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Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Sustainable Energy****Group of Experts on Renewable Energy****Sixth session**

Bangkok, 7-8 October 2019

Report of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy on its sixth session**I. Introduction**

1. The sixth session of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy (GERE) was held on 7–8 October 2019.

II. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by over 70 experts (tbc) from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Uzbekistan,

3. Experts from India, Lebanon, Nepal, Singapore, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates, .. participated under Article 11 of the Commission's Terms of Reference.

4. Representatives of the, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), International Energy Agency (IEA), International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), International Energy Agency (UNDP) and UNEP-DTU Partnership, Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency, also participated.

5. The meeting was also attended by representatives of non-governmental organizations, private sector and academia, as well as independent experts.

III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2019/1 – Annotated provisional agenda.

6. In accordance with the Commission's rules of procedure, the first item of the provisional agenda is the adoption of the agenda.

7. The provisional agenda as contained in ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2019/1 was adopted without amendment.

IV. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

8. The Group of Experts elected Mr. Admir Softić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Mr. Georgy Ermolenko (Russian Federation), and Mr. Miloš Banjac (Serbia) as Vice-Chairs for two years. In 2018, Mr. Nazir Ramazanov (Azerbaijan) as its Chair, Mr. Adrian Bylyku (Albania), Mr. Andrei Miniankou (Belarus), Ms. Margalita Arabidze (Georgia), Mr. Tibor Fisher (Germany), Mr. Felice Cappelluti (Italy), Ms. Ainur Sospanova (Kazakhstan), Mr. Kostiantyn Gura (Ukraine) as Vice-Chairs were elected for two years and other stakeholders who previously served on the Bureau were invited to join the Bureau for two years to strengthen its activities.

9. The Bureau of the Group of Experts has the following members: Mr. Nazir Ramazanov (Azerbaijan) as Chair, and Mr. Adrian Bylyku (Albania), Mr. Andrei Miniankou (Belarus), Mr. Admir Softić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Ms. Margalita Arabidze (Georgia), Mr. Tibor Fischer (Germany), Mr. Felice Cappelluti (Italy), Ms. Ainur Sospanova (Kazakhstan), Mr. Georgy Ermolenko (Russian Federation), Mr. Miloš Banjac (Serbia), Mr. Kostiantyn Gura (Ukraine), Mr. Paolo Frankl (International Energy Agency), Mr. Gurbuz Gonul (International Renewable Energy Agency), Ms. Rana Adib (Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century), and Michela Morese (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) as Vice-Chairs.

V. National sustainable energy action plans – from commitments to actions (workshop) (agenda item 3)

Documentation: ECE-ENERGY/GE.6/2019/3-ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2019/3 –

10. The delegates participated in a dedicated workshop on the national sustainable energy action plans – from commitments to actions. This workshop was held as a joint session of the Groups of Experts on Renewable Energy and on Energy Efficiency and organized in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which is co-implementing the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project “Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia”.

11. The project aims to strengthen capacities of beneficiary countries (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) for the preparation of National Action Plans to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to energy. Under the project, existing gaps in data collection have been assessed through national reports that include a baseline review of sustainable energy data in each beneficiary country. National case studies have been developed, and a synthesis report has been prepared to provide an analysis of these case studies and give the assessment of existing policies and practices in sustainable energy, focusing on existing regulatory and institutional frameworks and pointing out gaps and challenges that governments face in implementing these policies.

12. Delegates from the project countries exchanged their experience and good practices in developing draft National Sustainable Energy Action Plans and discussed possible recommendations for policymakers that would assist them in reforming and adjusting policies aimed at achieving targets of SDG7 and at fostering favourable climate for investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

13. The Group of Experts:

14. Expressed appreciation with the main outcomes of the implementation of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project “Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia” by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) (lead agency) the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the beneficiary countries of the project – Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

15. Took note of the potential that National Sustainable Energy Action Plans (NSEAPs) have in achieving SDG7 and other energy-related sustainable development goals and targets by the countries that develop, adopt and implement NSEAPs and encouraged other ECE member States to consider developing, adopting and implementing NSEAPs.

16. Encouraged Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan to adopt their draft NSEAPs (with modifications as appropriate) and begin their implementation.

17. Requested that the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy assists interested countries in developing, adopting and implementing NSEAPs in its area of competence and based on the availability of resources.

18. Requested that ECE secretariat assists Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan in implementation of NSEAPs after their adoption in coordination with other international organizations and other partners based on the availability of resources.

VI. Tracking progress and exchange of experiences on how to increase the uptake of renewable energy (agenda item 4)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2018/3 – Perspectives for renewable energy in the ECE region.

ECE/ENERGY/2019/1 – Pathways to sustainable energy – Status Report.

19. The delegates exchanged experiences, good practices in providing affordable, reliable, sustainable and clean renewable energy and discussed key findings and implications for the Group of Experts and the ECE region. Increasing the uptake of renewable energy at the level needed to achieve global development and climate challenges remains a key challenge for the whole world, and the ECE region is no exception. While the countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia, Europe and North America are united in their goal of accelerating the development and implementation of renewable energy projects, the status and progress of market development is not homogenous across the region.

20. The efforts for deploying more renewables in other regions of the world was presented by delegates showing similarities in the development of new markets and the expansion of existing mature markets but also in terms of gaps, issues and opportunities. Despite the fact that a number of promotion schemes are in place across the region, ultimately the uptake of renewable energy depends on market access and the effective implementation of these schemes.

21. The International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21) contributed to the discussions on the progress made and future perspectives in the renewable energy development of the ECE region, presenting their key findings from reports, available data, experiences as well as their tools to support the on-going process to increase the renewable energy uptake.

22. In a session jointly organized with REN21, the delegates discussed present and future of renewable energy and debated how solar PV, hydropower, offshore and onshore wind and biomass can collectively contribute to the region's energy mix. As the renewable energy sector matures, the delegates discussed how energy policies, are seeking ways to further incorporate renewables into an evolving market. Relevant nexus issues, such as synergies and trade-offs between energy and water, and the role of cities were also discussed.

23. The Group of Experts:

24. Took note of the document ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2018/3 – Perspectives for renewable energy in the ECE region and noted with appreciation the on-going work by dena (German Energy Agency) to support the market development of renewable energies in ECE countries through the identification of obstacles to renewable energy uptake and promotion of multi-stakeholder dialogue.

25. Expressed gratitude to the Government of Germany, notably the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) for supporting the tracking progress and exchange of best practices and experiences in the ECE region to overcome barriers through the work with dena as well as for a new edition of the ECE Renewable Energy Report with REN21, International Energy Agency (IEA) and other key partners.

26. Expressed appreciation on the implementation of the last phase and overall outcome of the project “Pathways to Sustainable Energy” overseen by the Committee on Sustainable Energy and agreed to support further development and follow-up to facilitate member States engage in a policy dialogue on possible pathways, taking into account the possible role that renewable energy can play in a future energy system.

27. Outlined the intention to engage, within the scope of the expertise of the Group of Experts, in the joint work with other subsidiary bodies on transition of the energy sector in line with the results of the ECE project “Pathways to Sustainable Energy”, supporting member States to assume the obligations under international agreements.

VII. Hard Talks and opportunities to support renewable energy investments (agenda item 5)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2019/4 – Hard Talks in ECE countries on how to increase renewable energy uptake

28. Delegates exchanged data, information, experiences in ECE member States to achieve quantitative goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and in support to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda through concrete policy actions. However, many countries lag behind in terms of reaching specific targets, including those for renewable energy, within the agreed timeframes. In particular, attracting investment is a major challenge in many countries of the region, even with the existence of support schemes and policies aimed at the advancement of renewable energy.

29. The Group of Experts paid special attention to key issues and prioritizes discussions focusing on overcoming obstacles to renewable energy uptake and boosting

renewable energy investment in the region. Towards this aim, an open multi-stakeholder exchange – “Hard Talks” - among political decision makers, governmental officials, project developers, investors and technology providers is facilitated to promote dialogue between the public and private sector and to identify solutions to improve the investment climate in the renewable energy sector and cooperation opportunities. A series of “Renewable Energy Hard-Talks” took place in a number of countries, namely Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Serbia, and Ukraine, between 2016-2019, while further Hard-Talks are foreseen to be organised in other countries.

30. Delegates were invited to discuss the relationship between policy measures and market conditions in the process of increasing renewable energy investments, while also sharing successful experiences stemming from previous ECE Hard Talks (see more at: <https://www.unece.org/energy/welcome/areas-of-work/renewable-energy/unece-ren21-hard-talks.html>). In this context, delegates shared successful practices to develop and implement policies and measures to overcome political, legal, regulatory and technical barriers while taking advantage of untapped renewable energy potential.

31. A dedicated session was jointly organized by ECE and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) on how to promote renewable energy investments through auctions and cross-sectoral synergies. The delegates pointed out how auctions are contributing to obtain competitive prices for renewable power in markets of the world, to improve project completion as well as to deliver on socio-economic objectives needed for a just and inclusive energy transition and in support to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

32. The Group of Experts:

33. Noted with appreciation the support provided by the so-called “Renewable Energy Hard Talks” to member States on problem solving and priority identification to increase the uptake of renewable energy and requested to develop further work and analysis to increase the understanding of renewable energy resource characteristics and availability, while increasing investments in enabling infrastructure.

34. Requested the secretariat to organize additional Hard Talks, upon country request and fund availability, as instrument to enhance the dialogue between governments and business to strengthen policy, institutional, normative and regulatory frameworks and, subsequently, to increase significantly the deployment of renewable energy.

35. Requested the secretariat to further explore the development of an Umbrella Programme for an integrated and medium-term support to the ECE countries, in particular in South East and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

36. Took note of the findings and conclusions from the series of “Renewable Energy Hard-Talks” that took place in Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Serbia, and Ukraine between 2016-2019.

VIII. Cross-cutting and inter-sectoral cooperation to integrate renewable energy into energy systems (agenda item 6)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2019/5 – ECE/MP.WAT/WG.1/2019/5
Sustainable renewable energy investments and development: accounting for water resources and the environment with a nexus approach.

37. The delegates discussed how the target of increasing the renewable energy uptake for ECE countries requires an integrated approach and multi-stakeholder dialogue to achieve higher renewable energy shares within future energy systems. This includes an

improved understanding of renewable energy resource characteristics and availability as well as the strengthening of policy, institutional, normative and regulatory frameworks.

38. The delegates presented their experience and views on how to better integrate renewable energy into energy systems. It was raised the importance to consider an integrated and holistic approach in the deployment of renewable energy and to discuss the implementation of possible joint inter-sectoral work. This included the consideration of future project development and how to benefit from the Renewable Energy Hard Talks and other discussions held in the riparian countries of the Drina River Basin, (namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) focused on a water-energy nexus perspective. In particular, delegates discussed solutions to barriers and linkages of renewable energy to the water resources, land and the environment, including opportunities for intersectoral synergies as well as an initial check-list for developing renewable energy project proposals from an environment and nexus angle.

39. The delegates discussed how renewable energy plays a strong role in helping to achieve better management of resources within the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus. The role of renewable energy in promoting the nexus approach was specifically considered, as well as links to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the implications for climate change mitigation.

40. The Group of Experts:

41. Recognized the contribution of implemented and on-going activities towards a better integration of renewable energy into energy systems, considering in an integrated and cross-cutting manner the aspects of interlinkages with fossil fuels, particularly natural gas.

42. Expressed appreciation for the cooperation with other sectoral activities of the ECE in helping to achieve a better management of resources, including the increase of the renewable energy share sustainably, taking into consideration intersectoral opportunities and effects in the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus. It requested to strengthen the potential role of renewable energy in promoting the nexus approach as well as links to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the implications for climate change mitigation. On this, it supported continuing the cooperation with the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus under the Water Convention to develop and publish a resource document on capitalizing on intersectoral synergies and considerations in developing renewable energy – outlining a tool for policy makers – and to promote its trial and application (subject to availability of resources), using experience from the Drina basin and the Hard Talks.

43. Expressed gratitude for the delegates' presentations on their experiences and views on how to better integrate renewable energy into energy systems, in particular on the interlinkages and synergies between renewable energy and natural gas and cleaner electricity production.

IX. Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2020-2021 (agenda item 7)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/2019/9 – Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2020-2021.

44. Following the development of a draft Work Plan of the Group of Experts for 2020-2021 by its Bureau, review and approval by the Group of Experts for 2020-2021 by written procedure and subsequent renewal of mandate and approval of the work plan by the Committee on Sustainable Energy, delegates discussed how to undertake next steps in the

implementation of the planned activities and how to strengthen its role to accelerating and deepening the transition to sustainable energy systems.

45. The Group of Experts:

46. Noted with appreciation the concrete activities the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy has been implementing since the end of 2014 to help significantly increase the uptake of renewable energy in the region.

47. Noted that it had delivered on the concrete activities of the mandate and work plan for 2017–2019 and reported achievements and key milestones at the twenty-eighth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

48. Requested the secretariat to work at the implementation of the Work Plan 2020-2021 as approved at the twenty-eighth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy under a renewed mandate and explore possible ways and means of funding by potential donors and partner organizations for specific projects, including for sustainability certification/standards of solid biofuels and/or technical standards for feeding hydrogen, bioenergy into the gas grid.

X. Other business (agenda item 8)

49. Expressed appreciation to UN ESCAP and the Royal Thai Government for hosting the sixth session of the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok.

XI. Dates of the next meeting (agenda item 9)

50. The seventh session of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy is scheduled to take place in Geneva on 24-25 September 2020. The Group of Experts confirmed its proposal from previous sessions that its meetings may take place in venues outside Geneva.

XI. Report of the meeting (agenda item 10)

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