



Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Sustainable Energy****Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition****Seventeenth session**

Geneva, 21-22 March 2022

Report of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition**I. Introduction**

1. The seventeenth session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane (CMM) and Just Transition was held on 21-22 March 2022 in Geneva and online.
2. This report summarizes the discussions on the work of the Group of Experts at its seventeenth session. All the documents and presentations of the session are available on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) website.¹

II. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by experts from the following ECE member States: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.
4. Experts from Australia, China, India, and Mongolia participated under Article 11 of the ECE's Terms of Reference.
5. The International Energy Agency (IEA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the United Nations Environment Programme were represented. Representatives from the European Union also participated.
6. The following international associations were represented: Environmental Defense Fund, European Association for Coal and Lignite, Global Methane Initiative (GMI), International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO), Methane Action, and Responsible Mining Foundation (RMF).
7. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated: American Carbon Registry - Winrock International, Assocarboni General Association of Coal Operators, Association of Donbass Mining Towns, Association of Geological

¹ Official documents of the session are available at <http://documents.un.org/>. Unofficial room documents and presentations delivered at the meeting are available on the ECE website at: <https://unece.org/info/Sustainable-Energy/Coal-Mine-Methane/events/363735>.



Researchers JADE, Center for Human Rights and Environment, Clean Air Task Force, ClientEarth, Ember, InStrat Foundation, International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane in China, Methane Center PA, and Scientific and Technical Mining Association.

8. The private sector was represented by experts from 15 companies. Academia was also represented by experts from 11 universities and scientific institutes.

III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2022/1

9. The provisional agenda as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2022/1 was adopted without amendment.

IV. Opening remarks (agenda item 2)

10. In his opening remarks, the Chair of the Group of Experts observed that the world continued to face the challenges of extreme weather events brought on by climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and high energy prices resulting from the shortages in supply chains and the geopolitical disturbances caused by the war in Ukraine. He stressed that as challenges increase in frequency and difficulty, it was important for the Group to remain open to discussion allowing for diversity of ideas and points of view to be voiced openly and without fear so that all the experts could work together on finding the best solutions. The Chair noted that in spite of the challenges related to the pandemic, the Group had managed to persist and had continued to successfully deliver on its mandated tasks. He commended the recently issued guidance on monitoring reporting and verification of methane emissions from coal mines, noting that this was a new contribution to the Group's body of work. He thanked the authors of the publication and expressed the hope that it would be endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for use by all UN Member States. Two earlier publications on CMM (Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Use in Coal Mines) and abandoned mine methane (AMM) (Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Recovery and Use from Abandoned Coal Mines) produced by the Group have been endorsed by ECOSOC. Talking about current events, the Chair observed that the war in Ukraine is illegal and recalled that the UN Secretary-General had declared the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation a violation of the United Nations Charter. Aside from noting with regret the horrific human tragedy that was being caused by the ongoing hostilities, he talked about the environmental consequences of the war. He also pointed to energy-related ramifications of the conflict observing that as energy shortages became more intense many countries would see that as an opportunity to advance adoption of higher energy efficiency practices and installation of new renewable energy systems. Other countries may though advocate to increase the production and use of fossil fuels and/or nuclear energy. However, because of the long construction times of fossil fuel and nuclear power plants this would not have a meaningful direct impact on short and mid-term energy shortages. Consequently, the Chair stated that the secretariat should recognize the diversity of the region and be ready to help individual member States in finding the solutions that match the country's particular needs and capabilities. He argued that the Group should focus on the complexities of the coal life cycle and on determining how and where coal can be a part of the solution. The Chair noted that coal that is used for energy might in certain cases be relatively easily supplanted. In contrast, he observed, that this is not the case for coal used in metallurgy, cement, and other chemical processes. These sectors will need to wait many years for a commercial-scale technology based on an alternative fuel to coal. In conclusion, the Chair stressed that the Group needed to take the long view regarding all the areas that it is mandated to work on, i.e., mine safety, monitoring, mitigation and use of coal associated methane emissions, as well as mine closure and just transition. In that context, he announced that in the coming weeks and months, the Group would be undergoing a process of reorganization revolving around the establishment of three tasks forces, each of which focusing on one of the above-mentioned thematic areas.

11. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the work of the Bureau and the secretariat and their efforts to manage and direct the Group's work plan between annual sessions despite human and financial resource constraints and the difficult situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

V. Activities and priorities of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and matters for consideration by the Group of Experts (agenda item 3)

A. Key messages and policy recommendations for the seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe

12. The secretariat updated the Group of Experts on the outcomes of the thirtieth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy (22-24 September 2021).

13. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation that the Committee had adopted the Group of Experts' work plan for 2022-2023.

14. The Group of Experts was informed about and supported the Committee's endorsement of the revised strategic review of the ECE sustainable energy subprogramme (ECE/ENERGY/2021/4). The Group of Experts committed to reflect the strategic review in its future work. The Group of Experts once again called on ECE member States to provide the resources needed to accomplish activities that cannot be delivered through the regular budget.

15. The Group of Experts was informed about the growing interest from member States to accelerate action to mitigate methane emissions. The Group of Experts is committed to support these activities throughout the coal value chain. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the Global Methane Pledge², congratulated member States that have joined the pledge and invited others to do so. In support of the Global Methane Pledge, the Group of Experts recommended to member States to support a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly declaring an International Decade for Methane Management. The Group of Experts also recommended to continue hosting, co-hosting, and coordinating events that foster dialogue and information exchange about best practices in methane emissions' monitoring and mitigation.

16. The secretariat informed the Group of Experts that, during the thirtieth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, the Chair of the Group received an award in recognition of his longstanding contribution to and support of the work of the ECE sustainable energy subprogramme, including coordinating the best practice guidance documents on recovery and use of coal mine methane (CMM)³ and AMM⁴. Similarly, the Group was informed that the founding members of the International Centres of Excellence on CMM (ICE-CMM) in Poland and in China also received awards honouring their contributions to the development and support of the Centres and dissemination of best practices on CMM in their respective countries and beyond.

B. Revision of the Group's name, mandate, and terms of reference

17. The Group of Experts was informed that the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its thirtieth session approved the requested change of the name of the Group to the Group of

² <https://www.globalmethanepledge.org/>

³ https://unece.org/DAM/energy/images/CMM/CMM_CE/BPG_2017.pdf

⁴ https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/energy/images/CMM/CMM_CE/Best_Practice_Guidance_for_Effective_Methane_Recovery_and_Use_from_Abandoned_Coal_Mines_FINAL__with_covers_.pdf

Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition. The Committee also approved the change of the mandate and terms of reference of the Group pending requested clarifications on both.⁵

18. Subsequently, the Executive Committee of ECE endorsed the Committee's decisions at its meeting on 26 January 2022 (ECE/EX/2022/L3 para 3. (d)).

19. The Committee on Sustainable Energy requested the Group of Experts to consider the proposed clarifications to its mandate and terms of reference at its seventeenth session. Following discussion of the Committee's proposed clarifications and changes, the Group of Experts recommended a number of amendments to the text of its mandate and terms of reference, which will be presented to the Committee at its thirty-first session. The agreed text of the Group's mandate reads as follows:

"1. The mandate of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition (the Group of Experts) is to promote efficient environmentally sustainable transition of industries along the coal value chain ensuring the reduction of associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and social equity of the process through substantive, results-oriented activities that may help the recovery and use of methane in order to reduce the risks of explosions in coal mines in the context of climate change mitigation and to contribute to sustainable development, including the support of communities, local economies and the environment in the just transition process.

2. The areas of work of the Group of Experts are:

(a) Reduction and management of methane emissions through for example recovery and use of methane from active, closed, and/or abandoned coal mines aimed at reducing the risks of explosions, mitigating climate change, and supporting sustainable development;

(b) For those countries or regions/states that choose to cease coal mining and related activities, offering support on request on preparation of coal mines and coal mining regions and communities for mine closure and reorientation of the local economies;

(c) Environmentally sustainable transition and repurposing of mines and existing mining infrastructure and facilitating development of new profiles of economic activity and business models that preserve social cohesion and cultural heritage of the affected localities.

3. The Group of Experts requests the Committee on Sustainable Energy to renew its mandate until 31 December 2023, with the possibility of extension."

VI. Report on implementation of the work plan for 2020-2021 (agenda item 4)

20. The Group of Experts noted that its work plan for 2020-2021 was fully implemented. The Chair and the secretariat thanked the members of the Group for their contributions to delivering on the mandated activities.

21. The Group of Experts thanked the ICE-CMMs in Poland and in China for their efforts and initiatives supporting the Group's work on disseminating and promoting best practices in methane detection, monitoring, capture, and use, approved their annual reports for 2021, and approved their work plans for 2022. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the work being undertaken by the Methane Center located in the Russian Federation. The Group of Experts further noted the encouragement from the Committee to establish additional centres and requested the secretariat to seek additional partners and extrabudgetary resources to this end.

⁵ ECE/ENERGY/137, para 79 <https://unece.org/sed/documents/2021/09/reports/report-committee-sustainable-energy-its-thirtieth-session>

VII. Work plan for 2022-2023 (agenda item 5)

22. The secretariat informed the Group that the Committee at its thirtieth session approved the Group's work plan for 2022-2023.
23. The Chair of the Group of Experts encouraged all its members to engage actively in the work of the Group to assure timely and effective implementation.
24. The Group requested the Bureau of the Group to develop, in cooperation with the secretariat, proposals to deepen the cooperation for promotion and dissemination of best practices for degassing and utilizing of CMM to mitigate the risk of explosions in coal mines and to submit them to the Group for consideration.
25. In view of the broadened mandate of the Group to address just transition issues, the Group discussed the need to expand its membership to include relevant stakeholder groups. The Group requested the Bureau in cooperation with the secretariat to develop an outreach plan for those stakeholder groups. The Group also discussed the value of establishing task forces or working groups to deliver on specific activities under the work plan. Following a presentation by the Chair of possible options, including the establishment of three task forces focussed on (i) mine safety, monitoring, mitigation and use of coal associated methane emissions; (ii) mine closure; and (iii) just transition, the Group of Experts requested the Bureau to implement this approach.

VIII. Methane emissions from coal mines (agenda item 6)

26. The Group of Experts discussed proposed methane legislation presented by the European Commission in December 2021. Following the debate, the Group of Experts identified a number of provisions of support and concern that will be relayed to the European Commission and requested the Chair and the secretariat to submit the agreed feedback to the European Commission through the consultation procedure established for that purpose.
27. The Group of Experts was presented with the newly published *Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation* (ECE/ENERGY/139 and ECE Energy Series No. 71). It congratulated the Task Force that developed the document for its work. The Group of Experts observed that reliable emissions data are necessary for designing effective policies on control and reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and for accurate evaluation of available mitigation opportunities. It also highlighted the immediate need for national emissions monitoring and reporting schemes based on comparable methodologies, called upon member States to develop such schemes and proposed to assess the comparability and merits of the various methodologies that are being used.
28. In the context of efforts to reduce global methane emissions, the Group of Experts highlighted the need to incorporate in all methane emissions reduction initiatives an understanding that any such actions could have implications that, if not properly addressed, might harm communities and the global flow of strategic resources.

IX. Transition of the coal mining sector (agenda item 7)

29. The Group of Experts discussed best strategies for incorporating into its work the challenges related to just transitions in coal mining regions. It observed that the transition of the coal sector is a complex process which is proceeding at an uneven pace across the ECE region.
30. The Group of Experts noted that infrastructure modernization and reorientation in coal mining regions towards a less mono-sectoral economy will have a significant impact on the social strata of affected localities and called upon member States to develop practical solutions and mechanisms aimed at alleviating shocks to vulnerable populations.
31. The Group of Experts considered the impacts that transformation of coal mining regions might have on inhabitants who do not have a direct economic link to the coal mining

industry. The consequences for and impacts on women in particular were highlighted through a series of presentations by BHP Mitsubishi Alliance, International Institute for Sustainable Development, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Standardization, Responsible Mining Foundation, and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the discussion that followed. The Group of Experts called on policymakers to give due attention to the problem and to take it into account when developing strategies for targeted regions to ensure that support is provided not only to directly affected groups such as laid-off mine workers, but also to other individuals affected by the transition.

X. Explosion risk reduction (agenda item 8)

32. The Group of Experts held a discussion on explosion risk reduction, analysing the most recent methane-related accidents in coal mines and identifying best practices helping to prevent such tragedies in the future. The Group of Experts noted that the environmental challenges of methane emissions from the coal sector and the safety and social implications of unsafe working conditions in underground coal mines around the world are both important and interconnected and called upon member States to not underestimate the issue.

XI. Future work of the Group of Experts (agenda item 9)

33. The secretariat reported to the Group of Experts on its online activities and presented suggestions on how such solutions could benefit the future work of the Group. The continued public health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the resulting growing popularity and effectiveness of modern modes of communication were noted. The Group of Experts thanked the secretariat for its work and initiative in organizing online events and requested that it cooperate with the Bureau on identifying and developing instruments that could enhance delivery of the Group's mandated tasks. However, the Group of Experts also recognized that conducting meetings, workshops, conferences and other events in person are of enormous benefit to the members and their respective countries and institutions. Therefore, to the extent possible and consistent with global public health standards, the Group of Experts expressed its wish to continue engaging at in-person events.

34. The Group of Experts discussed the potential for cooperation with the other groups of experts operating under the umbrella of the Committee on Sustainable Energy. It was presented with the document "United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) – Draft Guidance for Application to Coal Bed Methane (CBM)" (ECE/ENERGY/GE.3/2022/8) developed by the Expert Group on Resource Management. Members of the Group of Experts were thanked for comments they provided on the draft document. The Group was asked to provide further feedback as the work on the document proceeds. The Group of Experts expressed its willingness to continue contributing to that work and requested the secretariat to ensure effective communication between the Groups.

35. The Group of Experts was informed about the Secretary-General's Working Group on Extractive Industries. The Group of Experts expressed its interest to contribute to the work of the Working Group once established and requested the secretariat to explore whether it would be possible to join and support the initiative, and if so, to undertake, in coordination with the Bureau, the necessary steps to make that happen.

XII. Twelfth joint meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and the Global Methane Initiative Coal Subcommittee (agenda item 10)

36. The Group of Experts thanked the secretariat of the Coal Subcommittee of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) and its members for their continued support and collaboration. Referring to the most recent joint project, the Group of Experts thanked the GMI Coal

Subcommittee for its support in developing *the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation* (ECE/ENERGY/139 and ECE Energy Series No. 71).

37. The Group of Experts expressed interest in continuing to develop joint projects with GMI and requested the secretariat to ensure, facilitate, and coordinate continued cooperation between the two entities.

38. The Group of Experts expressed interest to participate in the next Global Methane Forum. The Group requested the secretariat to ensure that topics related to the work of the Group are featured in the event's agenda to the extent possible.

XIII. Preparations for the eighteenth session of the Group of Experts (agenda item 11)

39. The eighteenth session will be held on 20-21 March 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland.

XIV. Any other business (agenda item 12)

40. The Group of Experts noted the need to secure additional extrabudgetary resources to deliver results-oriented projects.

XV. Adoption of conclusions and recommendations (agenda item 13)

Documentation: CMM-17/2022/INF.1 - Unofficial room document: Draft Conclusions and Recommendations arising from the Seventeenth Session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane dated 28 February 2022.

41. The conclusions and recommendations were adopted and are included under the relevant agenda items highlighted in this report.

XVI. Adoption of the report and close of the meeting (agenda item 14)

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