



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ECE/1447
7 February 2007

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Sixty-second session
Geneva, 25-27 April 2007
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

ISSUES CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

Note by the Executive Secretary

Summary

The note below outlines the issues calling for action by the Commission, namely the approval of the Terms of Reference of five Sectoral Committees as detailed below. The Commission's approval is also requested for the holding in 2008 of both the ECE's Third Regional Implementation Forum for Sustainable Development and a regional review of progress in the economic areas covered by the outcome document of the ECE regional Beijing +10 review.

I. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF SECTORAL COMMITTEES

1. As provided for in the Work Plan on ECE Reform (E/ECE/1434/Rev.1), “the Terms of Reference of the Sectoral Committees shall be approved by the Commission” (paragraph 25). In this connection:

- (a) The Committee on Trade, at its first session (21-23 June 2006), approved its Terms of Reference, as contained in document ECE/EX/2006/L.5;
- (b) The Committee on Housing and Land Management, at its sixty-seventh session (18-20 September 2006), adopted its Terms of Reference, as contained in document E/ECE/EX/2006/L.16;
- (c) The Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration, at its first session (27-28 September 2006), adopted its Terms of Reference, as contained in document ECE/CECI/2006/6;
- (d) The Timber Committee, at its sixty-fourth session (3-6 October 2006), adopted its revised Terms of Reference, as contained in document ECE/EX/2006/L.17;
- (e) The Committee on Sustainable Energy, at its fifteenth session (28-30 November 2006), adopted its revised Terms of Reference, as contained in document ECE/EX/2006/L.22.

2. The approval of the Commission of these Terms of Reference is hereby requested.

II. THIRD REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

3. In 2002, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) stated that the “implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the Summit should be effectively pursued at the regional and subregional levels, through the regional commissions and other regional and subregional institutions and bodies”. The Summit also called on the regional commissions to promote the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into their work in a balanced way and to facilitate and promote such integration into the work of regional, subregional and other bodies “for example by facilitating and strengthening the exchange of experiences, including national experience, best practices, case studies and partnership experience related to the implementation of Agenda 21”.

4. In this connection, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) at its eleventh session in May 2003 invited the regional commissions to consider organizing regional implementation meetings in collaboration with other regional and subregional organizations to provide regional inputs to the CSD’s discussions.

5. The CSD meets annually in New York, in two-year cycles, with each cycle focusing on clusters of specific thematic and cross-sectoral issues, outlined in its multi-year programme of work (2003-2017) (E/CN.17/2003/6).

6. UNECE has organized two Regional Implementation Meetings in preparation of CSD-12 and CSD-14 respectively, contributing a regional perspective to the assessment and review of implementation in important areas like water and sanitation, and energy.

7. CSD-16, to be held in April/May 2008, will start a new two-year-cycle with a focus on the following sectoral issues:

- Agriculture
- Rural Development
- Land
- Drought
- Desertification
- Africa

In addition, there will be a review of the decisions on water and sanitation adopted by CSD-13.

8. The Secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) has already indicated that the regional commissions are expected to provide similar regional inputs to CSD-16 as were provided to the twelfth and fourteenth sessions, involving the following preparations:

- The organization of Regional Implementation Meetings by each of the five United Nations regional commissions (which presumes preparation of significant assessment papers for the sectoral issues);
- Written contributions to the Secretary-General's Reports;
- The organization of regional panels during the session.

9. While not all issues have the same relevance for all regions, the UNECE region is expected to provide inputs not only with regard to progress and challenges in its member countries, but also from a donor perspective, particularly for Africa.

10. In those areas where the UNECE does not carry out substantive activities and therefore does not possess the required expertise, competent organizations and bodies like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) will be asked to assist with the preparation of background documentation.

12. In order to ensure timely preparations, it is proposed that the Commission decide, at its sixty-second session, to organize the Third Regional Implementation Meeting in preparation of CSD-16. The suggested dates are 28-29 January 2008, which would allow sufficient time for the preparation of the Meeting as well as allowing for its results to be fed into CSD-16.

13. To prepare for and convene the Regional Implementation Meeting for CSD-16, it is estimated that approximately US\$ 50,000 would be needed, as follows:

- For at least one consultant paper on the sectoral issues (see paragraph 8 above):
US\$ 20,000

- For travel and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) of one representative from each of the eligible¹ member States: US\$ 30,000.

14. Past experience suggests that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA) will be unable to provide funds for consultants as well as for the participation of most countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-East European countries (SEE). For the Second Regional Implementation Meeting, UN/DESA provided funding only for eligible countries that were members of the CSD. It is not known yet if this will also be the case for the Third Regional Implementation Meeting.

Proposed Actions

15. It is proposed that the Commission decide to organize the Third Regional Implementation Meeting in preparation of CSD-16 on 28-29 January 2008 in Geneva. UNECE member States are also invited to explore the possibilities of making an extrabudgetary contribution to help defray the above-mentioned costs.

III. REGIONAL REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN ECONOMIC AREAS FOLLOWING THE OUTCOME OF THE ECE REGIONAL BEIJING +10 REVIEW

16. UNECE, like the other regional commissions, provides a regional platform for reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BpfA) adopted by all member States in 1995.

17. Two intergovernmental reviews for the UNECE region were organized in Geneva, in 2000 (Beijing +5) and in 2004 (Beijing +10). They were prepared in close cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues (OSAGI) and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) as well as other United Nations and non-United Nations international organizations with gender activities in the UNECE region (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Council of Europe, European Union and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)).

18. The Beijing +5 and Beijing +10 reviews demonstrated consistent support of the whole gender constituency of the region involved in the Beijing process, as reflected in the active participation of representatives of governments from 52 and 53 member States respectively, intergovernmental organizations and a large number of non-governmental organizations and academia. The conclusions from these meetings (E/ECE/RW.2/2000/7 and ECE/AC.28/2004/3) identified a number of policy areas requiring further efforts. They served as a road map for member States for their national policies and at the same time provided region-specific inputs into the global review of the Beijing process coordinated by DAW/OSAGI (New York 2000 and 2005).

¹ According to the criteria for financial support approved by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its thirteenth session in October 2006 (ECE/CEP/138).

19. Further progress in the Women and Economy area, as defined by the BPfA, was among the key concerns of UNECE member countries in the context of uneven progress in equality of economic opportunities in countries and sub-regions and in specific areas, such as employability, wage gap and social protection, including pensions.

20. Key challenges to address included the improvement of the monitoring and benchmarking processes for assessing progress in gender equality, identifying good practices in mainstreaming gender into economic policies, and giving urgent attention to reversing negative trends in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

21. Since 2000 the UNECE has supported countries in addressing these challenges within its mandate and areas of expertise. Such support has included the establishment of a gender statistics website and related capacity building activities in gender statistics, exchange of experiences on gender and economic policies (Regional Symposium on Mainstreaming Gender into Economic Policies, organized in cooperation with OSAGI/DAW, Geneva 2004), support to women's entrepreneurship (Forums of Women Entrepreneurs, Geneva 2001 and 2003; training on access to financing for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the launching of a new project – Working Group on Gender and Economy – under the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

22. The UNECE reform in 2006 re-affirmed the need for particular attention to be paid to the gender dimension of development, as a priority cross-cutting theme and for strengthening mainstreaming efforts, taking into account the economic areas addressed by the regional Beijing +10 review (E/ECE/1434/Rev.1, paragraph 79).

23. In line with the reform, the UNECE can continue to play its role as a regional platform to review progress, exchange experience and discuss a new approach to gender equality as a crucial factor for smart economics.

Proposed Actions

24. It is thus proposed that the Commission agree in principle to organize a regional meeting in 2008-2009 to review progress and identify good practices in the area of Women and Economy, in the context of preparations for the Beijing +15 review. The Commission may also wish to request the Executive Committee take up this matter and, in particular, to discuss the format and other modalities of the proposed meeting.
