

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
122<sup>nd</sup> Meeting  
Geneva, 3 May 2022

**EXCOM/CONCLU/122**

**CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS**

## FORMAL SEGMENT

### Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda

1. The provisional draft agenda for the 122<sup>nd</sup> meeting was adopted.

### Item 2 – Chair’s conclusions from the last meeting

2. The representative of the European Union and its member States appreciated the decision by the Chair to annex statements made by delegations to EXCOM/CONCLU/121, given the special circumstances of the 121<sup>st</sup> meeting. The Chair affirmed that this was indeed an exceptional arrangement which should not become a regular practice.

3. The conclusions from the 121<sup>st</sup> meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/121) were adopted.

### Item 3 - Update on Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period and meeting servicing arrangements

4. The Secretary of the Commission informed that, since the last meeting of EXCOM, five silence procedures had been concluded related to formal meetings with remote participation, namely the 84th session of the Inland Transport Committee, the 84th session of the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety, the 186th session of the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations, the 123rd session of the Working Party on General Safety Provisions, and the 24th session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. The silence had not been broken for this procedure. Full details were available on the UNECE website. She recalled that the special procedures during the COVID-19 period were currently set to expire on 30 June 2022 and proposed that they be extended until 31 December 2022 as outlined in ECE/EX/2022/L.9, given a possible continuation or resumption of restrictions related to the pandemic.

5. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the decision on extension until 31 December 2022 of Special Procedures during the COVID-19 period, as contained in ECE/EX/2022/L.9.

### Item 4 - Matters relating to the Inland Transport Committee:

#### a) Meeting with the Chair of the Inland Transport Committee

6. The Chair congratulated the new Chair of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC), Ms. Hannie Meesters, who had been elected at a special session of the ITC on 29 April 2022 and was the first woman to hold the position. Due to technical problems with the remote connection, the Secretary of the ITC made a presentation to EXCOM on behalf of the Chair on the achievements of ITC over the past year and its plans for the future. He invited EXCOM to approve the programme of work of the Transport subprogramme for 2022 and the mandate and terms of reference of two new groups of experts.

7. The representative of the European Union and its member States thanked the outgoing Chair and the bureau, as well as all UNECE membership and the secretariat, for the successful cooperation that has finally resulted in the adoption of the Committee's Terms of Reference by ECOSOC. The EU sees this new document as an important step towards a greater recognition of the Committee's global role. She furthermore thanked the outgoing Chair for his contribution to the Committee, and welcomed the new ITC Chair and the newly elected Bureau.

8. The representative of the Russian Federation welcomed the contribution of UNECE to bolstering multilateral cooperation on road safety and expressed commitment to constructive, depoliticized cooperation with all partners with a view to supporting multilateral efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the ITC Strategy until 2030. She had no objection to the decisions tabled for EXCOM approval. She expressed disappointment that the current politicization of UNECE was also affecting the ITC, with an experienced Russian candidate not being elected to the ITC Bureau the previous week due to political reasons. The Russian Federation would keep a close eye on the new bureau and reserved the right not to recognize its rulings and to bring them up for discussion during meetings of the Committee.

9. The representative of Switzerland congratulated the new Bureau and noted that the work of ITC had a positive impact also beyond the UNECE region.

10. The representative of Ukraine aligned with the representative of the European Union and its member States. He was grateful to delegations who had supported his country at the ITC special session in the face of the Russian aggression it was experiencing, and looked forward to progress on the agreed goals and targets of the ITC once the aggression was over. He was satisfied with the results of the Bureau elections during the ITC special session.

11. The representative of the United Kingdom aligned with the representative of Ukraine. He expressed support to the new ITC Bureau and to the activities of ITC. He had no objection to the decisions tabled for EXCOM approval.

12. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Inland Transport Committee for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Committee and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

#### b) Decisions on matters relating to the Inland Transport Committee

13. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the Programme of Work of the Transport subprogramme for 2022 as contained in the document ECE/TRANS/2022/8. EXCOM approves the mandate and terms of reference of the Group of Experts on the operationalization of the e-CMR procedure, as contained in Annex IV of document ECE/TRANS/2022/6, for the period 2022–2023; and the mandate and terms of reference of the Group of Experts on cycling infrastructure, as contained in Annex V of document ECE/TRANS/2022/6, for the period 2022–2024.

#### Item 5 – Meeting servicing arrangements

14. The Chair recalled the main issues surrounding the servicing of meetings, such as the financing of Remote Simultaneous Interpretation or the shortage of meeting rooms arising from the renovations at the Palais. She and the secretariat had been in continuous contact with UNOG on these matters and an informal consultation had taken place with interested

delegations on 25 April.

15. The Executive Secretary informed that she had recently met in New York with the Controller and with the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management but that no solution had been found thus far. She encouraged member States to express their views on the importance and urgency of the matter and to liaise with their counterparts in New York to obtain support at relevant discussions there, so that UNECE could continue to fulfil its mandate.

16. The representative of the EU and its MS appreciated the informal note and the efforts by the secretariat to find solutions to the very difficult situation UNECE. She expressed their willingness to participate as soon as possible in the proposed stock take and visioning exercise, which they believed would confirm that, consistent with the logic of building back better, hybrid meetings – in very clearly defined cases- can become a recurrent feature of UNECE’s work. On that basis, given the unique set up of UNECE, she expressed the wish of the EU and its MS to find a stable solution in dialogue with UN headquarters in New York.

17. The representative of Switzerland recognized the urgency of finding a solution and encouraged the secretariat to continue working with relevant partners to that end. He highlighted that the difficulties arose both out of horizontal issues that affected the entire UN system, and also restrictions specific to Geneva due to the Strategic Heritage Project. He proposed modifications to the draft language put forward in informal document 2022/15.

18. The representative of Turkmenistan likewise put forward draft language. He noted that, while in-person meetings remained important for achieving political consensus, remote participation had increased the visibility of UNECE and enhanced the possibilities for knowledge exchange among all stakeholders.

19. The representative of the Russian Federation likewise put forward draft language. She said that the financing of hybrid meetings, should these continue, be determined by the administrative and budgetary organs of the UN, with these decisions applying system-wide.

20. Following negotiations, delegations reached agreement on common language. The Chair thus concluded that EXCOM:

- takes note of the update provided on UNECE meeting servicing issues, as contained in informal document 2022/15;
- welcomes the efforts undertaken by the secretariat to strengthen business continuity measures related to the delivery of its calendar of official meetings and knowledge sharing and capacity-building activities and the further review of existing meeting formats and servicing arrangements;
- looks forward to further periodic updates on the activities outlined in the roadmap, and the submission of related proposals for its consideration;
- reiterates the urgent need for meeting services in support of the official UNECE calendar of meetings;
- welcomes the efforts of the UNECE secretariat in providing hybrid meeting support services and remote simultaneous interpretation, as needed, in support of full Member State participation in its bodies, during Covid-19 pandemic related restrictions;
- in this regard, requests the Secretariat to finalize related contingency planning, on the understanding that implementation of business continuity measures would not be funded from Section 20 of the budget;

- invites the General Assembly to take the above into account when considering the solutions to challenges related to conference management.

## **INFORMAL SEGMENT**

### Item 6 – Annual report on evaluations 2021

21. The Executive Secretary presented the 2021 Annual Evaluation Report to EXCOM for its information. The report was prepared pursuant to a request made by EXCOM at its 91st meeting. She recalled that all evaluation reports, management responses and progress reports were available at the Open UNECE section of the UNECE website. She invited EXCOM to take note of the document.

22. The representative of the European Union and its member States said a strong evaluation culture was essential for all organizations, as it allowed to measure progress, performance and the achievement of mandated outcomes with a view to strengthening the quality of those outputs. The European Union and its member States underlined the importance of the Results-Based Management approach, welcomed the evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNECE, and expressed interest in understanding the high number of outstanding recommendations in that domain. They moreover requested the secretariat to provide regular information and updates on the evaluation processes and the implementation of related recommendations.

23. The representative of Switzerland said the report was a valuable instrument that provided information on lessons learned and was helpful for member States considering other projects by UNECE.

24. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note with appreciation of the annual report on evaluations 2021 as contained in informal document 2022/16.

### Item 7 - Economic Commission for Europe as 2022 Coordinator for the Regional Commissions

25. The Executive Secretary recalled that in 2022, UNECE was the coordinator of the UN Regional Commissions and represented them at global and cross-cutting discussions. She informed EXCOM about the joint priorities identified for 2022<sup>1</sup>; plans to strengthen the integration of the regional dimension into global discussions, for example by reviving the ECESA Core Group composed of UNDESA, UNCTAD and the Regional Commissions; possible contributions to the implementation of Our Common Agenda, and the following meetings where she had or would engage as coordinator:

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<sup>1</sup> These joint priorities include

- Rethinking the global financial architecture and innovative finance for development.
- People-centered and gender-responsive health and social protection systems and access to vaccines;
- A green and resilient recovery, circular economy, ecosystems protection and restoration;
- Deepening regional integration, connectivity, trade and resilience of supply chains;
- Gender equality and women's and youth empowerment.
- SDG data;
- Digital technologies and innovation.

- 21 April: ECOSOC Special Meeting on Sustainable urbanization and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda
- 27 April: ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum
- 28 April: General Assembly High-level Meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda
- 18 May: ECOSOC Operational Activities for Development Segment session on “Regional Repositioning: Role of regional leadership in supporting countries”
- 30 June-1 July: High-level Meeting on Improving Road Safety convened by the President of the General Assembly, including the first replenishment conference of the UN Road Safety Fund
- 5-12 July: High-level Political Forum
- September: COP-15 of the Convention on Biodiversity

26. The Chair concluded that EXCOM looks forward to future updates on activities undertaken under UNECE’s coordinatorship of the Regional Commissions in 2022 and engages member States to engage actively at the relevant meetings in UN Headquarters.

#### Item 8 – Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

27. The representative of the Russian Federation said that the extrabudgetary projects put forward for EXCOM approval should be subject to the review stipulated in EXCOM decision ECE/EX/2022/L.6.

28. The representative of the European Union and its member States had no objection to the projects and likewise said that they should be subject to the review stipulated in EXCOM decision ECE/EX/2022/L.6.

29. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary projects contained in informal documents 2022/17 and 2022/18 on the understanding that they will also undergo the ongoing review stipulated in EXCOM decision ECE/EX/2022/L.6 of on 24 March 2022.

#### Item 9 - Briefing by the Executive Secretary: Important new developments and key upcoming events.

30. Regarding the implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS), the Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that UNECE had recently submitted its report on the topic to the Secretary-General. Given that most support services were provided to UNECE by UNOG, a number of UNDIS indicators were not directly applicable to UNECE. Nevertheless, UNECE collaborated closely with UNOG to benefit from the relevant guidance in its operations. UNECE had met or exceeded requirements for all indicators that were applicable. She informed that UNECE integrated disability inclusion into its operational activities, deliverables and results, as appropriate. Through the work of its subprogrammes, UNECE continued to mainstream relevant inclusiveness aspects into its programmes and projects and considered disability-related perspectives in the development of norms and standards. Relevant provisions were contained in the annual budget document and reported on through the established mechanisms.

31. The Chair informed EXCOM that she had chaired the Pan-European Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations 2023 Water Conference organized by UNECE and UN-Water on 12 – 13 April, where more than 250 participants had gathered to identify regional

priorities, challenges and good practices. The main topics of the conference (ensuring access to water and sanitation for all, transboundary water cooperation, climate change and water-related disasters, circular economy, intersectional cooperation, pollution prevention, innovative financing, groundwater) were of particular importance in the UNECE region. The meeting had highlighted the UNECE Water Convention and its Protocol on Water and Health as key catalyst for progress. She invited member States to play an active role in the preparations for the 2023 UN Water Conference and to highlight regional priorities at the conference itself.

32. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming meetings:

- 4-6 May, Barcelona: 6th UNECE International PPP Forum
- 9-12 May, Geneva: Special session of the Committee on Environmental Policy dedicated to the preparations for the upcoming 9<sup>th</sup> Environment for Europe Conference in Nicosia.
- 12-13 May, Vienna: Chief Executives Board
- 16-20 May, Geneva: 38th UN/CEFACT Forum
- 25-27 May, Geneva: 15<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on Competitiveness, Innovation, and PPPs
- 2-3 June, Stockholm: Stockholm+50, a high-level meeting convened by the UN General Assembly to commemorate the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and celebrate 50 years of global environmental action.
- 6-8 June, Dushanbe: 2nd Intl High level Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development"
- 16-17 June, Rome: UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing
- 5-12 July, New York: High-level Political Forum

#### Item 10 – Any other business

33. The Executive Secretary noted that the secretariat had provided the information requested in EXCOM decision ECE/EX/2022/L.6. She recalled that ECE/EX/2022/L.6 envisaged further consideration of the matter at the next session of EXCOM. As no delegation had made a statement to that effect, she hoped that member States would pronounce their views soon on the matter.

34. The Chair informed EXCOM that its next meeting would take place on 8 July 2022 in the afternoon.

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