



Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Sustainable Energy****Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane****Sixteenth session**

Geneva, 3-4 March 2021

Report of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane**I. Introduction**

1. The sixteenth session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane (CMM) was held on 3-4 March 2021 in Geneva and online.
2. This report summarizes the discussions on the work of the Group of Experts at its sixteenth session. All the documents and presentations of the session are available on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) website¹.

II. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by experts from the following ECE member States: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Ukraine, and United States of America.
4. Experts from Australia, China, India and Mongolia participated under Article 11 of the Commission's Terms of Reference.
5. From the United Nations Specialized Agencies, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was represented. Representatives from the European Commission (EC) Directorate-General (D.G.) Energy and D.G. Research and Innovation (RTD) participated.
6. The following international associations were represented: Global Methane Initiative, International Energy Agency (IEA) Clean Coal Centre, World Bank Group.
7. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated: Assocarboni, Association of Dobass Mining Towns, Association of Geological Researches

¹ Official documents of the session are available at <http://documents.un.org/>. Unofficial room documents and presentations delivered at the meeting are available on the ECE website at: <https://unece.org/sustainable-energy/events/16th-session-group-experts-coal-mine-methane>.

(Turkey), ClimateWorks Foundation, EIT Climate-KIC, Energy Efficiency Technology Institute, Environmental Defense Fund, International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane (ICE-CMM) China, ICE-CMM Poland, iuventum e.V., Jade, Methane Center PA, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Responsible Mining Foundation, Scientific and Technical Mining Association of the Russian Federation, Underground Coal Mine Safety Research Collaboration, and Winrock International.

8. The private sector was represented by experts from twenty two companies. Academia was also represented by experts from nine universities and scientific institutes.

III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2021/1

9. The provisional agenda as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2021/1 was adopted without amendment.

IV. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

10. The Group of Experts elected a Bureau to take over from the end of the sixteenth session until the end of the eighteenth session. The elected members are: Mr. Raymond Pilcher (Raven Ridge Resources, Inc.) as Chair, and Ms. Aida Haracic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Mr. Clemens Backhaus (Germany), Mr. Jacek Skiba (Poland), Mr. Sergey Shumkov (Russian Federation), Mr. Igor Yashchenko (Ukraine), Mr. Özgen Karacan (United States of America), Ms. Volha Roshchanka (United States of America), Mr. Zhixin JIN (International Centre of Excellence on CMM China), Mr. Clark Talkington (Advanced Resources International, Inc), Mr. Yuriy Bobrov (Association of Donbass Mining Towns), Mr. Neil Butler (HEL-EAST Ltd), Mr. David Creedy (Sindicatum Sustainable Resources) and Mr. Lukasz Kroplewski (independent expert), as Vice-Chairs.

11. The Group of Experts agreed, for the sake of ensuring continuity of the Bureau, that not all officers be elected at the same time. This approach is in line with the practice of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and other groups of experts.

V. Opening remarks (agenda item 3)

12. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the work of the Bureau and the secretariat and their efforts to manage and direct the Group's work plan between annual sessions despite human and financial resource constraints and the unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

VI. Activities and priorities of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and matters for consideration by the Group of Experts (agenda item 4)

(a) Key messages and policy recommendations for the sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe

13. The Group of Experts supported the decision of the Committee on Sustainable Energy 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). The

Group of Experts noted that its work on methane has a notable near-term benefit for both climate and quality of life and proposed to continue its activities on management of methane emissions from coal-related activities in the transition to a sustainable future.

14. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the Committee's endorsement of the "Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Recovery and Use from Abandoned Coal Mines" (ECE/ENERGY/128 and ECE Energy Series No. 64) and the invitation to member States to take appropriate measures to ensure broad dissemination and application of the Best Practice Guidance.

15. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the decision by the Committee to invite the Economic Commission for Europe to propose to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that it endorse the Best Practice Guidance and recommend its application worldwide. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to keep the Group apprised of any developments.

(b) Support for declaration of an International Decade for Methane Management

16. The Group of Experts repeated its strong support for declaration by the UN General Assembly of an International Decade for Methane Management. The Group of Experts agreed to liaise with the Global Methane Initiative to seek the support of UN Member States for such a declaration.

(c) Carbon neutrality as a pathway to sustainable energy and the role for the Group of Experts

17. The Group of Experts noted the request of the Committee on Sustainable at its twenty-ninth session 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)" led by the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems. The Group of Experts on CMM agreed to offer its support to the project and invited interested experts to participate.

(d) Strategic review of the ECE sustainable energy subprogramme

18. The Group of Experts noted that consultations with member States are being held in 2021 to finalize the draft strategic review of the ECE sustainable energy subprogramme (ECE/ENERGY/2020/12) with a view to having the text approved and adopted at its thirtieth session. The Group of Experts further noted the 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 to that end the Committee had encouraged closer cooperation among the subsidiary bodies on cross-cutting issues.

(e) Rules of procedure of the Committee on Sustainable Energy

19. The Group of Experts noted that Rules of Procedure for the Committee on Sustainable Energy were endorsed by the Committee at its twenty-ninth session (Annex I to ECE/ENERGY/133). These Rules apply to the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. The Group of Experts further noted that the objective of instituting Rules of Procedure for the Committee is to streamline the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, to provide a basis for accelerated delivery of the sustainable energy subprogramme, and to solidify ECE's reputation as a credible, relevant, and responsive partner.

VII. New developments and challenges in the coal sector (agenda item 5)

20. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the new CMM-related projects and initiatives undertaken in ECE member States presented during the session. The Group of Experts noted the importance of CMM degasification and use and agreed to work towards development of rules, regulations, and standards to encourage financing and development of CMM degasification and use projects.

21. The Group of Experts noted the feedback received during the meeting on challenges faced by the coal sector related to coal mine closures or impending cessation of coal mining activities. The Group of Experts further noted that this feedback mirrors feedback received from participants during workshops organized by the Group in recent years. Noting that there is relevant expertise and experience within its membership, the Group of Experts proposed that it could offer support to member States considering shutting coal mines on preparation of coal mines and coal mining regions and communities for mine closure and reorientation of local economies.

VIII. Report on implementation of the work plan for 2020-2021 (agenda item 6)

22. The Group of Experts noted that implementation of the work plan for 2020-2021 is on track and thanked members for their support in ensuring on time delivery of quality products and events.

23. The Group thanked the International Centres of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane (ICE-CMM) in Poland and in China for their work to disseminate and deploy the family of methane-related Best Practice Guidance documents, approved their annual reports for 2020 and approved their work plans for 2021. The Group further noted the encouragement from the Committee on Sustainable Energy to establish additional centres and requested the secretariat to seek additional extrabudgetary resources to this end.

24. The Group of Experts recalled its decision at its fifteenth session to explore further the proposal made by the European Commission to develop jointly best practices on: (i) monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of methane emissions from the coal sector at facility level, (ii) monitoring methane emissions from surface mines, and (ii) mine closure. The Group noted with appreciation the establishment of a Task Force to develop a document describing the systems in place in the United States and other countries that provide MRV of emissions and mitigation of methane. Noting that the document likely will inform legislation that is under consideration by the European Union as a part of its efforts to reduce methane emissions, the Group of Experts requested the document to be finalized as soon as practicable and issued as a parliamentary document for its seventeenth session.

IX. Future work of the Group of Experts (agenda item 7)

25. Noting 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, the Group of Experts agreed to revise its mandate and work to orient with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and embrace the principles of a just transition. The revised name, mandate, and terms of reference of the Group are contained in document ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2021/4.

26. Noting that its mandate expires on 31 December 2021, the Group of Experts agreed to recommend that its mandate be renewed for a further two years to 31 December 2023.

27. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to submit the proposed revised name, mandate, and terms of reference of the Group, as well as the mandate renewal request, for consideration by the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its thirtieth session.

X. Work plan for 2022-2023 (agenda item 8)

28. The Group of Experts approved its draft work plan for 2022-2023 subject to incorporation of amendments to document ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2021/3 agreed at the meeting. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to submit the draft work plan for 2022-2023 to the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its thirtieth session.

XI. Cooperation and partnerships (agenda item 9)

29. The Group of Experts held a debate on its potential involvement in the current and future methane-related activities and initiatives that seek to contribute to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Chair of the Group's Task Force reported on the objectives, scope, and the progress of work to develop a document that reviews existing practices in monitoring, reporting, and verification, as well as mitigation of methane emissions from the coal sector worldwide. The methane strategy that is being currently prepared by the European Commission was also presented and discussed.

XII. Eleventh joint meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and the Global Methane Initiative Coal Subcommittee (agenda item 10)

30. The Group of Experts thanked the Coal Subcommittee of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) and its members for their continued support and collaboration.

31. The Group of Experts expressed interest in continuing to develop joint projects with GMI and requested the secretariat to ensure, facilitate, and coordinate continued cooperation between the two entities.

32. The Group of Experts expressed its interest in participating in the next Global Methane Forum. The Group requested the secretariat to ensure that topics related to the work of the Group are featured in the event's agenda to the extent possible.

XIII. Preparations for the seventeenth session of the Group of Experts (agenda item 11)

33. The seventeenth session will be held in March 2022 in Geneva.

XIV. Any other business (agenda item 12)

34. The Group of Experts noted the need to secure additional extrabudgetary resources to deliver results-oriented projects.

XV. Adoption of conclusions and recommendations (agenda item 13)

Documentation: CMM-16/2021/INF.1 - Unofficial room document: Draft Conclusions and Recommendations arising from the Sixteenth Session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane dated 19 February 2021.

35. The conclusions and recommendations were adopted and are included under the relevant agenda items highlighted in this report.

XVI. Adoption of the report and close of the meeting (agenda item 14)

36. The report of the meeting was adopted, including the conclusions and recommendations, subject to any necessary editing and formatting.
