

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Eighty-sixth Meeting
Geneva, 16 September 2016

EXCOM/CONCLU/86

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

Meeting of the Executive Committee
16 September 2016

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda

1. The Chair informed that discussions regarding the Vice-Chairmanship of the Bureau were still ongoing and proposed to delete item 3 (Bureau elections) from the agenda. She encouraged delegations to submit candidatures for the Bureau, keeping in mind the wish previously expressed by member States to maintain a geographic composition of the Bureau consisting of one member State from the Western part of the ECE region, one from the Eastern part, and one from the other parts.
2. The provisional draft agenda for the 86th meeting was adopted following the removal of item 3.

Item 2 – Chair's conclusions from the last meeting

3. The conclusions from the 85th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/85) were adopted.

Item 3 - Bureau elections
(removed from agenda)

Item 4 - Matters relating to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

4. On behalf of the Chair of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS), H.E. Todor Ulianovschi, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of SCTCS over the past year and its plans for the future. He sought EXCOM approval for the renewal of the mandates and terms of reference for 2016-2018 of the three Groups of Experts under Working Party 6 for the period 2016-2018, as contained in ECE/EX/2016/L.16* Further, he informed that the SCTCS Bureau had requested that EXCOM reconsider the format of the meetings that currently are scheduled as back-to-back meetings of the SCTCS and the Committee on Competitiveness, Innovation and Public-Private Partnerships (CICPPP) due to the reasons outlined in informal document 2016/41.
5. The representative of the Russian Federation said his country viewed trade facilitation as a national and international priority and welcomed technical assistance projects aimed at the CIS countries. He supported the renewal of the mandates and terms of reference of the three Groups of Experts under Working Party 6 under consideration.
6. The representative of the European Union and its member States noted the increased participation of delegates from outside the ECE region and from developing countries in Working Party 7 on agricultural quality standards. He noted that such participation is part and parcel of the beyond-the-UNECE dimension of the organization's work that was evoked in the previous EXCOM and was now under review. He supported the renewal of the mandates and the terms of reference in question and did not object to relaxing the requirement on the back-to-back meetings of the SCTCS and the CICPPP.
7. The representative of Belarus commended the work of the SCTCS. He particularly appreciated the technical assistance to his country from the secretariat and the Russian Federation in the context of the relevant extrabudgetary project on removing procedural and regulatory barriers to trade and stated that Belarus was cooperating with the secretariat to effectively use the resources allocated.
8. The representative of Kazakhstan thanked SCTCS for the technical assistance provided to her country on trade facilitation and technical regulations, which allowed Kazakhstan to submit

documents to the WTO for joining the annexes of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. She looked forward to the continuation of such work and said this should ultimately increase trade in the region.

9. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks Mr. Ulianoschi for the clear and comprehensive report. The EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Steering Committee and being kept aware of future directions of its work. EXCOM approves the renewal of the mandates and terms of reference for 2016-2018 of the three Groups of Experts under WP.6 for the period 2016-2018, as contained in ECE/EX/2016/L.16*. EXCOM decides to suspend the requirement for the meetings of the SCTCS and CICPPP to be held back-to-back to facilitate effective meeting servicing.

Item 5 - Matters relating to the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships

10. The Chair of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (CICPPP), Mr. Sharon Kedmi, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of CICPPP over the past year and its plans for the future. He requested EXCOM to approve the establishment of the Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships and its terms of reference to replace the Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships (TOS-PPP) as of its first session to be held in 2017.

11. The representative of the Russian Federation did not object to the transformation of the TOS-PPP into a Working Party and said this would raise the status of the subsidiary body and allow it to have an extended mandate and improve the effectiveness of its work. He hoped CICPPP would make a substantive contribution to the relevant thematic panel at the upcoming ECE Conference in Minsk. He requested that the secretariat circulate Mr. Kedmi's and Mr. Ulianoschi's presentations.

12. The representative of Belarus appreciated CICPPP's extensive assistance to his country on PPPs, including on the drafting of relevant legislation and PPP pilot projects. He also appreciated the Innovation Performance Review of Belarus by the CICPPP. He supported the transformation of the TOS-PPP into a Working Party and welcomed the development of PPP standards on zero tolerance to corruption.

13. The representative of the European Union and its member States wished to learn more about ECE's mandate in terms of PPPs and how this work is positioned within the UN family. He asked which standards were developed by the PPP Specialist Centres. On the matter of the TOS-PPP, he said he would like to learn more about whether the scope and purpose of the work would remain the same, and about the advantages and financial implications of the TOS-PPP becoming a Working Party.

14. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division clarified that the scope of the work would remain the same and that there would be no financial implications. She explained that Teams of Specialists usually have a lifespan of two years whereas standard-setting work takes longer and requires maintenance. Therefore, a Working Party would provide a more stable framework.

15. The representative of Kazakhstan said that a Working Party would have higher status in the eyes of governments.

16. The Executive Secretary explained that the mandate on PPPs is approved by EXCOM. The work has received great attention and interest and this would continue to increase as PPPs were crucial to SDG implementation. ECE had become a global leader on PPP standards and best practices and this had been recognized by DESA, the World Bank etc.

17. The representative of European Union and its member States said he would reflect on the matter and would pronounce on the issue at the next meeting.

18. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the CICPPP for the clear and comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Committee and being kept aware of future directions of its work. The Chair concluded that EXCOM decides to continue its deliberations on the proposal to establish a Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships to replace the Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships at its next meeting. EXCOM requests the secretariat to disseminate the presentations made under agenda items 4a and 5a.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 6 – Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management

19. The Executive Secretary informed about a recent ECOSOC resolution (E/2016/L.28) on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management. It requests regional Commissions to provide such support, upon request and as appropriate. He further informed that the European branch of the UN Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM:Europe) had requested such support from ECE. He said that the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) has already worked on relevant issues and was recognized as a leader in development of new statistical methodology and exploration of the use of new data sources. He expressed the view that greater geospatial knowledge and capability within the ECE could benefit other areas of work, such as transport networks, smart cities etc. Geospatial information would also enhance the capacity of ECE countries to meet new information challenges related to the SDGs. He hoped EXCOM would support ECE's engagement with GGIM:Europe and said the secretariat could prepare a proposal with options for mobilizing resources for this work for EXCOM's consideration.

20. The representative of the Russian Federation believed CES could make a substantial contribution in this area and the implementation of E/2016/L.28, and supported the relevant CES conclusions from April 2016. Before taking a decision, he requested to see a proposal such as the one outlined by the Executive Secretary.

21. The representative of the European Union and its member States acknowledged the relevance of geospatial information. He requested from the secretariat a proposal, prepared in coordination with GGIM:Europe, on how the two entities could concretely collaborate, the benefits to be derived and the budgetary aspects of such a collaboration. In this context, he said the input from the October 2016 meeting of the CES Bureau should be considered.

22. The representative of the United States recognized the importance of geospatial information in follow-up and review of the SDGs. He joined the request for the proposal and asked that it include two aspects: i) Details on what GGIM:Europe expects of ECE and how it views the partnership, and ii) the potential collaboration with the Group on Earth Observations based in Geneva. He noted that a partnership with the latter could be an interesting way to leverage resources within the UN system.

23. The Chair concluded that EXCOM expresses support for ECE to provide relevant support, upon request and as appropriate, to the work of the regional bodies of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management. In this regard, EXCOM requests the secretariat to prepare a proposal, in collaboration with GGIM:Europe, to further describe the scope of such work, possible partnerships on this work, and to elaborate different options for mobilizing additional resources for such work, to be presented for consideration at its next meeting.

Item 7 – Update on evaluation activities

24. The Executive Secretary provided a brief introduction of past, present and future UNECE evaluation activities and encouraged EXCOM to consult, on the ECE website, the full reports and management responses of the internal evaluations of ECE undertaken in 2014-2015. Regarding the evaluations planned for 2016-2017, he informed that ECE proposed to cancel the statistical evaluation from the work plan, due to an upcoming OIOS evaluation of the statistical work of the Regional Commissions in support of internationally agreed development goals. Instead, inter-divisional aspects of the statistical work promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and an integrated approach to sustainable development work would be addressed in the context of Evaluation no.1 on cross-sectoral collaboration. He requested EXCOM's approval for this adjustment to the evaluation work plan, as well as for the evaluation work plan for 2018-2019.

25. The representative of the Russian Federation appreciated the transparency provided by the Secretariat's reporting on the evaluations. He said assessments of technical assistance projects were of particular interest to his delegation and expressed the hope that the recommendations of the evaluations would be implemented by the relevant bodies.

26. The representative of the European Union and its member States welcomed the presentation on evaluations already conducted and those to be performed soon. He commended the breadth of the exercise, encompassing programmes, subprogrammes and projects and the work of the Programme Management Unit (PMU). He agreed to cancelling the statistical evaluation from the 2016-2017 workplan as proposed by the Executive Secretary, and hoped that the funds freed by this cancellation would be used to reinforce the evaluation capacities of the secretariat, e.g. via additional training. He welcomed the strengthening of the evaluation function of ECE and stressed the importance of implementing the recommendations of evaluations in future activities and of the autonomy of the evaluation function.

27. The representative of Switzerland welcomed the inclusion of evaluations in EXCOM's agenda and said he would welcome similar discussions at the Commission session. He said more information on how evaluation results inform strategic planning would be welcome, and stressed the importance of further institutionalizing evaluations and tracking management action.

28. In response to the Russian Federation, the Executive Secretary agreed that assessing technical cooperation projects was important. In response to the European Union, he said that ECE would strive to further strengthen its evaluation capacity with additional training, and noted that, going forward, all larger projects would include a subsequent evaluation as funding for such activities was now a standing requirement. He agreed with the importance of maintaining the autonomy of the evaluation function, implementing the recommendations, and further institutionalizing evaluations.

29. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the report of evaluations for 2014-2015, and appreciates ECE's efforts to strengthen its evaluation function. EXCOM approves the amendments to the 2016-2017 evaluation workplan as proposed in informal document 2016/45. Furthermore, EXCOM requests that inter-divisional aspects of the statistical work promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and an integrated approach to sustainable development work be addressed in the evaluation titled "Review of ECE efforts to promote cross-sectoral collaboration and an integrated approach to sustainable development work (programme-level)". EXCOM decides that resources freed up by the cancelled evaluation be used to reinforce the capacity in the Programme Management Unit to undertake evaluations. EXCOM approves the evaluation workplan for 2018-2019 as contained in informal document 2016/46.

Item 8 – ECE Resource mobilization strategy

30. The Executive Secretary presented ECE's new resource mobilization strategy, developed to implement a 2015 OIOS recommendation. The strategy identifies effective ways to mobilize

extrabudgetary resources, in particular in support of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. ECE will work with all stakeholders to ensure the strategy's implementation and has hired a new Resource Mobilization Officer to this end.

31. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed support for the strategy. He recognized that additional financing would support the increased workload of the secretariat and create a stable base for strategic planning. He emphasized that mobilizing new resources should not hamper the main activities. He also hoped ECE would look at the experience gained in other organizations, citing the example of the WHO's Framework for Engagement with Non-State Actors.

32. The representative of the European Union and its member States noted that UNECE's core asset in the context of Agenda 2030 was technical expertise in the normative and standard-setting fields. He recognized the importance of predictable extrabudgetary funding. He said such funding should stay at manageable amounts and finance activities that are within ECE's scope and mandate. He approved the strategy provided these two caveats were upheld.

33. The representative of the United States commended the strategy. He noted that the primary responsibility to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda rested with national governments rather than the UN. Nevertheless, he recognized that ECE would receive requests for assistance from member States and deemed the strategy a good way to address this fact.

34. The Executive Secretary agreed that extrabudgetary funding should cover the related administrative workload and that cost recovery arrangements should be put in place. ECE would ensure that each extrabudgetary project was a self-sustaining exercise. He said the secretariat would report to EXCOM on the implementation of the strategy.

35. The representative of Kazakhstan said that the progress and results achieved in mobilization of resources demonstrates the relevance of ECE's work and donors' interest.

36. The Chair concluded that, mindful of the critical need to mobilize additional resources for ECE activities, EXCOM approves the ECE resource mobilization strategy as contained in document 2016/47 on the understanding that the amount of these additional resources remains manageable and that the type of activities funded remains within the organization's scope and mandate. It encourages the secretariat to implement the strategy, drawing on the experience of other UN system entities, other organizations and the private sector. Further, it requests the secretariat to report annually to EXCOM on the implementation of the ECE resource mobilization strategy.

Item 9 – ECE policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women

37. The Executive Secretary presented ECE's new policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women, underlining that it conforms to the requirements of the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP). He said the secretariat would do further capacity building on gender issues and planned to incorporate these into the staff appraisal process.

38. The representative of the Russian Federation appreciated the policy and said that it should be undertaken in strict compliance with ECE's programme documents and the rules and regulations of the Organization. Regarding the objective on mainstreaming gender in the sectoral committees, he said these bodies should comply with the provisions of the 2005 ECE reform plan (specifically, paragraph 79) and the outcome of its 2013 review (specifically paragraph 33).

39. The representative of the United States welcomed the policy. Regarding the objective on knowledge generation and exchange of best practices, he agreed that it was important to draw attention to unconscious bias present in laws and policies that may have been set a long time ago and that new best practices and policies should take these into account.

40. The representative of the European Union and its member States welcomed the policy and appreciated both its breadth as well as the concrete nature of its proposals.

41. The representative of Switzerland welcomed the policy and its alignment with UN-SWAP. He highlighted the importance of advancing the economic empowerment of women and the representation of women within the organization. He underlined that the SDGs would not be achieved without commitment to gender equality.

42. The Executive Secretary confirmed that the policy would be implemented in strict compliance with relevant rules and regulations.

43. The Chair concluded that EXCOM welcomes the new ECE gender policy contained in 2016/48 and appreciates the secretariat's efforts towards promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, within ECE and its programmes, and in support of strengthening the capacity of ECE member States.

Item 10 – Preparations for the Commission session

44. The Executive Secretary presented the logo the secretariat has developed for the 70th anniversary of ECE. He said multiple outreach activities were planned throughout 2017 and expressed the hope that member States would consider providing financial support to support them.

45. The representative of the United States requested that an agenda item on the substantive preparation for the 2017 Commission session be presented at the next meeting of EXCOM.

46. The representative of the European Union and its member States supported the request by the United States and took note of the need for extrabudgetary funding for outreach activities.

47. The representative of the Russian Federation also expressed support for the request by the United States.

48. The Executive Secretary said the secretariat would do as requested.

49. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the proposed logo for ECE's 70th anniversary and appreciates the efforts made by the secretariat to mark the occasion. EXCOM welcomes the outreach campaign and the related communication tools outlined in document 2016/50 aimed at enhancing the visibility of the ECE work on economic integration and sustainable development towards 2030. EXCOM encourages member States to consider supporting these or other outreach activities for the 2017 Commission session. EXCOM requests the secretariat to include an item on substantial preparations for the 2017 Commission session on the agenda of its next meeting.

Item 11 - Important new developments: briefing by the Executive Secretary.

50. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about his participation at the recent High-level Political Forum. He also reminded EXCOM of the informal consultation planned for 23 September regarding the future mechanism for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the regional level with a view to taking a decision on the establishment of such a mechanism at the 2017 Commission session.

51. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Secretariat for the update and looks forward to continuing the informal dialogue on a future regional review mechanism for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

52. The Executive Secretary drew EXCOM's attention to the two changes made to the draft Strategic Framework as a result of the June meeting of the Committee on Programme and Coordination, which are detailed in document E/AC.51/2016/L.4/Add.16. He said that the Committee recommended the General Assembly to approve the Strategic Framework subject to these modifications.

53. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the proposed Strategic Framework 2018-2019 on Programme 17, Economic Development in Europe, as amended in E/AC.51/2016/L.4/Add.16.

54. The Executive Secretary recalled that the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) would celebrate its 70th anniversary in 2017. He informed that a Ministerial resolution underscoring the results and impact of ITC's work and affirming existing mandates would be adopted at the anniversary session. ECE proposes a multi-stage consultation to prepare the zero draft of the resolution and encourages delegates to participate.

55. The representative of the Russian Federation emphasized that the ITC session preparatory process, including the drafting work, should occur within the ITC Bureau. At the same time, he expressed interest in regular briefings by the secretariat regarding this preparation.

56. The representative of the European Union and its member States appreciated the work of the ITC and requested that EXCOM be briefed at the earliest opportunity regarding the draft Ministerial resolution as well as the draft strategy that will provide the basis of work for the coming years. He requested that this briefing take place before the resolution and strategy are forwarded to member States' capitals.

57. The Chair concluded that EXCOM welcomes the update on the Inland Transport Committee. EXCOM requests the secretariat to organize regular briefings to engage in the preparation of the draft Ministerial resolution and the draft strategy on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Inland Transport Committee.

58. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about cooperation with other entities: He advised that an MoU is to be signed with the government of Portugal regarding the International Specialist Centre of Excellence on PPPs in Water and Sanitation to be hosted in the country (this follows established procedure). Further, UNECE had been approached regarding a possible cooperation agreement with the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Executive Secretary said that the secretariat was still reviewing this request and would revert to EXCOM at a later date with more information. He noted that precedents for such an agreement existed as the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly has an MoU with DESA, and ECE had a cooperation agreement with the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Eurasian Economic Community.

59. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the update on discussions regarding opportunities for MoUs and looks forward to future updates on the topic.

60. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following recent missions and meetings:

- i. 1 July, Geneva: UNECE Staff Day
- ii. 14-21 July, New York: High-level Political Forum
- iii. 13-16 September, Geneva: 77th session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management

61. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming events:

- i. 19-23 September, New York: General Assembly
- ii. 28-29 September, Geneva: 25th session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy
- iii. 10-13 October, Istanbul: World Energy Congress
- iv. 17-20 October, Quito: HABITAT III

- v. 18-20 October, Geneva: 74th session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry
- vi. 18-21 October, Baku: Seventh International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (will also include an International Renewable Energy Conference and the annual sessions of the UNECE Group of Experts on Renewable Energy and Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency)
- vii. 26-27 October, Minsk: UNECE Conference “Laying the foundation in the UNECE region for economic integration and sustainable development towards 2030”

62. Regarding the Minsk Conference, the Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that USD 25,000 of additional extrabudgetary funding has been pledged by the Russian company Rusal. He appreciated this contribution and said that others would be welcome. He hoped that Conference participants would complete their registration as soon as possible, which would facilitate planning.

63. The representative of Belarus informed EXCOM that the visa procedure for the Minsk Conference has been simplified. He thanked the Russian Federation and UNDP for financing travel for some participants. He also encouraged delegates to contact him in case speakers from their countries wished to participate in a particular panel.

64. The representative of Kazakhstan expressed her confidence that the Minsk Conference would strengthen cooperation between ECE and the Eurasian Economic Union.

65. The Chair concluded that, regarding the upcoming conference in Minsk, EXCOM encourages all member States to help identify additional suitable speakers for high level discussions, and to encourage participants from their countries to complete their registration.

Item 12 – Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

66. The Chair informed EXCOM that the secretariat, after consultation with the Bureau, has tabled the energy-related extrabudgetary project in document 2016/55 after the mandated document deadline and hoped delegations would nevertheless be prepared to discuss it.

67. The representative of Germany stated that his delegation looked forward to this energy-related project, which will be undertaken jointly by Germany, the Russian Federation and the United States based on a proposal by the Russian Federation. He noted that the project would disseminate energy research for the benefit of the whole region.

68. The Russian Federation supported the approval of the projects. He underlined that, where ECE was one of multiple implementing partners, it is important to adhere to the Commission’s mandate and observe the division of labor with the other partners. This would ensure efficient use of donor resources and expert knowledge.

69. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary projects contained in informal documents 2016/52, 2016/53, 2016/54 and 2016/55.

Item 13 – Other business

70. The Chair informed that the next EXCOM meeting would be held on 18 November 2016 at 3 pm.
