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Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Sustainable Energy

Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane

Thirteenth session

Geneva, 24-25 September 2018

Report of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane

I. Introduction

1. The thirteenth session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane was held from 24-25 September 2018.
2. This report summarizes the discussions on the work of the Group of Experts at its thirteenth session. All the documents and presentations of the session are available on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) website¹.

II. Attendance


3. The meeting was attended by experts from the following ECE member States: Canada, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Poland, Russian Federation, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.
4. Experts from China, Colombia, India, and Mongolia participated under Article 11 of the Commission's Terms of Reference.
5. From the United Nations system and Specialized Agencies, a representative from the European Commission (EC), represented by the EC Directorate-General (D.G.) Energy participated.

¹ Official documents of the session are available at <http://documents.un.org/>. Unofficial room documents and presentations delivered at the meeting are available on the ECE website at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48539>.

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6. The following international organizations were represented: Global Methane Initiative, International Energy Agency (IEA) Clean Coal Centre (IEACCC) and World Mining Congress.

7. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated: Assocarboni General Association of Coal Operators, Center for Promotion of Sustainable Development, Climate-KIC, and The Advocates from Human Rights.

8. The private sector was represented by experts from twenty-one companies. Academia was also represented by experts from four universities.

III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2018/1

9. The provisional agenda as contained in the document ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2018/1 was adopted without amendment.

IV. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

10. At its twelfth session, the Group of Experts elected a Bureau to serve for two years, until the end of 2019. No new nominations were received in response to a request sent by the secretariat to member States in May 2018.

V. Opening remarks (agenda item 3)

11. In his opening remarks, the Chair praised the scope and the diversity of expertise of the members of the Group and highlighted the continuous need for improvement in working conditions and safety in underground coal mines. The Chair mentioned the ongoing work that the Group is undertaking to develop training modules aimed at reducing methane related safety risks and emissions to the atmosphere. He briefly reviewed the activities undertaken by the Group last year and indicated the deliverables in the 2018-2019 work plan that need to be completed in 2019. The Chair underlined the importance of addressing gender issues in extractive industries and expressed his gratitude to the Women's Human Rights Program for conducting research on this matter for the Group. The Chair praised the work of the Bureau and its efforts to manage, direct and implement the Group's work plan between annual sessions in spite of human and financial resource constraints. To ensure continued efficiency of the Bureau's work, he proposed to develop Terms of Reference, providing guidelines for the functioning of the Bureau and determining the role and obligations of the Chair and Vice-Chairs. The need to expand the Group's membership was also highlighted.

12. In his opening remarks, the Director of the ECE Sustainable Energy Division highlighted the work of the Division and emphasized the role of efficient methane management in the general effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He advocated for a focus on a broad methane management agenda that includes not only coal mine methane, but also pre-mining methane drainage, ventilation air methane, as well as methane from abandoned mines. The need to focus not only on mitigation but also on proper monitoring, reporting and verification was underlined. The Director noted the success of the Global Methane Forum and highlighted the strategic partnership between ECE and the Global Methane Initiative (GMI). He stressed the role of the International Centres of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane, operating under the auspices of the Group in dissemination of the best practices in the efficient methane capture and use, and welcomed the Group's efforts to expand their network. Finally, the Director underlined the need to discuss the role of fossil

fuels in the future energy mix and praised the Group's efforts to develop a project that aims at providing countries with a tool for an efficient and socially responsible transition towards the green economy.

13. The full texts of the Chair's and the Director's opening remarks are available on the session's website² under agenda item 3 - Opening remarks.

VI. Eighth joint meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and the Global Methane Initiative Coal Subcommittee (agenda item 4)

14. The Group of Experts thanked the Coal Subcommittee of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) and its members for their continued support and collaboration.

15. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the success of the Global Methane Forum held in April 2018, Toronto, Canada and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to the event.

16. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the added value and success of other events that it has recently organized in cooperation with GMI, namely the seminar Turning Coal Mine Methane into an Asset: Implementing Best Practices and Policies delivered at the twenty-fifth World Mining Congress, 19-22 June 2018, Astana, Kazakhstan, and the capacity-building workshop on Best Practices in Coal Mine Methane Capture and Utilization, 24-25 July 2018, Bogota, Colombia.

17. The Group of Experts expressed interest in continuing to develop joint projects with GMI and requested the secretariat to ensure, facilitate, and coordinate continued cooperation between the two entities.

18. The Group of Experts was informed about the situation related to CMM in Canada, China, Colombia, India, Poland, Ukraine and the United States, and was presented with an overview of the ongoing CMM projects in these countries. A presentation was delivered by Battelle on capacity-building related to methane mitigation in key GMI countries. Two technical discussions focusing on Abandoned Mine Methane and on Ventilation Air Methane were also held.

VII. Update on implementation of the work plan for 2018-2019 (agenda item 5)

19. The Group of Experts reviewed its work plan for 2018-2019 and noted that all activities planned for 2018 had been successfully delivered.

20. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the completion of the translation of the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Recovery in Coal Mines (BPG) into French, Russian, Spanish, Polish and Chinese. The Group of Experts thanked the International Centres of Excellence (ICE-CMM) in Poland and in China for their in-kind contributions in respectively translating the BPG into Polish and Chinese. The Group of Experts welcomed that the French BPG had been issued in print by ECE and encouraged ICE-CMMs in Poland and in China to also issue their versions of the BPG in hard copies.

² <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48539>

21. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the array of BPG dissemination activities successfully organized in 2018 and thanked the members for their active involvement in their delivery.
22. The Group of Experts discussed the invitations that it received from the Ministries in Georgia, Turkey and Ukraine to deliver capacity-building events in these countries. The Group decided to develop a standardized procedure for responding to such requests. A detailed questionnaire on the particular needs of the requesting country is to be prepared by the Bureau with the support of the secretariat. The need to make better use of electronic means of communication to disseminate the best practices developed by the Group was highlighted. To improve the efficiency of BPG dissemination activities, the secretariat was requested to explore opportunities to coordinate the Group's activities with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
23. The Group of Experts discussed the progress on the development of the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Recovery and Use from Abandoned Coal Mines that is being carried out under the framework of the extrabudgetary project "Dissemination of best practices in the abatement, recovery and use of methane, Phase II". The members were informed that an updated outline will be developed and distributed to the Group by the end of September 2018. It was decided that the scope of the document needs to be reviewed in order to assure its relevance and principle-based character, as well as to avoid duplication with the existing BPG. The representative of the IEACCC (Ms. Lesley Sloss) volunteered to join the Task Force on AMM. Other members were encouraged to also contribute to the work on the document.
24. The Group of Experts welcomed the progress made to develop a risk management tool and thanked Mr. David Creedy for leading the work on this task. The tool, which will be designed to raise awareness on gas related hazards, needs to be straightforward, easy to use, generally available, and applicable.
25. The Group of Experts noted that, in accordance with its 2018-2019 work plan, a standard training module needs to be developed before the end of the biennium and asked the members to contribute to the work on this deliverable. The idea to develop an interactive on-line training tool was introduced and this will be further discussed by the Bureau and the secretariat in terms of its objectives, focus, form, scope, and targeted audience.
26. In light of ECE's work on methane management in extractive industries, the Group of Experts decided to evaluate the value of and need for developing in the next biennium a document on best methods and practices in monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) of methane emissions in the coal industry. Aligned with the current BPG, which serves as a principles-based and practical approach to addressing various safety and environmental problems caused by methane that is liberated during coal mining, the proposed publication would provide guidance for incorporating MRV as a way of measuring progress in reducing emissions. The Group requested the Bureau to discuss the issue in greater detail and present its opinion on engaging in such an activity at the fourteenth session.
27. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the updates provided on the status and activities of the ICE-CMMs in Poland and in China. The Group further noted with appreciation the progress made in the development of a worldwide network of centres and congratulated the host entities for the work accomplished. The Group requested that the secretariat and the host entities ensure communication and coordination of their respective activities among each other and with the Group. The Group also requested the secretariat to continue to keep the other Regional Commissions informed on the activities of ICE-CMMs undertaken beyond the ECE region and to seek their engagement in any such initiatives.
28. The Group of Experts approved the status report of the ICE-CMM in Poland.
29. The Group of Experts approved the status report of the ICE-CMM in China.

30. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the interest of the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and the United States in establishing ICE-CMMs in these countries and requested the secretariat to provide the local entities involved in the process of their creation with any information and assistance necessary for setting up the Centres.
31. Noting with appreciation the presentation on the activities, goals, and accomplishments of the World Mining Congress (WMC), the Group of Experts requested the secretariat to explore opportunities for cooperation between the two entities and for development of joint projects. Should any such projects be identified they could be started in the next biennium subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources.
32. A panel discussion on modernization of the energy sector as a pathway towards low-carbon energy and a green economy was held. The benefits and challenges related to technological modernization of the energy and mining sectors, with an emphasis on environmental and social aspects, were addressed and the ongoing activities undertaken by the entities represented on the panel were reviewed. The Group of Experts committed to review the concept note of the project on transition of the energy sector and to circulate it to the panelists. The Group of Experts will work to include other relevant participants in the project.
33. The Group of Experts underlined the importance and inevitability of the transition of the energy sector and invited member States and relevant organizations to cooperate with ECE on the modernization project that it is developing in this field.
34. The Group of Experts recommended that it stays informed of the facts related to, and becomes more involved in, the ongoing debate on the role of coal in the future energy mix in the context of CMM and AMM. Methane emissions from coal mining are driven by the demand for coal and contribute to the overall carbon footprint of the coal industry and coal consumers. The need for an open and inclusive dialogue based on facts was underlined and the Group invited other subsidiary bodies of the ECE Committee on Sustainable Energy to join the discussion and to develop a common position on the future of energy.

VIII. Gender issues and promoting broader inclusiveness (agenda item 6)

35. In line with the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, a panel discussion focused on targeting modes for broader inclusiveness in the Group’s work and on the value of diversity for innovation was held. The discussion explored, in particular, the gender inclusive aspect of the issue, and highlighted the benefits that diversity of the workforce and the resulting multiplicity of employees’ experiences and world views can bring to companies operating in the coal and allied industries, including CMM, CBM, and AMM.
36. Recognizing the importance and value of broader inclusiveness in its work, the Group of Experts requested that measures aimed at raising awareness on barriers to women’s engagement and professional development in the mining and energy sectors should be promoted at activities organized by the Group. The Group committed to demonstrating inclusiveness within its own activities and work plan.

IX. Preparations for the fourteenth session of the Group of Experts (agenda item 7)

37. The fourteenth session of the Group of Experts will be held on 7-8 November 2019 in Geneva, immediately after the fifteenth session of the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production from Fossil Fuels.

38. The Group of Experts decided that a joint ECE and GMI Coal Sub-Committee meeting should be included in the agenda of its fourteenth session.

39. The Group of Experts requested the Bureau and the secretariat to explore the opportunity to hold an additional unofficial meeting of the Group in New York, United States in 2019.

X. Any other business (agenda item 8)

40. The Group of Experts noted the need to expand its membership from both within and beyond the ECE region, and to secure additional extrabudgetary resources. Both are prerequisites to be able to deliver on the current work plan. The Group requested the secretariat to work, in cooperation with the Bureau, to identify new members, as well as potential sources of funding.

41. Noting that a request is to be made by the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its upcoming twenty-seventh session in Geneva, the Group of Experts recommended to

- (a) engage in a discussion with the other subsidiary bodies of the Committee on the role, programme of work, structure, and mode of operation of the Committee, and
- (b) review its own mandate and programme of work

in order to ensure their relevance to, and suitability for delivering on the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Group of Experts underlined that it stands ready to contribute from its experience and expertise to the summary document containing recommendations on these matters that is to be jointly prepared by the subsidiary bodies of the Committee and presented to the Committee's twenty-eighth session in 2019.

XI. Adoption of conclusions and recommendations (agenda item 9)

Documentation: CMM-13-2018-INF.1 - Unofficial room document: Draft Conclusions and Recommendations arising from the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane dated 31 August 2018.

42. The conclusions and recommendations were adopted and are included under the relevant agenda items highlighted in this report.

XII. Adoption of the report and close of the meeting (agenda item 10)

43. The report of the meeting was adopted, including the conclusions and recommendations, subject to any necessary editing and formatting.