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**Economic Commission for Europe****Committee on Sustainable Energy****Group of Experts on Renewable Energy****Eighth session**

Geneva, 5-6 October 2021

Item 11 of the provisional agenda

**Report of the meeting****Report of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy at its Eighth Session<sup>1</sup>****The Group of Experts on Renewable Energy:****I. Introduction**

1. The eighth session of the Group of Experts on Renewable energy (the Group of Experts) was held from 5 to 6 October 2021 amid circumstances caused by COVID-19, including travel restrictions.
2. This report summarizes the proceedings of the Group of Experts at its eight session. All the documents related to the session are available on the website of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).<sup>2</sup>

**II. Attendance**

3. The meeting of the Group of Experts was attended by 290 participants. Of these, 245 were participating virtually and 45 in-person.
4. Experts from the following ECE member States participated: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Moldova, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, and Uzbekistan.

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<sup>1</sup> The draft conclusions and recommendations were reviewed and agreed by the Group of Experts after each agenda item and updated as needed

<sup>2</sup> Official documents, room documents, and presentations delivered at the meeting are available on the ECE website (see <https://unece.org/sustainable-energy/events/8th-session-group-experts-renewable-energy>). Official documents of the session are also available at Official Document System of the United Nations (see <http://documents.un.org>).

5. Representatives of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) attended the meeting. The European Union was represented.

6. The meeting was also attended by representatives of non-governmental organizations, academia, and private sector, as well as by independent experts.

### **III. Adoption of the agenda” (agenda item 1)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2021/1 – Annotated provisional agenda.

7. Adopted the Agenda as presented.

### **IV. Opening remarks (agenda item 2)**

8. In his opening remarks, the Chair shared his reflections on the challenging situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on the activities of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy (Group of Experts). This session of the Group of Experts was delivered jointly with the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems and will be co-Chaired by the Chair of the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems. The joint session is part of the 11<sup>th</sup> International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development.

9. The Chair noted that this year’s meeting was held in cooperation with a number of other groups of experts, in particular with the Group of Experts on Gas and the Expert Group on Resource Management. The Chair observed that it would be valuable for such close cooperation to continue with all of the groups of experts reporting to the Committee on Sustainable Energy in view of the key role of renewable energy in the transition to a sustainable energy future.

### **V. Election of officers (agenda item 3)**

10. The Group of experts elected Ms. Nurzat Abdyrasulova Head of the Unison Group, Kyrgyzstan and Ms. Aida Sitdikova, Director, Energy Eurasia, Middle East & Africa, Sustainable Infrastructure Group of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as Vice-Chairs for two years. During its seventh session in 2020, the Group of Experts elected for two years the representative of Ukraine as its Chair and representatives of Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, and Serbia as Vice-Chairs, and invited representatives from the International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to participate in the Bureau for two years.

11. The Bureau of the Group of Experts has the following members: Mr. Kostiantyn Gura (Ukraine) as Chair, and Mr. Adrian Bylyku (Albania), Ms. Victoria Keshishyan (Armenia), Mr. Andrei Miniankou (Belarus), Mr. Admir Softić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Ms. Margalita Arabidze (Georgia), Mr. Tibor Fischer (Germany), Ms. Ainur Sospanova (Kazakhstan), Ms. Nurzat Abdyrasulova (Kyrgyzstan), Mr. Georgy Ermolenko (Russian Federation), Mr. Miloš Banjac (Serbia), Mr. Paolo Frankl (International Energy Agency), Mr. Gurbuz Gonul (International Renewable Energy Agency), Ms. Rana Adib (Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century), Ms. Michela Morese (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/Global Bioenergy Partnership) and Ms. Aida Sitdikova (EBRD) as Vice-Chairs

## VI. Tracking progress and exchange of experiences on how to increase the uptake of renewable energy (agenda item 4)

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2018/3 – Perspectives for renewable energy in the ECE region.

ECE/ENERGY/2019/1 – Pathways to sustainable energy – Status Report.

12. Participants pointed out as providing affordable, reliable, sustainable and clean energy remains a key challenge for the whole world, and the ECE region is no exception. While the countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia, Europe and North America are united in their goal of accelerating the development and implementation of renewable energy projects, the status and progress of market development is not homogenous across the region. Despite the fact that a number of promotion schemes are in place across the region, ultimately the uptake of renewable energy depends on market access and the effective implementation of these schemes.

The Group of Experts:

13. Expressed appreciation for the progress made in the uptake of renewable energy and the subsequent needed policy options from the perspective of renewable energy.

14. Encouraged countries of the region to improve quality of data to monitor and assess progress made in the renewable energy uptake as well as to convey preliminary expressions of interest to organize Renewable Energy Hard Talks in their countries

15. Noted with appreciation the work done by REN21 and dena in understanding key issues to be considered in order to make the needed normative and institutional changes to promote investments and, subsequently, increase the uptake of renewable energy.

16. Recognized the role of the REN21 ECE Status Report in tracking renewable energy progress in ECE countries, which is under finalization within the RE-Uptake project implemented jointly by dena (German Energy Agency) and REN21 in cooperation with the ECE secretariat and with the support provided by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy of Germany (BMWi),

17. Requested the secretariat to assist interested countries in identifying obstacles and bottlenecks to renewable energy investments through the organization of Renewable Energy Hard Talks, based on the availability of resources.

18. Welcomed support provided by the Regional Advisor to the work of the Group of Experts in a number of areas

19. Invited ECE member States to consider potential requests for studies and capacity-building activities in the area of renewable energy that can be addressed with support of Regional Advisory Services.

20. Took note of the study “Energy Transition and Post-Covid-19 Socio-economic Recovery: Role of Women and Impact on Them”, supported by case studies from five countries in the UNECE region (Albania, Belarus, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan), and acknowledged that engaging with women in the energy sector can have multiple benefits, including contribution to skilled labour, entrepreneurs, and investors in the development of energy efficiency across sectors.

21. Took note of the publication “Guidelines and Best Practices for MSME in delivering energy efficient products and renewable energy equipment” and an updated study, as well as customized national studies for Albania, Georgia, North Macedonia (completed), Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and the Republic of Moldova (in progress) and acknowledged that assisting micro-, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) working in the area of renewable energy is crucial to a sustainable and green recovery from the Covid-19 crisis.

## **VII. Cross-cutting and inter-sectoral cooperation to integrate renewable energy into energy systems (agenda item 5)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2021/4 – Overview of Benefits and Challenges for Governments applying UNFC to Renewable Energy Projects and Resources

22. Participants pointed out as the target of increasing the renewable energy uptake for ECE countries requires an integrated approach and multi-stakeholder dialogue to achieve higher renewable energy shares within future energy systems. This includes to achieve better management of resources through improved understanding of renewable energy resource characteristics and availability as well as within the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus.

The Group of Experts:

23. Recognized the contribution of implemented and on-going activities towards a better integration of renewable energy into energy systems, considering in an integrated and cross-cutting manner the aspects of interlinkages with other energy sources. This includes an improved understanding of renewable energy resource characteristics and availability as well as the strengthening of policy, institutional, normative and regulatory frameworks.

24. Expressed gratitude for the delegates' presentations on their experiences and views on how to better integrate renewable energy into energy systems, in particular on the interlinkages and synergies between renewable energy and natural gas and cleaner electricity production.

25. Taking into account the importance of further testing the classification of renewable energy projects using the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) Noted with appreciation the content of the study titled "Overview of Benefits and Challenges for Governments applying UNFC to Renewable Energy Projects and Resources", jointly prepared by the Renewable Energy Working Group of the Expert Group on Resource Management and the Group of Experts. The Group of Experts and the Expert Group on Resource Management work together on renewable energy project and resource reporting case study, and continue work identifying renewable energy data communication needs of governments, businesses and financiers for example regarding resource potentials.

26. Expressed appreciation for the cooperation with other sectoral activities of the ECE in helping to achieve a better management of resources, including the increase of the renewable energy share sustainably, taking into consideration intersectoral opportunities and effects in the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus. It requested to identify decentralised solutions when needed. It requested continuing the cooperation with the Task Force on the Water-Food-Energy to strengthen the potential role of renewable energy in promoting the nexus approach as well as links to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the implications for climate change mitigation.

27. Invited the secretariat to engage, within the scope of its expertise, in the joint work with other subsidiary bodies on transition of the energy sector in line with international agreements and in support to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and following the recommendation of the Committee on Sustainable Energy on energy sub-programme's Strategic Review and Pathways Programme,

## **VIII. Work Plan for 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 (agenda item 6)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/2021/12 – Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2022-2023.

28. The secretariat briefly presented the Work Plan of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for 2022-2023, which was approved by the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its Thirtieth session on 22-24 September 2021. The Committee requested that the groups of experts consider the suggested clarifications in their work plans and to submit a revised version to the Thirty-first session of the Committee.

The Group of Experts:

29. Noted with appreciation the concrete activities the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy has been implementing since the end of 2014 to help significantly increase the uptake of renewable energy in the region.

30. Noted that it had delivered on the concrete activities of the mandate and work plan for 2020–2021 and reported achievements and key milestones at the twenty-eighth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

31. Requested the secretariat to work at the implementation of the Work Plan 2022-2023 as approved by the Group of Experts by written procedure and by the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its thirtieth session, under a renewed mandate, and explore possible ways and means of funding by potential donors and partner organizations for specific projects, focused on activities related to a) regulatory and policy dialogue and b) sharing of best practices on various renewable energy sources with a view to increasing the share of renewables in the global energy mix..

## **IX. Roundtable on financing decarbonization of energy system in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region (agenda item 7)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/GE.7/2021/3 – Renewable Energy Financing and Investment in selected United Nations Economic Commission for Europe member States.

32. This roundtable was delivered jointly by the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy and the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems. It was also supported by the Expert Group on Resource Management. Participants pointed out that the energy transition in the ECE region requires both private and public financing across all zero- and low-carbon technologies. - (New text from the discussion): In addition, socio-economic context and public acceptance remain to be a barrier for new added capacity for all technologies. Action plans for deployment of new renewable projects needs to be localized taking bottom-up approach. Participants pointed out that securing affordable financing for all technologies is key and government support is essential.

The Group of Experts:

33. Noted with appreciation the study presented to participants on “Renewable Energy Financing and Investment in selected ECE member States”, which provides a comprehensive, up-to-date overview of financing mechanisms and investment activities in four ECE member States: Albania, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Serbia. The study was instrumental to recent Renewable Energy Hard-Talks that took place or are foreseen in UNECE countries in 2021.

34. Pointed out that strengthened international cooperation is necessary to facilitate access to clean energy research and technologies, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, nuclear power and advanced and more environmental-friendly fossil-fuel technologies, and promote investments into modernization of energy infrastructure and clean energy technologies. Joint and well-balanced national power systems could be enhanced through strategic partnerships and cross-border energy cooperation, which would take into account the specificity of national power sectors.

35. Encouraged continued cooperation with the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems, the Expert Group on Resource Management and the Group of Experts on Gas in promoting financing decarbonization of the energy system, including through non-fossil technology (renewable energy and nuclear) investments, and advising the Committee on Sustainable Energy. Investments in low-carbon technologies may contribute substantially but always will have to be matched with investment in carbon-negative technologies to give zero green-house gas emissions. While some technologies are zero and low-carbon in themselves, sometimes their life-cycle emissions are higher; these also need to be balanced by negative-carbon investments.

36. Requested the secretariat to further support the discussion within and among ECE countries on the relationship between policy measures and market conditions in the process

of increasing renewable energy investments, while also continuing promoting and sharing successful experiences stemming from ECE Renewable Energy Hard Talks

## **X. Roundtable on technology interplay and innovation: the potential for hydrogen in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region (agenda item 8)**

37. This session was delivered jointly by the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems and the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy. It was also supported by the Group of Experts on Gas. The three Groups of Experts have been implementing activities on hydrogen in the ECE region jointly. This roundtable discussed clean energy pathways to a rapid shift to a hydrogen economy. The discussion highlighted that the market for clean hydrogen production is in making. There are differences between geographies and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. There is a need to address the principle of additionality that is fair and workable. At the moment the burden is solely put on hydrogen producer to develop required renewable energy capacity.

The Group of Experts:

38. Expressed appreciation on the discussion towards clean energy pathways to a rapid shift to hydrogen ecosystem that will require hydrogen production through electrolysis from both renewable energy and nuclear power as well as from fossil fuels with CCUS.

39. Took note of the Committee's conclusion that it is necessary to agree on a comprehensive and science-based terminology and classification of different types of hydrogen that would provide a clear taxonomy and foster collaboration and investment flows and support a better understanding of the origin of hydrogen to accelerate its sustainable deployment (ECE/ENERGY/137).

40. Noted that across the ECE region countries are recognizing the potential for hydrogen to contribute to meeting the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement. The regional and national hydrogen strategies have been developed in many ECE countries but there is a gap in ambition and understanding of the potential across the region.

41. Requested the secretariat to explore possible ways and means to raise extra-budgetary resources in cooperation with Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems and the Group of Experts on Gas in order to assess sustainable hydrogen production potential across the region, and strengthen national capacity in understanding the potential of global, subregional and national cost-effective hydrogen production and transport as well as how hydrogen can increase the uptake of renewable energy.

## **XI. Dates of the next meeting (agenda item 9)**

42. The ninth session of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy is scheduled to take place in Geneva on 6-7 October 2022, unless the Group of Experts decides otherwise.

## **XII. Other business (agenda item 10)**

43. At the time the provisional agenda was prepared, there were no issues to be raised under this item.

## **XIII. Adoption of the report and close of the meeting (agenda item 11)**

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

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