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Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Committee

110th meeting

Geneva (online), 10 July 2020

Item 2 (a) of the provisional agenda

Update on Special Procedures during COVID-19 period: decisions taken under silence procedure from April to June 2020

Decisions taken under silence procedure from April to June 2020

Background

1. On 6 April 2020, the Executive Committee (EXCOM) adopted [Special Procedures](#) during the COVID-19 period to ensure business continuity during the pandemic. The secretariat was requested to report back on the implementation of these arrangements throughout the COVID-19 situation.
2. The decisions taken by EXCOM in the period from April to June 2020 are contained in annex I of this document.
3. On 29 May 2020, EXCOM adopted special procedures during the COVID-19 period also for a number of its subsidiary bodies. Annex II contains business-critical decisions taken by UN/CEFACT, a subsidiary body of EXCOM, in June 2020. Business-critical decisions taken by other subsidiary bodies of the Commission will be reported to their respective parent bodies.
4. EXCOM is invited to take note of the decisions adopted under the silence procedure, as contained in annexes I and II.

Draft Decision

5. The Executive Committee takes note of the decisions contained in annexes I and II.

GE.20-08861(E)



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Annex I

Decision No. 1, adopted on 6 April 2020

Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period

In light of the exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Executive Committee

1. Emphasizes the importance of solidarity and partnership in these exceptional times and stresses the need to ensure continuity of the work of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE);
2. Authorizes the Chair of the Commission to circulate, after consultation with the ECE Bureau, draft decisions of the Executive Committee to all member States, through the Permanent Missions in Geneva, under a silence procedure of at least 72 hours and in accordance with Rule 20 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure as contained in ECE/EX/3/Rev1;
3. Decides that if the silence is not broken, the decision shall be considered adopted, and the Executive Committee shall take note of the decision at its first meeting held after the cessation of precautionary measures as soon as the circumstances allow, and that this decision on the procedures for taking decisions of the Executive Committee shall be in effect until the end of May 2020 unless extended through this procedure;
4. Authorizes the Chair of the Commission to convene remote informal meetings of the Members of the Executive Committee to discuss matters of crucial importance for the continuity of the work of the Commission under current circumstances including in preparation of silence procedure. The minimum deadline of 72 hours should only be used for silence procedure following a remote informal meeting of the Members of the Executive Committee;
5. Requests the Secretariat to continue exploring possible solutions to the issue of interpretation in remote meetings in accordance with Rules of procedure 18 and 19, with a view of proposing solutions to the membership as soon as possible;
6. Encourages the subsidiary bodies of ECE to explore, in full respect of the above temporary measures, innovative formats to conduct business remotely. On an exceptional basis and for business-critical issues, this may include decision-making through written consultations and silence procedure outside the regular sessions of the respective bodies. In this regard, the Bureaus of ECE intergovernmental bodies, supported by the ECE secretariat, should propose specific modalities in line with the modalities approved by the Executive Committee and for approval by the Executive Committee. These modalities would then apply to the respective subsidiary bodies, temporarily until end of May 2020;
7. Underlines that these arrangements are exceptional and time-limited and requests the Secretariat to report back to EXCOM on their implementation throughout the COVID-19 situation.

Decision No. 2, adopted on 16 April 2020

EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project “Improving Housing Affordability in the ECE region”, as contained in informal document 2020/16.

Decision No.	adopted on 29 May 2020
Agenda item 2 - Chair's conclusions from the 109th meeting Document Conclu109	
No. 3	The conclusions are adopted.
Agenda item 3 - Update on Special Procedures during COVID-19 period EXCOM approves the arrangements for various ECE subsidiary bodies to conduct business remotely during the COVID-19 period as contained in informal documents 2020/17, 2020/18, 2020/19/Corr.1, 2020/20, 2020/21, 2020/22.	
Extension of EXCOM Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period Informal document 2020/17	
No. 4	In light of the continuing exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and taking into account the decision on Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period taken by EXCOM on 6 April 2020, the Executive Committee 1. Authorizes the Chair of the Commission to continue using the Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period for taking decisions of the Executive Committee until 31 July 2020; 2. Requests the Secretariat to continue exploring possible solutions to the issue of interpretation in remote meetings in accordance with Rules of procedure 18 and 19, with a view of proposing solutions to the membership as soon as possible; 3. Underlines that these arrangements are exceptional and time-limited and requests the Secretariat to report back to EXCOM on their implementation throughout the COVID-19 situation.
Arrangements for the ECE Inland Transport Committee subsidiary bodies to conduct business remotely during the COVID-19 period Informal document 2020/18	
No. 5	Further to the Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period adopted by the Executive Committee of the ECE on 6 April 2020, the Executive Committee: 1. Takes note that the Bureau of the ECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC) has decided to approve, where Chairs of ITC subsidiary bodies deem it necessary, the convening of informal consultations of ITC subsidiary bodies during the period where the Special Procedures apply, to allow them to discuss matters of crucial importance for the continuity of their work under the exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic; 2. Authorizes the Chairs of the relevant subsidiary bodies to circulate recommendations on decisions to the members of those subsidiary bodies on business-critical issues resulting from these informal consultations, through the Permanent Missions in Geneva, under a silence procedure of at least 72 hours and in accordance with Rule 44 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of ECE as contained in E/ECE/778/Rev.5;

Decision No.	adopted on 29 May 2020
	3. Notes that, if the silence is not broken, the recommendations shall be considered adopted and will be submitted to the 83rd session of ITC for consideration, as appropriate.
Arrangements for business-critical decisions in order to ensure the continued governance of UN/CEFACT during the COVID-19 period. Informal document 2020/19/Corr.1	
No. 6	<p>Further to the Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period adopted by the Executive Committee of the ECE on 6 April 2020, the Executive Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Takes note that the Plenary of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) held informal consultations on 4-5 May 2020 to discuss business critical decisions that would have been taken at its twenty-sixth session originally scheduled 4-5 May 2020, which was postponed due to mitigating measures regarding the COVID-19 pandemic; 2. Authorizes the Chair of UN/CEFACT to circulate drafts of seven independent business-critical decisions, agreed upon at this informal consultation and contained in document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/INF.12, under a silence procedure of at least 72 hours through the country Heads of Delegation of the UN/CEFACT Plenary and in accordance with Rule 44 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the ECE as contained in E/ECE/778/Rev.5; 3. If the silence is not broken, the decisions shall be considered adopted and will be submitted to the next formal session of EXCOM for consideration. Further, the decisions will be reported back to the twenty-sixth session of UN/CEFACT.
Arrangements for the ECE Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships to conduct business remotely during the COVID-19 period Informal document 2020/20	
No. 7	<p>Further to the Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period adopted by the Executive Committee of the ECE on 6 April 2020, the Executive Committee</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Takes note that the Bureau of the ECE Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships has decided that the Committee will hold consultations by written procedure of no more than one month to discuss its inter-sessional implementation plan for 2020-2021 in order to ensure the continuity of the work of the Committee under the exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, and 2. Authorizes the Chair of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships to circulate a draft decision on the inter-sessional implementation plan 2020-2021, incorporating the results of the above written procedure, to the members of the Committee, through the Permanent Missions in Geneva, for adoption under a silence procedure of at least 72 hours and in accordance with Rule 44 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the ECE as contained in E/ECE/778/Rev.5. 3. If the silence is not broken, the decision shall be considered adopted and will be submitted, together with any comments received from delegations for record purposes, to the 14th session of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships in 2021 for consideration, as appropriate.

Decision No.	adopted on 29 May 2020
Arrangements for business-critical decisions in order to ensure the continued governance of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards during the COVID-19 period Informal document 2020/21	
No. 8	<p>Further to the Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period adopted by the Executive Committee of the ECE on 6 April 2020, the Executive Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Takes note that the Bureau of the ECE Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards has decided to convene informal consultations of the Bureau of the Steering Committee and interested delegations on 29 and 30 June 2020 to discuss decisions of crucial importance for the continuity of the work of the Steering Committee under the exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic; 2. Authorizes the Chair of the Steering Committee to circulate to delegations to the Steering Committee draft recommendations for business-critical decisions resulting from these informal consultations, through the Permanent Missions in Geneva, under a silence procedure of at least 72 hours and in accordance with Rule 44 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the ECE as contained in E/ECE/778/Rev.5; 3. If the silence is not broken, the recommendations shall be considered adopted and will be submitted to the next formal session of EXCOM for consideration. Further, the decisions will be reported back to the seventh session of the Steering Committee.
Arrangements for the ECE Committee on Sustainable Energy to conduct business remotely during the COVID-19 period Informal document 2020/22	
No. 9	<p>Further to the Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period adopted by the Executive Committee of the ECE on 6 April 2020, the Executive Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Takes note that the Bureau of the ECE Committee on Sustainable Energy (CSE) has decided to approve, where Chairs of CSE subsidiary bodies deem it necessary, the convening of informal consultations of CSE subsidiary bodies during the period where the Special Procedures apply, to allow them to discuss matters of crucial importance for the continuity of their work under the exceptional circumstances triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic; 2. Authorizes the Chairs of the relevant subsidiary bodies to circulate recommendations to the members of those subsidiary bodies on business-critical issues resulting from these informal consultations, through the Permanent Missions in Geneva, under a silence procedure of at least 72 hours and in accordance with Rule 44 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of ECE as contained in E/ECE/778/Rev.5; 3. Notes that, if the silence is not broken, the recommendations shall be considered adopted and will be submitted to the 29th session of CSE for consideration, as appropriate.
Agenda item 4(b) - Decisions on matters relating to the Inland Transport Committee	
EXCOM approves the decisions as proposed in document ECE/EX/2020/L.1	

Decision No.	adopted on 29 May 2020
No. 10	The Executive Committee hereby approves the programme of work of the Transport subprogramme for 2020, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/2020/21.
EXCOM approves the decisions as proposed in document ECE/EX/2020/L. 2	
No. 11	<p>The Executive Committee hereby approves the renewal of the mandates of:</p> <p>(a) Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals until 2020, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/294;</p> <p>(b) Group of Experts on Unified Railway Law until 2020, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/294.</p> <p>The Executive Committee hereby approves the establishment of:</p> <p>(a) the Group of Experts on Assessment of Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Inland Transport until 2025, on the basis of the terms of reference included in document ECE/TRANS/2020/6, and working in English, French and Russian, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/294;</p> <p>(b) the Group of Experts on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (WP.30/GE.1) until 2022 on the basis of the terms of reference included in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2019/9 and Corr.1, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/294;</p> <p>(c) the Group of Experts on the Permanent Identification of Railway Rolling Stock until 2022 on the basis of the terms of reference included in document ECE/TRANS/2020/15, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/294.</p>
<p>Agenda item 6(b) - Decisions on matters relating to the possible Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe.</p> <p>EXCOM adopts the decision relating to the possible Legally Binding Agreement on Forests in Europe as contained in ECE/EX/2020/L.3.</p>	
No. 12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noting the letter of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic and Co-Chair of Forest Europe of 10 June 2019 to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) conveying the Forest Europe Ministerial Decision on resuming the negotiations on a legally binding agreement on forests in Europe for consideration and further action; 2. Recalling the decision of the 106th meeting of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of 8 July 2019 that took note of the information provided on a possible legally binding agreement on forests in Europe and requested the secretariat to organize informal consultations to consider the matter further; 3. Taking note of the informal consultations organized by the secretariat on 30–31 October 2019 and on 27–29 January 2020 and the lack of consensus on the proposed resumption of the negotiations on a possible legally binding agreement on forests in Europe under ECE auspices serviced jointly by ECE and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 4. Requests the ECE Executive Secretary, in consultation with the FAO Director-General, to inform the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic and Co-Chair of Forest Europe that ECE and FAO are not in a position to take any further action on the request made in the above-mentioned letter of 10 June 2019.
Agenda item 7 - Format and organizational aspects of the Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)	
No. 13	1. Taking note of General Assembly Resolution 73/195, para. 50, EXCOM mandates the ECE to facilitate the collection of voluntary inputs by Member States, according to the Proposed Framework to assist Member States in the Organization of Regional Reviews for the international

Decision No.	adopted on 29 May 2020
	cooperative framework on safe, orderly and regular migration, for onward transmission to IOM, while respecting the sovereignty and the different positions of the ECE Member States. 2. Substantive contributions to the regional review meeting by the ECE secretariat will be provided within the limits of its mandate and activities in the area of migration (i.e. statistics).
Agenda item 9 - Resource mobilization strategy of the Economic Commission for Europe Informal document 2020/27/Rev.1 ¹	
No. 14	Having considered the ECE resource mobilization strategy presented by the Secretariat under agenda item 9 of the remote informal meeting of the Members of EXCOM, 20 May 2020, Mindful of the critical need to mobilize additional resources for the ECE activities, the Executive Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decides to approve the ECE resource mobilisation strategy as contained in document 2020/27. • Encourages the Secretariat to implement the strategy and • Invites member States to continue supporting the ECE by providing additional resources for its mandated activities, and • Requests the Secretariat to annually report on the implementation of the ECE resource mobilisation strategy to the Executive Committee, through the Technical Cooperation report.
Agenda item 12 - Extrabudgetary projects (for approval) Informal documents 2020/29 – 2020/36	
No. 15	EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary projects contained in informal documents 2020/29, 2020/30, 2020/31, 2020/32 ² , 2020/33, 2020/34, 2020/35, 2020/36.

¹ Prior to adoption, the informal document 2020/27 was amended (and reissued as Rev. 1) at the request of the meeting. The following text was added “or it should be proportionate to the size of the project and kept to a minimum” in the penultimate paragraph of document (quote from “Transparency, accountability and approval of extrabudgetary funding” (2014/41/Rev.1).

² The United States of America wishes to formally register the comment below related to Informal document 2020/32:

"In reference to the extra-budgetary project detailed in document number 2020/32, without additional information on the specific Iranian entities or individuals involved, we are unable to assess the scope of potential U.S. sanctions implications. We recommend that UNECE take necessary and appropriate due diligence measures, which could involve consulting with the UN Office of Legal Affairs. Should you have any further questions we will be happy to try to answer them to the extent possible, based on additional details you can provide."

Annex II

Decisions put forward for silence procedure as agreed by the UN/CEFACT Plenary Members at their informal virtual consultation of 4 May 2020 and adopted on 12 June 2020

The Plenary agrees to request EXCOM to approve the use of silent procedure for 7 business-critical decisions (as per EXCOM decision of 6 April).

1. The Plenary appoints by acclamation eight Bureau Vice Chairs: Ian Watt, Marek Laskowski, Hanane Becha, Tahseen Khan, Liliana Fratini-Passi, Estelle Igwe, Benno Slot and Aleksei Bondarenko.
2. The Plenary approves the revision of Recommendation N° 33: Recommendation and Guidelines on Establishing a Single Window (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/7).
3. The Plenary approves the revision of Recommendation N° 16: United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Location (UN/LOCODE) (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/8).³
4. The Plenary approves the revision of Recommendation N° 5: Abbreviations of INCOTERMS (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/10).
5. The Plenary endorses the Programme of Work of the Advisory Group on Advanced Technologies in Trade and Logistics (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/18).
6. The Plenary endorses the Programme of Work or 2020-2021 of the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE) Advisory Group (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/20).
7. The Plenary endorses the Programme of Work of the Team of Specialist on Sustainable Fisheries 2020- 2021 (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/22).

³ The Delegations of France and Italy sent the following comment related to document [ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2020/8](#), revision of Recommendation N°16 on United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Location (UN/LOCODE):

“With reference to Recommendation N°16 on UN/LOCODE, further work should be taken on child codes in order to render these official and obligatory; in a future version of annex 3 or in an official repository, the uses of the available child codes should be described (for example BIC for container depots, SMDG for port container terminals, etc.)”