

Committee on Sustainable Energy**Bureau Meeting****Geneva, 26 September 2017, 11.00-13.00****Bureau Report No. 2017/3****Present, Bureau:**

Mr. Jürgen Keinhorst, Chair

Mr. Sergio Garribba, Mr. Bekbergen Kerey for Mr. Ramazan Zhampiissov, Mr. Talyat Aliev, Ms. Nataliya Boyko for Mr. Didenko (and also nominated), Mr. Jarad Daniels, Mr. Ray Pilcher, Mr. Aleksandar Dukovski, Mr. David MacDonald, all Vice-Chairs

Ms. Miriam Gutzke, Germany, Mr. Aibek Bekzhanov, Kazakhstan

Observers:

Mr. Ron Adam, Mr. Hubert Schwarz, both nominated Bureau members

Ms. Judith Galilee Metzer, Israel

Apologies:

Mr. Nazir Ramazanov, Mr. Jean-Christophe Füg, Mr. Ramazan Zhampiissov

Present, secretariat, Sustainable Energy Division (SED):

Mr. Scott Foster, Mrs. Stefanie Held, Mr. Gianluca Sambucini, Mr. Branko Milicevic, Mr. Oleg Dzioubinski, Ms. Lisa Tinschert, Mr. Michal Drabik, Mr. Hari Tulsidas

Immediate action points

SED secretariat:

- Provide list of strategic questions/identify policy areas for next Bureau meeting. This could be the first step to map relevance/needs/gaps of energy issues across member States
- Develop strawman for potential UNECE energy ministerial in 2020 for Bureau consideration

Bureau:

- Next in-person Bureau meeting: 11 December 2017, Geneva, the day of the UNECE Executive Committee that will consider the outcomes of the 26th session of the Committee

Main discussion points**Welcome and adoption of the agenda**

- The Bureau meeting was kindly hosted by the German Permanent Mission to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva.
- The Chair welcomed the participants, including the three newly nominated Bureau members and observers.
- While the agenda was adopted as presented, the Bureau discussed mainly agenda item 2: "Taking stock and looking forward."
- Questions raised in this context were the following:
 - What are the outcomes that we are seeking with Committee and Bureau work?
 - How can we tackle the complex challenges?
 - Where does the Bureau want to lead the Committee during the next biennium?
 - How does it want to operate?
 - Is the current structure effective?

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- Which partners should be sought?
- How can the much needed resources be found?

Impressions from previous Committee sessions and enhancing the impact of Committee work

- The Director provided background about the complex challenges faced when implementing the programme of work and seeking to achieve sustainable energy. He stressed that progress has been made to deliver on energy for sustainable development, especially through collaboration among the right stakeholders, but much was still left to do (reference to the *Global Tracking Framework*, recent work by the International Energy Agency and a joint report with REN21 and the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy). He further stressed the importance of voluntary contributions to make progress.
- As 2018 milestone, he mentioned the upcoming review of SDG7 in the context of the High-Level Political Forum in New York in spring 2018 and described the opportunity that the review process offered for the work of the Committee and the subprogramme.
- He reintroduced the idea of a UN-wide energy ministerial for heightened engagement at the political level and sought advice from the Bureau how to take this idea forward.
- The term “political relevance” of the work of the Committee occupied the Bureau. Relevance – for whom? For each member State, for the region, a sub-region or globally? How can a limited number of relevant topics be found? How can we learn from each other? The Bureau stressed the importance of the platform the Committee provides to facilitate peer learning and capacity building in energy technology and policy.
- The Bureau further mentioned the importance to improve exchange with capitals, beyond the “Geneva orbit”, and to actively leverage links to respected organisations in the energy sphere, e.g. IEA, OECD, IRENA, others. The Committee should already be well connected through its Bureaux and expert network, but does not take full advantage. Value added was to provide a strategic vision in energy across the region and different sectors, as well as the possibility to exchange views on “tricky” subjects like fossil fuels in the energy mix.
- The question was raised how to present what the Committee is doing internally and externally to increase visibility. The Bureau recommended to develop a rational, a clear and forward-looking agenda for the Committee and its subsidiary bodies and to communicate it strategically. The Bureau observed that the many activities of the Groups of Experts and the subprogramme are carried out without a clear line. It stressed the need for clarity of purpose and priority setting that would allow the necessary broad political approach and to develop a message to capitals – the Bureau uttered the wish to discuss progress and achievements in more depth in a way that could be presented to capitals and administrations to facilitate endorsement of outputs.
- In this context, the Bureau suggested to build on the Committee as a platform for exchange and peer review. Communication was a major aspect and a “good marketing campaign” at the essence to raise the visibility of the work of the Committee. A dialogue in both directions between the Committee and the expert groups as well as capitals was needed to define further direction of work. Diversity could be a benefit as well as a hindrance. Therefore, it was important to keep the independent platform the Committee represents to transfer knowledge across subregions. Messages should be simple and political, not technical, for maximum impact with policy makers. Topics should resonate with all stakeholders.

Mandate and programme of work of the sustainable subprogramme

- The Chair stressed the role of the Committee to “oversee” the work of the subsidiary bodies. What was lacking was a dialogue with member States to determine topics of strategic relevance. Examples cited as organisations to include in the work: UNIDO, OECD, the Batumi Conference for Europe (link of the recommendations to energy).
- In addition, the Bureau made the following observations:

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- While the SDGs are a framework for the UN, for many countries they are like “space shuttles” – far away and incomprehensible. Committee can help demystify.
- Well-formulated large projects, e.g. a project about the modernisation of large industrial complexes grouping together various industrial sectors (steel, chemicals, and cement with energy infrastructure) as a part of a country’s future energy strategy could serve as an example for an innovative approach across the six Groups of Experts. Could allow joint outreach to financial institutions, to entire network and across sectors.
- The link between the Committee and the Expert Groups must be strengthened. The Bureau is ideal to develop a strategic approach to implement the programme of work. More frequent interactions could happen as well virtually, and then use the respective Bureaux for strategy and communication in all directions, as well with the Committee. The Bureau of the Committee therefore has a special role to facilitate a broader cross-conversation, flag strengths and weaknesses and point to the opportunities outside the organisation and with strategic partners (as a successful example see the CCS recommendations to the UNFCCC process in 2014). The Bureau mentioned the crucial role of the Executive Secretary for outreach and visibility (with New York, the Secretary General, the other Regional Commissions and capitals).
- United States proposed to include coal in the *Pathways to Sustainable Energy* project, at the same time the messaging about the fossil fuel based sectors (especially coal) should change towards more energy efficiency, holistic policy making and greening the economy. It would add value to help countries think about how to move a country towards an entirely new future and address the SDGs.

Energy Ministerial

- The Chair thanked Kazakhstan for hosting the 8th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development and Energy Ministerial, an event that brought together more than 90 countries and more 2500 delegates.
- Contrary to the Batumi environmental conference, where a mandate from UNECE existed to hold a UNECE ministerial, such as mandate was missing for the Energy Ministerial in Astana.
- The Bureau discussed pros and cons on a possibility for a UNECE Energy Ministerial in the near future, by 2020-2021. Precondition should in any case be to find a formal way to engage capitals and UNECE Executive Committee in the preparations of such an event. The decision making process for the ministerial should take into account what other energy organisations are doing, what UNECE can afford from a staffing and resource point of view and should only begin once a clear view has been agreed on what to expect from such an event at this time. The Bureau recommended to think about topics of political relevance carefully and to link outcomes to like meetings and high-level partners. A concept paper was requested for further discussion.

Summary and next steps

- The Chair summarised the main challenges as i) implementation at national level; ii) lack of funding for the work programme at UNECE level; iii) UN bureaucracy; and iv) a decision needed if an energy ministerial should be planned or not.
- For its future meetings, the Bureau discussed the tools it would need to proceed. Some mentioned the need to map activities and needs of member States in energy, whereas others said it would be more useful to determine strategies at country level: how to green an economy, how to develop a low-carbon move and enhance competitiveness, and yet others stressed the importance of business models and involving the private sector in anything to do with the SDGs. It was important to connect the ideas that the Committee and its subsidiary bodies already have on energy and to develop a strategy for the Committee in the medium and long-term.
- The secretariat was tasked with the following:

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- Provide list of strategic questions/identify policy areas for next Bureau meeting. This could be the first step to map relevance/needs/gaps of energy issues across member States or for a bigger SWOT analysis
- Develop strawman for potential UNECE energy ministerial in 2020 for Bureau consideration

Next meeting of the Bureau

- 11 December 2017, 11.00-16.00, Geneva, at the auspices of the UNECE Executive Committee meeting. The Chair is to present the recommendations of the Committee 26th session on mandates and work plans for approval.
- Details to be communicated by the secretariat asap.
