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Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane

Ninth session

Geneva, 23 October 2014

Item 14 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the report

Report of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane on its ninth session

I. Introduction

1. The ninth session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane was held on 23 October 2014¹.

II. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by 40 experts from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States: Germany, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States of America.

3. Experts from China, Colombia, India and Mongolia participated under Article 11 of the Commission's Terms of Reference.

4. Representatives of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the Global Methane Initiative also participated.

5. The private sector and academia were also represented.

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=35132>.

III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2014/1

6. The provisional agenda as contained in ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2014/1 was adopted without amendment.

IV. Opening remarks from the Chair (agenda item 2)

7. The Chair delivered opening remarks, outlining the Group of Experts' work plan for 2014–2015 and its five concrete goals. Achieving these goals is important as each of them represents incremental contributions to the overall purpose of the Group of Experts: to aid United Nations Member States in implementing a set of principles-based best practices that, if properly employed, will ensure protection against methane explosions and their potential disastrous outcomes, while concomitantly reducing emissions of a powerful greenhouse gas into the atmosphere. The full text of the Chair's opening remarks is available on the session's website² under Agenda item 2 – Opening remarks by the Chair of the Group of Experts.

V. Activities and priorities of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (agenda item 3)

8. The Director of the Sustainable Energy Division of ECE provided the Group of Experts with an update on the relevant decisions adopted by the ECE Executive Committee (EXCOM), including on the Group of Experts' work plan for 2014–2015. The Director drew attention to the overarching mandate of the Committee on Sustainable Energy to provide access to affordable and clean energy to all, in line with the “Sustainable Energy for All” initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, and to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon footprint of the energy sector. He emphasized the need for the Committee and its subsidiary bodies to carry-out concrete and results-oriented activities and noted that the Group of Experts is undertaking concrete and results-oriented activities as per its work plan. The Director then provided an overview of the work of the other subsidiary bodies of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, including the Expert Group on Resource Classification, the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production from Fossil Fuels, the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency, the Group of Experts on Gas, and the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy. He drew attention to the cross-cutting nature of the work of all the subsidiary bodies and the opportunities for cooperation and collaboration, in particular in relation to energy efficiency noting that the focus of the sustainable energy programme is on energy efficiency from source to use.

² <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35132>

VI. Challenges and opportunities in coal mine methane management (agenda item 4)

9. Members of the Group of Experts reported on developments related to challenges and opportunities in coal mine methane (CMM) management in their countries or organizations.

10. The expert from Germany reported on the latest improved technologies for CMM extraction in working and abandoned coal mines. The presentation is available on the webpage for the meeting³. Experts raised a range of technical questions, including related to the working pressure and the costs of the CMM extraction system.

11. The expert from Kazakhstan presented work on predicting and mitigating the risks from hazardous methane outbursts through monitoring and use of software that registers changes in pressure and their deviations from long-term patterns. The expert from Colombia raised a question on the use of drainage methane for electricity generation.

12. The expert from Ukraine presented a historical overview of work undertaken in the field of CMM management in his country and the positive results of collaboration between Ukrainian, Russian and Kazakh mining institutions. He also described the challenges the Donbass coal mines face, including the dangers to the public from the mines that are not operating.

13. The Group of Experts agreed to offer its technical assistance to United Nations Member States in their efforts to reduce the risks of accidents and improve the environmental and economic performance of their coal mines.

14. The representative of the International Labour Organization (ILO) informed the Group of Experts of the importance that the ILO's constituents (governments, worker organizations and employer organizations) attach to mining, in particular in an occupational safety and health context. In its work, ILO focuses on the promotion of Convention 176, the ILO safety and health in mines convention from 1995, through the promotion of the practical guidance contained in the Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Coal Mines. In this context, it was noted that the work plan for the Group of Experts for 2014–2015 complements the ILO's work, both in relation to mining and in the creation of green jobs.

15. The ILO representative thanked the secretariat for facilitating collaboration between ILO and the Group of Experts, in particular by sharing information related to extrabudgetary projects discussed under agenda item 7.

16. In order to avoid possible duplication of efforts, notably in the area of coal mine safety, the Group of Experts agreed to explore opportunities for ILO to participate in the Bureau of the Group of Experts. In this regard, the Group of Experts requested the secretariat to approach the ILO and further explore this possibility and the needed practical steps.

VII. Electronic dissemination of Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Recovery in Coal Mines (agenda item 5)

17. The secretariat advised that the draft translations of the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Recovery in Coal Mines into Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian,

³ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35132>

Mongolian and Spanish are being peer reviewed and are available for comment on the ECE coal mine methane website⁴.

18. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation that these translations have been finalized in advance of the timelines defined in the Group of Experts' work plan. The Group of Experts requested the Bureau to approve the final versions and the secretariat to disseminate the final versions as widely as possible.

19. Once in-kind contributions or needed funds are identified, and as soon as the update and further development of the Best Practice Guidance (discussed under agenda item 6) is carried out, the Group of Experts agreed that the Best Practice Guidance should be translated into additional languages, such as Korean, Romanian, Turkish, and Vietnamese.

20. The expert from Colombia advised the Group of Experts that the Spanish version of the Best Practice Guidance would be used as a reference in drafting regulations and legislation on methane management and safe mining practices in Colombia. He stressed the need for an accurate final Spanish version, with all the abbreviations and graphics fully and accurately translated and all information up-to-date. The secretariat advised that the first draft of the Spanish translation has been sent to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), with a request to ensure the accuracy of the text.

21. The representative of Mongolia expressed gratitude to the Group of Experts for translating the Best Practice Guidance into Mongolian. Given that coal represents the most significant component of Mongolia's exports, she advised that the principles outlined in the Best Practice Guidance should be applied in both large-scale and artisanal coal mines in Mongolia.

VIII. Update and further development of Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Recovery in Coal Mines (agenda item 6)

22. The Task Force on further development of the Best Practice Guidance reported on its findings.

23. The Group of Experts noted the recommendations of the Task Force on further development of the Best Practice Guidance and agreed on the changes proposed.

24. The Group of Experts requested the Task Force on further development of the Best Practice Guidance to continue its work. In this regard, the Group of Experts agreed to invite ECE member States to consider the possibility of providing needed extrabudgetary funds, and instructed the secretariat to take the required steps in this direction and report on progress at the Group of Experts' tenth session.

⁴ <http://www.unece.org/energy/se/cmm.html>

IX. Proposals for case studies on the application of best practice guidance in specific coal mines in different regions of the world (agenda item 7)

25. The Group of Experts agreed to keep the current framework for case studies on application of best practice guidance while expanding their number and geographic representation.

26. The Group of Experts reviewed and discussed an early draft of the extrabudgetary project "Application of Best Practices in Specific Coal Mines", that is to be shared with potential donors for consideration. The Group of Experts noted that future extrabudgetary projects could be carried out towards accomplishment of activity C of the Group of Experts' work plan for 2014–2015: "Prepare proposals for case studies on the application of best practice guidance in specific coal mines in different regions of the world". In this regard, the Group of Experts recommended that the main deliverables of the project should be detailed case studies on the application of best practices at reference coal mines that would demonstrate how the principles outlined in the Best Practice Guidance can be implemented.

27. The representative of the Russian Federation provided a presentation on a prospective case study on methane management and prevention of explosions. The full presentation is available on the ECE CMM website⁵.

X. Establishment of an International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane (agenda item 8)

28. A representative of the UNECE International Public-Private Partnership Centre of Excellence provided an overview of key governance issues that should be considered in establishing a Centre of Excellence, including defining its Terms of Reference and geographical remit and determining if the Centre can undertake activities such as paid consultancy work. In the latter case it is necessary to ensure that any use of the United Nations logo and brand be undertaken in accordance with United Nations rules and regulations.

29. It should also be clear to which ECE body and how the Centre would report. The nature of the institutional agreement with ECE also needs to be well defined. The Centre would operate under the rules and regulations of the hosting authority and the link to the ECE would be regulated by a Memorandum of Understanding. It would be necessary to clarify funding issues such as how the Centre would be funded and whether it would be asked to make a financial contribution to ECE. The Group of Experts requested that the secretariat provide a template for the establishment of such a Centre.

30. In line with its work plan, in 2013 the Group of Experts set up a Task Force to work towards establishment of an International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane. During the eighth session of the Group of Experts, experts from Poland presented a letter offering to host an International Centre of Excellence on CMM at the Central Mining Institute in Katowice, Poland. The Task Force reported on its recommendations and recent developments.

31. The Group of Experts recommended that the proposed International Centre of Excellence on CMM should be a specialist centre tasked to support capacity-building

⁵ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35132>

activities and dissemination of best practices in economically viable methane abatement and utilization, and environmentally responsible methane management.

32. The Group of Experts recommended to accept the offer from Poland to host an International Centre of Excellence on CMM at the Central Mining Institute in Katowice. The Group of Experts requested that the Task Force continue its work and instructed the secretariat to initiate, in collaboration with the Government of Poland, the necessary legal and practical steps towards establishing the International Centre of Excellence on CMM in Poland.

33. The Group of Experts requested that the Task Force continue to look into the possibility to expand the geographic and substantive scope of future International Centres of Excellence on CMM, in the spirit of the 2011 decision of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

XI. Providing advice to various international, national and regional market-based coal mine methane emission reduction mechanisms and related coal mine methane standards (agenda item 9)

34. An update was provided on the California Air Resources Board Mine Methane Capture Protocol adopted in March 2014.

35. The representative of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and its Technical Committee (TC) 263 (Coalbed Methane) presented opportunities for collaboration between ISO and the Group of Experts.

36. The Group of Experts agreed to continue to identify and discuss potential areas of cooperation with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and its Technical Committee (TC) 263 Coalbed Methane.

37. The Group of Experts agreed to continue and, as appropriate, expand its multi-year collaboration with the Global Methane Initiative's Coal Sub-committee and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat.

XII. Report from the twentieth session of the Coal Subcommittee of the Global Methane Initiative (agenda item 10)

38. The twentieth session of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) Coal Subcommittee discussed, inter alia, Partner Country and Project Network updates, news from the October 2014 Steering Committee Meeting, and plans for the 2015 Partnership-Wide, 10-Year Anniversary Meeting. Representatives from Partner Countries, some of which are ECE member States, informed the Group of Experts on their CMM activities. A summary of the discussions during this agenda item and presentation are available at Global Methane Initiative's website⁶.

39. The representative of GMI placed on record GMI's appreciation of its close collaboration and cooperation with the Group of Experts on CMM and noted the mutually-reinforcing activities of GMI and the Group of Experts.

⁶ https://www.globalmethane.org/news-events/event_detailsByEventId.aspx?eventId=443

XIII. Adoption of conclusions and recommendations (agenda item 11)

Documentation: CMM-9/2014/INF.1 – Unofficial room document: Draft Conclusions and Recommendations for the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane, Ninth Session *as at 22 October 2014*

40. The conclusions and recommendations were adopted and are included under the relevant agenda items.

XIV. Preparations for the tenth session of the Group of Experts (agenda item 12)

41. The tenth session of the Group of Experts is tentatively scheduled for 28 October 2015 in Geneva.

42. Noting that its Work Plan for 2014–2015 was approved by the ECE Executive Committee at its sixty-eighth meeting on 30 April 2014, the Group of Experts agreed that no changes were needed to the work plan for 2014–2015 and recommended that a draft Work Plan for 2016–2017 be prepared by the Bureau in cooperation with the secretariat for the tenth session.

XV. Other business (agenda item 13)

43. The Group of Experts noted the challenge to complete its work in one day and recommended that consideration be given to increasing the duration of future meetings of the Group of Experts to one and a half or two days. The Group of Experts also requested that its future meeting be scheduled during the same week as the annual Committee on Sustainable Energy meeting. It is important that members of the Group of Experts have the opportunity to attend meetings of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and that the Chair be present as a member *ex officio* of the Extended Bureau.

XVI. Adoption of the report (agenda item 14)

44. The Chair, with the assistance of the secretariat, summarized the previously agreed conclusions and recommendations. The draft meeting report was circulated and adopted at the meeting. After editing, it will be posted on the ECE coal mine methane website⁷.

⁷ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35132>