



# Economic and Social Council

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## Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

### Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Twenty-third session

Geneva, 4 and 5 May 2021

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

**Adoption of the agenda**

## **Revised annotated provisional agenda for the twenty-third session**

**To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 10 a.m.  
on Tuesday, 4 May 2021**

### **I. Provisional agenda**

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs.
3. Adoption of the report of the twenty-second session.
4. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference.
5. Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System to support a regular process of environmental assessment.
6. Regular pan-European environmental assessment supported by the Shared Environmental Information System.
7. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
8. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment, including institutional and regulatory mechanisms and infrastructure at the national level.
9. Other business.
10. Closure of the meeting.



## II. Annotations

According to its terms of reference for 2017–2021, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment is open to all member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Members of the Working Group represent the national institutions responsible for environmental monitoring and assessment. The Working Group also involves representatives of programmes and policies and multilateral environmental agreements dealing with the collection of environmental data and information and the generation of environmental assessments — whether covering the environment as a whole or only a specific theme — as well as expert teams (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, paras. 10 and 11).

Also invited to participate are representatives of international organizations, such as the European Commission, the European Environment Agency, the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Statistics Division and the World Health Organization European Centre for Environment and Health.

The twenty-third session of the Working Group is expected to be held on 4 and 5 May 2021 as a hybrid meeting. The agenda and format of the session may need to be adjusted at a later stage given the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

### 1. Adoption of the agenda

The outgoing Chair, Ms. Katerina Nikolovska (North Macedonia), will open the twenty-third session. The Working Group will be invited to adopt the agenda for the session, as set out in the present document.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs

At its twentieth session (Geneva, 3 and 4 September 2018), the Working Group re-elected Ms. Nikolovska as its Chair and Ms. Maia Javakhishvili (Georgia) and Mr. Yuri Tsaturov (Russian Federation) as its Vice-Chairs. Its terms of reference specify that: “The Working Group shall elect a chair and two vice-chairs for a term of up to two years, ensuring a regional balance in the nominations. The chair and vice-chairs shall be eligible for re-election for one additional term.” (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 12). The current Chair and Vice-Chairs have already been elected for two terms and cannot be re-elected. Members of the Working Group will therefore need to elect a new chair and vice-chairs at the twenty-third session. Members are invited to start consultations on possible candidates prior to the session.

### 3. Adoption of the report of the twenty-second session

The secretariat will summarize the outcomes of the twenty-second session of the Working Group (Geneva, 27 October 2020) as contained in the report of that session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2020/2) and invite the Working Group to adopt the report.

The secretariat will inform the Working Group about the status of implementation of the decisions and recommendations that were made at the twenty-second session, including the consideration of the Working Group’s activities by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-sixth session (Geneva, 9 and 10 November 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> Documentation for the meeting and other relevant information will be posted on the web page for the meeting on the ECE website: <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/twenty-third-session-working-group-environmental-monitoring-and>.

#### 4. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference

The Working Group's terms of reference require that it prepares an annual timetable of activities and achievements (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 5).

The secretariat will report on the noting by the Committee on Environmental Policy, at its twenty-sixth session, of the modified timetable of activities of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in 2021 (as set out in information paper No. 7 of the Committee's twenty-sixth session).<sup>2</sup>

The secretariat will present the draft timetable of activities for 2022 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/3), which the Working Group will be invited to approve.

The secretariat will report on the decision by the Committee on Environmental Policy to extend the mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group until mid-2023 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/4), as requested by the Working Group (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2020/2, para. 20 (g)), and the subsequent consideration of the decision by the ECE Executive Committee.

The secretariat will provide informal information on the financial resources available to support meetings of the Working Group and its other activities.

In addition, international organizations will be invited to report briefly on initiatives and extrabudgetary projects that relate to the activities of the Working Group as appropriate. The European Environment Agency will be invited to report on its strategy for the period until 2030, and UNEP on the outcomes of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (Nairobi (online), 22 and 23 February 2021, and Nairobi, February 2022, date to be confirmed) and their relevance for the Working Group.

#### 5. Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System to support a regular process of environmental assessment

The terms of reference for the Working Group specify that it shall: regularly evaluate the performance of ECE countries in establishing and implementing the Shared Environmental Information System against the Shared Environmental Information System targets and performance indicators adopted by the Committee; and prepare a mid-term and a final report for the Committee on Environmental Policy on the establishment and implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System leading up to 2021 (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 3 (a) (iii) and (v)).

During its twenty-fifth session (Geneva, 13—15 November 2019), the Committee invited the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to oversee the preparation of a final review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia for consideration by the Committee, with a view to its subsequent forwarding to the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference as an information document. It encouraged all member States in Europe and Central Asia to report on their progress in establishing the System, using the online reporting tool developed for this purpose (ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 37 (i) and (j)).

At its twenty-second session, the Working Group adopted the revised outline of the final review report further developed by the secretariat (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2020/5/Rev.1). The secretariat noted that, based on the limited number of self-assessments submitted by member States, it was not yet possible to assess the full establishment of the System (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2020/2, para. 29 (a) and (b)).

The Working Group requested all member States to submit their self-assessments by 15 December 2020 at the latest to the secretariat through the Shared Environmental Information

<sup>2</sup> Available under "Information documents" tab at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/twenty-sixth-session-committee-environmental-policy>.

System online tool. The Working Group also requested the secretariat to prepare a revised version of the document for the Working Group's next session.

The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its twenty-sixth session, encouraged all member States to submit their self-assessments by 15 December 2020.<sup>3</sup>

The secretariat will present a final review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/6). Member States will be invited to share their experience of the reporting exercise and to discuss the use of the System in the future.

The Working Group will be invited to approve the report.

## **6. Regular pan-European environmental assessment supported by the Shared Environmental Information System**

The Working Group has been tasked with leading a process of consultation on the regular pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 2 (b)) for consideration by the Committee on Environmental Policy and leading up to the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

During its twenty-fifth session, the Committee welcomed the information provided by the secretariat and UNEP on the next pan-European assessment and selected option 3 from among the options for the next pan-European environmental assessment, as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6, subject to the availability of resources. It requested the secretariat and UNEP, in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency, to prepare a limited indicator-based and thematic assessment, and to inform the Bureau regularly of progress made. The Committee encouraged all member States to provide the necessary funding to enable the preparation of the assessment (ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 37 (k) (i)–(iii)).

During the twenty-second session of the Working Group, the secretariat presented a revised outline of the next pan-European assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2020/6/Rev.1), which was approved by the Working Group as the final outline for the assessment, while noting that it might not be possible to address all environmental themes listed, that themes needed to be addressed in an integrated manner and that the COVID-19 pandemic should be considered (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2020/2, paras. 31 and 38 (a)).

During its twenty-sixth session, the Committee on Environmental Policy expressed its appreciation to those member States that had provided financial contributions to support the preparation of the next pan-European environmental assessment, encouraged member States to provide further support in terms of expertise and funding, and requested the secretariat to continue to inform the Bureau of progress made.<sup>4</sup>

The secretariat will provide an overview of the latest developments related to the assessment, including on completed parts, and remind participants to identify partners, institutions and experts that could contribute to the development and review of specific chapters of the next pan-European assessment.

The Working Group will be invited to consider the information on developments and completed parts and discuss how to mobilize additional financial and in-kind support for the assessment.

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<sup>3</sup> See List of Decisions (as adopted by the silence procedure completed on 19 November 2020). Available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/twenty-sixth-session-committee-environmental-policy>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## **7. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

One objective of the Working Group is to discuss interlinkages between environmental, economic and social considerations regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the green economy and other related areas of work.

During the twenty-second session, and in the light of the shortened meeting due to the ongoing pandemic and resulting time constraints, members of the Working Group were invited to submit proposals in written form to the secretariat by 15 November 2020 on:

(a) How the work on environmental information, data, indicators, including green growth indicators of international partners (OECD, UNEP, etc.), and national reports on green growth would support the development of the pan-European environmental assessment, including for the selected themes of the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

(b) How the Working Group could continue its work on integrating economic, social and environmental data into the Shared Environmental Information System;

(c) Topics to consider for the twenty-third session of the Working Group (Geneva, 4 and 5 May 2021) (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2020/2, para. 40).

The secretariat will present any feedback received and recent developments.

International organizations will be invited to present upcoming global and regional environmental policy events in 2021 relevant for the work of the Working Group.

International organizations and the European Environment Agency will be invited to report briefly on developments related to new technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and Earth observation and to make full use of the potential of data, technology and digitalization that will complement and potentially replace established monitoring practices and information sources for improved decision-making.

The Working Group will be invited to discuss how the work on environmental information, data and indicators, including related to a green and circular economy, can support the development of the pan-European environmental assessment and other activities related to the Working Group.

## **8. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment, including institutional and regulatory mechanisms and infrastructure at the national level**

Members of the Working Group, and especially those representing countries in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, will be invited to make a short presentation on major actions taken since the previous meeting regarding, as appropriate:

(a) The production of environmental reports, analyses and assessments based on environmental information and indicators, including through the use of the Shared Environmental Information System;

(b) The modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks, in particular, those on air, water and soil;

(c) Improvements in data quality assurance and control, as well as the management of data;

(d) Improvements in data policy and institutional and regulatory mechanisms and technical solutions for data exchange between various ministries and agencies (ministries of environment, environment agencies and ministries of agriculture, energy, health, industry, transport and water) and with other users, including the public;

(e) The implementation of recommendations regarding environmental monitoring and assessment made in national environmental performance reviews;

(f) Developments related to the use of new technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and Earth observation for environmental monitoring.

The secretariat will prepare and circulate a template to support oral presentations, as needed.

## **9. Other business**

The Working Group will be invited to discuss any other business that might be brought to its attention. Members of the Working Group wishing to propose items are invited to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

## **10. Closure of the meeting**

The Chair, with the assistance of the secretariat, will sum up the conclusions and decisions of the Working Group and close the meeting. The report of the meeting and the list of participants will be finalized by the secretariat for circulation to the Working Group after the meeting. These documents will be posted on the web page for the meeting.

## **III. Organization of work**

Detailed information on the organization of work will be released closer to the meeting date and will be posted on the web page for the meeting.

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