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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Committee on Environmental Policy

#### Twenty-seventh session

Geneva, 3–5 November 2021

## Report of the Committee on Environmental Policy on its twenty-seventh session

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## I. Introduction

1. The Committee on Environmental Policy held its twenty-seventh session in Geneva and online, from 3 to 5 November 2021. The present report is based on a summary of the session's outcomes and the decisions taken, as adopted by the silence procedure completed on 18 November 2021.<sup>1</sup>

### A. Attendance<sup>2</sup>

2. Delegations from the following 38 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) attended the meeting: Albania, Armenia; Austria; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Czechia; Estonia; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Hungary; Italy; Latvia; Lithuania; Malta; Monaco; Montenegro; Netherlands; North Macedonia; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Republic of Moldova; Romania; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Ukraine; United States of America; and Uzbekistan. An observer from Morocco participated in the meeting.

3. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Europe, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe were also present.

4. Other national, regional and international organizations and bodies were represented at the meeting, including: the European Union, represented by the European Commission, the European Environment Agency and the Permanent Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva; and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

5. Representatives of the following civil society organizations and academia participated in the session: the Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development "Eco-Accord"; the European ECO-Forum; the European Environmental Bureau; the European Transport Workers' Federation; The Pew Charitable Trusts; Women Engage for a Common Future; and Zoï Environment Network.

### B. Opening of the session and organizational matters

6. Mr. Marco Keiner (Director, ECE Environment Division) and Mr. Bruno Pozzi (Director, UNEP Regional Office for Europe) made welcoming remarks. The Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy welcomed participants and recalled the main objectives of the session.

7. The Chair informed the Committee that, on 4 October 2021, the United Nations Office at Geneva had sent a note verbale to the permanent missions and the permanent observer offices to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and, in particular, informed them that, due to the depletion of the global market for freelance interpreters, effective 1 November, the duration of hybrid and virtual meetings with interpretation would revert to two hours whenever active remote participation exceeded 30 minutes. The Chair further emphasized that, in order to keep the provisional timetable of the twenty-seventh session of the Committee on Environmental Policy unchanged, with 3-hour sessions, active remote participation should not exceed 30 minutes.

8. The Chair further informed the Committee that the ECE Executive Committee, at its 117th meeting (Geneva, 8 July 2021), had extended until 31 December 2021 procedures to take decisions in formal meetings with remote participation, as contained in document ECE/EX/2020/L.12, and initially adopted on 5 October 2020 by the Executive Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting documents and other information, including the summary of decisions, are available on the session web page: <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Committee-on-Environmental-Policy/events/357297>.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the hybrid format of the meeting, the final list of participants (available at [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/CEP-27\\_LoP\\_final.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/CEP-27_LoP_final.pdf)) is based on online registration.

The procedures applied to sectoral committees (including the Committee on Environmental Policy), bodies reporting directly to the Executive Committee and Working Parties. That meant that the procedure was to be applied to the decisions of the current session of the Committee on Environmental Policy and that, in practice:

(a) During the current meeting, the Committee on Environmental Policy, as usual, would agree on the decisions;

(b) Subsequently, those decisions would be circulated to all Geneva Permanent Representations for approval by silence procedure of 72 hours (through the Executive Committee web page);<sup>3</sup>

(c) If the silence was not broken through an objection, the decisions would be deemed adopted. However, if the silence was broken for a given decision, it would be referred back to the Committee on Environmental Policy;

(d) The possibility of raising an objection was limited, being understood as a safeguard measure in case a registered participant was unable to participate remotely in the meeting because of technical reasons. In other words, the possibility of raising an objection was limited to rare cases in which a delegation that had properly registered for, and participated in, a given meeting had experienced technical problems during said meeting.

9. The Committee adopted the agenda of its twenty-seventh session (ECE/CEP/2021/1), taking into account the proposed time schedule as presented in information paper No. 1/Rev.2.

## **II. Outcomes of the work of the Bureau**

10. The Chair reported that during the intersessional period, due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Bureau had worked by means of electronic consultations – including online meetings on 2 June and 20 September and a hybrid meeting on 2 November 2021 – to prepare the current session of the Committee. The outcomes of the Bureau's work were presented in document ECE/CEP/2021/3. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the outcomes of the Bureau's work under the respective agenda items.

11. The Committee expressed appreciation to the Bureau for its good work in fulfilling the mandates assigned to it by the Committee, especially for the excellent work undertaken with regard to preparation of draft background thematic documents on the themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022).

## **III. Sustainable development in the region**

12. Ms. Monika Linn (Principal Adviser to the ECE Executive Secretary) in her capacity as ECE focal point for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, presented developments related to the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region, including the key outcomes of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (Geneva (hybrid), 10–18 March 2021), submitted as the contribution of the ECE region to the 2021 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (New York, 6–15 July 2021).

13. The Committee was informed that the sixth session of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE Region would be held as a hybrid meeting on 6 and 7 April 2022. The Forum would include the High-level Policy Segment “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region” and two sets of peer learning round tables. The outcomes of the sixth session of the Regional Forum would constitute the contribution of the ECE region to the tenth session of the high-level political forum on sustainable development (New York, July 2022).

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://unece.org/silence-procedure>.

14. The secretary to the Economic Commission for Europe briefed the Committee on the outcomes of the sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva (hybrid), 20 and 21 April 2021), including on the road map for operationalizing the decisions of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission across the subsidiary architecture and the ECE secretariat.

15. A representative of the ECE secretariat briefed the Committee on ECE activities to advance sustainability and circularity and to achieve climate neutrality in the garment and footwear industry, through traceability and transparency of value chains.

16. A representative of the ECE secretariat briefed the Committee on ECE capacity-building activities to improve dam management in Central Asia, including the findings of an evaluation report.

17. The Committee took note of the information provided on developments in the ECE region linked to the 2030 Agenda, and:

(a) Called for active participation in the preparation and conduct of the sixth session of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region;

(b) Took note of the information on the outcomes of the sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe;

(c) Decided to include a standing agenda item on the follow-up to the sessions of the Economic Commission for Europe in future regular sessions of the Committee and requested the secretariat to include relevant information on the annotated provisional agenda of the Committee's sessions;

(d) Noted with interest the information provided by the secretariat on ECE activities to advance sustainability and circularity and to achieve climate neutrality in the garment and footwear industry, through traceability and transparency of value chains;

(e) Noted with interest the information provided by the secretariat on ECE capacity-building activities to improve dam management in Central Asia, including the findings of an evaluation report.

## **IV. Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference**

### **A. Draft agenda of the Conference**

18. The Chair recalled that, in accordance with the Reform of the “Environment for Europe” process: reform plan, a decision on the agenda of the Conference should be taken at the regular meeting of the Committee approximately 12 months prior to the Conference.<sup>4</sup> It was recalled that, at its twenty-sixth session (Geneva, 9 and 10 November 2020), the Committee had mandated the Bureau, with support from the secretariat and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to prepare a first draft of the provisional annotated agenda for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.<sup>5</sup>

19. The Committee was informed that the Bureau, at its virtual meeting on 2 June 2021, had discussed the first outline of the annotated provisional agenda and provided further guidance to the secretariat while drafting the agenda for the Conference. Based on the guidance received from the Bureau, the secretariat had finalized the draft annotated provisional agenda for the Conference and issued it as an official document for the current session (ECE/CEP/2021/6).

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<sup>4</sup> ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, para. 12 (a).

<sup>5</sup> ECE/CEP/2020/2, para. 22.

20. The Committee:

(a) Adopted the draft agenda for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference as contained in the document ECE/CEP/2021/6;

(b) Invited its Bureau, with support from the secretariat and in cooperation with relevant partners, to further develop the annotated agenda for the Conference and to submit it to the Committee for consideration at its special session in May 2022.

## B. Background thematic documents

21. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-sixth session, the Committee had considered draft outlines of two background thematic documents on the themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and asked:

- The Committee members to make concrete suggestions and proposals on draft outlines of two background thematic documents on the themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and to send them to the secretariat by the end of 2020.
- The Bureau, with support from the secretariat and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to continue working to prepare, for the next regular session of the Committee, the first drafts of the two background thematic documents.<sup>6</sup>

22. The Committee was informed that, following its call for suggestions and proposals on draft outlines at the twenty-sixth session, the secretariat had received suggestions and proposals from Czechia, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden and the European Investment Bank.

23. The Committee was further informed that a consultant contracted by UNEP had prepared an information note on the current key principles, policies and approaches of green and circular economy in the two thematic areas – sustainable infrastructure and sustainable tourism – with a view to further elaboration into the background thematic documents. The consultant had presented to the Bureau, at its virtual meeting on 2 June 2021, the main contents of the information note, highlights of the opportunities available for the region and region-specific examples of challenges, as well as an identification of the next steps in further developing the information base contributing to the preparation of the thematic background papers for the Ninth Ministerial Conference. The Bureau had discussed the information note and guided the consultant and the secretariat on the next steps in developing the background thematic documents.

24. The Committee was further informed that the Bureau, at its virtual meeting on 20 September, had taken note of the final version of the information note (finalized by the consultant based on the comments and inputs received from the Bureau members during and after the meeting on 2 June 2021) and asked the secretariat to split and convert the information note into the format of first drafts of the two thematic background documents and to submit them as information papers for the twenty-seventh session of the Committee on Environmental Policy. Based on the guidance received from the Bureau, the two following information papers had been prepared and issued: No. 2. Draft thematic document for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference: Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure; and No. 3 Draft thematic document for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference: Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism.

25. The Committee:

(a) Expressed appreciation to UNEP for financially supporting development of an information note on the current key principles, policies and approaches of green and circular economy in the areas of sustainable infrastructure and sustainable tourism, which had served

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., para. 26.

to prepare first drafts of two background thematic documents on the themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

(b) Also expressed appreciation for the work undertaken by the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, OECD and UNEP, to prepare first drafts of two background thematic documents on the themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

(c) Asked the Committee to make concrete suggestions and proposals on the first drafts of the two background thematic documents on the themes for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and to send them to the secretariat, preferably by the end of November but no later than 31 December 2021;

(d) Asked the Bureau, with support from the secretariat and in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to further develop the two drafts and submit them as official documents for the special session of the Committee in May 2022.

## C. Pan-European environmental assessment

26. A representative of the ECE secretariat briefed the Committee on progress in the preparation of a limited indicator-based and thematic pan-European environmental assessment and a summary of its key findings and policy messages (information paper No. 4).

27. The Committee:

(a) Expressed its appreciation to those member States that had provided financial contributions to support preparation of the next pan-European assessment, namely Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Serbia and Switzerland;

(b) Also expressed its appreciation to the individual authors for their drafts and to UNEP, OECD, UNWTO, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, Conservation International and International Soil Reference and Information Centre–World Soil Information, members of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators and the ECE secretariat for the further development of the draft pan-European environmental assessment;

(c) Welcomed the draft elements of the assessment and took note of the progress made, timeline and next steps for its completion, and decided to provide comments on the draft elements provided, in particular the draft summary for policymakers, by 30 November 2021;

(d) Requested the secretariat to submit the full draft of the pan-European assessment and the draft summary for policymakers for consultation with ECE member States, at the latest by 15 February 2022, and decided to provide comments to the secretariat within one month of receipt;

(e) Also requested the secretariat to continue to inform the Bureau of progress made.

## D. Other documents

28. The Chair recalled, in accordance with the Reform of the “Environment for Europe” process: reform plan, that the Conference outcomes might include a 2-page agreed outcome on follow-up and further actions strictly limited, in terms of scope, to the themes of the Conference.<sup>7</sup>

29. The Committee was informed that the Bureau, at its virtual meeting on 2 June 2021, had asked the secretariat to prepare a zero draft of the ministerial declaration and circulate it among the Bureau members.

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<sup>7</sup> ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, para. 14 (c).

30. The Committee was also informed that the Bureau, at its virtual meeting on 20 September 2021, had taken note of the zero draft of the ministerial declaration prepared by the secretariat and agreed on the next steps:

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

31. The Committee was further informed that, based on the guidance received from the Bureau, the secretariat had prepared the draft ministerial declaration and issued it as information paper No. 12 for the current session.

32. The Committee:

(a) Approved the general framework and structure of the proposed elements for the draft ministerial declaration, as contained in information paper No. 12;

(b) Invited the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to further develop the draft of the ministerial declaration, based on comments and revisions to the draft in track changes received by 31 December 2021 from Committee members and observers, and to submit it as an official document to the Committee at its special session in May 2022;

(c) Took note of the draft list of documents to be prepared for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference as contained in information paper No. 5;

(d) Welcomed the continuation of activities by the countries under the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy;

(e) Welcomed the proposal by Switzerland to advance the development of the catalogue of actions/measures on possible voluntary actions/commitments under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy on the two themes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, entrusted Switzerland to form and convene an ad hoc group to prepare the catalogue and invited Committee members and other stakeholders to express their interest if they wished to join the group.

## **E. Organizational issues**

33. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-fifth session (Geneva, 13–15 November 2019), the Committee had considered the document regarding organizational issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (ECE/CEP/2019/19) and recommended reducing the maximum size of delegations for the Conference by 20 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

34. The Chair further recalled that, at its twenty-sixth session, the Committee had asked the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to prepare for the next session of the Committee a new document regarding organizational issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference taking into account the new dates of the Conference (5–7 October 2022).<sup>9</sup>

35. The Committee was informed that the slightly revised document regarding organizational issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference had been given the masthead symbol ECE/CEP/2021/7.

36. The Committee approved the document regarding organizational issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (ECE/CEP/2021/7), with revisions made in paragraph 10 (a) and (c).

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<sup>8</sup> ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 27 (d).

<sup>9</sup> ECE/CEP/2020/2, para. 29.

## F. Resource requirements

37. The Chair recalled that the Environment for Europe reform plan stipulated that, for the preparatory process of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and the Conference itself, the necessary extrabudgetary financial resources would have to continue to be provided to ECE to supplement the United Nations core budget resources. The plan also stated that the host country should assume relevant financial commitments.<sup>10</sup> It was further recalled that, at its twenty-fifth session, the Committee had welcomed information paper No. 19 on estimated resource requirements for preparing the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, and invited interested countries and organizations to make contributions (in cash and in kind) for the preparation of the Conference.<sup>11</sup>

38. The Chair further recalled that, at its twenty-sixth session, the Committee had expressed gratitude to the countries for their pledges to contribute financially to the preparation of the Conference and invited interested countries and organizations to make contributions (in cash and in kind) for the preparation of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.<sup>12</sup>

39. The Committee was informed that, after the twenty-sixth session of the Committee:

- A contribution has been received from Cyprus, which, in fulfilment of commitments by the host country of the Conference, had contributed €93,985.50 to be used for the organization and conduct of the Conference (including the secretariat's travel and participation, and additional temporary staff as to be defined by the Host Country Agreement).
- Pledges had been received from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection of Germany (€30,000) and from the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia (€5,000).

40. The Committee welcomed the contribution made by Cyprus as the host country and pledges by Cyprus, Germany and Serbia for the preparation of the Conference and invited interested countries and organizations to make contributions (in cash and in kind) for the preparation of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

## G. Host country preparations

41. The Chair recalled that the Committee, at its previous session, had expressed appreciation to Cyprus as the host of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries.<sup>13</sup>

42. The representative of Cyprus informed the Committee about the ongoing preparations for the hosting of the Conference.

43. The Committee expressed appreciation to Cyprus, as the host of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, for the information provided.

## V. Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting

44. The Chair of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment informed the Committee of the outcomes of the twenty-third session of the Working Group (Geneva (hybrid and online), 4 and 5 May 2021), and presented its annual timetable of activities for 2022 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/3).

<sup>10</sup> ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, para. 12 (g) and (h).

<sup>11</sup> ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 30.

<sup>12</sup> ECE/CEP/2020/2, para. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., para. 19 (b).

45. A representative of the ECE secretariat informed the Committee that the Working Group had completed its final review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/6) and presented the report.

46. A representative of the ECE secretariat briefed the Committee on the outcomes of the eighteenth session of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators (Geneva (hybrid), 18 and 19 October 2021).

47. The Committee:

(a) Took note of the information provided and welcomed the activities of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, especially in support of the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System;

(b) Invited member States and organizations to provide in-kind and financial support to the ECE Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme;

(c) Thanked Austria, the Russian Federation and Switzerland for their financial support not directly related to the pan-European environmental assessment, as well as UNEP and the European Environment Agency, together with the United Nations Statistics Division, WHO and OECD, for their substantive support to the Programme;

(d) Took note of the annual timetable of activities for 2022 of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/3;

(e) Welcomed the “Final review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System” (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/6), prepared by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment with the support of the secretariat and UNEP;

(f) Expressed appreciation for the fact that, overall, a Shared Environmental Information System had been successfully established in Europe and Central Asia but noted that countries still needed assistance in fully implementing the pillars and principles of the Shared Environmental Information System and in the regular production and sharing of relevant data flows associated with the ECE environmental indicators;

(g) Forwarded the final review report to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

(h) Took note of the information provided and welcomed the activities of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, especially regarding the review of the ECE set of environmental indicators;

(i) Decided to extend the mandate and terms of reference of the Joint Task Force until mid-2023 to allow the Joint Task Force to prepare a new draft mandate and terms of reference after the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, and requested the secretariat to submit that decision on extension to the ECE Executive Committee for approval;

(j) Welcomed the revision of the guidelines for the application of environmental indicators and on biodiversity monitoring.

## **VI. Environmental performance reviews**

48. The Committee proceeded with the peer review of the Second Environmental Performance Review of Morocco. The review’s 16 chapters and associated recommendations (information paper No. 7) had earlier been examined by the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews together with Moroccan experts at a meeting conducted in a hybrid format in Geneva and by virtual means from 27 to 29 September 2021.

49. Ms. Farah Bourqartacha (Head, Directorate of Observation, Studies and Planning, Department of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of Morocco) presented key achievements to date and main challenges encountered by the country in advancing the environmental agenda for sustainable

development, within the substantive framework of the second environmental performance review of the country.

50. The Chair of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (Estonia) informed the Committee on Environmental Policy of the main outcomes of the Expert Group's work in 2021, highlighting the richness of the Second Environmental Performance Review of Morocco, which contained 105 recommendations and addressed 76 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. He also emphasized the constraints of virtual meetings, while recognizing the positive aspect of enabling a broader participation of experts from the reviewed country.

51. The rapporteurs designated by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (Italy and Switzerland) shared key findings in selected areas of the second review and the steps necessary to address the identified challenges.

52. The secretary to the Expert Group gave an overview of activities in 2021.

53. The delegation of Uzbekistan presented the Road map for implementing the Recommendations of the Third Environmental Performance Review of the country, launched nationally in July 2021.

54. The Committee:

(a) Adopted the recommendations contained in the Second Environmental Performance Review of Morocco (information paper No. 7);

(b) Expressed appreciation to the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme and recognized its contribution to supporting countries in meeting national and environmental policy commitments;

(c) Expressed appreciated for the work of the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews in 2021;

(d) Invited members of the Committee to nominate their representatives to the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews;

(e) Welcomed the information provided on the activities of the Environmental Performance Review Programme, and expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for the excellent work in support of the Programme;

(f) Welcomed the national launch of the Third Environmental Performance Review of Uzbekistan;

(g) Took note of the continuation of the Third Environmental Performance Review of Azerbaijan;

(h) Took note of the next environmental performance reviews to be conducted, namely the Second Environmental Performance Review of Armenia and the Third Environmental Performance Review of Kyrgyzstan;

(i) Took note of the pending request made by Ukraine to undertake its next environmental performance review;

(j) Welcomed progress achieved in the implementation of the project entitled "Evidence-based environmental governance and sustainable environmental policies in support of the 2030 Agenda in South-East Europe" funded by the United Nations Development Account;

(k) Requested the ECE secretariat to continue activities with a regional approach as follow-up to national environmental performance reviews;

(l) Welcomed the activity to support the implementation of recommendations made in the environmental performance reviews of North Macedonia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan through the development of road maps by the three Governments, initiated with funds from the ECE Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation;

(m) Took note of the information provided by the secretariat on resource mobilization for the Environmental Performance Review Programme in 2020–2021 and, in particular, thanked:

- (i) Austria, Germany and Switzerland for their financial support;
- (ii) France, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg and the European Investment Bank for providing expertise;
- (iii) Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Romania, Switzerland and UNEP for having delegated their experts to serve in and support the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews;
- (iv) The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa for political support;
- (v) The United Nations Development Programme for logistical support;
- (n) Encouraged delegations to provide in-kind (expert) and financial support to the Environmental Performance Review Programme;
- (o) Expressed appreciation for the close cooperation of the ECE Environment, Statistical and Sustainable Energy Divisions, the Sustainable Development and Gender Unit, and the United Nations country teams with the Environmental Performance Review Programme.

## VII. Cross-sectoral activities

55. The Chair informed the Committee that, as per established practice, the secretariat had prepared a briefing note entitled Cross-sectoral activities under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Environment subprogramme, for the Committee's consideration at its twenty-seventh session (ECE/CEP/2021/4). The note presented the recent developments and plans for the future related to those activities and contained recommendations to the Committee concerning future work under its auspices.

56. A representative of the ECE secretariat updated the Committee on the recent developments under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP), in particular on the outcomes of the nineteenth session of the Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (Geneva (hybrid), 27 and 28 October 2021).

57. A representative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe briefed the Committee on the recent developments under the European Environment and Health Process.

58. A representative of the ECE secretariat updated the Committee on the recent developments in mainstreaming a gender perspective in environmental activities.

59. The Committee took note of the information provided in the document on Cross-sectoral activities under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Environment subprogramme (ECE/CEP/2021/4), and:

- (a) Also took note of the information provided on the work of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development and encouraged its members from the countries participating in the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development to remain informed of the process at the national level by establishing and maintaining working contacts with the Steering Committee members and focal points from their national administrations and non-governmental organizations;
- (b) Confirmed its willingness to continue close cooperation with the Steering Committee in the framework of the preparations for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;
- (c) Welcomed the work under THE PEP, expressed support for THE PEP and encouraged the participation of experts in the working groups that were to be established;
- (d) Took note of the progress report submitted by WHO and reconfirmed its commitment to contributing to the European Environment and Health Process;

(e) Also took note of the information provided with respect to gender mainstreaming across ECE activities and in environmental activities carried out by the Environment Division since the Committee's past session;

(f) Recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming in environmental activities, particularly in the light of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and emphasized that gender equality was both a goal in itself and a means of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development;

(g) Agreed to continue to mainstream a gender perspective in its activities.

## **VIII. Criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events**

60. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-fifth session, the Committee had approved the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events and requested the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to periodically verify the availability of data for 2018 and, if available, for all countries with economies in transition, to prepare revised criteria for financial support for approval by the Committee at its next session.<sup>14</sup>

61. The Chair informed the Committee that, throughout 2021, the secretariat had repeatedly examined the availability of the relevant data. Sufficiently comprehensive data had not been available in time for either the CEP Bureau meeting (2 June 2021, online) or the CEP Bureau meeting (20 September 2021, online).

62. Furthermore, the Chair informed the Committee that the data had become available in mid-October and the secretariat had updated the criteria for the consideration of the Bureau. The Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy had conducted electronic consultations of the revised and updated criteria during the last 10 days of October 2021 and recommended submitting the criteria to the Committee as annexed to information paper No. 8.

63. The Committee approved the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events, as presented in information paper No. 8, and requested the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to periodically verify the availability of data for 2021 and, if available for all countries with economies in transition, to prepare revised criteria for financial support for subsequent approval by the Committee.

## **IX. Annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2022 and outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2023**

64. The Chair recalled that, in December 2017, at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly (New York, 12 September–24 December 2017), through General Assembly resolution 72/266 on shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations, the States Members of the United Nations had approved the change from a biennial to an annual budget period on a trial basis from 2020 onwards.<sup>15</sup>

65. The Chair also recalled that, at its twenty-sixth session, the Committee had requested the Bureau to address the issue of timing in the definition of the programme of work and to oversee the appropriate balance with regard to its activities.<sup>16</sup>

66. The Chair informed the Committee that the ECE Executive Committee had helped the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy to address that issue. At its 115th meeting (Geneva, 5 March 2021) the Executive Committee had approved a document entitled

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<sup>14</sup> ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 50.

<sup>15</sup> A/RES/72/266, para. 6.

<sup>16</sup> ECE/CEP/2020/2, para. 60 (b).

“Sequential review of the proposed programmes of work of ECE subprogrammes” (informal document 2021/8).<sup>17</sup> In line with the sequential review procedure, the Committee would be invited to adopt the draft annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2022 (ECE/CEP/2021/5) and consider the “Outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2023” (information paper No. 9).

67. The Committee:

(a) Adopted the draft programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2022 (ECE/CEP/2021/5) and recommended that it be approved by the Executive Committee;

(b) Took note of the “Outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2023” as contained in information paper No. 9.

## **X. Presentation and exchange of views on the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme**

68. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-fifth session, the Committee had welcomed the information provided by UNEP on the ongoing preparations for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, and invited UNEP to continue to inform the Committee of relevant developments under the Assembly.<sup>18</sup>

69. Mr. Pozzi (Director, UNEP Regional Office for Europe) informed the Committee of the outcomes of the online meeting of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (Nairobi (online), 22 and 23 February 2021) and preparation of a resumed in-person meeting, to be held in February 2022.

70. The Committee:

(a) Welcomed the information provided by UNEP on the outcomes of the online meeting of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP and preparation of a resumed in-person meeting;

(b) Invited the UNEP Regional Office for Europe to continue briefing the Committee on relevant developments under the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP and in particular on the outcomes of its fifth session at the next session of the Committee.

## **XI. Calendar of meetings**

71. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-sixth session, the Committee had approved the proposed schedule of Committee and Bureau meetings until 2023.<sup>19</sup> She informed the Committee that the proposed schedule of meetings of the Committee and its Bureau for the period 2022–2024 was presented in information paper No. 10.

72. The Committee:

(a) Approved the proposed schedule of Committee and Bureau meetings for the period 2022–2024 (information paper No. 10);

(b) Decided to organize the Committee’s special session in Geneva, from 9 to 12 May 2022;<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> EXCOM/CONCLU/115, para. 39.

<sup>18</sup> ECE/CEP/2019/15, para. 57.

<sup>19</sup> ECE/CEP/2020/2, paras. 65 and 66.

<sup>20</sup> The session will take place on 9 May (afternoon), 10 and 11 May (morning and afternoon) and 12 May (morning).

(c) Took note of the request to check the possibility of moving the dates of the special session to avoid overlapping with other international meetings and asked the secretariat to inform the Bureau in that regard for future consideration by the Bureau;

(d) Agreed to the proposal by Portugal to organize an additional Bureau meeting tentatively at the end of January 2022 and thanked Portugal for the offer to host it in Lisbon.

## **XII. Election of officers**

73. The Chair informed the Committee that Mr. Yuri Tsaturov, a former Bureau member, had passed away on 8 April 2021.

74. Furthermore, the Chair informed the Committee that, based on the recent replacements and new nominations received, the secretariat had prepared information paper No. 11 presenting the list of candidates for the Bureau to be elected by the Committee.

75. The Committee:

(a) Decided to elect the Bureau of the Committee, as stated in information paper No. 11;

(b) Expressed its condolences regarding the passing away of Mr. Tsaturov, a long-standing member of the Bureau representing the Russian Federation and former Chair of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment;

(c) Expressed appreciation to the outgoing member of the Bureau, Ms. Biljana Filipovic Dusic, for her work;

(d) Took note of the information provided on the upcoming changes in the position of the representative of Belgium to the Bureau and agreed to include the agenda item on the election of officers in the agenda of the special session in May 2022.

## **XIII. Impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including on the Environment for Europe process**

76. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-sixth session, the Committee had welcomed the information provided by the representative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe on how the pandemic could be used as an opportunity to reset the world's environmental future and how a COVID-19 response could better support further progress towards the 2030 Agenda.<sup>21</sup>

77. The Chair also recalled that the Committee had agreed to further discuss the impact of the pandemic, including on the Environment for Europe process, at its next regular session.<sup>22</sup>

78. In view of a lack of interest from the delegations in taking the floor, the agenda item was closed.

## **XIV. Other business**

## **XV. List of decisions**

79. Supported by the secretariat, the Chair compiled and presented a summary of the outcomes of the twenty-seventh session and the decisions taken. Following a discussion, the draft list was finalized and approved.

80. The Chair informed the Committee that the list of decisions would be circulated through all Geneva Permanent Representations for approval by silence procedure of 72 hours (through the Executive Committee web page). If the silence was not broken through an

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<sup>21</sup> ECE/CEP/2020/2, para. 73.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., para. 74 (c).

objection, the decisions would be deemed adopted and the approved list of decisions would be uploaded to the session web page. If the silence was broken for a given decision, it would be referred back to the Committee.

## **XVI. Closure of the meeting**

81. The Committee requested the Bureau and the secretariat to follow up on the Committee's decisions, including by preparing the documents and reports necessary for the Committee's work at its next session.

82. The Committee expressed appreciation for the work of the ECE secretariat in preparation of the current meeting.

83. The Committee expressed gratitude for the work of the interpreters and the Interprefey technical team in servicing the current meeting.

84. The Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.

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