

UNECE Group of Experts Coal Mine Methane Bureau Call

3 February 2021

17:00-18:30 (Geneva time)

DRAFT MINUTES

Participants:

Bureau Members:

Present

- Mr. Ray Pilcher (Chair)
- Mr. Clemens Backhaus
- Mr. Yuriy Bobrov
- Mr. David Creedy
- Mr. C. Ozgen Karacan
- Mr. Lukasz Kroplewski
- Ms. Volha Roshchanka
- Mr. Sergey Ivanovich Shumkov (supported by Mr. Alexiey Shlyapin)
- Mr. Jacek Skiba
- Mr. Admir Softić
- Mr. Clark Talkington
- Mr. Igor Yashchenko

Apologies

- Mr. Neil Butler
- Mr. Hasan Erdoğan
- Mr. Zhixin JIN
- Mr. Pawel Pikus
- Mr. Milanko Savic

Secretariat:

- Mr. Scott Foster
- Ms. Charlotte Griffiths

Draft agenda:

1. Approval of draft agenda
2. Bureau nominations
3. Preparations for CMM-16 (3-4 March 2021)
 - Provisional agenda for CMM-16
 - Timeline and speakers
 - Joint session with GMI Coal Subcommittee
4. Draft proposal to reorient mandate of GoE CMM to better deliver on the 2030 Agenda
5. Draft GoE CMM Work Plan for 2022-2023
6. Draft conclusions and recommendations for CMM-16
7. Preparations for Workshop on 5 March
8. Update on Committee on Sustainable Energy
 - Rules of Procedure for Committee on Sustainable Energy and its subsidiary bodies
9. Next call
10. AOB

Item 1. Adoption of the agenda

1. The agenda was adopted without any changes.

Item 2. Bureau nominations:

2. The nominations of the following candidates for membership of the Bureau were received by the secretariat.

- For Chair:
Mr Raymond Pilcher (Raven Ridge Resources, Inc.)
- For Vice-Chairs:
Ms Aida Haracic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) (NEW NOMINATION)
Mr Jacek Skiba (Poland)
Mr Igor Yashchenko (Ukraine)
Mr Özgen Karacan (United States of America)
Ms. Volha Roshchanka (United States of America) (nominated in 2020)
Mr Zhixin Jin (International Centre of Excellence on CMM in China)
Mr Clemens Backhaus (A-TEC Anlagentechnik GmbH)
Mr Clark Talkington (Advanced Resources International, Inc.)
Mr Yuriy Bobrov (Association of Donbass Mining Towns)
Mr David Creedy (Sindicatum Sustainable Resources)
Mr Lukasz Kroplewski (Independent Expert)

3. All of the candidates representing non-State entities were approved by the Bureau.

4. All of the above-mentioned candidates will be presented for election at the beginning of the 16th session of the Group.

Item 3. Preparations for CMM-16

5. The provisional agenda for CMM-16 (ECE/ENERGY(GE.4/2021/1) has been finalised and posted to the CMM-16 meeting page on the UNECE website.

6. The joint session with the GMI Coal Subcommittee will be held on 4 March from 2-3.30pm CET. Continuing cooperation with GMI was noted with appreciation.

7. The discussions focussed on Item 5 of the provisional agenda for CMM-16 “New Developments and Challenges in the Coal Sector throughout the World”.

8. Mr. Sergey Shumkov made a number of comments to the proposed agenda and draft timetable for the session. It was noted that he had provided comments in writing to both documents just prior to the call. These were shared on screen with the Bureau. He sought clarification on why “just transition” was on the agenda for the meeting. In his view, this topic falls outside the Group’s mandate. Mr. Shumkov observed that this topic is being discussed by the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems.

9. The request of the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-ninth session that its expert groups consider in their work the changing social, environmental, and economic contexts for their activities and the principles of a just transition was highlighted.

10. Mr. Shumkov requested clarification on the invitation to Mr. Maxim Titov as a speaker on transition of the energy sector in Russia, noting that Mr. Titov does not represent the Government of the Russian Federation and does not have access to the most accurate and official data and documents. Mr. Shumkov underlined that Russia wishes to ensure that the most accurate and reliable data on the situation in Russia are presented in an objective and a clear manner. Mr. Shumkov referred to many reports on the issue of the transition of the Russian energy sector that were developed by the Government and that are publicly available. He offered to share those reports with all interested members of the Bureau.

11. Mr. Shumkov offered himself and Mr. Valerii Zakharov, Director, Center for Coal Mine Methane in Russia, Russian Academy of Science, as speakers for the session. This offer was accepted with appreciation by the Bureau. The Chair underlined that there had been no intent to prevent the Russian Government from speaking at the session and warmly welcomed Mr. Shumkov and Mr. Zakharov as speakers.

12. The Chair underlined that the future of the coal sector is closely intertwined with the work of the Group. As the Group deals with methane from coal mines, the future of these mines falls in the sphere of interest of the Group. The Chair noted that not all aspects of “just transition” are covered by the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems and that coal is used for more than electricity production. In many regions of the world metallurgical coal for use in making steel, iron and other metals currently has greater importance than thermal coal.

13. Noting that the Group of Experts offers a platform for inclusive discussion with all stakeholders and that attaining successful sustainable development requires inclusive partnerships (SDG17), the Chair proposed to retain Mr. Titov as a speaker. Mr. Titov would present the findings of ENERPO’s project on the energy transition in Russia. Mr. Titov would not be speaking on behalf of the Russian Federation and neither his presentation nor the data therein would be represented as official. It was observed that Mr. Titov present results of a project addressing the issues of coal sector transition broadly and covering electricity production as well as the steel and cement industries that are heavily reliant on coal. Mr. Creedy observed that it is of benefit to the discussion to have a range of people speaking on given subjects.

14. The Chair noted that the session in question “New Developments and Challenges in the Coal Sector throughout the World” would explore issues in Poland and Ukraine in addition to Russia. In view of the transition of the coal sector in Russia as outlined by Mr. Shumkov, Russian experts have a great deal of valuable experience and expertise to share for the benefit of other countries.

15. Mr. Shumkov was thanked for his feedback and comments and the Russian Federation’s longstanding support of the work of the Group was noted with appreciation.

16. It was agreed that the timeline for CMM-16 would be updated to reflect the discussions and a revised version posted to the UNECE website.

Item 4. Draft proposal to reorient mandate of GoE CMM to better deliver on the 2030 Agenda

17. Providing context for the proposal to reorient mandate of the GoE CMM to better deliver on the 2030 Agenda, the secretariat drew attention to the request of the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-ninth session (25-27 November 2020) that its expert groups consider in their work the changing social, environmental, and economic contexts for their activities and the principles of a just transition. The proposed changes to the mandate respond to the Committee’s request.

18. It was clarified at the outset that managing methane from coal mines will remain the key focus of the Group.

19. In the discussions on the proposal to modify the mandate and demonstrate that the Group and its work continue to evolve in response to the pressing need to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, the importance of addressing social issues in the context of just transition was recognised.

20. Mine closure and just transition are key aspects of the ongoing transformation of the coal industry and hence paying attention to them will allow the Group with the neutral and inclusive UN platform that it offers to add value to them to the benefit of member States.

21. Mr. Shumkov did not support including mine closure issues in the Group's mandate. In his view this should be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Should a country be interested in seeking the Group's help on the topic, that country could request assistance but in general the Group should not be preoccupied with the issue. Mr. Shumkov also shared that in his opinion the Group should delegate more of its work to the International Centres of Excellence on CMM (ICE-CMMs). In his view, the ICE-CMMs should work on the "ground" and the Group should focus mainly on dissemination of their findings. He proposed that the ICE-CMMs publish reports in their national languages only on the Group's website. Should anyone be interested in having a version of the documents in other languages, the Centres should translate the documents themselves, thus avoiding costs, formality and the occasional inaccuracies of UN translations.

22. The Chair observed that the intent of forming the network of ICE-CMMs was to act as a local interface in the coal regions and hence offer an opportunity for the Group to engage at the local level where it can be most helpful by sharing ideas and experience.

23. Discussion followed on the proposal to modify the name of the Group to "Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane, Mine Closure and Transition". Mr. Talkington supported the idea of changing the name of the Group and extending its mandate as per the draft proposal circulated. He observed though that the current membership of the Group lacks sufficient expertise in the areas under consideration for addition to the Group's scope of work and hence outreach would be needed to expand the Group's membership with experts with relevant experience and expertise. Mr. Talkington supported the proposal to include mine closure in the Group's mandate.

24. Mr. Shumkov shared his views and proposed that the Group should revert to the name that it had in the early 2000s, *i.e.*, Group of Experts on Coal in Sustainable Development.

25. There was no consensus in the Bureau on the proposal to modify the mandate or name of the Group. It was recognised that the Bureau should ideally arrive at a common position before circulating any proposal to the Group.

Item 5. Draft GoE CMM Work Plan for 2022-2023

27. Bureau members were invited to provide comments to the draft Work Plan for 2022-2023 on 20 January, feedback to date is being incorporated in a revised text. Bureau members were requested to provide any additional feedback in writing to the secretariat at the earliest opportunity.

Item 6. Draft conclusions and recommendations for CMM-16

28. Bureau members were asked to review the draft conclusions and recommendations as circulated on 1 February and provide their feedback in writing by cob 10 February.

Item 7. Preparations for Workshop on 5 March

29. The Bureau discussed in detail the virtual workshop on energy transition with a focus on the coal sector scheduled to be held on 5 March in English only. It was emphasized that the workshop is not an official meeting of the Group of Experts. The secretariat is exploring options to secure extrabudgetary resources to offer simultaneous interpretation, but as yet without success.

30. Mr. Shumkov observed that the purpose of the workshop is unclear. He expressed his concern that the workshop is not ready and that holding it in English only would mean that Russian-speaking experts could not contribute to the discussions. In his view, an event that is organized by the Group of Experts at the UN premises should be delivered in the three official languages of ECE. Mr. Shumkov offered that if the Group is interested to learn more about coal issues in Russia, all members are warmly invited to attend the Russian Energy Week planned for October 2021. He offered to hold the workshop on energy transition alongside that event and

assured that Russia would be happy to provide interpretation for such an event at its own expense. The Chair welcomed Mr. Shumkov's offer to organize a workshop in Russia.

31. The Chair recognized all the points made by Mr. Shumkov and thanked him for sharing his concerns. Holding an event without interpretation clearly disenfranchises those experts that don't speak English. He emphasized there was no intent to exclude Russian experts from the event. The workshop in the proposed form is the best that the Group is able to deliver in the current challenging conditions. The Chair underlined that the workshop is not an official meeting of the Group and has been prepared as a fully virtual event. It has the same status as other workshops organized between annual sessions of Group, including in Kazakhstan, Poland, Ukraine, Turkey, China, and Colombia. At these events any interpretation was covered by the host.

32. Sequential interpretation was offered as a potential solution though this approach doubles the time needed.

33. It was agreed that the Chair in cooperation with the secretariat would explore the best path forward for the workshop, including postponing the event.

Item 8. Update on Committee on Sustainable Energy

34. The secretariat updated Bureau Members on the outcomes of the 29th session of the Committee held 25-27 November 2020. The 5 decisions that the sustainable energy subprogramme will ask the Commission to approve at its upcoming 69th session in April 2021 were outlined. The decisions most closely related to the work of the Group are: (i) endorsement of the International Decade for Methane Management, and (ii) a request to ECOSOC to endorse the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Recovery and Use from Abandoned Coal Mines.

Item 9. Next call

35. It was agreed that the next Bureau call should take place mid-April prior to the session of the Commission.

Item 10. Any other business

36. The Bureau was informed that Mr. Michal Drabik had been recruited against the XB funds to continue his work with the Group, effective 8 February 2021.

37. The Chair and the secretariat thanked participants for their time and involvement in the call.
