

UNECE Group of Experts Coal Mine Methane Bureau Call

20 August 2023

16:00 - 17:30 (Geneva time)

MINUTES

Participants:

Bureau Members:

Present

- Mr. Ray Pilcher (Chair)
- Mr. Lukasz Kroplewski
- Ms. Felicia Ruiz
- Mr. Jacek Skiba
- Mr. Clark Talkington

Apologies

- Mr. Yuriy Bobrov
- Mr. Neil Butler
- Mr. David Creedy
- Ms. Bobbie Foot
- Ms. Aida Haracic
- Mr. Zhixin JIN
- Mr. C. Ozgen Karacan
- Ms. Alicja Krzemien
- Mr. Joulieu Moulin
- Ms. Volha Roshchanka

Secretariat:

- Mr. Michal Drabik

Draft agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Update on the recent and the upcoming activities of the Group and its Task Forces
3. Information about the upcoming 32nd session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy
4. AOB

Item 1. Adoption of the agenda

1. The agenda was adopted without any changes.

Item 2. Update on the recent and the upcoming activities of the Group and its Task Forces

2. The secretariat updated the Bureau on the recent achievements of the Group, including:

- a. First meetings of the Task Forces. The Bureau was informed that all three taskforces that were approved at the [18th session](#) of the Group in Geneva, namely: Task Force on [Just Transition](#), on [Methane Emissions Reduction](#), and on [Safe Operations and Closure of Coal Mines](#) were successfully set up and held their first meetings on [16 June](#), [16 May](#), and [14 June](#), respectively.

- b. ILO Project. The Bureau was informed that following a discussion at the second meeting of the Task Force on Just Transition, there is a potential to develop a joint project

proposal on matters related to Just Transition with ILO. The issue is to be discussed in greater detail with ILO representative shortly. The Bureau requested the secretariat to keep it informed about any future developments related to that activity.

- c. Extrabudgetary projects. The Bureau was informed that:
 - i. at its 129th meeting held on 6 July 2023 in Geneva, UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) approved the extrabudgetary project *Strengthening national capacities to reduce coal mine methane emissions from active (CMM) and abandoned (AMM) coal mines and to measure and manage methane emissions across the natural gas value chain*. The objective of the project is to develop and disseminate technical resources on best practices in monitoring, reporting, verifying, (MRV) and mitigating methane emissions from coal mines and natural gas systems. It aims to increase capacity of member States and the private sector to apply best practices in methane management (MRV and mitigation) from the above-mentioned sectors. The Bureau Members were requested to help with the effective delivery of the project.
 - ii. the proposed project on methane sponsored by CATF did not receive a requested approval at the 129th EXCOM meeting due to concerns expressed by the Russian Federation. While the secretariat responded to question asked by the above-mentioned State, the responses were not deemed fully satisfactory, and therefore further discussion on the project proposal was postponed until the next EXCOM meeting. The secretariat assured the Bureau that it is in constant communication with the Russian Permanent Mission in Geneva, and that it undertakes any possible efforts to provide the Russian Federation with all explanations necessary for obtaining its support to the project.
- d. Approval of the project on mapping readiness for just transition in Albania. The secretariat informed the Bureau that the project on *Mapping Albania's readiness for green and just transition in post-coal mining areas* was approved for delivery under the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC). The objective of this project is to assess Albania's readiness for green and just transition in local post-coal mining areas and to identify regulatory, social, technical, and financial barriers that the country will need to address to be able to successfully reclaim and repurpose its post-coal mining areas in accordance with the principles of green economy and just transition. The project will assess the situation of various post-coal mining sites across the country and identify elements that are necessary to enable the start and to ensure progress in reclaiming and repurposing. The Bureau Members were requested to help with the effective delivery of the project.
- e. ECOSOC resolution on *Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation*. The secretariat was happy to announce to the Bureau that the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) at its meeting held on 25 July 2023 adopted without a vote draft resolution on *Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation*, whereby it decided "to invite States Members of the United Nations, international organizations and the regional commissions to consider the possibility of taking appropriate measures to ensure the application of the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation worldwide".
- f. Youth Engagement. The Bureau was informed that:
 - i. within the framework of the 61st United Nations [Graduate Study Programme](#) (3-14 July 2023), the secretariat, with the support from the Chair of the Group of Experts engaged with young energy experts from around the world to discuss the issue of mapping the ongoing just energy transition efforts across the UNECE region and the steps that need to be taken to accelerate their

progress. Over the two weeks of supervised work the students produced a report titled *Forging a Just Transition: Towards Green Jobs and Rights-Based Futures*.

ii. on 6 June, the secretariat held the informational session for the international group of students from University of Gdansk (Poland) and presented to them the work and the modes of operation of the UN system, with particular focus on energy-related matters and the form of governance represented by the subsidiary bodies (group of experts) of the Committee on Sustainable Energy. The goal of the meeting was to familiarize the students with the wide diversity of the UN mechanisms and decision-making processes, and to encourage them to engage with UN entities to present the point of view, concerns, and aspiration of the young generation.

g. VAM. Secretariat informed the Bureau that together with the Chair of the Group of Experts helps IMEO to develop Technical Guidance Documents focusing on different sources of methane emissions from the coal sector, and that this work highlighted a clear need for providing the general public with a background document on that matter. It was stated that the secretariat has already identified an expert who agrees to develop such a study, and a request was made to the Bureau to approve that activity. After a discussion in which it was mentioned that the document should:

- i. give a careful attention to economics of VAM,
- ii include a needs assessment/gap analysis,
- iii. provide guidance to RnD actors operating in the field in question, and
- iv. be subject to a review by a Review Committee composed of experts with experience in different VAM technologies,

the Bureau approved the activity and requested the Chair of the Group of Experts to assemble, with the secretariat's help, the Review Committee and to present its composition to the Bureau at the next Bureau meeting. The secretariat indicated that due to the fact that such document was not forecasted for 2024, it will not be able to be issued as an official UNECE publication, simultaneously clarifying that it will still be able to be presented at the Group's webpage, display UNECE logo, and be promoted and disseminated by the Group. It was agreed that a coordination call between the principal author, the secretariat, and the Review Committee should be organized, as soon as the latter is composed and operational. The Bureau members offered their help with development of the document and requested the secretariat to manage the process.

3. The secretariat updated the Bureau on the recent events organized by the Group, as well as on those which experts representing the Group contributed to, including:

a. 47th International Technical Conference on Clean Energy. On 24 July, the Chair and the Secretary of the Group of the Group of Experts participated in the technical session dedicated to coal mine methane at the [47th International Technical Conference on Clean Energy](#) that take place (23 to 27 July 2023) in Clearwater, Florida, USA. The delivered presentation offered an overview of the work of the Group, discussing its composition, mandate, objectives, and activities. The Group's approach advocating for addressing methane emissions along the whole coal value chain and throughout the whole mine life cycle was presented. An important link between methane management and just transition in the context of the ongoing and future changes of the coal mining sector was also explained.

b. The Eurasian Business Forum "Green Energy & Waste Recycling Forum". [Green Energy & Waste Recycling Forum \(GEWR\)](#) is the largest forum in Central Asia on waste management and renewable energy. The second day of the Conference, 5 July 2023, featured a three and a half hour-long segment dedicated to methane titled *National Methane Forum*. It was focused on different approaches to methane emissions reduction across various sectors and on best practices applicable in each of those industries. Within the framework of that segment representatives of the Group of

Experts spoke about methane mitigation opportunities in the coal sector, highlighting also the links between emissions abatement efforts and Just Transition.

c. Workshop on Just Transition in Mining Communities and Potential for Development of Geothermal Energy. The workshop was held on 20 June 2023 in Tirana, Albania. The first part of the event introduced to the Albanian and foreign stakeholders the recently published [Guidelines for Mine Closure Programme in Albania and Serbia](#). The second part of the meeting was dedicated to another document, namely [Assessment of the Geothermal Resources of Albania](#). The last part of the workshop provided participants with an opportunity for brainstorming on how UNECE can best help Albania and its other member States in their quest for transitioning its post-coal mining areas in accordance with the principles of green economy and just transition and ensuring a sustainable use of its natural resources.

d. Methane Mondays 9. The ninth session of the Methane Mondays online series titled: *Coal mining lifecycle from exploration through closure and repurposing; the value of real time monitoring from onsite measurements and remote sensing* was held on 5 June 2023. The session focused on the role of monitoring, going beyond methane issues. It showed how important, from the point of view of both: mine operations and the subsequent repurposing of post-mining areas, the issues related to monitoring of water, ground stability, and waste are.

4. The secretariat updated the Bureau on the upcoming events that the Group is to organize or participate in, including:

a. The tenth session of the Methane Mondays series. The tenth session of the Methane Mondays online series titled: *Politics of Methane* is to be held on Monday, 5 September 2023 at 16:00-17:30 Geneva time. The session will evaluate the actual impact of the existing initiatives to reduce methane emissions from the coal mining sector, and will try to answer the question of how to change methane from a divisive political matter to a unifying global challenge.

b. Fact finding mission to Albania. The secretariat informed the Bureau that in a week following the Committee meeting that is to be held on 13-15 September, the Group of Experts will organize, within the framework of the project *Mapping Albania's readiness for green and just transition in post-coal mining areas* (see point 2.d.), a fact-finding mission to Albania, allowing the experts involved in that work to gather the necessary information directly at the source.

c. Almaty Energy Forum. The Forum is an inclusive multistakeholder dialogue that facilitates regional cooperation, provides technical capacity support and helps countries in Central Asia to innovate and modernize their regional infrastructure and to build resilient energy systems that are secure, affordable, and deliver on net-zero targets. The Bureau was informed that this year the event will be held on 6-8 November and that it will feature a session on methane, as well as the whole separate workshop dedicated to that subject. The latter is to be delivered jointly with GMI.

Item 3. Information about the upcoming 32 session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy

5. The secretariat warmly invited Bureau members to the upcoming [Sustainable Energy Week](#). The event will take place on 11-15 September and it will feature the [32nd Session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy](#) and the [10th session of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy](#). It was highlighted that on the last day of the Committee meeting (Friday, 15 September), the Group of Experts will deliver two sessions:

a. On methane, reviewing the existing initiatives targeting methane emissions and evaluating their impact, exploring opportunities and challenges of the new methane detection and monitoring technologies and methods, and highlight the problem of ventilation air methane; and

- b. On Just Transition, presenting a new concept of coal, in which the latter is not perceived as merely a fuel, but a multi-purpose resource, thus significantly broadening the range of opportunities for just transition strategies.

Item 4. Any other business

6. No issue was raised under this agenda item

7. The Chair and the secretariat thanked participants for their time and involvement in the call, and closed the meeting.
