

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
127th Meeting
Geneva, 16 March 2023

EXCOM/CONCLU/127.Rev1

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda

1. The provisional draft agenda for the 127th meeting was adopted.

Item 2 – Chair’s conclusions from the last meeting

2. The conclusions from the 126th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/126) were adopted.

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

3. The Secretary of the Commission informed that, since the last meeting of EXCOM, one silence procedures had been concluded related to formal meetings with remote participation, namely the 15th session of the Working Party on Automated/Autonomous and Connected Vehicles (GRVA). The silence had not been broken for this procedure and its respective decision was thus considered adopted. Full details were available on the UNECE website.

Item 4 - Matters relating to the Standing Working Group on Ageing:

a) Meeting with the Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing

4. The Chair welcomed the Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing, Mr. Alfredo Ferrante (Italy), who made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of the Standing Working Group over the past year and its plans for the future. He invited EXCOM to approve the latest programme of work of the Population component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme for 2023.
5. The representative of Turkmenistan highlighted the need for all member States, particularly those from Central Asia, to strengthen the capacity to ensure the continuity of long-term care and social services for older people and to prevent social exclusion and inequality in old age. He urged the chair of the Working Group to consider Turkmenistan when conducting capacity-building seminars, developing guidelines, tools, and training materials.
6. The representative of the European Union and its member States noted the challenges and opportunities of an older population in the UNECE region. He expressed appreciation for the achievements of the Working Group, including the organization of the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing in July 2022 in Rome and the fourth review of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.
7. The representative of the Republic of Moldova expressed appreciation for the support received throughout last year to conduct the 10-year evaluation of the implementation of the national road map on mainstreaming ageing and to train more than 150 civil

servants. She stated that her country would welcome strengthening its cooperation with UNECE on 3 topics: (i) to ensure full integration of older persons' needs in the national legal framework, (ii) to promote the WHO Age-friendly Cities Framework and (iii) to develop digital literacy programmes for older persons to access public services.

8. The Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing, Mr. Alfredo Ferrante (Italy), thanked delegations for their comments. He noted the special interest of the Working Group in the issue of digital inclusion, which is key for attaining real inclusion of older persons in our society. He indicated readiness to engage on this topic in the intersessional period following the upcoming Commission.
9. The Secretary of the Standing Working Group on Ageing added that UNECE would follow up on the requests for capacity-building made by Turkmenistan and the Republic of Moldova.
10. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Standing Working Group on Ageing for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Working Group and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

b) Decisions on matters relating to the Standing Working Group on Ageing

11. The representative of the Russian Federation stated that they had no objection to the adoption of the programme of work.
12. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the programme of work of the Population component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme for 2023, as contained in the document ECE/WG.1/2022/5.

Item 5 - Matters relating to the Inland Transport Committee

a) Meeting with the Chair of the Inland Transport Committee

13. The Chair welcomed the Chair of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC), Ms. Hannie MEESTERS (the Netherlands), who made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of the Committee over the past year and its plans for the future. She invited EXCOM to approve the programme of work of the Transport subprogramme, renew the mandate of two Groups of Experts and the terms of reference of two subsidiary bodies.
14. The representative of the European Union and its member States appreciated the work of the ITC, recognizing in particular its role as a global platform for discussing policy and regulatory options. He added that, given the strong participation of non-UNECE countries, it would be useful to reflect on meeting modalities, including online ones. He highlighted the important work undertaken by ITC on the climate impact of inland transport. He welcomed the regulatory efforts to facilitate the rollout of electric vehicles, the progress towards a unified railway law between Europe and Asia and the inclusion of digital technologies to improve inland transport. He commended the technical assistance provided by the secretariat to help Ukraine cope with the negative impact of Russian aggression on regional transport connectivity.

15. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland welcomed the focus on climate change at the 85th session of the Inland Transport Committee, given the high contribution of inland transport to the total transport greenhouse gases emissions. He welcomed the extension of the mandate of the Group of Experts on drafting a new Legal Instrument on the Use of Automated Vehicles in Traffic (LIAV) until 31 December 2024.
16. The representative of the United States stated his concern about an extra-budgetary contribution made to Working Party 29 to provide for remote simultaneous interpretation (RSI) without EXCOM approval. He added that EXCOM had approved projects involving funding for RSI on other occasions and that EXCOM standards for approval of extrabudgetary contributions should be consistent. He sought clarification on related ECE policy.
17. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed deep regret that the 85th session of the ITC had taken place in a politicised atmosphere. She noted that no progress had been made on solving problems with the implementation of the AETR. She stressed that unilateral restrictive measures imposed by the EU have a negative impact on regional transport connectivity.. She expressed disappointment about the position of the western membership to push through decisions which contradicted the Terms of References of UNECE, as they were directed against a specific country. She emphasised that her country was not in agreement with decision 39, adopted by vote at the 85th session, and noted that this decision that made it impossible for some countries to meet their legal obligations under the instrument, and that the interpretation by member States of the secretariat's responsibilities undermines the credibility of the initiators of such decisions and raises the question of secretariat's fulfilment of its obligations under Article 100 of the UN Charter. She condemned the use of the UNECE by Ukraine, the EU, the USA and the UK to push through politically biased anti-Russian decisions. She noted the activity of the secretariat to try to minimise the negative consequences of the politicisation of the Committee's work and its role of mediator in a situation where a direct dialogue was not possible.
18. The representative of the European Union and its member States stated that the AETR issue had been discussed at length on several occasions. He added that the renewal of the administrative arrangements had been decided validly by SC.1 in October 2022 and that he expected the secretariat to sign the arrangement without further delay. He concluded by saying that the European Union and its member States disagreed with the Russian Federation's characterization of the effects of the decision.
19. The Chair of the ITC thanked delegations for their comments.
20. The Executive Secretary explained that a group of experts was working on finding an agreeable solution regarding the AETR issue. With regard to RSI, she stated that UNECE had been informed by UNOG that business continuity measures in Geneva would be extended until 30 June 2023. However, the Controller advised that costs would have to be covered by the client entities for this additional service and could not be absorbed if no funding could be identified in some entities. As a result, UNOG is providing related services only on a reimbursable basis. With regard to extrabudgetary funding, she added that the secretariat continued to be guided by decision A(65), para. 31 (a) of Annex III (E/2013/37 p.26): *member States (...) agreed that the mobilization, allocation and use of extrabudgetary resources should be done in accordance with the UN rules and procedures, in support of ECE's mandate and subject to EXCOM's approval of*

extrabudgetary projects. To assure transparency and accountability on the use of these resources EXCOM should be informed, throughout the project cycle, of the use of resources and the concrete results achieved. Special procedures adopted by member States for the COVID 19 period were set to expire in mid-May and that she did not foresee any further extension. Many lessons had been learned from the pandemic, including the benefits of new digital formats. She also recalled the decision taken by EXCOM in July 2020 (EXCOM/CONCLU/110, para 18), namely, to develop a proposal for an extrabudgetary project on a review of existing meeting formats and servicing arrangements, including for capacity-building activities, drawing on the lessons from the COVID-19 crisis response and provide recommendations to EXCOM for consideration. In closing, she proposed that after the Commission, an informal process could be launched with interested delegations and key stakeholders to scope a project on future working methods.

21. 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

22. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves:
 - (a) The programme of work of the Transport subprogramme for 2023, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/2023/11;
 - (b) The renewal of the mandate of the Group of Experts on drafting a new Legal Instrument on the Use of Automated Vehicles in Traffic (LIAV), as contained in document ECE/TRANS/2023/L.1/Add.1 until 31 December 2024;
 - (c) The renewal of the mandate of the Group of Experts on European Agreement Concerning Work of Crews of Vehicles Engaged in International Road Transport (AETR), as contained in document ECE/TRANS/2023/L.1 until 30 June 2025;
 - (d) The terms of reference and the establishment of the Revisions Committee of the Model Rules on the Permanent Identification of Railway Rolling Stock, as contained in Annex III to document ECE/TRANS/2023/9;
 - (e) The revised terms of reference of the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2), as contained in Annex I to document ECE/TRANS/2023/9.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 6 - Preparations for the seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe

23. The Chair thanked the secretariat for issuing the documentation for the session in a timely manner and for making it available on the UNECE website. He encouraged delegations to review the materials in advance to facilitate a rich discussion during the session, especially on to the high-level theme, highlighting the background paper and the toolbox of relevant ECE instruments, contained in documents E/ECE/2023/1504 and 1505, respectively.
24. The representative of Austria, in her capacity as Chair of the Commission, updated on efforts made to forge consensus on a draft high-level statement for consideration at the Seventieth session. As it had not been possible for member States to reach agreement on a common vision at this time, these efforts had been suspended and delegations had been

informed accordingly at informal consultations on 28 February.

25. The Chair further informed that on 6 March, 2023, the secretariat had been requested to circulate document E/ECE/2023/L.1 in languages. This draft resolution had been submitted on 2 March by the European Union and its Member States, Georgia, North Macedonia, Norway, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America for consideration at the Seventieth Session under item 4, "Consideration of the high-level statement". He added that the document was available on the UNECE website.
26. The representative of the Russian Federation confirmed that as a result of informal consultations member States did not succeed to elaborate a text of the high-level statement acceptable to all. She queried why the draft resolution L.1 had not been presented during informals or tabled for consideration by EXCOM. She stated that her delegation did not consider the draft resolution a basic document, to be circulated 42 days prior to the session under Rule 3 of the UNECE Rules of Procedure (RoPs). She said that in the absence of any provisions under the Commission's RoPs, UNECE should follow the RoPs of its parent body ECOSOC. The secretariat should liaise with the Office of Legal Affairs to confirm if it fell within the mandate of UNECE, which did not include issues related to peace and security, territorial integrity, and human rights. She condemned the attempts of the EU and the USA to promote anti-Russian rhetoric in the UNECE, which will definitely contribute to deepening the split between its members and destabilize the work of the regional commission.
27. The representative of Belarus noted that document E/ECE/2023/L.1 was the only draft decision before the session which had not been discussed by all member States in advance. She added that it did not align to the agenda item under which it was being presented. She concluded that the approach taken to present the document violated the key working principles of UNECE and was in breach of EXCOM ToR.
28. The Secretary of the Commission stated that the submitting delegations had requested that draft resolution E/ECE/2023/L.1 be transmitted to the Commission for its consideration under agenda item 4. The secretariat had processed the text as received and, as requested, had distributed it in the three ECE languages to other Member States, in line with the deadlines set out in the Commission RoPs. As per standing practice, all Commission documents were made available on the Commission website of UNECE.
29. The representative of the United States stated that the draft resolution had been tabled in accordance with Rule 3 and Rule 6 of the Commission's RoP. EXCOM's RoPs merely stipulated in Rule 3c that "EXCOM shall prepare the sessions of the Commission". While he acknowledged that in the past UNECE had a long-standing practice of consensus-based documents, the UNECE region was, at the moment, in an unprecedented situation. Further, the Commission's RoP contained a chapter on voting and the existence of this chapter acknowledged that in rare cases, consensus might not be possible. He further added that, along with the European Union, he was available to have bilateral consultations with any interested member States.
30. The representative of the European Union and its member States stated that the EU, its Member States, together with the like-minded countries, were deeply concerned and strongly condemned the Russian aggression against Ukraine. It had had a devastating impact on people, economy and infrastructure of Ukraine and had brought about far-reaching consequences for other countries in the region. The aggression had also

undermined cooperation within UNECE, for example in areas such as environment, energy or transport. Therefore, the consideration of the draft resolution on “Social and economic effects of the Russian aggression against Ukraine” was very relevant for the Commission, the highest governing body of UNECE, which was meeting for the first time since the start of the invasion in February 2022. The draft resolution was not intended to be a high-level statement. He called on all member States to support the resolution during the Commission session.

31. The representative of the Russian Federation rejected all accusations with respect to destruction of energy and transport infrastructure and disrupting of transport flows. Regarding the procedural issues, she noted that no explanation had been provided as to why the draft resolution had not been presented at the previous EXCOM meeting, especially as it would not be likely to find support by all delegations. She queried whether resolutions could be presented 24 hours before voting, as indicated in the RoPs, as there were no specific provisions in the UNECE RoPs on advancing resolutions and decisions.
32. The representative of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland echoed the statements by the United States and the European Union that document E/ECE/2023/L.1 was a draft resolution for consideration of the Commission, and not the high-level statement. As the rest of the submitting delegations, his country was available for consultations on the draft resolution for adoption by consensus. He concluded by saying that the resolution rightly noted that Europe would not be secure until Ukraine's sovereignty was restored and there was a just peace that respects Ukraine's rights under the Charter of the United Nations, international law, and General Assembly resolutions on the territorial integrity of Ukraine.
33. The Secretary of the Commission confirmed that there were only two rules in the Commission RoP that spoke to the matter of documentation. Past practice offered little additional guidance: In a recent Commission session, an ad hoc proposal for a decision had not been deemed receivable, as there had not been sufficient lead time for its consideration in the two-day session.
34. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the submission of the draft decision on items related to the Inland Transport Committee, as contained in informal document 2023/12, to the seventieth session of the Commission for its consideration under item 7. The Chair then moved on to another topic under this item agenda: the programme and logistics of the session.
35. The Executive Secretary invited all delegations to accredit their delegations expeditiously, encouraging gender balance and the inclusion of a youth representative. She hoped for strong and senior level representation, which could be facilitated by the remote participation options. Based on the number of youth delegates present at the session, an intergenerational dialogue over lunch time could be organized to explore together how to embed better this future-oriented focus in the UNECE work. She further invited the membership to the traditional reception in the evening of the first day of the Commission. To set the scene, the virtual side-event would be held from 3-5 April, with an impressive lineup of 11 sessions and some 63 speakers.
36. The representative of Turkmenistan requested more information about the status of candidacies to the position of Chair and Vice-Chairs. He added that, in these difficult times for the region, the UNECE Bureau had been led by three neutral countries for the first time in UNECE history.

37. The Chair stated that thus far two candidacies for the position of Chair had been received, namely by Turkmenistan and Switzerland. For the two positions of Vice-Chair, no candidacies had been received so far. Candidacies to the Bureau could still be submitted.

Item 7 - Preparations for the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, including linkages with the SDG Summit

38. The Executive Secretary briefed EXCOM about the upcoming Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held on 29-30 March 2023. She explained that the multiple crises affecting the region, including the war in Ukraine, but also the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic; the food, energy and cost-of-living crises; the economic downturn; and the financial vulnerabilities, were adversely affecting the region's progress towards the SDGs. UNECE's annual SDG Progress Report, which had been issued last week, showed that the region was off track to achieve the vast majority of measurable SDG targets, and was sliding back in some areas. In the margins of the Forum, over 30 side events would be held, mostly online. The outcomes of the Regional Forum would feed into the High-level Political Forum in July as usual, but also into the SDG Summit at the General Assembly in September, which would be a pivotal moment at the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda.

Item 8 - Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

39. EXCOM considered seven extrabudgetary projects presented for approval today, as contained in informal documents 2023/13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19.
40. Regarding project 2023/19, the representative of Ukraine expressed gratitude to the government of Germany for the decision to support project 2023/19 and stated that he expected the project to be approved at this meeting.
41. The representative of the Russian Federation considered the chosen direction of assistance as useful. She cautioned against hasty action on the proposed project. She requested the secretariat to include in the project template a section on the purpose and description of the project and add the proviso "*when the security situation allows and taking into account the developments in the field*". She sought clarification as to why such a large project should be additionally supported by the regular budget, namely 3 months of P4. She also requested the Secretariat to provide more detailed information on the selection of local NGOs to which almost half of the project funds would be transferred. Further, she requested information on the proposed location of UN staff during their work on the project in the two project cities and recommended that the Department for Safety and Security at Headquarters be consulted for guidance. She requested that the information on these issues be provided in writing prior to further consideration of the project.
42. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland expressed support for the adoption of project 2023/19.
43. The representative of the United States supported the adoption of project 2023/19.
44. The representative of the European Union and its member States expressed strong support for project 2023/19 and underlined the urgency to start the work as soon as possible to provide support to Ukraine.

45. The representative of Germany, aligning herself with the statement by the European Union and its member States, expressed appreciation for UNECE's commitment to support the cities of Kharkiv and Mykolaiv in the field of urban planning, stated the commitment of the German Government to support this project with the amount of 4,700,000 € and urged all Member States to approve project 2023/19 at the present meeting.
46. The representative of Israel supported project 2023/19 and condemned attacks targeting civilians and infrastructure across Ukraine.
47. Regarding project 2023/13, the representative of the Russian Federation stated that her delegation would require more time to study the project, as another initiative, to be supported by Russian funding, was under preparation that related closely to some of the proposed activities. She requested to postpone consideration of the project until the next session of EXCOM.
48. The representative of the European Union and its member States expressed strong support to project 2023/13, stressing the importance of the project for the connectivity and resilience of Central Asia and as an enabler to the transition for greener energy sources.
49. The representative of Germany, aligning herself with the statement by the European Union and its member States, supported project 2023/13, highlighting the contribution of the project to the UNECE subprogramme on sustainable energy.
50. Regarding project 2023/14, the representative of the Russian Federation raised some queries about i) prior review by UNECE governing bodies of the initiative to create a repository of data for the joint UNECE-FAO session; ii) the role of an international expert, to be hired under the project, and the organization of consultations; and iii) engagement of UNECE governing bodies in the consideration of guidelines for the low carbon construction in cities.
51. The Director of the Forests, Land and Housing Division clarified that the project aimed at enlarging an existing repository, not creating a new one. The international expert would be hired for software and database preparation. Regarding the guidelines for carbon construction in cities, any guidelines developed within the scope of the projects would be sent to the Committee for approval, as appropriate after prior consideration by the working party.
52. The representative of the European Union and its member States strongly regretted that no consensus had been found on projects 2023/13 and 2023/19 and called on the Bureau and the secretariat to ensure that decisions could be taken at the next EXCOM meeting.
53. The representative of Germany, aligning herself with the statement by the European Union and its member States, expressed regret that no consensus had been found on projects 2023/13 and 2023/19 and called on the Bureau and the Secretariat to take the necessary steps to facilitate the approval of the project at the next EXCOM meeting.
54. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary projects contained in informal documents 2023/14, 2023/15, 2023/16, 2023/17 and 2023/18. As there was no consensus regarding projects 2023/13 and 2023/19, he requested the secretariat to initiate

informal consultations with interested delegates to be able to consider both projects further at the next EXCOM.

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

55. Regarding cooperation with other organizations, the Executive Secretary informed EXCOM of two Memoranda of Understanding under preparation. The purpose of the MoU with the **High Performance Buildings Initiative (HPBI)** was to set forth a unified framework for cooperation, to further develop and disseminate international standards as expressed in the Framework Guidelines, as well as to enable collaboration with other networks, alliances and groups of entities active in the area of energy efficiency in built environments. Such a common framework would ensure greater coherence in the engagement with partner entities.

56. The second MoU is planned with the **International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA)**. It focuses on strengthening the linkages between the interconnection of FIATA's digitalized transport documents, in particular the FIATA Multimodal Transport Bill of Lading (FLB), with the eTIR International System platform.

57. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM of her attendance to the following recent meetings and missions:

- **31 January - 3 February 2023, Geneva:** 55th session of the Implementation Committee (Espoo Convention)
- **1 - 3 February, New York:** ECOSOC Coordination Segment, Meeting with ESs
- **6 February 2023, Geneva:** 95th session of the TIR Executive Board
- **16 - 17 February 2023, Geneva:** 15th meeting of the Implementation Committee of the Water Convention
- **21 - 24 February 2023, Geneva:** 85th session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC)
- **07 - 08 March, 2023, Geneva:** 13th meeting of the Protocol on PRTRs Compliance Committee
- **13 - 17 March 2023, Geneva:** Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety (86th session of WP.1)
- **16 March 2023, Gothenburg:** Forum for International Cooperation on Air Pollution (not personally attended)

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

- **22 - 24 March 2023, New York:** UN 2023 Water Conference (following the United Nations Senior Women Leaders Retreat 2023)
- **29 - 30 March, Geneva:** 2023 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
- **3 - 5 April 2023, online:** Virtual side events of the 70th session of the Commission
- **18 - 19 April 2023, Geneva:** 70th session of the Commission
- **4 - 6 May 2023, Nairobi:** CEB Spring 2023 session

Item 10 – Any other business

40. The Chair informed EXCOM that its next meeting would take place on 15 May in the morning.
