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Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Future work of the Group of Experts

Proposal to orient the mandate of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane to deliver better on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Prepared by the Bureau of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane

I. Introduction

1. This document is intended to provide the basis for a discussion at the sixteenth session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane on whether or not to propose a revision to the name, mandate and Terms of Reference of the Group of Experts to the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its thirtieth session (22-24 September 2021).
2. The proposed revision is prompted by:
 - (a) requests of the Committee to its subsidiary bodies, and the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane in particular, to focus on just transition, integrated methane management and carbon neutrality as outlined in Section III of this note;
 - (b) discussions at workshops organized by the Group Experts and other events at which the Group of Experts has participated on modernization of the coal industry, the future of the coal industry, just transition, and/or mine closure and repurposing;
 - (c) requests of workshop and meeting participants for support from the Group of Experts as outlined in Section III of this note; and
 - (d) the need and urgency expressed by United Nations Economic for Europe (ECE) member States to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. Current mandate and Terms of Reference of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane

3. As decided by the ECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) at its 108th Meeting (Geneva, 16 December 2019), the current mandate of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane is until December 2021 (EXCOM/CONCLU/108, paragraph 22).

4. The current mandate and Terms of Reference of the Group of Experts are contained in documents ECE/ENERGY/2017/7 and ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2017/3 (as approved by EXCOM at its ninety-fifth meeting (Geneva, 11 December 2017, EXCOM/CONCLU/95, paragraph 9)) with the objective, areas of work and concrete activities as follows:

A. Objective

5. To promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from coal mines by means of concrete, results-oriented activities that may help the recovery and use of methane to reduce the risks of explosions in coal mines, mitigate climate change, and support sustainable development.

B. Areas of Work

6. Best practices for effective drainage, recovery and usage of coal mine methane (CMM).

C. Concrete activities

(a) Disseminate the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Recovery in Coal Mines;

(b) Launch and support the work of the International Centres of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane;

(c) Collect and disseminate case studies on the application of best practice guidance in specific coal mines in different regions of the world;

(d) Contribute, in cooperation with other Groups of Experts and under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, to the work on integrated methane management in the context of sustainable development;

(e) Further engage, in cooperation with other Groups of Experts and under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, in the work on transition of the coal industry in the ECE region; and

(f) Continue to provide advice on coal mine methane related standards to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and other international, national and regional market-based coal mine methane emission reduction mechanisms. Engage and develop robust professional ties with the recognized expert entities operating in the field of fossil-based energy.

7. If the activities carried out by ECE coal mine methane experts reveal coal mine safety issues unrelated to drainage, recovery and usage of coal mine methane, these will not be addressed in the ECE context but they may communicate these to other relevant organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) for consideration in the framework of its coal mine safety guidelines.

III. Support and justification for revising the mandate

8. The Group of Experts on CMM:

(a) *Noted* 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 (ECE/ENERGY/133, paragraph 18(b));

(b) *Noted* the request of the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-ninth session to the Group of Experts that it address, where possible, methane emission issues in

the broader context of the whole coal life cycle along the entire value chain (ECE/ENERGY/133, paragraph 20(e));

(c) *Noted* that the Committee at its twenty-ninth session reiterated its request for closer cooperation among the expert groups to address cross-cutting issues, notably related to the project on “Enhancing the understanding of the implications and opportunities of moving to carbon neutrality in the ECE region across the power and energy intensive industries by 2050” (Carbon Neutrality project) (ECE/ENERGY/133, paragraph 18(d));

(d) *Noted* and offered its support for the decision of the Committee on Sustainable Energy taken at its twenty-ninth session to request the Economic Commission for Europe at its sixty-ninth session to consider a decision on near-term acceleration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through action on gases and buildings (ECE/ENERGY/133, paragraph 7);

(e) *Noted* the parliamentary document “Effective actions to reduce methane emissions” (ECE/ENERGY/2020/11) submitted to the twenty-ninth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy as background for the discussions under Item 5(b) “Action agenda for the Economic Commission for Europe: International decade of methane management” and, in particular section III “Uncharted paths in the transition of the energy sector” and section IV “The problem is clear - how can the Economic Commission for Europe be a part of the solution?”. *Further noted* that this parliamentary document was reviewed by the Group of Experts on CMM and the other groups of experts reporting to the Committee prior to submission;

(f) *Recalled* the request of the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-fifth session (28-30 September 2016) that the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane make a proposal to the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy on expanding the mandate of the Group of Experts to encompass work on the transition of traditional mining companies to become integrated service companies and to explore the impact this transition might have on the contributions of the energy sector on sustainable development. (ECE/ENERGY/107, paragraph 26);

(g) *Recalled* that the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-sixth session (25-28 September 2017) whilst noting with appreciation the progress made on the cross-cutting project on the transformation of the energy sector and endorsing development of a case-specific model for transition of a specific old industrial site, requested all its subsidiary bodies to contribute to this initiative (ECE/ENERGY/113, paragraph 74);

(h) *Recalled* the request of the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-sixth session to the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane to contribute, in cooperation with other Groups of Experts and under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, to the work on integrated methane management in the context of sustainable development (ECE/ENERGY/113, paragraph 75);

(i) *Recalled* that the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-seventh session (26-27 September 2018) whilst noting with appreciation the progress made on the cross-cutting project on the transformation of the energy sector, endorsed development of a case-specific model to demonstrate how to modernize an industrial complex that evolved over time to embrace up-stream energy production, industrial facilities, and accompanying residential/urban infrastructure. The work would bring to bear the range of expertise found in the ECE energy subprogramme (managing methane accumulations, efficient energy production from coal and gas, improving industrial and end-use energy efficiency, optimizing resource management, and enabling the introduction of renewable energy technology) to enhance the environmental, social, and economic performance of the site in line with the 2030 Agenda. The Committee further requested all its subsidiary bodies to contribute to this initiative and invited countries to engage in the project to identify an industrial site for the pilot stage of the venture (ECE/ENERGY/119, paragraph 38);

(j) *Recalled* the request of the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-eighth session (25-27 September 2019) that the secretariat and the groups of experts consider the findings of the Pathways to Sustainable Energy Project in preparing their future work plans (ECE/ENERGY/123, paragraph 24(f));

(k) *Noted* the many calls for the work of the Committee on Sustainable Energy to reflect the scale, scope, role, and values of the United Nations in making concrete, measurable progress on energy, and the fact that to that end the Committee had encouraged closer cooperation among the subsidiary bodies on cross-cutting issues;

(l) *Noted* the discussions on modernization of the coal industry, the future of the coal industry, just transition, and/or mine closure and repurposing at the following workshops organized by the Group of Experts and the requests for support from participants on just transition, and/or mine closure and repurposing:

- Workshop on Post-Mining Perspectives: Capture and Use of Abandoned Mine Methane and Mine Reclamation and Revitalization of Post Mining Areas (26 February 2020, Cracow, Poland) with participants from France, Germany, Poland, Spain, United States and European Commission
- Fourteenth session of the Group of Experts on CMM (7-8 November 2019, Geneva, Switzerland). A joint discussion with the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems was held on the Role of fossil fuels in decarbonizing energy systems
- Workshops on Best Practices in Coal Mine Methane Capture and Utilization (10-14 June 2019, Dnipro, Ukraine and Ankara, Turkey) with participants from Ukraine and Turkey respectively
- Workshop on Coal Mine Methane as a Valuable Energy Source (27 February 2019, Cracow, Poland) with participants from Poland and Colombia
- CMM Seminar during the Ninth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (15 November 2018, Kyiv, Ukraine) with participants from Ukraine
- Seminar on Modernising Infrastructure - Transition of the Energy Sector during the Ninth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (13 November 2018, Kyiv, Ukraine) with participants from Ukraine and other countries
- Meeting of the Chair and secretariat with the Ministry of Energy of Kazakhstan at the time of the World Mining Congress (20 June 2018, Astana Kazakhstan) to discuss modernizing the coal sector in the country, with a focus on Karaganda
- ECE Coal Mine Methane Seminar during the Global Methane Forum (16 April 2018, Toronto, Canada). Discussions focussed on the potential for and need to reduce emissions along the whole life cycle of coal and power production with participants from Canada, Poland, Turkey, Ukraine, United States and China.

(m) *Recognized* that many ECE member States and non-ECE member States have closed coal mines or have set dates for cessation of mining activities;

(n) *Recognized* global efforts to lower the emissions originating from the coal sector;

(o) *Recognized* the importance of the social aspect of the ongoing transformation of the energy industry in general, and of the coal sector in particular;

(p) *Noted* that the work of the Group of Experts on methane has a notable near-term benefit for both climate and quality of life;

(q) *Acknowledged* the request of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and the need to better align its mandate with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and embrace the principles of a just transition.

IV. Proposed revised name, mandate and Terms of Reference

9. The Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane proposes:

(a) to change the name of the Group to the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition; and

(b) to revise its mandate and Terms of Reference as follows:

A. Objective

10. To promote efficient transition of industries along the coal value chain ensuring the reduction of associated greenhouse gas emissions and social equity of the process through substantive, results-oriented activities that may help the recovery and use of methane in order to reduce the risks of explosions in coal mines; mitigate climate change; and support sustainable development, and that may support communities, local economies and the environment in the just transition process.

B. Areas of Work

11. The areas of work of the Group of Experts are:

- (a) Recovery and use of methane from active, closed, or/and abandoned coal mines aimed at reducing the risks of explosions, mitigating climate change, and supporting sustainable development;
- (b) For those countries or regions/states that choose to cease coal mining and related activities, offer support on request on preparation of coal mines and coal mining regions and communities for mine closure and reorientation of the local economies;
- (c) Repurposing of mines and existing mining infrastructure and facilitating development of new profiles of economic activity and business models that preserve social cohesion and cultural heritage of the affected localities.

C. Concrete activities

12. The concrete activities of the Group of Experts are to:

- (a) Disseminate the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Recovery in Coal Mines;
- (b) Disseminate the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Recovery and Use from Abandoned Coal Mines;
- (c) Develop and disseminate best practices as needed for monitoring, reporting, verification, and remediation of methane emissions from operating coal mines, closed and/or abandoned coal mines, prospective coal mines (coal bed methane), and surface mines;
- (d) Support the work of the International Centres of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane (ICE-CMMs) and expand the network of ICE-CMMs;
- (e) Use modern information technologies to facilitate exchange on advanced technologies for degassing and extracting methane from coal mines, including through the network of ICE-CMMs;
- (f) Collect and disseminate case studies on the application of best practice guidance in specific coal mines in different regions of the world;
- (g) Develop guidance on mine closure with special focus on gassy mines;
- (h) Develop principles on managing the social aspects and impact of the transition of industries along the coal value chain and coal-dependent regions;
- (i) Contribute, in cooperation with other groups of experts and under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, to the work on integrated methane management in the context of sustainable development;
- (j) Further engage, in cooperation with other groups of experts and under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, in the work on transition of the coal industry in the ECE region;
- (k) Contribute to the work of the Expert Group on Resource Management on development of specifications and guidelines for application of the United Nations

Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) and the United Nations Resource Management System for Coal Bed Methane Resources;

(l) Contribute, in cooperation with other Groups of Experts and under the leadership of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, to the work on the “Pathways to Sustainable Energy” programme; and

(m) Continue to provide advice on coal mine methane related standards to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and other international, national and regional market-based coal mine methane emission reduction mechanisms. Engage and develop robust professional ties with the recognized expert entities operating in the field of fossil-based energy.

13. If the activities carried out by ECE coal mine methane experts reveal coal mine safety issues unrelated to drainage, recovery and usage of coal mine methane, these will not be addressed in the ECE context but they may communicate these to other relevant organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) for consideration in the framework of its coal mine safety guidelines.

14. The Group of Experts will avoid duplication of activities undertaken by other stakeholders on the above topics and will focus on deliverables that complement and build on any activities that exist as relevant.

15. The Group of Experts will ensure broad inclusiveness in its membership to the extent possible and pay due attention to gender equality in its activities.

V. Request to the Committee on Sustainable Energy

16. The Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane requests the Committee on Sustainable Energy to consider at its thirtieth session the change of the name of the Group, and the revision of its mandate and Terms of Reference as per the proposal presented in this document.
