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Twenty-third session

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Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Outcomes of the work of the Bureau

Outcomes of the work of the Bureau for the period February-July 2017

Report by the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy

Summary

At its twenty-second session (Geneva, 25-27 January 2017), the Committee on Environmental Policy requested the Bureau and the secretariat to follow up on the Committee's decisions, including by preparing the documents and reports necessary for the Committee's work at its next session in 2017. In that regard, the Committee mandated its Bureau to carry out a number of activities, including: (a) to prepare the Committee's twenty-third session; (b) to develop a short document on the Committee's role in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (c) to prepare a proposal for the organization of the mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, June 2016) in 2018; (d) to assess the implications of establishing a joint secretariat between the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the World Health Organization for servicing the European Environment and Health Process; and (e) to prepare a first draft of the Committee's revised terms of reference.

To fulfil the above mandates, the Bureau worked by means of electronic consultations and met in Lisbon on 28 and 29 June 2017. The present document outlines the outcomes of the Bureau's work, including its June meeting, with a view to supporting the Committee's work at its twenty-third session.

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Introduction

1. In the intersessional period, the Bureau of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy worked on fulfilling the mandates received from the Committee at its twenty-second session (Geneva, 25-27 January 2017) and made preparations for the Committee's twenty-third session. The Bureau worked by means of electronic consultations and met in Lisbon on 28 and 29 June 2017.

2. In particular, the Bureau considered both the substance and organization of the discussions to be held at the Committee's twenty-third session. In addition, the Bureau worked on preparing the proposal for the organization of the mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, June 2016) in 2018. Also, the Bureau considered the Committee's role in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and looked at the implications of establishing a joint secretariat between ECE and the World Health Organization (WHO) for servicing the European Environment and Health Process. It furthermore prepared a first draft of the Committee's revised terms of reference and looked into updating criteria for eligibility for financial support for participating in meetings and events, and also considered the revised calendar of meetings for the Committee until the end of 2020.

3. The Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy comprises the Chair from Portugal and Vice-Chairs from Belarus, Belgium, Czechia, France, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Switzerland and the United States of America.

I. Provisional agenda for the Committee's twenty-third session

4. During its meeting in June 2017, the Bureau approved the draft provisional agenda and the draft organization of work for the Committee's twenty-third session with a number of revisions, which were to be reflected in the final version of those documents. For instance, the Bureau recommended:

(a) That the session on sustainable development in the region be allocated more time to allow for the organization of a round-table discussion with the participation of chairs of other ECE sectoral committees, with a focus on Sustainable Development Goals 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 15 (life on land) and 17 (partnerships for the Goals);

(b) That the discussion on the multilateral environmental agreements continue to review efforts made in supporting the 2030 Agenda and should focus on the Sustainable Development Goals 6, 11, 12 and 17;

(c) To allocate 20 minutes for each of the cross-cutting issues, except the European Environment and Health Process, which will include consideration of the outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava, Czechia, 13-15 June 2017);

(d) That the presentation and exchange of views on the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly take place on the second day of the meeting to enable participation of interested chairs and representatives of the multilateral environmental agreements;

(e) To set a deadline for any additional nominations to the Bureau to allow sufficient time for consultations before the Committee's twenty-third session.

5. Concerning the organization of side events on the margins of the Committee's session, the Bureau suggested to organize in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) a side event on the Belt and Road Initiative. Another side event will be organized jointly by the ECE secretariat, UNEP and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to present the results of two mapping exercises, one carried out by ECE and UNEP to collect information on the expertise and activities of international organizations in the area of green economy in the region, the other by OECD to collect information on development cooperation for green growth in the countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

II. Role of the Committee on Environmental Policy in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

6. At its meeting in Lisbon, the Bureau considered a draft document on the role of the Committee in implementing the 2030 Agenda and made revisions, which were reflected in the final version submitted to the Committee, as presented in document ECE/CEP/2017/15.

7. In particular, the Bureau considered ways to strengthen the cooperation with other ECE sectoral committees by organizing dedicated discussions during the sessions of the Committee on Environmental Policy with the participation of chairs of other ECE sectoral committees. For the twenty-third session of the Committee, the Bureau recommended to take into account the Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in 2018 and to invite the chairs of the following ECE committees: the Committee on Sustainable Energy; the Committee on Housing and Land Management; the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry; and the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships.

8. Concerning the topic for discussion, the Bureau suggested that the initial discussion focus on sharing information on experience and challenges in adapting the work and activities of the respective committees to support the 2030 Agenda. The Bureau asked the secretariat to compile an information paper providing links to relevant documents and materials mapping the work of these committees in support of the 2030 Agenda. The overall discussion will focus on Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in 2018, namely Goals 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 15 (life on land) and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). Regarding the time frame for such a discussion, the Bureau suggested to allocate one-and-a-half hours by extending the agenda item on sustainable development.

III. Multilateral environmental agreements

9. At its Lisbon meeting in June 2017, the Bureau discussed the possible focus for the agenda item on multilateral environmental agreements at the Committee's twenty-third session. The Bureau agreed to continue reviewing efforts under each treaty to define its role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In that context, the Bureau suggested to focus the discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals 6, 11, 12 and 17.

10. Regarding the format of the discussion, based on the experience of the past sessions, it could be organized in the form of a moderated round table to deliberate on the above issues with the participation of the treaty chairs or other representatives and the Committee delegates.

IV. Follow-up to the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and preparation of the mid-term review of the Conference's main outcomes

11. At its meeting in June 2017, the Bureau worked on preparing the proposal for organizing in 2018 the mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. The Bureau recommended organizing the mid-term review in the most efficient and non-resource-intensive manner. For instance, for the mid-term review reports, the Bureau suggested to keep them short and to use a user-friendly and visual, quantitative presentation of the results of the assessment of progress, for example, by means of graphs and pie charts with a short description presenting key findings and main messages. The document containing the proposed organization of the mid-term review was revised to reflect comments by Bureau (ECE/CEP/2017/16). Annex II to the document includes a template to guide the preparation of reports for the mid-term review.

12. Furthermore, the issue of making the mid-term review distinct from a regular session of the Committee was raised. Also, finding ways to attract participation by the private sector, especially in the discussion on greening the economy and cleaning the air, was emphasized. One member of the Bureau informed her colleagues about the World Resource Forum taking place in Geneva on 24 and 25 October 2017, with a focus on accelerating the resource revolution. The Forum could provide a good opportunity for networking and promoting the two Batumi Initiatives — the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) and the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA) — as well as attracting private sector representatives to participate in the mid-term review.

13. Concerning the survey on the Batumi Conference, the Bureau took note of the low response rate, which was partly owing to technical issues with the online version of the survey. The Bureau recommended to repeat the invitation to the Committee members and observers to fill in the survey either online or in a Word file format. For future similar surveys, the Bureau recommended preparing a short satisfaction survey to be circulated on the last day of the conference. Another short survey, to identify the priorities and themes for next conferences, could be prepared, as necessary, after the mid-term review to support the preparation of the next conference.

14. In addition, at its meeting in Lisbon, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on activities undertaken by the ECE secretariat, jointly with UNEP and the Green Growth Knowledge Platform, to promote and implement the two Batumi Initiatives. In particular, it noted the success of the “Batumi Talk Show: Scoring Sustainable Development Goals through action on green economy and clean air”, which was hosted by the ECE secretariat together with UNEP on the margins of the ECE session in April 2017. The Bureau supported the proposal to organize another Batumi Talk Show during the Committee's twenty-third session.

V. European Environment and Health Process

15. In Lisbon, the Bureau was informed about the main outcomes of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health. Annex II to the Ostrava Declaration sets out “Institutional Arrangements for the European Environment and Health Process”, including an invitation to the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and the ECE Executive Committee, through the Committee on Environmental Policy, to consider establishing a

joint European Environment and Health Process secretariat, supported by adequate human and financial resources.¹

16. Following the request from the Committee at its twenty-second session, the Bureau considered a draft document, prepared by the ECE secretariat, containing possible arrangements for a joint ECE-WHO Regional Office for Europe secretariat for the European Environment and Health Process. The Bureau agreed that the document be submitted to the Committee to facilitate the discussion with a view to reaching an agreement on the matter (ECE/CEP/2017/18).

VI. Programme of work of the Environment subprogramme

17. At its June 2017 meeting, the Bureau considered a document presenting the draft proposed strategic framework for the Environment subprogramme for 2020-2021 and agreed to submit it to the Committee for review (ECE/CEP/2017/10).

18. Concerning revising criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events, as presented in annex I to the report of the twenty-second session of the Committee (ECE/CEP/2017/2), the Bureau asked the secretariat, closer to the Committee session, to verify the availability of data on gross domestic product per capita for 2016 and, if available, to prepare a revised version of the criteria. In case data were still not available, the Bureau recommended to continue using the criteria adopted at the twenty-second session of the Committee.

VII. Terms of reference

19. Following a mandate from the Committee to prepare a first draft of the Committee's revised terms of reference for the Committee's consideration at its twenty-third session, the Bureau, at its Lisbon meeting, considered comments received on the terms of reference of the Committee as adopted in 2007. The Chair of the Committee prepared a revised version of the terms of reference in consultation with the Bureau, presented in document ECE/CEP/2017/19, which has been submitted to the Committee for its consideration.

VIII. Rules of procedure

20. At its twenty-second session, the Committee decided to consider further the need for specific rules of procedure of the Committee at its next session. At its meeting in June 2017, the Bureau discussed the matter and recommended to continue with the current practice of conducting its meetings and organizing its business in line with the ECE rules of procedure.

IX. Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy

21. At its meeting in Lisbon, the Bureau recommended to set a deadline for any additional nominations to the Bureau to allow sufficient time for consultations before the Committee's twenty-third session. The deadline was set for 30 September 2017. Based on

¹ World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, document EURO/Ostrava2017/8, para. 28. Available from www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2017/06/sixth-ministerial-conference-on-environment-and-health/documentation#336668.

interest expressed by the current members of the Bureau, the secretariat was asked to compile an information paper and circulate it to the Committee in the beginning of August 2017. The paper will be revised, as needed, in line with possible additional nominations received by 30 September 2017.

X. Calendar of meetings

22. At its June meeting, the Bureau considered the calendar of meetings until the end of 2020. The Bureau agreed to hold a short meeting in the afternoon of 13 November 2017, before the Committee's twenty-third session.
