

## Bureau Call

**27 October 2020**

15:00-17:00 (Geneva time)

# MINUTES

### A. Participants:

Bureau Members:

#### *Present*

- Mr. Ray Pilcher (Chair)
- Mr. Yuriy Bobrov
- Mr. David Creedy
- Mr. C. Ozgen Karacan
- Mr. Łukasz Kroplewski
- Ms. Volha Roshchanka
- Mr. Sergey Ivanovich Shumkov (accompanied by Mr. Alexiey Shlyapin)
- Mr. Jacek Skiba
- Mr. Admir Softić
- Mr. Clark Talkington

#### *Apologies*

- Mr. Clemens Backhaus
- Mr. Neil Butler
- Mr. Hasan Erdoğan
- Mr. Pawel Pikus
- Mr. Milanko Savic
- Mr. Igor Yashchenko
- Mr. Zhixin Jin

Secretariat:

- Mr. Michal Drabik

### B. Draft agenda:

1. Update by the Secretariat on the current situation of the Group
2. Delivery of the Work Plan 2020-2021 – activities for the next year;
3. Work Plan for 2022-2023;
4. 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Group, March 2021.

#### **1. Adoption of the agenda**

- The agenda was adopted.

#### **2. Update by the Secretariat on the current situation of the Group:**

- The Secretariat reported on the current situation of the Group. It was highlighted that any planning is very difficult due to the unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Group scheduled for 22-23 March 2021, is most likely going to be a hybrid meeting allowing for online participation. It was also mentioned that interpretation capacity of UNOG is limited and therefore it is not certain how many hours of interpretation

the Secretariat will be able to secure for the session. It was highlighted, that due to internal regulations, the maximum number of two-hour-long interpreted segments that the Group might obtain over two days of the meeting is four (two segments each day).

### **3. Delivery of the Work Plan 2020-2021 – activities for the next year**

- The Secretariat reported that this year the Group has delivered two meetings: a seminar held within the School of Underground Mining organized in February in Poland, as well as an annual session held in September, which was preceded by an informal online meeting.
- The Secretariat, with support of experts, secured translation of the Best Practice Guidance on AMM into Spanish and Russian. The documents are currently available electronically ([here](#)) and in print. A Chinese version is being currently prepared, with significant input from ICE-CMM in China. The Centre in Poland has been approached to develop a Polish version of the document. In addition, a case study from the Saar Coal Field in Germany ([here](#)) has been added to the page dedicated to the above-mentioned publication ([here](#)).
- The first two segments of a training tool for conducting feasibility studies developed by the U.S. EPA and GMI has been posted and the Group's webpage ([here](#)).
- It was highlighted that this year Group activities, such as onsite workshops and seminars were limited due to pandemics. It was also underlined that there is a number of activities in the Work Plan for 2019-2020, delivery of which is conditioned on availability of extrabudgetary resources that have not been obtained. Consequently, those will not be delivered unless extrabudgetary resources are obtained between now and the end of the ongoing biennium.

### **4. Work Plan for 2022-2023**

- The Secretariat informed the Bureau that due to the fact that the annual session of the Group is scheduled for March 2021, the new Work Plan for 2022-2023 needs to be prepared between now and then in order to formally adopt the work plan at the session and to submit the document for the Committee's approval at its 30th session next fall.
- In light of the comments made during the 15 session of the Group held in September, the Secretariat emphasized that if the Group wishes to expand or amend its mandate, now it is a good moment to debate that matter, so that the new work plan that it is to be prepared already reflects the desired scope of the Group's work.
- A suggestion to disseminate more of the Group's work through online means of communication rather than paper publications was made. The Best Practice Guidances were said to be quite general in their approach and therefore a need for providing more specific information about given approaches and practices was expressed.
- Similarly, it was also suggested to include in the work plan the events organized with the use of the electronic means of communication, since, on the one hand, it is uncertain how long the pandemic is to disturb the Group's normal operation, and, on the other hand, such means have proven to be a convenient alternative to onsite meetings, which allow to relatively easily gather stakeholders from all around the world. Nevertheless, it was highlighted that there are some important issues that needs to be taken into account before the Group's turns to such solutions. First of all, interpretation needs to be provided in order to assure inclusiveness of the Group's proceedings. Secondly, not all subject matter might be suitable for discussion at online events. It was observed that policy matters are more appropriate than highly technical matters, as it is more likely to gather the appropriate audience and convey the desired messages in the first case rather than in the second. However, the events of the latter type were not excluded, provided that they are delivered to the targeted, previously determined, recipients. A suggestion was made that the audience should be engaged ahead of a meeting in order to find out what the particular needs and interests are in each case. It was also agreed that online events should rather be short (up to 2 hours) and focused on a given subject matter rather than general in nature. The Secretariat suggested that the funds from the ongoing XB project earmarked for travel of experts could be utilized to secure interpretation of the online meetings, provided that the donor agrees for such change. The software used by the UN to

interpret its official meetings, i.e. Interpretrefy, was praised for its quality by the Bureau Members who have already had a chance to use it. There was a call for Bureau Members to provide information on online tools that are utilized in their countries. Such tools could be disseminated through a website dedicated to the Group's activities. In this context, it was reported that GMI has the first two modules of its training tool available on its own page, as well as on the page of the Group. The remaining modules are to be developed and made available by the end of the year. Those modules could be made available for translation into other languages, should Bureau members from non-English speaking countries be willing to arrange for it.

- It was mentioned that the fact that the coal sector is undergoing a major transition needs to be acknowledged. As the role of coal is declining, the Group should give greater attention to such issues as: AMM, coal mine closure – preparation for and execution of, transition of local and national economies, and preservation of communities in the coal mining regions. It was stated that it is the Group's role to let people know that closing mines is not the end of the "problem" and that it does not solve many issues, be it economic, social, or environmental, that need to be addressed. A suggestion was made to gather standards for mine closure that are currently applicable in various member States and organize a workshop focused on comparing their scopes and provisions. At the same time it was observed that there are not many of such standards, and those that exist tend to be very specific and focused on engineering aspect of the process, leaving many other matters, particularly those related to social and economic costs of mine closure, not addressed.
- A comment was made that in the last years the Groups deviates ever more from its mandate. It was observed that too much attention is given to emission matters, at the expense of technological developments in the mining industry. In that context, the need to reengage closer with mine representatives was highlighted. It was suggested that each Centre of Excellence should have its own web page on which it would post information about the newest technologies in the region of its operation. The Secretariat offered to host any tools developed by ICEs on the Group's website
- In order to evaluate the Group's capacity and potential to contribute to the work on mine closure and just transition, the Chair established a Task Force, composed of Mr. Clark Talkington and Mr. David Creedy, which is to prepare its proposal of activities that the Group could engage in to assure that it remains relevant in the new circumstances governing in the coal sector, at the same time staying aligned with its original mandate.
- An added value of cooperation between ICEs was underlined. In that context, a question was made whether the currently independent Russian Centre of Excellence (Centre for problems of methane and gas-dynamic phenomena in coal and ore deposits created within the framework of the Institute of Comprehensive Exploitation of Mineral Resources of the Russian Academy of Science) would be willing to join the already existing network of Centres operating under the Group's auspices. Such a will was indicated by the Representatives of the Russian Federation. However, the internal Russian procedures necessary to make it possible were said to be difficult and time-consuming. The current situation was described as being even further complicated due to COVID-19 pandemic, which slowed down the bureaucratic processes all around the world. At the same time, a strong support to the Group and its activities was expressed on behalf of the Russian Centre, and its interest in closer cooperation and integration with other Centres was indicated. It was mentioned that the cooperation between Russian Centre and the Centres in Poland and China has already been established. As an example, it was stated that host institutions of the Russian Centre and the Centre in Poland are now engaged in a joint project, results of which could be disseminated by the Group. The Secretariat strongly supported such an idea and offered its help with making that possible. The issue of setting up ICE in the US was also raised. The process was said to be stalled by the pandemic, yet it was underlined that the idea was not abandoned, and it is hoped to be pursued as soon as the situation permits.
- The issue of cooperation with the EU on developing standards for measurement and reporting of methane emissions from the coal sector was discussed. A new methane strategy released by the EU few weeks ago was criticized as insufficient and lacking understanding of the specificity of the coal industry. The Bureau was informed that the Group was already in contact

with DG ENER and that in order to proceed the Group needs to present to the EU its proposal of the next steps, and of the approach (methodology) that it suggest to take to address the issue in question. The Bureau supported getting involved in cooperation with the EU, simultaneously highlighting caution with which the issue should be approached. It was highlighted that the Group has a lot to offer on both: policy perspective and practical, project-level, experience. The Chair asked Mr. Skiba, who showed great familiarity with the issued strategy and the EU policies, to prepare a list of bullet points exposing the omissions and inaccuracies of the EU document, and suggesting how the Group's cooperation with DG ENER could be framed, and what the Group could offer them to do to improve the text. It was observed that the standards that the EU is working on should not be seen as a punishment to the coal industry, but rather as an added value allowing it to improve its operations. The US was said to be reporting on methane emissions since 2011, and therefore it was suggested to look at its experience and utilize its solutions, where proven effective. A help with providing an overview of the existing practices in the US, as well as in the other countries with which the US has cooperated on that matter was offered by the American Representative. A readiness of the US to be involved in, and to contribute from its experience to the Group's work on this subject was welcomed by the Bureau.

#### **5. 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Group, March 2021**

- As due to the COVID-19 pandemic the format of the session is still uncertain, it was decided to discuss that matter at the next call.

#### **5. Any other business**

- The Secretariat asked Bureau Members to provide their comments to the CMM-related section of the draft conclusions and recommendations prepared for the Committee meeting in November.

#### **6. End of the meeting.**

- The Secretariat referring to the discussions held throughout the meeting asked the Bureau Members to:
  - Inform the Secretariat about any activities, case studies, projects' results, etc. that are performed in their respective member States or /and organizations, which they would like to be promoted through the Group.
  - Provide information to the Secretariat about any topics, or recipients that they find suitable for the discussed potential online workshops. It was underlined that the Secretariat will be happy to organize such workshops, however, their thematic scope and targeted audience should be determined by the Bureau.
  - Provide the Secretariat with initial written suggestions as to how to proceed with the UNECE-EU cooperation on methane emissions from the coal sector.
- The Chair and the secretariat thanked participants for their time and involvement in the call.
- The meeting was closed.