

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
16 August 2023

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Environmental Policy****Twenty-eighth session**

Geneva, 1–3 November 2023

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Outcomes of the work of the Bureau**Outcomes of the work of the Bureau for the period
January–June 2023****Report by the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy***Summary*

At its special session (Nicosia, 3–4 October 2022), the Committee on Environmental Policy requested its 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 in November 2023. The present document outlines the outcomes of the Bureau's work during the period January–June 2023, with a view to supporting the Committee's work at its twenty-eighth session (Geneva, 1–3 November 2023).



Introduction

1. At its special session (Nicosia, 3–4 October 2022), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy agreed to hold its next regular session in Geneva, on 1–3 November 2023, and 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.¹
2. During the intersessional period, the Bureau worked by means of electronic consultations, held an online meeting on 8 March 2023 and met in-person in Geneva on 8 June 2023.
3. The Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy comprises the Chair, from Portugal, and Vice-Chairs, from Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Italy, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland and Uzbekistan.

I. Provisional annotated agenda for the Committee’s twenty-eighth session

4. During its meeting in June 2023, the Bureau considered for approval the draft provisional annotated agenda for the Committee’s twenty-eighth session (ECE/CEP/2023/1) and the provisional time schedule for the meeting (information paper No.1).
5. Under different agenda items of the Committee’s twenty-eighth session, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat and:
 - Agreed to add a segment on multilateral environmental agreements serviced by the Environment subprogramme under agenda item 3. Sustainable development in the region.
 - Took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the decisions taken by the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators at its nineteenth session (Geneva, 3–4 November 2022) and on the outcomes of the twenty-fifth session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva (hybrid), 2–3 May 2023).
 - Suggested inviting the Chair of the Conference of European Statisticians to participate in the twenty-eighth session of the Committee in order to facilitate discussion on the proposal made to convert the Joint Task Force into a standing body, and asked the secretariat to prepare background information to support discussion on the matter.
 - Agreed to include an agenda item on regional advisory services and collaboration activities on the provisional agenda of the regular session of the Committee to allow the Committee to be better informed on the activities of the Regional Advisor of the Environment Division.

II. Follow-up to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and preparation of the mid-term review of the Conference’s main outcomes

6. During its meeting in March 2023, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the current statistics on the voluntary commitments under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and on possible ways to promote said Initiative and agreed to further discuss those issues at its next meeting in Geneva in June 2023.

¹ See ECE/CEP/S/2022/6 (advance version), para. 38 (a)–(b). Available at <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2023/01/reports/report-committee-environmental-policy-its-special-session>.

7. The Bureau also took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the results of the evaluation survey carried out after the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022) and agreed to evaluate the reaction to the Nicosia Conference at the next session of the Committee in November 2023 (with possible use of Slido).

8. During its meeting in June 2023, the Bureau discussed possible ways of promoting the voluntary commitments under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and agreed to include Batumi Initiative on Green Economy pre-coffee chats on the provisional agenda of the next session of the Committee.

9. During its meeting in March 2023, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the revised strategy of the Environment subprogramme in the draft proposed programme budget of ECE for 2024, which envisages supporting countries in the development of regionwide approaches to emerging issues (e.g., on sustainable infrastructure).

10. At its meeting in June 2023, the Bureau further discussed possible ways to fulfil the Nicosia mandate on the regionwide approach to sustainable infrastructures, namely, as stated in the Ministerial Declaration:

We will explore the way forward for the pan-European region, including through innovation, nature-based solutions and engagement with the private sector. The future regionwide approach to sustainable infrastructure should provide the basis for common goals, targets and criteria for policymaking, financing, performance monitoring and replicability of practices that best suit domestic and transboundary needs.²

11. The Bureau suggested that, at the next session of the Committee in November 2023, countries and organizations with Batumi Initiative commitments related to sustainable infrastructure could be invited to share their experience in their implementation; and a representative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) might wish to present the International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure³ and how they could be used at the regional level.

12. At the same meeting, the Bureau agreed to propose to the Committee to organize the mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference at the regular session of the Committee in 2025 using the format of the mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016) as an example. The Committee might wish to ask the secretariat to prepare an official document on organizing the mid-term review, using document ECE/CEP/2017/16 as an example.

13. The Bureau took note of information provided by the secretariat further to a decision by ministers in Nicosia to:

Invite the ECE secretariat, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and others, to prioritize assessing the most urgent environmental needs in Ukraine based upon the methodology of the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme and on the results of ongoing and planned impacts assessments, and to make recommendations to advance a sustainable recovery of the country, in line with the Lugano Declaration and its seven principles adopted at the Ukraine Recovery Conference of 4–5 July 2022.⁴

² ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.1, para. 9.

³ See United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure: Integrated, Systems-level Approaches for Policymakers – Second Edition* (Nairobi, 2022)

⁴ ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.1, para. 4.

- In the Nicosia Declaration, Ministers invited the ECE secretariat and others to undertake an assessment in support of Ukraine based on the environmental performance review (EPR) methodology.⁵
- The design of the requested assessment would benefit from input by members of the Expert Group on EPRs.
- The assessment might include an “assessment of assessments” component. Input from the ECE Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme might therefore be needed, which would be subject to availability of resources.
- The assessment could only begin once the situation in the country was at least stable. Currently, the environmental damages and needs are still increasing in Ukraine.
- Meanwhile, an informal inter-agency coordination group on environmental assessments for Ukraine has been established, comprising representatives of ECE, UNEP, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the secretariat to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat and the Resident Coordinator’s Office in Kyiv. The group organized two online seminars in February and May 2023, respectively. The members of the Expert Group on EPRs were invited to attend the two seminars. The group is working on mapping assessments regarding Ukraine carried out by various actors, and plans to work on principles for a green recovery and reconstruction.

III. Environmental performance reviews

14. During its meeting in March 2023, the Bureau took note of an information paper on guidance to the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews, developed by the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews. Taking into account a number of square brackets in the document (e.g., with regard to limiting the number of chapters per EPR, limiting the number of recommendations per chapter and per EPR, etc.) the Bureau agreed that:

- Such a decision should be taken by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its next regular session in November 2023.
- Until such a time as the Committee decided on a revised mandate, the EPR Programme should be governed by and comply with the existing mandate, as contained in document ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/12.
- Based on an inclusive consultation process (including through a survey of Committee on Environmental Policy delegates and dedicated discussions with countries that have been subject to the EPRs), an options paper will be prepared to support Committee on Environmental Policy decisions on the fourth cycle of EPRs.

15. During its meeting in June 2023, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the preliminary results of the survey and on the progress in preparation of the following official documents for the next session of the Committee: Guidance on the conduct of the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews (ECE/CEP/2023/6); and Options for the conduct of the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews (ECE/CEP/2023/7). The Bureau noted that, although the results of the survey were very much in line with current practice, guidance might require some adjustment.

16. The Bureau welcomed the idea of the EPR team considering organizing workshops on the methodology of the environmental performance reviews, and suggested that such workshops could accommodate training of experts who write chapters and other actors involved in the EPR process.

⁵ Ibid.

IV. Criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events

17. At its twenty-seventh session (Geneva (hybrid), 3–5 November 2021), the Committee approved the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events, as presented in information paper No. 9, 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.⁶

18. The Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the matter and asked 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 consideration by the Bureau and approval by the Committee.

V. Annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2024 and outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2025

19. During its meeting in June 2023, the Bureau took note of the draft annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2024 (ECE/CEP/2023/5) and agreed to submit it as an official document of the twenty-eighth session of the Committee with no further revision.

20. The Bureau also took note of the information provided on further steps in the preparation of the outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2025.

VI. Calendar of meetings

21. During its meeting in June 2023, the Bureau took note of the information paper containing a proposed schedule of meetings of the Committee on Environmental Policy and its Bureau for the period 2024–2026 and agreed to submit it as an information document of the twenty-eighth session of the Committee with no further revision.

VII. Election of officers

22. During its meeting in June 2023, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat and agreed on the following steps:

- The secretariat would circulate a message asking the current Bureau members if they wished to put forward their candidatures for the Committee on Environmental Policy Bureau elections at the upcoming session of the Committee in November 2023.
- Based on the replies of the Bureau members, the secretariat would prepare a draft information paper listing those Bureau members who had expressed interest in continuing to serve in the Committee on Environmental Policy Bureau in 2024 and would circulate the paper to the Committee members.
- Based on the replies of the Committee members, if any, the paper would be finalized and submitted to the Committee for consideration at the forthcoming session in November 2023.

⁶ See ECE/CEP/2021/2, para. 63.