



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

HBP/2004/1

12 July 2004

ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Sixty-fifth session

(Geneva, 20-22 September 2004)

(Item 2 of the provisional agenda)

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FIFTY-NINTH SESSION OF  
THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

Note by the secretariat

**Introduction**

1. The fifty-ninth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) took place from 24 to 26 February 2004 (E/2004/37-E/ECE/1416). The following major topics and issues were examined and debated:

- (a) Policies to stimulate competitiveness and growth;
- (b) UNECE reform;
- (c) UNECE cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE);
- (d) The work of UNECE: achievements, constraints and perspectives;
- (e) Preparations for, and follow-up to, global and regional conferences;
- (f) Overview of UNECE technical cooperation activities.

**UNECE reform**

2. The Commission considered this item on the basis of documents prepared by the UNECE secretariat as a follow-up to similar discussions held in 2002 and 2003. The Chairman of the Commission also put forward two proposals: one to carry out of an external review of UNECE and another to adjust the programme planning process.

All documents discussed at the session may be downloaded from the UNECE web site  
[http://www.unece.org/commission/2004/59th\\_index.htm](http://www.unece.org/commission/2004/59th_index.htm)

3. The Commission noted that, given the enlargement of the European Union (EU) and the new geopolitical reality within the region, its role and place in the new European institutional architecture needed to be reviewed to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

4. In line with these views and taking into account the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination in support of the current United Nations and UNECE reform exercises, and building on the recommendation of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work, the Commission decided to commission a comprehensive report on the state of UNECE with the aim of developing recommendations to determine what changes to the role, mandate and functions of UNECE are necessary. The report should be guided by the will of member States to avoid duplication, and ensure cooperation, complementarity and efficiencies among intergovernmental organizations.

5. The Commission endorsed the actions proposed by the secretariat, as well as the recommendations proposed by the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work:

(a) With regard to intergovernmental structures:

(i) The Commission will, at its annual sessions, discuss adjustment of its own intergovernmental structure if an eligible body proposes it;

(ii) The UNECE principal subsidiary bodies will review biennially their intergovernmental structure, including related advisory groups, and report to the Commission at its annual session;

(b) With regard to the evaluation of the work of the principal subsidiary bodies, the Commission endorsed the proposals on best practice for evaluation as outlined in the report of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work, namely that the principal subsidiary bodies should play a key role in the evaluation process of the activities of UNECE. Therefore, the Group of Experts recommended that all principal subsidiary bodies should take steps to evaluate their programme of work/activities biennially. Such a frequency will fit in with the budget cycle. The principal subsidiary bodies should present a report about the steps taken following the results of the evaluation to the Commission at the end of every evaluation cycle;

(c) With regard to the priority-setting mechanism for technical cooperation activities, the Commission endorsed the proposals by the Group of Experts to facilitate the setting of priorities for technical cooperation. It was recommended that each principal subsidiary body, at its annual session, should identify the priorities currently underfunded and inform the Group of Experts through the secretariat.

### **UNECE cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**

6. The 1997 UNECE Plan of Action already stated that UNECE should consolidate cooperation with OSCE. Both have a similar membership and complementary mandates. Recently, the New Strategy Document of OSCE has provided the basis for a new and deeper relationship between OSCE and UNECE. An inter-secretariat task force will prepare a detailed

plan for cooperation on the basis of which a memorandum of understanding between the two organizations will be prepared.

7. The Commission welcomed the formalization of relations with OSCE. It was noted that the UNECE work with OSCE should be reflected in the UNECE programme of work for 2006-2007.

#### **The work of UNECE: achievements, constraints and perspectives**

8. The Commission considered this agenda item on the basis of a report by its Executive Secretary (E/ECE/1412). The Chairpersons or Vice-Chairpersons of the principal subsidiary bodies made presentations focusing on the outlook and challenges ahead, in particular the impact of EU enlargement on their work. It was noted that there was a need for more involvement of the countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in UNECE activities.

#### **Preparations for, and follow-up to, global and regional conferences**

9. The Commission noted the success of the First Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development, held in January 2004, and looked forward to the debate within the Commission on Sustainable Development.

10. With regard to follow-up to the Beijing World Conference on Women, the Commission endorsed the proposal to organize a UNECE regional preparatory meeting for Beijing +10 in the last quarter of 2004, as was done in 2000.

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11. The Committee may wish to take the above decisions into account when deciding on its programme of work. In particular, the Committee may consider measures to encourage more involvement of the countries from in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in its activities.

#### Note

Intergovernmental structure: (a) the Economic Commission for Europe (member countries represented by officials from the missions to the United Nations in Geneva and/or from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and its Group of Experts on the Programme of Work; (b) the principal subsidiary bodies (member countries represented by line ministries) created in specific areas; and (c) standing working parties created within each principal subsidiary body.