

Basic objectives of the climate change segment of the UNECE Biennial Session and guidelines for participation

Note to Participants

The Commission provides a forum for policy dialogue on pertinent developments that will have an impact on the region and is also responsible for taking strategic decisions on the UNECE programme of work. An objective of the climate change segment is to assess how the work programme of UNECE could be adjusted over the coming two years in order to deal with the challenges poised by climate change. Hence, the biennial Session of the Commission provides a unique opportunity for its member States and UNECE's other intergovernmental partners to provide their strategic vision of how UNECE's role in contributing to tackle climate change could be strengthened.

UNECE has assumed an active role in coordinating United Nations support for action on climate change in the pan-European region and beyond. It plays the role of a convener to support global, regional and national action on climate change, coordinating its implementation with other organisations that have significant mandates in this area and, in particular, contributing to the local and regional success of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The opening session will give a perspective on how climate change (actual and projected) could affect the ECE region and its member States, and an overview of the region's ongoing and planned climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. It will look at the role of ECE in addressing climate change, against the background of global developments, and will identify the main challenges for the region's climate change agenda. Also, it will explore the links between the financial crisis and the opportunity to take a proactive approach, such as the Green New Deal and creating green economies in the region. Finally, it will delve into the climate change challenges for the automotive industry, and how the industry is coping with them and finding alternative solutions. It will also feature a perspective on the role of the private sector in tackling climate change challenges.

Addressing climate change – now a global priority – is already an integral part of UNECE's work programme across its various Divisions. The first panel will explore the main climate change activities of UNECE against the background of the existing challenges for mitigation and adaptation actions in various sectors. In the transport sector, it will ask how the EU and ECE can improve cooperation to promote the use of environmentally friendly vehicles and highlight the role of the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations as an international standard-setting organ in this important area. It will explore the potential impact of establishing standards for fuel efficiency on the reduction of CO₂ emissions by cars. It will assess the need for market formation and financing of energy efficiency investments for climate change mitigation in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In this context, it will discuss how private-public partnerships can contribute, on the basis of specific examples such as the two energy efficiency funds within UNECE. It will highlight the benefits of energy and resource efficiency in the housing sector through relevant experiences and attempt to find ways of addressing the challenges ahead, including within the context of the upcoming negotiations at COP15 in Copenhagen. Finally, this panel will

showcase the co-benefits of integrated strategies for abating air pollution and mitigating GHG emissions through the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and explore ways to further strengthen co-operation between this convention and the UNFCCC and IPCC.

The second panel will discuss climate change action related to forestry and timber and give an adaptation perspective from the work of the Water Convention. It will attempt to understand the new risks to forests in the face of climate change and the challenges of combining multiple roles while maintaining sustainable forest management. It will ask how the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes can contribute to climate change adaptation, transboundary water cooperation. It will also provide a perspective on the conclusions of the Fifth World Water Forum and their relevance to work of UNECE. It will also show, on the basis of the experience gained through the ENVSEC initiative, how international cooperation on environmental issues can contribute to improving security in the ECE region.

The last panel will address ways of involving civil society at all levels – including involving key stakeholders from the private sector, civil society organisations and educational institutions – in the climate change debate and in implementing solutions. In this context, it will explore the governance structures needed to effectively mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, and how transparency and accountability and public engagement can be guaranteed. It will showcase a number of successful UNECE initiatives that are mechanisms to raise awareness and mobilize a wider group of stakeholders, including education for sustainable development, strategic environment assessment under the Espoo Convention and the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), a project aimed at achieving more sustainable and healthier transport patterns. Finally, it will address the role of statistics for climate relevant emissions and related human activities, both of which can contribute to factoring climate change into societal decision-making.

The concluding session will focus on ways of sharpening the impact of UNECE in combating climate change and the road ahead. Discussion can be guided by the recommendations laid out in the background document produced by the secretariat which encompass both general recommendations but also sector- or work-programme-specific recommendations.
