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Economic Commission for Europe

Sixty-ninth session

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Other issues calling for decision by the Commission

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Note by the secretariat*

EXCOM may wish to transmit the below draft decisions, as informally agreed among interested delegations, for consideration by the sixty-ninth session of the Commission.

(Other items, agreed previously, or still under consideration, will eventually be consolidated into this document as appropriate.)

I. Circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources

The Commission,

1. Recognising the adverse impacts of the crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable development, among others, and the need to build back better, to build a more equitable, inclusive, sustainable and resilient future and to get back on track to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,
2. Emphasizing the importance of circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), supporting economic prosperity and resilience, addressing environmental pressures, mitigating climate change and building back better in response to the COVID-19 pandemic,
3. Recognizing the need for multilateral and coordinated multi-stakeholder approaches to develop integrated solutions to respond to these challenges and stressing the importance of public private partnerships,

* The present report was submitted after the deadline as a result of consultations among member States.

4. Noting that the United Nations Environmental Assembly refers to a more circular economy as one of the current sustainable economic models, in which products and materials are designed in such a way that they can be reused, remanufactured, recycled or recovered and thus maintained in the economy for as long as possible, along with the resources of which they are made, and the generation of waste, especially hazardous waste, is avoided or minimized, and greenhouse gas emissions are prevented or reduced,
5. Further noting that, while the definition of the circular economy as well as the key statistics needed to measure it may exist at sub-regional and national levels, and important methodological work is being undertaken on different aspects of the concept of circular economy, there is currently no single internationally agreed definition of this concept,
6. Acknowledging the importance of common objectives in support of effective policy planning,
7. Recognizing the strengths of Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) as a prominent standard-setting body and a platform for enhancing regional harmonization and economic cooperation in a number of sectoral areas,
8. Welcoming voluntary initiatives by countries of the ECE region, including those made as contributions to the sixty-ninth session of the Commission and other voluntary commitments that were made earlier in the Environment for Europe process, to strengthen a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources,
9. Emphasizes the need to further strengthen its work in this field within its existing mandate as appropriate and subject to available resources;
10. Requests the relevant Sectoral Committees and bodies reporting directly to the Executive Committee, and their subsidiaries, to consider how to enhance the impact of relevant existing UNECE instruments, in order to foster circular and more resource efficient approaches, including by proposing ways to identify, assess and fill gaps in governance and good practices;
11. Invites these subsidiary bodies to replicate and scale up existing approaches that facilitate broad and effective use of the appropriate instruments, including through capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities;
12. Further invites these subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, to consider developing proposals in their respective Programmes of Work, including possible collaboration across subprogrammes, for impactful and measurable solutions that promote a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources and that can facilitate attaining the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
13. Further requests that these subsidiary bodies implement this decision without affecting their core mandate and activities carried out under each sectoral committee, and subject to available resources;
14. Invites the secretariat to collaborate with other international organizations and regional economic integration organizations, including the European Union towards the development of a harmonised approach to measuring progress towards circularity including greater resource efficiency;
15. Also requests the secretariat to further promote partnerships related to a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources, including with the United Nations system, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector, to explore opportunities for synergies to broaden the use of relevant ECE instruments;
16. Requests the secretariat to submit relevant inputs from its work, both subprogramme-specific and cross-sectoral, on promoting a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources to overarching international initiatives, such as the Decade for Action on the SDGs (2020–2030); the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030); and the Decade of Sustainable Energy for All;
17. Encourages timely implementation of the voluntary initiatives submitted by member States to the Commission session, to further accelerate the transition to a circular economy

and the sustainable use of natural resources, and further encourages member States who have not done so yet to consider taking concerted action in this regard;

18. Requests the secretariat to present a progress report on the Commission's work on the promotion of a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources for consideration at its seventieth session.

II. Extension of the mandate of the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development

(text agreed at EXCOM 112, 14 December 2020 (Informal document 2020/53) for onward transmission to the sixty-ninth Commission for consideration).

III. Amendment to the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Committee

The Commission,

30. Decides to amend rule 3 of the rules of Procedure of the Executive Committee, as contained in document ECE/EX/3/Rev.1, to read as follows: "In the case of meetings during which decisions are proposed for adoption, the provisional agenda and documentation in one ECE working language shall be distributed as soon as possible but at least 10 working days in advance; and documents in all languages shall be distributed no less than 2 days in advance."