



Economic and Social Council

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Economic Commission for Europe

Sixty-ninth session

Geneva, 20 and 21 April 2021

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening and adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the sixty-ninth session

To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 20 April 2021.¹

The session provides a forum for the consideration of issues of importance for the economic integration and cooperation among the countries of the region, and an opportunity to review the progress of the Commission's activities.

The session also enables the Governments of member States to examine the secretariat's report on the activities of the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the work accomplished during the two preceding years. Furthermore, Governments are invited to consider decisions to guide the Commission's work for the future.

The following annotations to the provisional agenda provide background information on each of the proposed items and suggestions regarding their consideration at the session.

I. Provisional agenda

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda.

A. High-level segment

Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe

2. High-level dialogue.
3. Roundtable: Building back better - Accelerating the shift to a more circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources.
4. Consideration of the high-level statement.

¹ In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the secretariat will explore options to organize the meeting, or segments thereof, in a hybrid format to facilitate in room and remote participation, as needed.



B. General segment

5. Report on activities on the high-level theme of the sixty-eighth session: “Smart Sustainable Cities: Drivers for Sustainable Development” and update on the work in the nexus areas.
6. Report on activities of the Executive Committee.
7. Other issues calling for decision by the Commission.
8. Election of officers.
9. Other business.
10. Adoption of the report of the session.

II. Annotations to the provisional agenda

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda

Documentation: E/ECE/1493

1. The Commission will adopt its agenda.

A. High-level segment

Documentation: E/ECE/1495, E/ECE/1496

2. The high-level segment of the 2021 Commission will be held under the overall theme “Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe.”
3. The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted profound changes in our societies, and highlighted and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. It has confronted policymakers with difficult choices and impeded progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this new situation, there is a need to restore economic dynamism, but also to exploit the opportunities to build a more equitable, inclusive, sustainable and resilient future.
4. Meeting the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will demand significant changes in existing patterns of resource use. More resource efficient and circular approaches to the economy can be a good guide for the necessary policy initiatives. These involve a deep rethinking of the way in which societies produce and consume, in order to reconcile aspirations for increased prosperity with environmental preservation, resilience and inclusiveness. Several principles are associated to the discussions on circularity, which provides an alternative to the linear “make-use-dispose” model. Reducing, reusing, sharing, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing and recycling are deployed to minimize resource inputs, waste, pollution and carbon emissions. A product’s life cycle perspective can help to close material loops in order to preserve resources in the system and increase efficiency.
5. Approaches towards a more resource efficient and circular economy offer additional benefits, besides contributing to a more sustainable management of natural resources. In a world shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic, the value of increased resilience and improved management of supply chains has been recognized. A shift towards a circular economy and increased resource efficiency can be a source of business opportunities that improve productivity, sharpen competitiveness and create jobs.
6. The advancement of more resource efficient and circular approaches to the economy requires a suitable normative framework and collaboration among multiple stakeholders. Taking into account the international dimensions of a circular economy will be critical to accelerate progress. A life cycle perspective will contribute to shape effective policies that use resources more efficiently. There is also a need to improve our understanding of classification and measurement issues related to the circular economy and the sustainable

management of natural resources. The high-level segment will seek to explore related questions, including:

- What are the barriers that constrain faster progress towards a more circular economy and sustainable management of natural resources in the ECE region? How could these barriers be overcome, including through international cooperation?
- What are the normative and governance gaps that should be closed to facilitate the shift to a more circular economy and increase resource efficiency? How could these be addressed through the work of ECE?
- How can partnerships among all relevant stakeholders be strengthened to support circularity and a more sustainable management of natural resources?

2. High-level dialogue

7. In the context created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the high-level dialogue will focus on policy initiatives to support a shift towards more circular economies and the sustainable management of natural resources, the role of international cooperation in accelerating progress, the significance of a more circular economy and increased resource efficiency for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the contributions that ECE can make in related areas.

8. It will consider action taken by governments and other stakeholders to promote a more circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources that result in more prosperous, resilient and inclusive economies while reducing environmental pressures.

9. The high-level dialogue will be opened by a keynote address that sets the stage for the discussion. Afterwards, Heads of Delegation are invited to make interventions.

10. The Executive Secretary will make a presentation on the work of ECE on the circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources.

3. Roundtable: Building back better - Accelerating the shift to a more circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources

11. The roundtable session will be dedicated to the topic “Building back better - Accelerating the shift to a more circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources.” Discussions will focus on practical solutions to challenges in shifting to circular approaches and the sustainable use of natural resources, how these solutions could be scaled and how existing gaps that prevent further progress be addressed, including through strengthened international cooperation. The discussions will be informed by the context created by the COVID-19 crisis, including new needs, constraints and emerging opportunities to “build back better”. The role of ECE activities and instruments in this transformation will also be considered. Examples could be taken from the following areas:

- Designing and planning for circularity
- Waste management
- Traceability and transparency
- Innovation, including new business models and social practices
- Energy transition and patterns of resource use

12. Participants will include representatives from Governments, civil society, academia, the private sector, and the United Nations system.

4. Consideration of the high-level statement

Documentation: E/ECE/1497

13. Member States will consider the high-level statement on key issues before the sixty-ninth Commission session.

B. General segment

5. Report on activities on the high-level theme of the sixty-eighth session “Smart Sustainable Cities: Drivers for Sustainable Development” and update on the work in the nexus areas

Documentation: E/ECE/1498

14. As part of its high-level segment of the sixty-eighth session, the Commission discussed the theme “Smart Sustainable Cities: Drivers for Sustainable Development”. Document E/ECE/1498 is presented for consideration at the sixty-ninth session to take stock of the work done since April 2019 on this theme, highlighting in particular related cross-sectoral collaboration among ECE subprogrammes. In this context, the Commission may also wish to consider the added value of the early selection of a high-level theme of future Commission sessions to facilitate broad stakeholder engagement, as appropriate.

15. In the high-level statement adopted at the sixty-eighth session, member States *inter alia* decided that “ECE will leverage its in-house expertise to achieve a greater impact on sustainable development in the region. Working across the eight subprograms, cross-sectoral teams will engage in areas where multiple SDGs converge (nexus areas): (a) sustainable and smart cities; (b) sustainable use of natural resources; (c) sustainable mobility, and smart connectivity; and (d) measuring and monitoring progress towards the SDGs. This nexus approach will enable the development of integrated solutions to clusters of interrelated SDGs and deepen partnerships, including Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). In line with the four nexus areas, ECE will expand and strengthen its network of knowledge partnerships with a wide range of actors, including with other organizations in the United Nations system.” The secretariat will provide an update on the work in the nexus areas, focusing in particular on the findings and recommendations elaborated in the four nexus flagship publications launched on the occasion of the 2021 Commission, for consideration by the membership.

6. Report on activities of the Executive Committee

Documentation: E/ECE/1499

16. Following the review of the ECE reform, EXCOM was established in 2006 to act as the governing body of ECE during the intersessional period of the Commission. Document E/ECE/1499 contains a report of the activities of EXCOM since the last Commission session. The special procedures adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure business continuity will be taken into account. The Commission may wish to provide views and comments on the functioning of EXCOM.

7. Other issues calling for decision by the Commission

Documentation: E/ECE/1500, E/ECE/1501

17. The Commission will be invited to approve any other decision as necessary. Among the draft decisions before the Commission is the proposed extension of the mandate of the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development. In this regard and further to decision B (68), the Commission may also consider an evaluation of the added value of the Regional Forum, as contained in document E/ECE/1501.

8. Election of officers

18. Rule 12 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission states: “The Commission shall, at each biennial session, elect a country from among its members to hold the chair for the period of the biennium. The representative of the elected country will be the Chairperson. The

Commission will also, at the same meeting, elect two countries whose representatives will become the Vice-Chairpersons for the period of the biennium. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission will also serve as the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the Executive Committee for the period of the biennium.” Accordingly, under this item, elections for the Chair and Vice-Chairs will be held.

9. Other business

10. Adoption of the report of the session

Documentation: E/ECE/1494

19. The Commission will consider the report of the sixty-ninth session.

III. Tentative timetable

| <i>Time</i> | <i>Agenda item</i> |
|--|---|
| Tuesday, 20 April 2021 | |
| 10:00–10:30 | Opening and adoption of the agenda Opening remarks: - Chairperson - Executive Secretary - Other high-level officials |
| High-level segment: Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe | |
| 10:30–13:00 | Item 2: High-level dialogue: - Keynote address - Interventions by Heads of delegation - Presentation by the Executive Secretary |
| 15:00 – 18:00 | Item 3: Roundtable: Building back better - Accelerating the shift to a more circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources |
| Wednesday, 21 April 2021 | |
| High-level segment (continued) | |
| 10:00 – 10:30 | Item 4: Consideration of the high-level statement |
| General segment | |
| 10:30 – 13:00 | Item 5: Report on activities on the high-level theme of the sixty-eighth session; “Smart Sustainable Cities: Drivers for Sustainable Development” and update on the work in the nexus areas |
| 15.00 – 15:45 | Item 6: Report on activities of the Executive Committee |
| 15.45 – 16.30 | Item 7: Other issues calling for decision by the Commission |
| 16.30 – 16.45 | Item 8: Elections of officers |
| 16.45 – 17.00 | Item 9: Other business |
| 17:00 –18:00 | Item 10: Adoption of report of the session |