


Economic Commission for Europe
Committee on Environmental Policy
Twenty-fourth session

Geneva, 29–31 January 2019

**Report of the Committee on Environmental Policy on its
 twenty-fourth session**
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I. Introduction

1. The Committee on Environmental Policy held its twenty-fourth session from 29 to 31 January 2019 in Geneva. The present report is based on a summary of the session's outcomes and the decisions taken, which the Committee approved on 31 January 2019.¹

A. Attendance

2. Delegations from the following 35 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) attended the meeting: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and United States of America.

3. The chairs or other representatives of the following ECE multilateral environmental agreements participated in the session: the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers; the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment; the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention); the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health; and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention).

4. From the United Nations system, representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Europe and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe were present.

5. Other national, regional and international organizations and bodies were represented at the meeting, including: the European Union, represented by the European Commission, the European Environment Agency and the European Investment Bank; the International Organization of la Francophonie; the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus; the Regional Environmental Centre-Moldova; and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia.

6. From civil society and others, representatives of the following organizations participated in the session: the Centre for International Environmental Law; Eco-Accord; EnviroPlan Consultants Limited; European ECO Forum; the University of Geneva; Green Liberty; International Investment Centre; and Zoi Environment Network.

B. Opening of the session and organizational matters

7. In an opening address, the Chef de Cabinet of ECE highlighted the value of the outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016) in supporting countries' efforts to enhance environmental governance and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy. She informed the Committee about the reform of the United Nations development system and the further alignment of ECE activities with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

8. The Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy welcomed participants and recalled the main objectives of the session.

9. The Committee adopted the agenda of its twenty-fourth session (ECE/CEP/2019/1), along with the proposed time schedule (information paper No. 1).

¹ Meeting documents and other information, including the summary of decisions, are available on the session web page (www.unece.org/index.php?id=50063).

10. The Committee was informed of a side event, “Working together for cleaner and healthier mobility towards the Fifth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment”, organized by ECE, to be held on 30 January 2019.

II. Outcomes of the work of the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy

11. The Chair reported that the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy had worked by means of electronic consultations and had held meetings in Geneva on 28 February 2018 and on 26 and 27 September 2018 to prepare the current session of the Committee. The outcomes of the Bureau’s work were presented in document ECE/CEP/2019/3. In addition, the Bureau had held a half-day meeting on 28 January 2019 to address pending issues. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the outcomes of the Bureau’s work under the respective agenda items.

12. The Committee expressed appreciation to the Bureau for its good work and to the ECE secretariat for the support provided to the Bureau.

III. Sustainable development in the region

13. The Principal Adviser to the ECE Executive Secretary, in her capacity as ECE focal point for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, presented developments related to the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region, including the key outcomes of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (Geneva, 1 and 2 March 2018) submitted as the contribution of the ECE region to the meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018 (New York, 9–18 July).

14. Preparations for the 2019 session of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (21 and 22 March) were ongoing. The 2019 session would be organized as a peer-learning platform with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals under global review in 2019, namely Goals 4 (quality education), 13 (climate action), 16 (peace and justice, strong institutions) and 17 (partnerships for the Goals). Participants would work both in plenary and in small groups to: enable an efficient exchange of good practice and case studies; identify shared goals, challenges and regional trends; and address transboundary issues. The outcomes of the 2019 session of the Regional Forum would constitute the contribution of the ECE region to the 2019 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (New York, 9–18 July).

15. The delegation of Georgia presented the “Strategic Vision towards Green Economy in Georgia”, which was based on six main pillars: air quality; green transport policy; green infrastructure; circular economy; building sector; and energy efficiency.

16. The director of Zoï Environment Network presented the first findings of the report “Greening the Belt and Road Investments in Central Asia: A Visual Synthesis”, prepared by his organization in cooperation with UNEP, Switzerland and partners in Central Asia and China. The visual synthesis for the first time analysed the developments, risks and opportunities concerning the Belt and Road in Central Asia.

17. The secretariat informed the meeting about the environmental impact of the fashion industry, the activities of the United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion and ECE activities to develop a United Nations framework (policy and standards) to help consumers better understand where their clothes came from and how they were made, including impacts and risks for their health, the environment, and workers in the industry.

18. The delegation of the European Union presented information on a new four-year programme – EU4Environment – to be launched in 2019, with a contribution of €19.5 million from the European Union, for six countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and with five international partners (OECD, UNEP, ECE,

the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the World Bank Group) to implement the programme.

19. In the ensuing discussion, delegations asked questions and considered the information provided.

20. The Committee took note of the developments in ECE activities linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and:

(a) Called for active participation in the preparation and conduct of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region (Geneva, 21 and 22 March 2019) aligned with the theme of the 2019 high-level political forum “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”;

(b) Welcomed the information on the Strategy on Green Economy of Georgia delivered by the delegation of Georgia, and expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Government of Georgia in facilitating the transition to the green economy;

(c) Noted with interest the presentation on the first findings of the report “Greening the Belt and Road Investments in Central Asia: A Visual Synthesis”, prepared by Zoï Environment Network together with UNEP, and expressed interest in being informed of future developments in that regard;

(d) Noted with interest the information provided by the secretariat on the environmental impact of the garment industry, the activities of the United Nations Alliance on Sustainable Fashion and the ECE activities in that regard, and expressed interest in further information on the subject to be presented at the meetings of the Committee as appropriate;

(e) Welcomed the information by the delegation of the European Union on a new four-year programme – EU4Environment – to be launched in 2019, with a contribution of €19.5 million from the European Union, for six countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and with five international partners (OECD, UNEP, ECE, UNIDO and the World Bank Group) to implement the programme.

IV. Mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

A. Greening the economy and cleaning the air, including the activities of the Green Economy and Environment Action Task Force and the regional environmental centres

21. The present agenda item was organized in the format of a talk show entitled “Greening the economy: Batumi Talk Show”, with representatives of Croatia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Kazakhstan and WHO as guests.

22. It was recalled that, at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016), ministers had endorsed the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy. The policy tool supported countries in their efforts to transition to the green economy, whilst contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. To make the Strategic Framework a reality, ministers had also launched the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2, para. 27), consisting of voluntary commitments to operationalize the Strategic Framework until 2030. To date, 124 commitments had been submitted by 27 countries and 13 lead organizations. Those commitments specified concrete actions for moving towards greener and more inclusive economic patterns.

23. It was also recalled that, with regard to air quality, ministers had reconfirmed their commitment to reduce air pollution and protect public health and ecosystems by endorsing the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air initiative (ECE/BATUMI.CONF/2016/2, para. 31). To date, 27 countries and four organizations had submitted 108 voluntary commitments to that initiative.

24. The co-moderators of the “Batumi Talk Show” (OECD and Green Growth Knowledge Platform) had drawn attention to the following background documents prepared to facilitate the Committee’s discussion with regard to greening the economy and cleaning the air:

(a) Implementing the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (CE/CEP/2019/4);

(b) Activities to support countries in their efforts to green their economies and achieve sustainable development (ECE/CEP/2019/5);

(c) Implementation of the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air: fostering progress towards improved air quality (ECE/CEP/2019/6).

25. The Committee welcomed the background documents on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air: “Implementing the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy” (ECE/CEP/2019/4)”, “Activities to support countries in their efforts to green their economies and achieve sustainable development” (ECE/CEP/2019/5), and “Implementation of the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air: fostering progress towards improved air quality” (ECE/CEP/2019/6) prepared by ECE in cooperation with UNEP and OECD. In addition, the Committee:

(a) Affirmed that the two Batumi initiatives continue to provide a solid mechanism for the implementation of the decisions of the Batumi Ministerial Conference;

(b) Noted with satisfaction the active participation of stakeholder countries and organizations in the reporting on the two initiatives;

(c) Welcomed the progress achieved in implementing voluntary commitments by the member States and organizations participating in the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air;

(d) Called upon the member States and other stakeholders to continue active participation in the two Batumi initiatives;

(e) Welcomed the “Batumi Talk Show” for promoting the two Batumi initiatives and invited interested countries and organizations to consider organizing a “Batumi Talk Show” at relevant events, as appropriate;

(f) Expressed appreciation to the countries (i.e. Croatia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany and Kazakhstan) and organizations (Green Growth Knowledge Platform, OECD, WHO) that had participated in the “Batumi Talk Show” for sharing their experience in implementing their commitments under the two initiatives and announcing new commitments;

(g) Welcomed and supported the active involvement of civil society in the implementation and monitoring of the Batumi initiatives.

B. Developing the Shared Environmental Information System

26. The Executive Director of the European Environment Agency presented the “Mid-term review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System” (ECE/CEP/2019/7). Subsequently, there was a brief intervention by the representative of OECD, followed by a panel discussion involving three panellists representing Azerbaijan, France and Montenegro.

27. The Committee welcomed the “Mid-term review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System” (ECE/CEP/2019/7) prepared by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment with the support of the secretariat, expressed appreciation for the progress achieved in Europe and Central Asia since the Batumi Conference, and:

(a) Also welcomed the self-assessment of progress by the majority of ECE member States and, in particular, by all countries in the region with economies in transition;

(b) Expressed sincere appreciation for the continued harmonization and improved accessibility of relevant data flows, improvement in the quality of selected environmental indicators and underpinning data flows and use of data flows for multiple purposes in support of regular environmental assessments and reporting by countries;

(c) Noted that countries still needed assistance in fully implementing the pillars and principles of the Shared Environmental Information System and in the regular production and sharing of relevant data flows associated with the ECE environmental indicators by 2021;

(d) Welcomed the support provided by the European Union and the European Environment Agency, UNEP and the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) in building the necessary capacity in countries with economies in transition;

(e) Encouraged its members to increase the use of the set of ECE environmental indicators in state-of-the-environment reporting and further harmonize data flows across the region, including in view of reporting obligations and for use in thematic assessments at different geographical levels;

(f) Requested the Working Group to lead a further review of progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia in advance of the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

C. Environmental performance reviews

28. The moderator introduced the objective of the mid-term review: to consider progress achieved in the third cycle of reviews, including in support of the achievement and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. The moderator drew attention to the document ECE/CEP/2019/8 “Environmental performance reviews: progress made in conducting the third cycle” and summarized the main achievements presented in the document:

(a) Completion of third cycle reviews for more than half of the eligible countries;

(b) Integration of relevant Sustainable Development Goals into the reviews conducted since 2017;

(c) Launch of a new area of activities to assist reviewed countries in the implementation of recommendations;

(d) Improved communication and outreach.

30. A panel discussion followed, with the participation of three panellists representing Georgia, Montenegro and Switzerland. The panellists shared their views on the progress made in the third cycle and in particular the integration of Sustainable Development Goals into environmental performance reviews, and on how such reviews could be enhanced in the future.

31. The Committee welcomed the report prepared by the ECE secretariat on “Environmental performance reviews: progress made in conducting the third cycle” (ECE/CEP/2019/8), and:

(a) Expressed appreciation for the progress achieved since the Batumi Conference in conducting the third cycle of reviews;

(b) Welcomed the positive experience gained in integrating the relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets into the environmental performance reviews conducted since 2017;

(c) Also welcomed the commencement of activities to assist reviewed countries in the implementation of recommendations emerging from their reviews;

(d) Further welcomed the holding of a peer-learning workshop “Policies for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: exchange of best practices on the basis of UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews” (Minsk, 21 and 22 November

2018) and the sharing of lessons learned in implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

(e) Invited countries to benefit from the Environmental Performance Review Programme by undertaking further reviews and inform the ECE secretariat of their interest;

(f) Requested the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews to start working, in cooperation with the reviewed countries, on proposals for the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews and to prepare a paper on that issue for the Committee's twenty-sixth session (Geneva, 9–11 November 2020), taking into account the suggestions made by the members of the Committee during the current session.

D. Multilateral environmental agreements

32. Opening the discussion on ECE multilateral environmental agreements, the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy recalled that, at its twenty-third session (Geneva, 14–17 November 2017), the Committee had appreciated the opportunity to have an open exchange of views during its session with the participation of the chairs and other representatives of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements. At that session, the Committee had recognized that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals implied an increase in cooperation between the multilateral environmental agreements, and between the multilateral environmental agreements and the Committee on Environmental Policy and underlined the need to consider ways to further improve cooperation and synergies between the Committee and the multilateral environmental agreements (ECE/CEP/2017/5, para. 37).

33. The Chair stated that, at the current session, the Committee was invited to continue reviewing progress under each of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements in support of the 2030 Agenda. The current session encompassed the mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. Document ECE/CEP/2019/9 provided an overview of how the ECE multilateral environmental agreements were being implemented in support of the 2030 Agenda.

34. The agenda item was organized into two consecutive clusters, with a view to enabling an interactive discussion. The first cluster covered the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, while the second cluster focused on the Air Convention, the Industrial Accidents Convention and the Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health.

35. In the first cluster, the Chair (Georgia) of the Bureau of the Aarhus Convention, the Chair (Sweden) of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, the Vice-Chair (Slovenia) of the Bureau of the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on Strategic Impact Assessment and Chair of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment and, in the second cluster, the Chair (Sweden) of the Bureau of the Executive Body for the Air Convention, the Chair (Norway) of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to, the Industrial Accidents Convention, the Vice-Chair (Estonia) of the Bureau of the Water Convention and the Vice-Chair (France) of the Bureau of the Protocol on Water and Health briefed the Committee on the progress under their respective multilateral environmental agreements in support of the 2030 Agenda, including: main achievements and key findings; lessons learned and challenges; and further steps.

36. The Chair (Sweden) of the Bureau of the Executive Body for the Air Convention briefed the Committee on the relevant outcomes of the ninth informal between the representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements and of the Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, 28 January 2019) – a meeting that she had chaired.

37. The Committee welcomed the interactive discussion held on the ECE multilateral environmental agreements, expressed its appreciation to Chairs and other members of the Bureaux of multilateral environmental agreements for their contributions, and took note of

the information provided with regard to efforts to support the 2030 Agenda made to date under each multilateral environmental agreement.

38. The Committee also welcomed the background document, prepared by the secretariat, providing an overview of how the ECE multilateral environmental agreements were being implemented in support of the 2030 Agenda (ECE/CEP/2019/9), and:

(a) Recognized the important role of multilateral environmental agreements in assisting Governments to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and the need to allocate sufficient resources for that purpose;

(b) Encouraged ECE member States to promote multilateral environmental agreements at the upcoming Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region (Geneva, 21 and 22 March 2019), dedicated to Sustainable Development Goal 16 and other Goals as effective tools for developing strong institutions;

(c) Noted that Sustainable Development Goal 16 was not mentioned: (i) in the document entitled “Main directions of UNECE ongoing work on further SDG alignment”, submitted by the secretariat to the ninety-eighth meeting of the ECE Executive Committee (Geneva, 18 May 2018);² or (ii) on the ECE website dedicated to the Sustainable Development Goals.³ The Committee requested the secretariat to add Sustainable Development Goal 16 to the priority Goals for the work of ECE and reflect that accordingly in the above-mentioned document and website;

(d) Reiterated its commitment to strengthening cooperation in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(e) Welcomed the operationalization, in 2016, of the amendment to the Water Convention allowing all States Members of the United Nations to accede thereto;

(f) Also welcomed the accession by Chad and Senegal to the Water Convention in 2018 and the interest in acceding officially to that instrument expressed by a large number of countries at the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Nur-Sultan, 10–12 October 2018);

(g) Expressed support for the request by the Meeting of the Parties to the secretariat to take all necessary measures, including the provision of additional human and financial resources from the regular budget, to ensure the effective management and full implementation of the Convention’s programme of work at the global level (ECE/MP.WAT/54, para. 103 (j)).

V. Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting

39. The Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (Russian Federation) presented the progress achieved on monitoring and assessment since the Committee’s twenty-third session. In particular, he informed the Committee that, as requested (ECE/CEP/2017/5, para. 49 (a)), the Working Group had revised the outline of its activities leading up to 2021, as presented in information paper No. 12, and prepared an annual timetable of activities for 2019, as presented in information paper No. 13.

40. The secretariat presented progress achieved by the Working Group and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators in 2018.

41. The Chair explained that the Working Group had been tasked with leading a process of consultation on the regular pan-European environmental assessment for consideration by the Committee on Environmental Policy and leading up to the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. She further explained that UNEP had presented a draft concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment, as set out in information paper No. 15

² Available at www.unece.org/info/about-unece/executive-committee-excom/meetings/2018/ninety-eighth-meeting.html.

³ See www.unece.org/info/about-unece/mission/unece-and-the-sdgs.html.

developed by the secretariat and UNEP, in consultation with the European Environment Agency, during the twentieth session of the Working Group (Geneva, 3 and 4 September 2018). The Working Group had also requested the secretariat to inform the Committee of the outcomes of that agenda item and the suggestions made for the pan-European assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2018/2, para. 52). The representative of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe described options for the next pan-European assessment.

42. The Committee took note of the revised outline of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment activities up to 2021 (information paper No. 12) and the annual timetable of its activities for 2019 (information paper No. 13).

43. It also took note of the strong concerns expressed by the Working Group regarding the availability of funds for the financial support of meeting participants, especially from South-Eastern Europe but also from other subregions.

44. The Committee reiterated the invitation to member States and relevant organizations to participate actively in the activities and meetings of the Working Group and invited those member States not represented in the Working Group to nominate their representatives by 1 March 2019 to the secretariat.

45. The Committee expressed sincere appreciation for the work of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, and:

(a) Welcomed the Joint Task Force's request to the secretariat to make relevant environmental information available in the database of the ECE Statistical Division;

(b) Took note of the capacity-building activities related to environmental statistics and indicators being carried out by the secretariat, UNEP, the European Environment Agency and OECD;

46. The Committee invited member States and organizations to provide in-kind and financial support to the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme and thanked, in particular, the European Union, through the European Environment Agency, Austria, Norway, the Russian Federation and Switzerland for their financial support, and also UNEP and the European Environment Agency for their substantive support to the Programme.

47. The Committee took note of the draft concept for the next pan-European environmental assessment (information paper No. 15) and the suggestions made by the Working Group for the modalities, scope and form of the assessment.

48. The Committee requested the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, with the support of the secretariat, working in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency and UNEP, to prepare a detailed proposal, including a timetable, budget and expanded outline, to be presented to the Committee at its next session.

VI. Environmental performance reviews

49. The Committee proceeded with the peer reviews of the environmental performances of Kazakhstan and North Macedonia.

50. The rapporteurs for the review of the environmental performance of Kazakhstan (Estonia and Switzerland) summarized the main findings and recommendations of the third environmental performance review of Kazakhstan, conducted by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews on 9 and 10 January 2019. The Vice-Minister of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan presented key achievements to date and main challenges encountered by his country in advancing the environmental agenda for sustainable development within the substantive framework of the third environmental performance review of Kazakhstan. Following a discussion on the review, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained in the third environmental performance review of Kazakhstan (information paper No. 3).

51. The rapporteurs for the review of the environmental performance of North Macedonia (Estonia and Switzerland) summarized the main findings and recommendations of the third environmental performance review of North Macedonia, conducted by the Expert Group on

10 and 11 January 2019. The State Secretary of Environment and Physical Planning of North Macedonia presented key achievements to date and main challenges encountered by her country in advancing the environmental agenda for sustainable development within the substantive framework of the third environmental performance review of North Macedonia. Following a discussion on the review, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained in the third environmental performance review of North Macedonia (information paper No. 4).

52. The Secretary to the Expert Group gave an overview of activities in 2018. The review missions for the third reviews of Kazakhstan and North Macedonia had taken place in March and September 2018, respectively. In September 2018, the third environmental performance review of Albania had been published and launched in Tirana. In December 2018, the environmental performance review of Mongolia had been published and launched in Ulaanbaatar. At its twenty-ninth session (Geneva, 9–11 January 2019), the Expert Group had worked on the two reviews carried out in 2018.

53. Presenting planned activities for 2019, the Expert Group Secretary said that the preparatory mission for the third environmental performance review of Romania would be carried out in May 2019. The country mission for the third review of Uzbekistan would be conducted from 25 February to 5 March 2019. Ukraine was next in line for its third environmental performance review. The reviews of Kazakhstan and North Macedonia would be published and launched in 2019.

54. The Secretary said that the peer-learning workshop “Policies for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: exchange of best practices on the basis of UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews” had taken place in Minsk, on 21 and 22 November 2018. In 2019, a project to strengthen national capacities for evidence-based environmental governance and sustainable environmental policies in support of implementation of the 2030 Agenda would continue to be carried out in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia in the framework of a UNDA project.

55. The Chair informed the Committee that there was a requirement to renew the current mandate and terms of reference (2015–2018) of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews for a further four-year period (2019–2022), based on the information presented in the document ECE/CEP/2019/12, and invited the Committee to adopt the renewed mandate and term of reference and to request the secretariat to submit them to the ECE Executive Committee for approval.

56. The Committee welcomed the information provided on the activities of the Environmental Performance Review Programme and expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for the excellent work in support of the Programme.

57. It expressed sincere appreciation for the work of the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews in 2018.

58. The Committee welcomed the commencement of the third environmental performance review of Uzbekistan.

59. It adopted the renewed mandate and terms of reference of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (ECE/CEP/2019/12) and requested the secretariat to submit it to the ECE Executive Committee for approval.

60. The Committee invited members of the Committee to nominate their representatives to the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews.

61. It took note of the information provided by the secretariat on resource mobilization for the Environmental Performance Review Programme in 2018 and in particular thanked:

(a) Germany, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland and the European Union for their financial support;

(b) Germany, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, OECD, UNEP and WHO for providing expertise;

(c) Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Switzerland for having delegated their experts to serve as members of the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews;

(d) UNDP for logistical support.

62. The Committee appreciated the close cooperation of the ECE Sustainable Energy, Forests, Land and Housing, Statistical and Sustainable Transport Divisions with the Environmental Performance Review Programme.

63. It encouraged delegations to provide in-kind (expert) and financial support to the Environmental Performance Review Programme.

VII. Cross-sectoral activities

64. The Chair informed the Committee that, following a request by the Bureau's meeting in an extended format in Geneva, on 28 February 2018, the secretariat had prepared a briefing note on the cross-sectoral activities of the ECE Environment subprogramme for the Committee's consideration at its twenty-fourth session. Document ECE/CEP/2019/11 presented the recent developments and plans for the future related to those activities and contained recommendations to the Committee concerning future work under the auspices of the subprogramme.

65. The representative of the WHO secretariat briefed the Committee on the recent developments and plans under the European Environment and Health Process. A delegate from Czechia informed the Committee about follow-up activities to the Declaration of the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Ostrava, Czechia, 13–15 June 2017). A delegate from Austria briefed the Committee on the preparations for the Fifth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment, which was scheduled to take place in Vienna in October 2019.

66. The Committee welcomed the background document (ECE/CEP/2019/11) prepared by the secretariat, which provided an overview of the cross-sectoral activities of the ECE Environment subprogramme, and:

(a) Took note of the information provided on the work of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development and encouraged its members from the countries participating in the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development to stay informed about the process at the national level by establishing and maintaining working contacts with the Steering Committee members and focal points from their national administrations and non-governmental organizations;

(b) Also took note of the information provided and welcomed the work under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP). Furthermore, the Committee encouraged both support for the Programme and the participation of ministers of environment in the Fifth High-level Meeting in 2019 and of experts in the preparatory process for the Fifth High-level Meeting;

(c) Encouraged the nomination of national focal points to the THE PEP from the environment side;

(d) Noted the information provided with respect to the Environment and Health Process and reaffirmed its commitment to contribute to the Process;

(e) Also noted the information provided with respect to gender mainstreaming across ECE activities and in environmental activities carried out by the Environment Division since the Committee's past session, and:

(i) Recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming in environmental activities, particularly in the light of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and emphasized that gender equality was both a goal in itself and a means to contribute to achieving sustainable development;

(ii) Supported international initiatives to promote gender equality and welcomed continued cooperation and coordination with the United Nations bodies and other relevant international forums and actors to that end;

(iii) Agreed to continue to mainstream a gender perspective in its activities.

(f) Considered organizing an international conference, in cooperation with all relevant ECE subprogrammes, and in particular with the support of the Housing and Land Management Unit, the joint ECE/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Forestry and Timber Section and the Sustainable Energy Division, on green building, with a view to exploring all aspects of, and opportunities to facilitate, a transition in the ECE region towards green building.

VIII. Overview of resources for environmental activities and criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events

67. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-third session, the Committee had considered updating the criteria for financial support and taken the decision by which the Committee had agreed to continue with the criteria for financial support as adopted by the Committee at its twenty-second session in January 2017 (using data for 2015) and, at the same time, asked the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to verify the availability of data for 2016 and, if available for all countries with economies in transition, to prepare revised criteria for financial support for approval by the Committee by email through a silent procedure (ECE/CEP/2017/5, para. 100). She informed the Committee that the Bureau had fulfilled its mandate and prepared, with support by the secretariat, the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events, which were presented in information paper No. 10.

68. Furthermore, the Chair informed the Committee that the overview of the status of the trust funds under the Environment subprogramme in the biennium 2016–2017 was presented in information paper No. 5. The secretariat briefed the Committee on the specific features of the information presented in the paper.

69. The Committee approved the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events as presented in information paper No. 10 and asked the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to periodically verify the availability of data for 2017 and, if available, for all countries with economies in transition, to prepare revised criteria for financial support for approval by the Committee by email through a silent procedure.

70. It welcomed the information provided by the secretariat on the status of the trust funds in the biennium 2016–2017 and requested the secretariat to provide the information for the next biennium (2019–2019) at the next relevant session of the Committee (i.e. in 2020).

IX. Reform of the United Nations planning and budgeting process

71. The Chair informed the Committee that the information on the reform of the United Nations planning and budgeting process was contained in information paper No. 6. The secretariat briefed the Committee on recent developments with regard to the reform of the United Nations planning and budgeting process.

72. The Committee took note of the information on the reform of the United Nations planning and budgeting process as presented in information paper No. 6.

X. Presentation and exchange of views on the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

73. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-third session, the Committee had welcomed the information on the preparations for the third session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP and invited UNEP to continue informing the Committee about relevant developments under the Assembly (ECE/CEP/2017/5, paras. 101 and 102).

74. The representative of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe informed the Committee about the preparations for the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, which would be held in Nairobi, from 11 to 15 March 2019.

75. The Committee welcomed the information provided by UNEP about developments in preparing the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, and invited UNEP to continue informing the Committee about relevant developments under the Assembly, and in particular about the outcomes of its fourth session at the next session of the Committee.

XI. Election of officers

76. The Chair informed the Bureau that, based on the interest expressed by the current Bureau members and new nominations received, the secretariat had prepared an information paper presenting the list of candidates for the Bureau to be elected by the Committee (information paper No. 7/Rev.3).

77. The Committee decided to elect the Bureau of the Committee as stated in information paper No.7/Rev.3.

78. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the outgoing members of the Bureau: Ms. Marie-Charlotte Delvaux (Belgium), Mr. Nicolas Fairise (France), Mr. Vladimir Ivlev (Russian Federation), Mr. Alexander Mayer (United States of America), Ms. Maria Nagornii (Republic of Moldova), Ms. Gordana Petkovic (Serbia), Ms. Marina Philipuyuk (Belarus) and Mr. Bulat Yessekin (Kazakhstan).

XII. Calendar of meetings

79. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-third session, the Committee had approved the proposed schedule of Committee and Bureau meetings until 2020 (ECE/CEP/2017/5, para. 108). She stated that the proposed schedule of meetings of the Committee on Environmental Policy and its Bureau for the period 2019–2021 was presented in information paper No. 8.

80. The Committee approved the proposed schedule of the Committee on Environmental Policy and Bureau meetings for the period 2010–2021 (information paper No. 8).

81. The Committee decided to organize the Committee's twenty-fifth session in Geneva, in the week of 11–15 November 2019.

XIII. List of decisions

82. Supported by the secretariat, the Chair compiled and presented a summary of the outcomes and decisions of the Committee's twenty-fourth session. Following a discussion, the draft summary was finalized and approved. The document was uploaded to the web page of the twenty-fourth session of the Committee.⁴

⁴ See www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2019/ece/cep/CEP-24_decisions_31.01.2019_final_unedited.pdf.

XIV. Closure of the meeting

83. The Committee requested the Bureau and the secretariat to follow up on the Committee's decisions, including by preparing the documents and reports necessary for the Committee's work at its next session.

84. The Committee expressed appreciation to ECE for organizing a side event on the THE PEP.

85. The Committee expressed appreciation for the work of the ECE secretariat in preparing the current meeting.

86. The Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.
