

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
102nd Meeting
Geneva, 14 December 2018

EXCOM/CONCLU/102

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

Meeting of the Executive Committee
14 December 2018

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda.

1. The provisional draft agenda for the 102nd meeting was adopted.

Item 2 – Chair’s conclusions from the last meeting.

2. The conclusions from the 101st meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/101) were adopted.

Item 3 - Matters relating to the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

(a) Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy

3. The Vice-Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy (CSE), Mr. Sergio Garribba, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of CSE over the past year and its plans for the future.

4. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed satisfaction with the first results of the scenario modelling undertaken as part of the Pathways project, and looked forward to the May 2019 meeting of the Committee where member States would further discuss developing goal-oriented options for adapting energy policies and creating an advanced monitoring mechanism. He said natural gas was a clean and promising energy source that would be used increasingly at a global level. Therefore, improving methane management in gas production and distribution was a priority. In that context, he found value in declaring a Year of Methane and holding relevant seminars and training workshops. He supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM’s approval.

5. The representative of the European Union and its member States noted the progress under the Pathways project, which reunites the resources of the Russian Federation, the United States and Germany. She expressed satisfaction at the development of the guidelines on energy efficiency in buildings, and interest in the advances under the UN Framework Classification and the UN Resource Management System, which continue to evolve and expand within and beyond the region. She also took note of the Committee’s intent to consult extensively on how it should support the efforts of member States efforts towards a deep transformation of energy systems, including at the informal open-ended Committee session in May 2019.

6. The representative of Belarus noted the positive cooperation of the Committee with his government and said that the latter participates actively, including in the Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings and the Bureaux of the Groups of Experts on Energy Efficiency and on Renewable Energy. He also took a positive view of the 9th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (Kiev, November 2018) and the project on international assistance in which Belarus participates together with 4 CIS countries. He supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM’s approval.

7. The representative of Austria aligned with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its member States. Further, she stated that Austria actively engages in CSE and found the Committee to be a useful forum for dialogue on the ongoing transformation in the global energy sector needed to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Regarding the 9th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development, she noted with concern the session “Nuclear energy and sustainable development: role in decarbonized energy mix”. Austria considers nuclear energy unsustainable and potentially damaging to health and the environment. She encouraged the Committee to consider renewables and reduction of energy demand to guide the transformation of the energy system. She looked forward to the future work of the Committee and said Austria would continue to participate actively, including at the informal open-ended Committee session in May 2019.

8. The representative of Switzerland noted with interest the challenges for 2019 including further alignment with and implementation of the SDGs and the wish to step up cooperation between different UNECE subsidiary bodies and the Regional Commissions. He had no objections to the decisions tabled for EXCOM’s approval.

9. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Committee on Sustainable Energy for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Committee and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

(b) Decisions on matters related to the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

10. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the change of name of the Expert Group on Resource Classification to the Expert Group on Resource Management and Terms of Reference of the Expert Group as contained in annex to document ECE/EX/2018/L.10.

Item 4 - Matters relating to the Committee on Housing and Land Management.

(a) Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Housing and Land Management.

11. The Chair of the Committee on Housing and Land Management (CHLM), Ms. Elena Szolgayova, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of CHLM over the past year and its plans for the future. She also highlighted the resource constraints of the UNECE Housing Unit, which had only two Regular Budget Professional staff.

12. The representative of the European Union and its member States noted with satisfaction the high number of events and activities undertaken with support by the European Union or its member States. She appreciated the concrete and useful outputs such as the upcoming UNECE Policy Framework for Real Estate Markets and the Country Profile on Housing and Land Management for Belarus. She said the European Union and its member States would continue to remain engaged in the work of the Committee.

13. The representative of the Russian Federation noted that urban planning and good management of municipalities were important factors for the achievement of the SDGs, in view of the rate of urbanization in the UNECE region. He said CHLM had unique experience in developing state policies on housing infrastructure, as well as useful outputs on accessible and ecological housing. He welcomed the alignment of CHLM’s work with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and did not object to changing the name of the Committee, provided

the mandate remained as outlined in the 2013 Review of the Reform of UNECE. He also supported the other decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval. He wished the secretariat success in the organization of the 2019 Commission session and its Day of Cities.

14. The representative of the United States congratulated CHLM on a successful Urban Week and a good year of work. The United States was supportive of the Committee. He welcomed the election of Ms. Marge Martin, a leading expert on homelessness from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, to the CHLM Bureau. He did not object to the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

15. The representative of Belarus appreciated CHLM's cooperation with his government on the Country Profile on Housing and Land Management of Belarus. He hoped a visit to Minsk in January 2019 would address remaining technical issues. He supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

16. The representative of Switzerland noted with interest the activities on smart sustainable cities and the planned activities on sustainable urban development. Switzerland attached great importance to urban and city issues. He supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

17. The representative of the Czech Republic aligned with the representative of the European Union and its member States. He appreciated the work of CHLM as an important contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda. He was pleased to note that the role of the Regional Commissions as key partners in reaching out to the member States had been highlighted in A/C.2/73/L.4/Rev.1. In addition to the important role of CHLM in the global context, he appreciated its close collaboration with the Czech Republic, including on the preparations of the European Smart and Sharing Cities conference (November 2018, Prague).

18. The Executive Secretary appreciated the positive remarks on the work of the Committee. Regarding the resource constraints, she noted that UNECE's budget had been reduced multiple times and that some activities would consequently need to be phased out due to lack of resources. It was not possible to continue cutting the budget while continuously adding new work. This also created an unsustainable burden on staff. It was important to reconcile resources with demand. The Executive Secretary indicated that she would bring a related proposal to EXCOM in the following year for further consideration by member States. She urged member States to consider supporting the work of the Committee financially. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Committee on Housing and Land Management for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Committee and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

(b) Decisions on matters related to the Committee on Housing and Land Management.

19. The Chair concluded that EXCOM
- i. endorses the proposal on the name change of the Committee on Housing and Land Management to "Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management", as contained in document ECE/HBP/2018/L.1 and transmits it to the sixty-eighth Commission session for consideration;
 - ii. approves the change of the name of a flagship programme of the Committee, currently named "Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management", to

- “Country Profiles on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management”, as contained in document ECE/HBP/2018/L.1;
- iii. approves the extension of the mandate of the Real Estate Market Advisory Group for the period 2019–2020 and its revised terms of reference as contained in document ECE/HBP/2018/L.2, and its programme of work 2019–2020 as contained in document ECE/HBP/L.3.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 5 - Preparations for the 2019 Commission Session

20. The Executive Secretary introduced informal documents 2018/32 and 2018/33, containing a draft agenda for the 2019 Commission session and three draft decisions to be submitted for the Commission’s consideration, respectively. She also recalled that two energy-related draft decisions mentioned by Mr. Garribba were submitted for EXCOM’s approval in informal document 2018/34. Further draft decisions would be tabled at the next EXCOM meetings after maturing through the consultation process and review of the respective subsidiary bodies. She also recalled that consolidated feedback on the draft high-level statement had been circulated and invited member States to virtually advance the review and provide a second round of proposed language amendments by 7 January. Informal consultations would be held on 17 January 2019 with a view to finalizing the draft document. She hoped all delegations would facilitate strong participation from their capitals.
21. The representative of the Russian Federation supported the submission of the draft decisions to the Commission session. He hoped for a balanced high-level statement that would reflect the interest of all member States.
22. The representative of the European Union and its member States requested additional time to form a coordinated position on the draft decisions contained in informal document 2018/34.
23. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the annotated provisional agenda of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission as contained in informal document 2018/32. EXCOM approves the submission of the draft decisions contained in informal document 2018/33 to the sixty-eighth session of the Commission for consideration under agenda item 6 “Other issues calling for decision by the Commission”. EXCOM decides to keep under review draft decisions contained in paragraphs 3 and 4 of informal document 2018/34 until EXCOM 103, to be held on 1 February 2019. EXCOM encourages member States to work towards consensus on the draft high-level statement before its next meeting in February 2019. EXCOM encourages delegations to facilitate high level attendance from their capitals at the session.

Item 6 - 2019 Regional Forum for Sustainable Development

24. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the Deputy Prime Minister of Albania, Ms. Senida Mesi, had proposed to chair the 2019 Regional Forum for Sustainable Development and said EXCOM needed to decide whether to accept this proposal. She invited EXCOM to approve the provisional agenda of the event, contained in informal

document 2018/40, and to agree to submit the draft decision contained in informal document 2018/35, extending the mandate for the Regional Forum to 2020 and 2021 to the sixty-eighth session of the Commission for consideration. She said invitations were being sent to Heads of Government and hoped for strong participation from capitals, both high-level representatives as well as experts for the peer learning round tables. She also encouraged member States to share concrete case studies and experiences related to the implementation of the SDGs under in-depth review in 2019 (4, 8, 10, 13, and 16). UNECE was working in close partnership with more than 15 UN agencies on the preparations. Several preparatory meetings were planned to take place back-to-back with the Regional Forum, led by various partners, including civil society, youth and volunteer groups. In discussions among Regional Commissions and with UN DESA and UNDP, first ideas had also emerged to hold an event on SDG Financing in conjunction with the Regional Forum, which could provide inputs to the September 2019 high-level dialogue on financing for development at the UN General Assembly. The format could be a preparatory event to the Regional Forum, co-organized by UNECE, UN DESA and UNDP. The focus of the event could be on mobilizing private resources for sustainable development. She asked if there would be interest from member States in such an event.

25. The representative of Albania viewed the forum as a regional space to share policy solutions, best practices and challenges for SDG implementation. She said that Ms. Mesi was also the national coordinator for SDG implementation and had led the preparation of Albania's Voluntary National Review in 2018. Albania was ready to cooperate with all member States to make the 2019 Regional Forum a success. She also looked favourably on holding an event on SDG financing and thought this important aspect was too rarely included in discussions.
26. The representative of Switzerland said the Forum would be a good opportunity to facilitate dialogue and exchange related to the progress of member States on implementing the SDGs. He expressed interest in the preparatory meetings. Regarding the proposed event on financing, he encouraged to contextualize the topic for the region. He supported the extension of the mandate of the Forum and appreciated Albania's proposal to chair the event.
27. The Chair concluded that EXCOM accepts, with appreciation, Albania's proposal to chair the 2019 Regional Forum. EXCOM approves the provisional agenda of the 2019 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development as contained in informal document 2018/40. EXCOM agrees to forward the draft decision extending the mandate for the Regional Forum for 2020 and 2021 to the sixty-eighth session of the Commission, as contained in informal document 2018/35, for consideration under agenda item 6 "Other issues calling for decision by the Commission." EXCOM encourages delegations to facilitate high level attendance from their capitals at the event and to share concrete case studies and experiences related to the implementation of the SDGs under in-depth review in 2019.

Item 7 – Proposed programme budget of the Economic Commission for Europe for 2020

28. The Executive Secretary introduced UNECE's proposed programme budget for 2020, shared with EXCOM for information. She recalled the General Assembly resolution A/72/266 changing the budget period from biennial to annual on a trial basis, and explained that the first annual proposed programme budget, to be prepared for 2020,

would contain three parts as follows: Part I: the plan outline, which presents the long-term priorities and the objectives of the Organization; Part II: the programme plan for programmes and subprogrammes and programme performance information; and Part III: the post and non-post resource requirements for the programmes and subprogrammes. Part I would be prepared by UN Headquarters; Parts II and III would be developed by departments on an annual basis. UNECE expected to receive final instructions shortly and had prepared a draft of Part II based on instructions already received. The proposed programme budget would subsequently be submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) at their respective sessions in mid-2019. Their conclusions and recommendations would be transmitted to the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session in 2019, when the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for 2020 would be considered.

29. The representative of the United States noted that there were increases in the number of projected activities. He inquired if this would lead to a request for increased resources or if it reflected a more efficient use of existing resources.
30. The head of the Programme Management Unit explained that an annual budget entailed allocating the previously biennial number of activities between two years, but that this could not always be an equal split as some activities, such as the Commission session, were only held every two years.
31. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the proposed programme budget for 2020. EXCOM encourages delegations to liaise with their counterparts in New York to ensure that their views are well represented at the budget discussions at UN headquarters.

Item 8 - Important new developments: briefing by the Executive Secretary

32. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) planned with the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC), as follow on to an earlier MOU that ended on 31 December 2017. Through its work on water management, industrial safety, and public participation, UNECE has focused on improving environmental quality in the framework of the initiative, in line with established workplans under its multilateral environmental agreements. Partners in the new MoU are OSCE, UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS, UN Environment and the Regional Environment Center for Central and Eastern Europe.
33. The representative of the Russian Federation said that the Russian Federation had continuously opposed the mixing of the social and environmental dimensions with security and would not support the politicisation of the work of UNECE.
34. In response to the Russian Federation, the Executive Secretary explained that UNECE adhered strictly to its mandates, including in the context of this MoU, and that it covered only environmental safety issues and not security-related ones. She said she would be ready to provide additional clarifications bilaterally if requested.
35. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following recent meetings:
 - i. 7-8 November, New York: Chief Executives Board

- ii. 5-9 November, Vancouver: 76th session of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry
- iii. 12-15 November, Kyiv: 9th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development
- iv. 15-16 November, Geneva: Regional UN System Meeting
- v. 21-22 November, Geneva: 2nd meeting of the governing bodies of the Road Safety Trust Fund
- vi. 22-23 November, Prague: International Conference “European Smart and Sharing Cities” co-organized by UNECE and Czech Republic
- vii. 29-30 November: State visit to Azerbaijan
- viii. 4-6 December, Geneva: 10th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention
- ix. 10-14 December, Geneva: 38th session of the Executive Body of the Air Convention
- x. 3-14 December, Katowice: COP24

36. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming events:
- i. 29-31 January, Geneva: 24th session of the Committee on Environmental Policy
 - ii. 5-7 February, Geneva: Intermediary session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention

37. The representative of Azerbaijan said the official travels of the Executive Secretary were of interest and appreciated UNECE’s demand-driven approach and country-contextual responses. She thanked the Executive Secretary for visiting Baku and informed EXCOM that UNECE and Azerbaijan had signed a joint declaration on cooperation for the implementation of the SDGs and would work together on the national priorities for sustainable development, relevant indicators and alignment of national programmes and strategies. Azerbaijan remained committed to its international obligations, including those undertaken in cooperation with UNECE. She highlighted water as a priority area and said the UNECE Water Convention was a valuable tool to preserve and protect this scarce resource. Azerbaijan, being a downstream country in terms of freshwater reserves, continues to face challenges related to the preservation and the provision of freshwater. Azerbaijan looked forward to cooperating with UNECE and engaging with the European Union on this topic, and to finalizing a MoU on the National Policy Dialogue on Water with UNECE in 2019.

38. The representative of the European Union and its member States asked the Executive Secretary for an update on the reform of the UN Development System.

39. The Executive Secretary replied that discussions were ongoing in both Geneva and New York and that UNECE and the other Regional Commissions were coordinating their positions. At the moment, no guidance had been received regarding the modalities of phase 2 of the reform. She indicated that she would keep EXCOM apprised of further developments.

Item 8 – Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

40. The representative of the United States supported the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2018/39 on transparency and traceability in the garment and footwear sectors. Referring to comments he had received from the United States Department of

Labor, he stated that the United States believed the project could make a useful contribution to improving working conditions and improving transparency of the opaque supply chains of these industries, including in leather production which contains particularly poor working conditions and labor rights abuses. He hoped the project would take into account existing efforts to promote transparency and traceability in the garment and footwear industry, such as the Responsible Sourcing Network's Yarn Ethically & Sustainably Sourced initiative, to avoid duplication of work.

41. The secretariat confirmed that it would strive to avoid duplication and that it was cooperating with all stakeholders in the sector to incorporate the experience of other organizations.

42. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal documents 2018/37, 2018/38 and 2018/39.

Item 9 – Other business

43. The Chair informed EXCOM that the next meeting would be held on 1 February 2019.
