

Committee on Sustainable Energy

Bureau call from 20 January 2022

The full recording and transcript are available and accessible to all participants in Teams. If you accepted the original meeting invitation you can go there directly.

Participants:

Jürgen Keinhorst, Chair

James Gannon, Admir Softić, Olga Yudina for Alexey Kulapin, Ray Pilcher, Francisco de la Flor, Stefan Buettner, David MacDonald, Vladimir Budinski for Jim Robb, Vice-Chairs

Lea Bigot for Germany, Nikoloz Kholodov for Georgia

Sergio Garribba, Italy, observer

Scott Foster, Stefanie Held, Charlotte Griffiths, Branko Milicevic, Michal Drabik, Igor Lityunvik, Denise Mulholland, UNECE secretariat

1. Bureau constitution

- During the 30th Committee session, the Committee nominated on an interim basis until the end of the thirty-first session Alexey Kulapin as Vice-Chair, and extended the terms of Jürgen Keinhorst (Germany) as Chair, and Tigran Melkonyan (Armenia), Admir Softić (Bosnia and Herzegovina), David Tvalabeishvili (Georgia), James Gannon (Ireland), Gilberto Dialuce (Italy), Pawel Pikus (Poland), Jean-Christophe Füg (Switzerland), and Yaroslav Demchenkov as Vice-Chairs, to serve until the end of the thirty-first session of the Committee. Sergio Garribba (Italy) was reinvited as an observer to the Bureau
- The Chairs of the Committee's subsidiary bodies are Vice-Chairs of the Committee ex officio, currently, Stefan M. Buettner, Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency, Jim Robb, Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems, Raymond Pilcher, Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane, Francisco de la Flor, Group of Experts on Gas, Kostiantyn Gura, Group of Experts on Renewable Energy, and David MacDonald, Expert Group on Resource Management
- Changes since the 30th session:
 - Emily Grubert was nominated by United States to replace Jarad Daniels, who has become the head of the Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute (GCCSI)
 - Kairat Rakhimov (Kazakhstan) left the Energy Ministry, the secretariat will follow up
 - Romeo Mikautadze was nominated by Georgia to replace David Tvalabeishvili
- **The secretariat will send an updated list of Bureau members for the next meeting**
- The Director introduced Denise Mulholland, a new staff member of the secretariat. She joins from the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

2. Committee on Sustainable Energy at COP 26 and follow-up

- The subprogramme was highly visible and active at COP26. The secretariat has distributed two documents setting out activities: i) UNECE report on COP26, sent to ECOSOC, on current and future activities, and ii) toolkits for carbon neutrality and energy efficiency guidelines in buildings.
- There also was a dialogue on buildings and the built environment with Norman Foster and John Kerry and a signing ceremony for the high-performance buildings initiative with new centres of excellence joining.

3. Review of presentation to EXCOM

- The Chair summarized his presentation to the 119th meeting of the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) on 16 December 2021 based on his report (informal document 2021/30: Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, report by the Chair), emphasising the importance to identify and set priorities. He stressed the need to develop standards and instruments for high performance buildings and hydrogen as well as methane management, all of which needed political support. It was time to translate commitments into action and to consider the whole life cycle approach in doing so.
- The Chair further informed the Bureau that EXCOM has deferred the approval of the Committee's recommendations to its 120th session to be held on 26 January 2022, once the silence procedure after the Committee's hybrid session has successfully been completed (*n.b.*, – EXCOM has since approved the recommendations fully).
- **The Bureau suggested adding work on gas to the important achievements of the Committee over the past year.** Reference was made to a very active group despite Covid and advancement on the work on natural gas for vehicles. **[N.B., the secretariat has confirmed that it is not possible to modify the Chair's report to EXCOM. Future Chair reports will be shared as drafts with the bureaux of the expert groups to ensure all activities are reflected].**
- The Director would consult with the Chair and propose an update of 2021 activities of the Committee, reflecting the good work of all expert groups equally.

4. Stock-take of pertinent UNECE tools and instruments

- Bureau members were consulted for an update on major tools to be reported to the Executive Office in preparation of the next ECE session in 2023. This discussion followed a request by the Executive Secretary of ECE to the Chair. Mentioned were
 - United Nations Framework Classification (UNFC) and the United Nations Resource Management System (UNRMS) and its 5-point plan for sustainable resource management
 - Guidelines for high performance buildings
 - Best practice guidance on methane (oil, gas, and coal)
 - Framework guidelines for energy efficiency standards in buildings

5. Discussion of priorities - overview of work as contained in PoWs 2022 and 2023.

- The following topics are priority issues for the work of the Committee in 2022:

- Hydrogen taxonomy/classification

The Bureau discussed the importance of a hydrogen taxonomy / classification for the UNECE region and suggested that the topic be a priority working area for the CSE. The Bureau recommended at first to evaluate the potential added value of UNECE in this area in order to avoid duplication with other initiatives and generate synergies. It further recommended including the demand side, in particular the needs of the energy intensive industries. It was also suggested to examine whether the tools developed by the UNECE in the field of sustainable resource management (UNFC, UNRMS) can be used for the classification of different types of hydrogen. The Expert Group on Gas will be leading this work in close cooperation with the Group of Experts on Resource Management. Further support from member States is needed in this field. The first extrabudgetary project focusing on hydrogen was launched in December with a kick-off workshop about countries' efforts on hydrogen. The project will include activities related to hydrogen taxonomy, a common certification and classification system for hydrogen and certificates of origin. Work will advance in March during the next meeting of the Hydrogen Task Force on the margins

of the Groups of Experts on Gas and Coal Mine Methane. **All six subsidiary bodies of the Committee should be invited to the meeting for a deeper discussion of the implication of a hydrogen taxonomy. Results of the XB-project will be available for the Commission's 2023 meeting.**

- Sustainable resource management / UNECE's 5-point plan

The Bureau confirmed the importance of CSE's work in the field of sustainable resource management. The five-point plan presented at COP 26 involves developing a broad framework for resource management to enable achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The first part consists of a concept for a social environmental economic license to operate. The Bureau highlighted the increasing relevance of sustainability issues related to activities of extractive industries. **The Bureau requested a short document highlighting UNECE's work on SRM that could be distributed to capitals.**

- Energy Efficiency / High performance Buildings Initiative (HPBI)

The HPBI was mentioned as priority. **The Bureau highlighted the need to develop a normative instrument for the ECE region (protocol) in this area.**

- International Decade for Methane Management

Work will continue during the March meeting of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane in collaboration with GMI and other partners.

- Coal Mine Methane / Just transition

The Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane is publishing a document about monitoring, reporting and verification of methane that can be considered a best practice guidance. An advance copy is available upon request. It complements work that the European Union is undertaking on methane monitoring and reduction with regard to mine closure and just transition. The group is focusing on two aspects: i) a lot of coal mines are being closed in a way that is inappropriate for the long term, including the repurposing of valuable land assets and related transitional aspects of the socio-economic dimension. This can be seen all over the world and is not limited to the UNECE region; ii) the false belief that shut coal mines will quit emitting methane. As many mines are gassy, more emissions can be observed after closure than expected. This abandoned coal mine methane requires close attention. It was noted that not all mines in the UNECE region are being closed. Many new coal mines are being opened, so the work that the Group of Experts has done on active coal mines and coal mine methane, both from the safety and environmental side, continues to be important. The Secretariat highlighted the need for more financial support in the field of methane management.

The Russian Federation flagged a concern they had about the group's mandate and approach to methane as a "dangerous" gas. They might bring this point back to the Committee Bureau's next meetings if concerns cannot be resolved during the upcoming March meetings of the Group of Experts.

- Pathways Phase II and Carbon Neutrality deep dives, including carbon footprint of various energy carriers through life cycle assessment

The Director reported that work in this area will begin when funding has been made available.

- Other

The Bureau requested a forward schedule or agenda that allows a better understanding of ongoing activities and their interconnectedness and importance. This could be done in form of a report about ongoing projects, planned meetings and country interests and monies pledged and received. This would help with the priority setting exercise mentioned by the Chair and allow better outreach to stakeholders for information and participation.

The Bureau further requested an update regarding the operationalisation of priority activities as well as information on the funding available for each priority during the next meeting.

6. Outreach and resourcing

The Bureau discussed the need to have tangible outcomes and targeted stakeholder outreach, so that the work of the Committee reaches a bigger national audience. For example, presentations or communication pieces can be given about the work of the Committee and the subprogramme across ministries, energy agencies, energy companies and associations. This can be followed up bilaterally between interested countries and the secretariat, especially if remote participation can be assured. The Russian Federation offered a specific approach to reach out to stakeholders throughout the Russian Federation regarding the work of the UNECE energy sub-programme.

7. AOB (incl. relevant meetings in 2022)

- **The Bureau recommended to have regular calls/meetings every two to three months related to the schedule of forthcoming expert group and Committee meetings. The next Bureau call will be held at the end of March. The current time of 1 pm Geneva time will be maintained for the time being and can be revisited later if inconvenient for the Bureau.**
- **Minutes of calls and meetings will be posted on the website and sent to participants. The secretariat will update missing minutes as soon as possible.**
