference.

II. Annotations to the provisional agenda

1. The Eighth Environment for Europe (EfE) Ministerial Conference will be held in Batumi, Georgia, from 8 to 10 June 2016. The Conference is being organized in accordance with the provisions of the Reform Plan of the EfE process (ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, and Corr.1). The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) is the convening body for the preparatory process. The organizational procedures for the Batumi Ministerial Conference presented in document ECE/CEP/2014/15, adopted by CEP in 2014, serve to guide the preparations for the Conference.

2. The Batumi Ministerial Conference will conduct its work under the following slogan: “Cleaner, Greener, Smarter”.¹ The opening of the Conference could be preceded by a greening-the-Conference-related short interactive event for the heads of delegation, to be organized by the host country — e.g., walking or riding bicycles to the Conference venue. During the Conference there will be opportunities to network and organize bilateral meetings between ministers, including on topics that are not on the Conference agenda.

1. Opening of the Conference and adoption of the agenda

Wednesday, 8 June, 10–11.30 a.m.

3. A high-level representative of Georgia will open the Eighth EfE Ministerial Conference. Introductory remarks by the Chair of the Conference [*Minister of Environment of Georgia*] and welcoming speeches by high-level representatives of ECE and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will follow. A short opening event by the host country will be presented to the delegates. Also, a photograph of the heads of delegations will be taken during the opening session.

¹ Subject to agreement by CEP. A CEP Bureau member suggested organizing a contest among the children of Batumi to make up a slogan for the Conference.

4. Delegates will be invited to adopt the agenda for the Eighth EfE Conference.

Documentation

Annotated provisional agenda for the Conference (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/1)

Organization of work at the Conference (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

List of documents and materials for the Conference (ECE/ BATUMI.CONF/2016/INF/1)

2. Getting the pan-European region ready for sustainable development

(a) Keeping the pan-European environment under review

Wednesday, 8 June, 11.30 a.m.–1 p.m.

5. The session will open with introductory remarks by the Chair of the Conference. Progress in developing the Shared Environmental Information Systems (SEIS) across the pan-European region and the establishment of a regular environmental assessment process to keep the pan-European environment under review will be discussed in response to the commitment made by ministers in Astana in 2011.

6. Delegates will consider key findings of the European regional component of the Sixth UNEP Global Environment Outlook (GEO-6). The discussion will be organized in the form of a round table or panel. [*N.B. to consider the usefulness of preparing a few questions to facilitate the discussion around the table.*]

7. Ministers will be invited to renew their commitment to establishing a regular process of environmental assessment based on SEIS, also as an efficient tool to advance the post-2015 development agenda.

Documentation

Shape and organization of the regular environmental assessment process in the pan-European region (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

Progress in developing the Shared Environmental Information System across the pan-European region (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

European regional component of the Sixth Global Environment Outlook: Executive Summary (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

(b) Multilateral environmental agreements, mechanisms, policies and institutions supporting the post-2015 development agenda

Wednesday, 8 June, 3–4.30 p.m.

8. The session will open with introductory remarks by the Chair of the Conference. Ministers will reflect upon the potential role of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), environmental performance reviews (EPRs), the Environmental Action Programme (EAP) Task Force, the Regional Environmental Centres (RECs) and others in supporting countries' efforts and enhancing the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda and achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Also, the experience of the Astana Water Action (AWA) stakeholders in using this initiative since its launch in Astana in 2011 will be shared. The discussion will be organized in the form of a round table or panel. [*N.B. to consider the usefulness of preparing a few questions to facilitate the discussion around the table.*]

9. The ministers will be invited to reiterate their commitment to participating in and implementing these various instruments and processes.

10. The session will conclude with a festive event to celebrate 20 years of successful implementation of the ECE EPRs, and looking forward to getting them ready to support the achievement of the SDGs. *[N.B. it is proposed to organize a surprise festive and interactive celebration.]*

Documentation

Astana Water Action progress report (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

3. Towards a new society: 10 years of education for sustainable development

Wednesday, 8 June, 4.30–6 p.m.

11. The High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries will open with introductory remarks by the co-Chairs of this segment [*Minister of Education and Minister of Environment of Georgia*] dedicated to education for sustainable development (ESD). Delegates will consider progress achieved in ESD as a result of 10 years of implementation of the ECE Strategy for ESD. Ministers of education and environment will decide on the next steps to be taken to advance ESD in the region, as a contribution to the Global Action Programme on ESD as well as to the post-2015 development agenda. *[N.B. to complete this agenda item in accordance with the decision of the ECE Steering Committee on ESD. A formal decision on the organization of the segment is expected to be made at the eleventh meeting of the Steering Committee (Geneva, 15–16 February 2016), but preliminary information will be available in time for the twenty-first session of CEP; the Steering Committee is currently working on possible scenarios.]*

12. The session will conclude with ministers of education and the environment being invited to adopt the Batumi Ministerial Statement on ESD.

Documentation

Draft Batumi Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

[N.B. two more documents are under preparation by the Steering Committee on ESD:

Third Review of National Implementation of the Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development [N.B. covers some aspects of the 10 years of implementation] (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

Ten years of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development [N.B. this publication will be ready but possibly not printed in time for Batumi]

4. Greening the economy in the pan-European region

Thursday, 9 June, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.

13. The session will open with introductory remarks by the Chair of the first thematic segment, on greening the economy in the pan-European region. The pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy, complemented by the Batumi Action for Greening the Economy, will be presented by the Chair of CEP as tools to advance the transition to green economy in the region.

14. Following the introduction, the meeting will break into several groups for interactive discussion on greening the economy in the pan-European region [*N.B. to consider the format of the interactive discussion, bearing in mind the simultaneous interpretation constraints; for instance, by preparing for ministers a special case study, role play or other serious game. The European ECO Forum is proposing a round-table discussion between ministers and environmental non-governmental organizations as well as other stakeholders*].

15. Subsequently, the plenary will resume to hear the results of the group discussions. The consolidated results of the discussions will be presented on the last day of the Conference and will serve as input into the Chair's Summary of the Conference.

16. Ministers will be invited to consider adopting the Strategic Framework [*N.B. the adoption per se could be done on the last day of the Conference during agenda item 7*]. Also, interested countries and organizations will be given the opportunity to briefly present initiatives and policy tools relevant to this item of the agenda. [*N.B. to select and include relevant initiatives from the document containing possible outcomes of the Conference, (ECE/CEP/2015/8).*]

17. To facilitate the work of the Conference a background thematic document on greening the economy in the region has been prepared jointly by ECE and UNEP in consultation with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe), as well as with organizations participating in the Regional Coordination Mechanism. The questions prepared by the CEP Bureau to focus the discussion under this thematic segment are the following:

(a) **Opportunities and challenges:** What are the pressing challenges to greening the economy in your country? What positive effects on, e.g., employment, human well-being, prosperity and natural capital are evident after introducing green economy policies? Have trade-offs been taken into account in policymaking — e.g., in terms of the impact on employment, social equity and private investment?;

(b) **Best paths to sustainability:** What approaches have proven most useful to promote a more efficient use of natural resources and to reduce pressures on them (e.g., circular economy, green innovation and initiatives in the fields of energy, building, transport infrastructure, water, fiscal reforms, standards and labelling)? What initiatives are working successfully or are planned to be introduced in your country to address challenges and major obstacles, including to sustainable consumption and production patterns?;

(c) **Green incentives:** What incentives concerning sustainable public procurement, environmental taxation and the removal of environmentally harmful subsidies, including fossil fuel subsidies, have been introduced, and what else can be done? What do you do to encourage green investment, including private and foreign direct investment and technology transfer in different sectors?;

(d) **Cooperation:** What steps could be taken to further promote cooperation among countries in the pan-European region to facilitate the transition to a green economy, including in the context of the post-2015 development agenda?

18. In addition, during the discussion of the above questions, a number of related issues will be addressed, as appropriate, such as: green agriculture, including its resource needs, possible loads on the environment and some good practices; how subnational and local authorities, business and civil society are involved in greening the economy in their countries; and environmental risk reduction as a key element in defining green economy.

Documentation

Draft pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/L.Xx)

Batumi Action for Greening the Economy (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

Greening the economy in the pan-European region (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

5. Improving air quality for a better environment and human health

Thursday, 9 June, 3–6 p.m.

19. The session will open with introductory remarks by the Chair of the second thematic segment, on improving air quality for a better environment and human health. The Batumi Action for Cleaner Air — an initiative to improve air quality for a better environment and human health prepared under the leadership of the Bureau of the ECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) — will be presented by the Chair of the Air Convention.

20. Following the introduction, the meeting will break into several groups for interactive discussion on improving air quality for a better environment and human health [*N.B. to consider the format of the interactive discussion bearing in mind the simultaneous interpretation constraints, for instance by preparing for ministers a special case study or role play exercise.*]

21. Subsequently, the plenary will resume to hear the results of the discussions in the groups. The consolidated results of discussions will be presented on the last day of the Conference and will serve as input into the Chair's Summary of the Conference.

22. Ministers will be invited to consider endorsing the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air. Interested countries and organizations will be given the opportunity to present briefly initiatives and policy tools relevant to this item of the agenda. [*N.B. to select and include other relevant initiatives from the document containing possible outcomes of the Conference (ECE/CEP/2015/8).*]

23. To facilitate the work of the Conference a background thematic document on improving air quality for a better environment and human health has been prepared by ECE in consultation with the Bureau of the Air Convention and the European Environment and Health Ministerial Board, as well as EEA, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, OECD, UNEP and WHO. The questions prepared by the CEP Bureau to focus the discussion under this thematic segment are the following:

(a) **Pollutants and policies:** Which air pollutants (indoor and outdoor) pose the highest risk to the environment and human health in your country, and how is this risk assessed (e.g., emission inventories, pollutants registers and air quality monitoring- and health-related data)? Which aspects of air pollution do you see as the most important to manage in the near future and in the longer term? How effective are current policies in addressing the impact of air pollution on public health, in particular in urban areas, as well as on ecosystems and crops? What can be done to make such policies more effective and how are the costs of inaction taken into account?;

(b) **Sectors and funding:** What sectors contribute the most to air pollution in your country and how successful has your Government been in integrating air pollution reduction measures into financial and development policies, as well as other sectoral policies? What role can policymakers and financing institutions play in ensuring that projects that reduce air pollution receive funding?;

(c) **Public awareness and participation:** Are the prevailing problems with air pollution and its transboundary character generally known in your country? How can communication be improved? Which channels, messages and means work best in your country? How could enabling public participation in relevant processes (e.g., policy development) improve air quality and what measures work best in your country?;

(d) **Cooperation:** Has international cooperation led to an improvement in air quality? How can international cooperation strengthen the national work? Which international instruments are the most effective in your experience? Which activities should be further strengthened to promote ratification, implementation and possible development of the ECE Air Convention and its protocols?

24. In addition, during the discussion of the above questions, a number of related issues will be addressed, as appropriate, such as: green agriculture, including its resource needs, possible loads on the environment and some good practices; and how subnational and local authorities, business and civil society are involved in greening the economy in countries.

Documentation

Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

Improving air quality for a better environment and human health (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

6. Reporting on the outcomes of the thematic sessions

Friday, 10 June, 10–11.30 a.m.

25. The Friday morning session will open with introductory remarks by the Chair of the Conference. On the basis of reports from the interactive discussions, the Chairs of the thematic segments will present the outcomes under agenda items 4 and 5. [*N.B. to consider whether a brief report from the co-Chairs of the segment on ESD would be useful.*]

26. Each presentation will be followed by comments from the floor on the main results and findings of the interactive discussions.

7. Adoption of the Conference outcomes

Friday, 10 June, 11.30 a.m.–12.30 p.m.

27. This segment will open with introductory remarks by the Chair of the Conference presenting a draft of the agreed outcome (Ministerial Declaration).

28. The delegates will be invited to consider initiatives, agreements, pledges and policy tools on subjects related to the Conference themes that have been submitted to the Conference.

29. Participants will then be invited to adopt the Ministerial Declaration.

Documentation

Draft Ministerial Declaration (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/L.1)

Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/Xx)

8. Closure of the Conference

Friday, 10 June, 12.30–1 p.m.

30. The Chair of the Conference will present the results of the Conference in the form of a Chair's Summary.

31. The Conference will close at 1 p.m. on 10 June 2016.

[N.B. to explore the interest for a potential host country for the ninth Efe Ministerial Conference in 2021 to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Efe process, which started in 1991 in Dobris Castle, Czech Republic]

Annex

Outline for the agenda and organization of work of the next ministerial conference

Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016

Wednesday, 8 June	Thursday, 9 June	Friday, 10 June
<p>1. Opening of the Conference (plenary, 10–11.30 a.m.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Opening ceremony – Adoption of the agenda <p>2. Getting the pan-European region ready for sustainable development:</p> <p>(a) Keeping the pan-European environment under review (interactive discussion, 11.30 a.m.–1 p.m.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SEIS progress – Regional GEO-6 launch <p>Lunch break/side events (1–3 p.m.)</p> <p>(b) Multilateral environmental agreements, mechanisms, policies and institutions supporting the post-2015 development agenda (interactive discussion, 3–4.30 p.m.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – MEAs, EPRs, EAP Task Force, RECs, AWA <p>3. Towards a new society: 10 years of education for sustainable development (plenary and round-table or panel discussions, 4.30–6 p.m.)</p> <p><i>Questions for discussion: The Steering Committee on ESD is working on preparing a few specific questions to focus the discussion under this segment</i></p> <p>Official events/side events (6.15–9 p.m.)</p>	<p>4. Greening the economy in the pan-European region (plenary and interactive discussion, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.)</p> <p><i>Questions for discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Opportunities and challenges (b) Best paths to sustainability (c) Green incentives (d) Cooperation <p>Lunch break/side events (1–3 p.m.)</p> <p>5. Improving air quality for a better environment and human health (plenary and interactive discussion, 3–6 p.m.)</p> <p><i>Questions for discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Pollutants and policies (b) Sectors and funding (c) Public awareness and participation (d) Cooperation <p>Official events/side events (6.15–9 p.m.)</p>	<p>6. Reporting on the outcomes of the discussions under the thematic sessions (plenary, 10–11.30 a.m.)</p> <p>7. Adoption of Conference outcomes (plenary, 11.30 a.m.–12.30 p.m.)</p> <p>8. Closure of the Conference (plenary, 12.30–1 p.m.)</p>