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Committee on Sustainable Energy

Group of Experts on Renewable Energy

Fifth session
Kiev, 13–15 November 2018

Report of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy on its fifth session

I. Introduction

1. The fifth session of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy (GERE) was held on 13–15 November 2018.

II. Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by 102 experts from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States: Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Representatives of the European Union also participated.

3. Experts from Indonesia and Iran 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 Western Asia (ESCWA) United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), International Energy Agency (IEA), International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) 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.7/2018/1 – 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.7/2018/1 was adopted without amendment.

IV. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

8. The Group of Experts elected Mr. Nazir Ramazanov (Azerbaijan) as its chair, Mr. Adrian Bylyku (Albania), Mr. Andrei Miniankou (Belarus), Ms. Margalita Arabidze (Georgia), Mr. Oliver Frank (Germany), Mr. Felice Cappelluti (Italy), Ms. Ainur Sospanova (Kazakhstan), Mr. Kostiantyn Gura (Ukraine) as vice chairs for two years. Ms. Biljana Trivanović (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Ms. Isabel Cabrita (Portugal), Mr. Georgy Ermolenko (Russian Federation), and Mr. Miloš Banjac (Serbia) were elected as vice chair in 2017 for two years.

9. The Group of Experts invited other stakeholders who previously served on the Bureau to join the Bureau for the next two years to strengthen its activities: 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).

10. The Bureau of the Group of Experts has the following members: Mr. Nazir Ramazanov (Azerbaijan) as Chair, Mr. Adrian Bylyku (Albania), Mr. Andrei Miniankou (Belarus), Ms. Biljana Trivanović (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Ms. Margalita Arabidze (Georgia), Mr. Oliver Frank (Germany), Mr. Felice Cappelluti (Italy), Ms. Ainur Sospanova (Kazakhstan), Ms. Isabel Cabrita (Portugal), 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. Tracking progress and exchange of experiences on how to increase the uptake of renewable energy (agenda item 3)

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

ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2017/3 – Renewable Energy Status Report 2017 - key findings: from bottlenecks to opportunities.

ECE/ENERGY/2018/1 – Pathways to sustainable energy – status report.

ECE/ENERGY/2016/7 – Pathways to sustainable energy – concept note.

11. The delegates discussed key findings from the Renewables 2018 report recently issued by the International Energy Agency (IEA) with an in-depth look at bioenergy. As outlined at the dedicated session, bioenergy is the largest source of growth in renewable consumption over the period 2018 to 2023. Bioenergy – as solid, liquid or gaseous fuels – will account for 30% of the growth in renewable consumption in this period. This is a result of the considerable use of bioenergy in heat and transport. The Group of Experts pointed that, however, amongst the renewable energy sources, bioenergy is the most diverse and complex, with many potential feedstocks, conversion processes and energy products. It also involves many interactions with non-energy sectors such as agriculture, forestry and waste management. Above all, it is essential that any increase in the production and use of

bioenergy contributes positively to the achievement of a number of sustainable development goals and avoids as far as possible adverse environmental, social or economic consequences.

12. The secretariat presented key findings from United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Renewable Energy Status Report 2017 jointly prepared with the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21), in close cooperation with IEA. Participants in the discussion pointed out the need to strengthen information and data gathering on renewable energy along the lines of work done by this ECE Report.

13. With a view of strengthening and complementing the work of tracking progress, analysis and forecast, ECE together with the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Fraunhofer, and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) are implementing the "Pathways to Sustainable Energy" project. A dedicated session discussed how the project seeks to provide answers on how countries can attain sustainable energy. The project combines modelling of energy scenarios with policy dialogue, technology research and the development of an early-warning system. Renewable energy (RE) has been recognized as playing a crucial role in achieving sustainable energy, no matter in which scenario. The Pathways project team showcased the different roles RE can play in various scenarios. Underlying cost assumptions as well as RE enabling technologies such as electric vehicles and storage options were discussed.

14. In a parallel discussion promoted by the Climate Action Network Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (CAN), participants had the opportunity to talk about the experiences of countries and corporations that have set the 100% RE goal by 2050. Participants pointed out that transition towards clean energy is necessary to prevent the dangerous effects of climate change and give hope to the most vulnerable countries

15. The Group of Experts:

16. Took note of the document ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2018/3 – Perspectives for renewable energy in the ECE region and noted with appreciation the follow-up work by dena (German Energy Agency) to exchange best practices and experiences to overcome barriers and take advantage of existing opportunities, promoting a constructive renewable energy policy dialogue in the ECE region.

17. 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, and encouraged future engagement in 2019 if resources will allow it for work with dena as well as for a new edition of the ECE Renewable Energy Report with REN21, IEA and other key partners.

18. Expressed appreciation on the progress made by the project "Pathways to Sustainable Energy" overseen by the Committee on Sustainable Energy and agreed to continue to contribute to the delivery of the project and to exploring how countries can attain sustainable energy in the future. With the overall objective to engage in a policy dialogue, the project applies modelling tools in order to derive a set of sustainable energy scenarios and adaptive policy pathways, taking into account the possible role that renewable energy can play.

19. Agreed to further coordinate the inputs to the Pathways project and represent the Group at project-related events, subject to availability of resources, and expressed commitment to integrate project-related policy themes into events under the auspices of the Group of Experts when possible (for example future Hard Talk events) to provide feedback and content to the project outputs.

VI. Hard Talks and opportunities to support renewable energy investments (agenda item 4)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2018/4 – Implementation of renewable energy national action plans in selected ECE countries.

20. Three dedicated matchmaking sessions jointly organized by ECE with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), DG DEVCO and DG NEAR, featured contributions by countries of the region, as well as from key national and international actors and investors, who discussed how to increase the uptake of renewable energy and energy efficiency, with special attention to energy poverty and social welfare.

21. The delegates discussed how increasing renewable energy production and promoting energy efficiency and sustainability are important priorities of energy policy in the effort to diversify the energy mix, improve the security of supply and address climate change objectives. Moreover, they help to alleviate key social issues such as energy poverty and energy access, thus improving the overall quality of life of people.

22. The Chair and secretariat presented key ECE activities for exchange of good experience and coordination of approaches, in particular through the renewable energy Hard Talks, to increase the uptake of renewable energy and improve energy efficiency for enhancing social sustainability by providing affordable, reliable, modern sustainable energy.

23. Within a parallel discussion, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) presented the Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement (GPA) launched in July 2018. The GPA is a framework that outlines concrete actions to accelerate progress towards the vision of safe access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy services for all displaced people by 2030.

24. The Group of Experts:

25. Outlined the need for ECE countries to adopt an integrated approach and multi-stakeholder dialogue to achieve higher renewable energy shares more sustainably within future energy systems, 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. Additionally, requested the secretariat that specific work be devoted to strengthening policy, institutional, normative and regulatory frameworks.

26. Pointed out its role to enhance the dialogue between governments and business to increase significantly the deployment of renewable energy, in particular to promote renewable energy investments through so-called Hard Talks in selected countries on policy, normative and institutional measures and matchmaking services to identify, develop, promote and implement investment projects, according to its Work Plan. It also recognized the potential value of the Hard Talks for exchange of good experience and coordination of approaches to investment, across sectors and borders. It 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.

27. Took note of the relevance of the cooperation with IEA, IRENA and the European Commission to accelerate the uptake of renewable energy in South East Europe and Central Asia through targeted activities in areas of: long-term renewable energy planning, renewable energy support schemes, integration of variable renewable energy into the grid, socio-economic benefits of renewable energy, strengthening renewable energy frameworks,

and access to financing; and emphasized importance of collaboration with other regional and international partners in this regard.

28. Expressed gratitude to IEA for the advanced discussion on the role of bioenergy in the light of changes to the energy landscape as well as to IRENA and the European Commission, notably the European Union Technical Assistance Facility (TAF), for the Matchmaking policy dialogue event on the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficient investments, jointly organized with ECE.

VII. Cross-cutting and inter-sectoral cooperation to integrate renewable energy into energy systems (agenda item 5)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2017/5 – Benefits of transboundary cooperation in water-energy nexus for renewable energy development.

29. A dedicated session was jointly organized by ECE and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on how to promote renewable energy investments with a nexus approach: co-benefits across sectors. The issues related to water-energy-food nexus were considered on how the resources of water, energy and food are interdependent. Though the nexus is usually described in terms of water, energy and food; some references have introduced additional dimensions to the nexus (e.g. climate) while others have replaced food with another dimension (e.g. land). A schematic diagram of the water, energy and food security nexus, has been developed by the ESCWA, where it includes the different Sustainable Development Goals as well as the institutional and policy frameworks (e.g. Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) for water security) which have to consider each of the dimensions of the nexus.

30. The secretariat presented the work started in 2013 to explore the potential of taking a nexus approach to transboundary water cooperation by carrying out participatory "nexus assessments" in transboundary basins: six river basins and one aquifer have been considered. One assessment focused on the Drina River Basin and its three riparian states: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro. The publication UNECE Assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus and benefits of transboundary cooperation in the Drina River Basin (2017) describes the tangible benefits from a coordinated operation of hydro plants and points at potential opportunities - for the energy sector and beyond – from synergies between rural development, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy development and eco-tourism.

31. The Group of Experts:

32. 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.

33. 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 to develop a resource document on capitalizing on intersectoral synergies and considerations in developing renewable energy, using the experience from the "Hard Talks" in the Drina river basin.

34. Expressed gratitude to the Government of Italy for supporting the organization of specific Renewable Energy Hard Talks in South East Europe from a water-energy nexus perspective and within a follow-up project in the Drina river basin.

VIII. Regulatory and policy dialogue addressing barriers to improve energy efficiency and renewable energy (agenda item 6)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.6/2018/5–ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2018/5
Regulatory and policy dialogue addressing barriers to improve energy efficiency and renewable energy.

35. A dedicated session on overcoming barriers to improving energy efficiency and renewable energy was jointly organized by ECE and ESCWA. The discussion gave particular attention to the reasons why energy efficiency improvement and uptake of renewable energy are lagging behind what is necessary to achieve climate goals and sustainable development goals.

36. Delegates discussed findings of the study on progress in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy in selected countries of South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, and in Russian Federation. The study aims at identifying and analyzing policy, regulatory and institutional reforms; capacity of stakeholders in the countries (national and local authorities, project developers and owners, and financial institutions); best practices developed and introduced; and awareness raising.

37. Delegates emphasized that a number of legislative, policy, economic, and financial barriers to significant improvements in energy efficiency and increased uptake of renewable energy remain. They pointed out the need to identify policies and measures in the ECE and ESCWA regions that reduce barriers to increasing investment and financing flows to energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, with an emphasis on commercial projects and private financing, as well as possible public-private partnership arrangements.

38. The role that Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) and specifically Super ESCOs) can play in overcoming such barriers in the ESCWA region was presented and discussed. Such set-up managed to stimulate the ESCO market and investments in energy efficiency in one of the countries in the ESCWA region.

39 The Group of Experts:

40. Took note of the document ECE/ENERGY/GE.6/2018/5–ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2018/5 Regulatory and policy dialogue addressing barriers to improve energy efficiency and renewable energy. This Background paper discusses progress in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy in selected countries of South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, and in Russian Federation.

41. Supported the findings of the study on policy, regulatory and institutional reforms, the capacity building process, development and introduction of best practices to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy in the selected countries since 2010 as well as on existing international processes that facilitate the countries' progress in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy.

42. Supported recommendations of the study on ways to overcome remaining gaps and on proposed next steps required to improve energy efficiency and renewable energy from a sub-regional perspective in the countries of South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and in the Russian Federation.

43. Requested the secretariat to issue a publication based on the study on progress in the areas of energy efficiency and renewable energy in selected countries of South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, and in Russian Federation.

44. Expressed appreciation on the strengthened collaboration with the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency on improving energy efficiency in deploying renewable energy sources through addressing key issues of common concern.

45. Requested the secretariat to explore further actions that increase financing of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

IX. Other business (agenda item 7)

46. The Group of Experts:

47. Took note with appreciation of the Committee expression of support for the activities of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy and endorsed confirmation of its mandate by the Committee at the twenty-seventh sessions - ECE/ENERGY/119 - Report of the Committee on Sustainable Energy on its twenty-seventh session.

48. Requested the secretariat to work with the Bureau of the Group of Experts to develop a draft Work Plan of the Group of Experts for 2020–2021 and submit it for review and approval by the Group of Experts by written procedure. The Group of Experts agreed that, in order to expedite submission of a draft Work Plan and other possible documentation for endorsement by the Committee on Sustainable Energy, it can work by written procedure subject to a minimum comment period of 21 days. No response or feedback is taken to be tacit approval.

49. Expressed appreciation to the Government of Ukraine for hosting the fifth session of the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency in Kiev.

X. Dates of the next meeting (agenda item 8)

50. The sixth session of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy is scheduled to take place in Geneva on 10–11 October 2019. 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 9)

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