

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

19 October 2021

Working Party on the Transport of Perishable Foodstuffs

English

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Activities of ECE bodies of interest to the Working Party:

Inland Transport Committee

Circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources

Note by the secretariat



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Other issues calling for decision by the Commission

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Note by the secretariat*

I. Circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources

The Economic Commission for Europe,

1. Recognizing the adverse impacts of the crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable development, among others, and the need to build back better, to build a more equitable, inclusive, sustainable and resilient future and to get back on track to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,
2. Emphasizing the importance of circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), supporting economic prosperity and resilience, addressing environmental pressures, mitigating climate change and building back better in response to the COVID-19 pandemic,
3. Recognizing the need for multilateral and coordinated multi-stakeholder approaches to develop integrated solutions to respond to these challenges and stressing the importance of public private partnerships,
4. Noting that the United Nations Environmental Assembly refers to a more circular economy as one of the current sustainable economic models, in which products and materials are designed in such a way that they can be reused, remanufactured, recycled or recovered and thus maintained in the economy for as long as possible, along with the resources of which they are made, and the generation of waste, especially hazardous waste, is avoided or minimized, and greenhouse gas emissions are prevented or reduced,
5. Further noting that, while the definition of the circular economy as well as the key statistics needed to measure it may exist at subregional and national levels, and important methodological work is being undertaken on different aspects of the concept of circular economy, there is currently no single internationally agreed definition of this concept,
6. Acknowledging the importance of common objectives in support of effective policy planning,

* The present report was submitted after the deadline as a result of consultations among member States.



7. Recognizing the strengths of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) as a prominent standard-setting body and a platform for enhancing regional harmonization and economic cooperation in a number of sectoral areas,
8. Welcoming voluntary initiatives by countries of the ECE region, including those made as contributions to the sixty-ninth session of the Commission and other voluntary commitments that were made earlier in the Environment for Europe process, to strengthen a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources,
9. Emphasizes the need to further strengthen its work in this field within its existing mandate as appropriate and subject to available resources;
10. Requests the relevant Sectoral Committees and bodies reporting directly to the Executive Committee, and their subsidiaries, to consider how to enhance the impact of relevant existing ECE instruments, in order to foster circular and more resource efficient approaches, including by proposing ways to identify, assess and fill gaps in governance and good practices;
11. Invites these subsidiary bodies to replicate and scale up existing approaches that facilitate broad and effective use of the appropriate instruments, including through capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities;
12. Further invites these subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, to consider developing proposals in their respective programmes of work, including possible collaboration across subprogrammes, for impactful and measurable solutions that promote a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources and that can facilitate attaining the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
13. Further requests that these subsidiary bodies implement this decision without affecting their core mandate and activities carried out under each sectoral committee, and subject to available resources;
14. Invites the secretariat to collaborate with other international organizations and regional economic integration organizations, including the European Union towards the development of a harmonized approach to measuring progress towards circularity including greater resource efficiency;
15. Also requests the secretariat to further promote partnerships related to a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources, including with the United Nations system, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector, to explore opportunities for synergies to broaden the use of relevant ECE instruments;
16. Requests the secretariat to submit relevant inputs from its work, both subprogramme-specific and cross-sectoral, on promoting a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources to overarching international initiatives, such as the Decade for Action on the SDGs (2020–2030); the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030); and the Decade of Sustainable Energy for All;
17. Encourages timely implementation of the voluntary initiatives submitted by member States to the Commission session, to further accelerate the transition to a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources, and further encourages member States who have not done so yet to consider taking concerted action in this regard;
18. Requests the secretariat to present a progress report on the work of the Commission on the promotion of a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources for consideration at its seventieth session.

II. Extension of the mandate of the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development

The Economic Commission for Europe,

19. Recalling its decisions B (67) to establish the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the region of the Economic Commission for Europe and B (68) to extend its mandate,
20. Reaffirming the provisions contained therein on the role, objectives and format of the Regional Forum,
21. Noting with appreciation the successful organization of the previous sessions of the Regional Forum as a platform for peer learning and the exchange of policy experiences and good practices in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals,
22. Taking note of the evaluation of the added value of the Regional Forum for ECE member States prepared by the secretariat (document E/ECE/1501),
23. Decides to continue to convene annual sessions of the Regional Forum in the years 2022 and 2023, in close cooperation with the entities of the regional United Nations system and with the active engagement of other relevant stakeholders;
24. Requests the secretariat to develop the agenda of each session of the Regional Forum in close consultation with member States, and to align it with the respective themes and programme of work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, with a focus on those aspects that are particularly relevant to the ECE region, and taking into account the findings of the evaluation of the Regional Forum contained in document E/ECE/1501;
25. Also requests the secretariat to continue to publish a yearly report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the ECE region to support the discussions at the sessions of the Regional Forum, with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum for sustainable development that year, using existing data sets and statistics;
26. Decides to keep the Regional Forum aligned with the overall follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, taking into account General Assembly resolution 74/298 entitled “Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/290 on the high-level political forum on sustainable development, resolution 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level and resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council”, and the outcomes of the reviews conducted in line with the provisions of paragraph 2 of this resolution;
27. Also decides to submit the reports of the sessions of the Regional Forum, including the Chair’s summary of the discussions with key messages, to the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, as part of the regional contributions to the global follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda;
28. Requests the secretariat to prepare an evaluation of the added value of the Regional Forums held in 2021 and 2022 for submission to the seventieth session of the Commission;
29. Further decides to review the present decision at its seventieth session.

III. Amendment to the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Committee

The Economic Commission for Europe,

30. Decides to amend rule 3 of the rules of Procedure of the Executive Committee, as contained in document ECE/EX/3/Rev.1, to read as follows: “In the case of meetings during which decisions are proposed for adoption, the provisional agenda and documentation in one ECE working language shall be distributed as soon as possible but at least 10 working days in advance; and documents in all languages shall be distributed no less than 2 days in advance.”

IV. Resource management, near-term acceleration of achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through action on gases and buildings, and study of the impact of subsidies as well as carbon pricing options

The Economic Commission for Europe,

31. Noting that at its twenty-ninth session (25–27 November 2020), the Committee on Sustainable Energy requested the Economic Commission for Europe consider decisions on resource management, near-term acceleration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through action on gases and buildings, and study of the impact of subsidies as well as carbon pricing options (ECE/ENERGY/133, paragraph 36), and noting that this proposal does not have financial implications,

32. Noting that sustainable management of natural resources is fundamental to attainment of the 2030 Agenda, is at the heart of the cross-cutting theme of the sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe, and is crucial for supporting inclusive and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 socio-economic crisis, requests the Committee on Sustainable Energy to undertake further development, dissemination, education and research, consultation, and engagement among stakeholders on the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources and its derivative the United Nations Resource Management System,

33. Noting that work of ECE on methane, carbon dioxide, and hydrogen and on high-performance buildings can have a notable near-term benefit for both climate and quality of life,

34. Invites the Committee on Sustainable Energy to pursue diligently further work on the role of natural gas, hydrogen, carbon capture, use, and storage, and high-efficiency, low-emissions technology for those countries that choose to use it as well as on the management of anthropogenic methane emissions in the transition to a carbon neutral economy;

35. Requests its sectoral committees on Sustainable Energy and on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management to undertake dissemination, education and research, consultation, and engagement among stakeholders on high-performance buildings and to support member States further developing and deploying normative instruments to improve energy efficiency in buildings;

36. Requests the Committee on Sustainable Energy to continue studying how best to address efficient use of energy resources, and in this regard the impact of subsidies as well as carbon pricing options.
