

Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Twenty-seventh session

Geneva, 3–5 November 2021

Item 4 (d) of the provisional agenda

Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference:

Other documents

Information paper No.12

18 October 2021

Draft Ministerial Declaration: **[Conference motto here]**

Summary

The Reform Plan of the Environment for Europe (EfE) process (ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, and Corr.1) adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy in 2009, and subsequently endorsed by ECE, mandated the Committee to act as the convening body for the preparatory processes for the Environment for Europe ministerial conferences.

The Reform Plan states that the Conference outcomes might include an agreed outcome of two pages on follow up and further actions strictly limited, in terms of scope, to the themes of the Conference.

At its twenty-sixth session, (Geneva and online, 9 and 10 November 2020), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy decided to reschedule the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Nicosia), for 5–7 October 2022.

The Bureau at its virtual meeting on 2 June 2021 took note of the preliminary list of documents and materials for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and asked the secretariat to prepare a zero draft of the ministerial declaration and circulate it among the Bureau members.

The Bureau at its virtual meeting on 20 September 2021 took note of the zero draft of the Ministerial declaration prepared by the secretariat and agreed on the next steps:

- The Bureau members may submit (by Friday 8 October 2021) their written comments/proposals on the draft.
- Based on the inputs received from the Bureau members the secretariat will finalize the draft and submit it as an information paper of the twenty-seventh session of the Committee.

The output of the above process is the present text, largely based on the structure of the ministerial declarations of EfE-7 (Astana, Kazakhstan, 2011) and EfE-8 (Batumi, Georgia, 2016). The Committee will be invited to work on the draft ministerial declaration with a view to its further elaboration and submission as an official document for the Special Session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (to be held in Geneva on 9-12 May 2022).

[¹Prepared by the Committee on Environmental Policy]

1. [**Intro**]² We, the ministers and heads of delegation from [number] countries in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region and the representative of the European Commission meeting in Nicosia, the Republic of Cyprus, from 5 to 7 October 2022 in the framework of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, make the following declaration. ...
2. [**COVID?**] We fully recognize the seriousness of the challenges, both old and emerging, facing our planet and our region, especially in light of the 2020-2021 pandemic, and we stress that finding successful solutions to these grave challenges calls for a joint and coordinated response which can only be achieved through close international cooperation and the use of existing international cooperation platforms. ...
3. [**Env+SDGs**] We reaffirm our commitment to improving environmental protection and advancing sustainable development in the ECE region, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030). ...
4. [**EfE process**] We confirm the value of the Environment for Europe process as of a unique pan-European platform for addressing environmental challenges, improving environmental governance, promoting environmental and cross-sectoral cooperation and information sharing among countries, and as a pillar of sustainable development in the region with the proven 31-year record of important achievements accomplished through the cooperation among all stakeholders. ...
5. [**Green economy**] We continue promoting the transition to a green economy, as a key path to sustainable development and poverty eradication. We will work towards the full internalization of externalities that cause the loss of or damage to natural capital, including through measuring costs and economic instruments. We will enhance ecosystems and ecosystem services as part of ecological infrastructure, and improve the sustainable use of natural resources. We will foster a circular economy, transparent and responsible business practice and eco-innovation, and will further work towards cleaner and more resource-efficient production processes. We will develop the human capital for green and decent jobs, including by providing relevant education and training, and increase the availability of such jobs. We will provide access to essential services. We will promote effective public participation. And we reaffirm the importance of further strengthening and scaling-up education for sustainable development. ...
6. [**Theme 1: Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure**]³ We recognise the important role sustainable infrastructure plays for the green economy transition, cutting across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and influencing 92 per cent of the 169 targets. We underline that sustainable infrastructure should be at the core of green economy policies and commitments, also playing a central role for COVID-19 stimulus recovery plans. A systemic, inclusive, and resilient approach is required for different types of infrastructure planning and management. We appreciate the attention given to the sustainable infrastructure subject by the member States of the

¹ Note from the secretariat: Square brackets indicate that the entire text is subject to revision by the CEP. The text appears in the same “working” format as that submitted to the CEP Bureau. It has not been formally edited and formatted.

² Note from the secretariat: Text on a yellow background is not part of the Declaration. It is included for convenience only, generally indicating the proposed theme of the following paragraph.

³ Note from the secretariat: The wording of this paragraph and the others should be coordinated with the thematic background documents (being prepared by the CEP)..

Economic Commission for Europe⁴, and we will explore the way forward for the pan-European region based on the existing international cooperation instruments like the Protocol on the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Espoo Convention providing the ground for common goals, targets and criteria for policy-making, performance monitoring and replicability of practices that best suits to domestic needs, while following and promoting the implementation of existing guidance as established in the UNEA resolution 4/5 on sustainable infrastructure. ...

7. **[Theme 2: Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism]** We recognize that applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism through multi-stakeholder cooperation is critical for building back better in the pan-European region the sector - one of the sectors most affected by the pandemic. We will promote the transformation of the tourism sector by implementing programmes and projects oriented to apply circular models in the tourism value chain to achieve more sustainable consumption and production. We appreciate the commitment expressed by the member States of the Economic Commission for Europe at its sixty-ninth session to step up their efforts to promote circular economy approaches and the sustainable use of natural resources, also in particular through the voluntary commitments that were made in the Environment for Europe process. We commit to support and promote these decisions by fully using the potential of the Environment for Europe process and, in particular, the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) for mobilising voluntary commitments and sharing positive experience. ...
8. **[Batumi follow-up: SFGE & BIG-E continuation]** We reaffirm our willingness to the implementation of the voluntary Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy adopted at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference as of a tool supporting countries' efforts in transitioning to green economy and, at the same time, contributing to the implementation of the SDGs. We welcome the positive progress in the implementation of voluntary commitments of the BIG-E to operationalize the Strategic Framework. We call upon the countries and other stakeholders to continue reporting on the existing voluntary commitments under BIG-E and consider taking new commitments also in view of further distribution and exchange of experience. We support further promotion of the BIG-E through existing knowledge-sharing platforms, such as the Green Growth Knowledge Platform. We further commend the good cooperation between ECE and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and invite the two organizations, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, to support countries in their efforts to green their economies and achieve sustainable development. ...
9. **[Batumi follow-up: Air & BACA wrap-up]** We appreciate the progress achieved in the pan-European region over the past four decades in decreasing emissions of the main air-polluting substances and their impacts. We also note that air pollution, both outdoor and indoor, remains the concern in the region and globally. In this regard we welcome the final progress report of the voluntary Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA), noting with appreciation the implementation of initiatives launched by interested countries and other stakeholders aimed at improving air quality and protecting public health and ecosystems. We also welcome close cooperation with the ECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) in achieving the progress under BACA. We emphasize the role of civil society in addressing air pollution and its impacts, and we remain committed to ensuring adequate monitoring of and public access to relevant information on air pollution, in particular ground-level monitoring. ...

⁴ Note from the secretariat: Sustainable infrastructure is one of the candidate themes of the high-level segment of the Seventieth session of the ECE in 2023. The decision of the UNECE Executive Committee on this issue is expected in early 2022. The text of this paragraph will then be updated accordingly.

10. [A limited indicator-based and thematic pan-European environmental assessment and a summary of its key findings and policy messages]. We
11. [MEAs] We appreciate progress achieved under the ECE multilateral environmental agreements and recognize the need to strengthen the participation of civil society and the private sector in their implementation. We invite countries to ratify, implement and provide adequate resources for the relevant multilateral environmental agreements. We recognize the opportunities provided by multilateral environmental agreements to implement Agenda 2030. ...
12. [EPRs] We commend the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme as an effective and practical policy tool with the proven record for more than a quarter of a century, and note the role it plays in supporting the achievement and monitoring of SDGs in the pan-European region. We encourage countries to benefit from the Environmental Performance Review Programme by undertaking further reviews. ...
13. [SEIS] We welcome the progress in developing the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) to support a regular process of environmental assessment. ...
14. [GREEN TF] We welcome the work of the Green Economy and Environment (GREEN) Action Programme Task Force, and we invite the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to continue its activities in cooperation with relevant partners.
15. [IGOs] We acknowledge the role of regional initiatives in support of Agenda 2030 and recognize the important contributions of the United Nations system, multilateral development banks and other international and inter-State organizations. ...
16. [RECs] We value the role Regional Environmental Centres continue to perform in implementing initiatives to improve environmental governance at all levels. ...
17. [Civil Society / Major Groups / NGOs / ...] We reaffirm the essential role that civil society participation — including business, women, non-governmental organizations, academia and other groups — plays in enhancing the decision-making to improve the environment and promote sustainable development. We appreciate the activities of civil society organizations in the region in this regard and commit ourselves to further developing partnerships with them, and to creating proper conditions, also by removing excessive barriers for their operation. We also welcome the contribution of the European ECO Forum to the Environment for Europe process. ...
18. [Mid-term review 2024/5?] We invite the Committee on Environmental Policy to convene in [2024/5?] a mid-term review to assess progress in the implementation of the main outcomes of this Conference. ...
19. [EfE-10] We decide to hold next 10th Environment for Europe ministerial conference in 5 years to assess the progress in our joint work and to devise new directions, and invite expressions of interest from Governments to host it. ...
20. [Expressing thanks] We express our gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Cyprus for having hosted this Conference and we wish to thank it and the people of Cyprus for the warm hospitality we have received. ...]