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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Item 4

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**Information update on the status of preparation  
of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission**

## Note by the Secretariat

### Information update on the status of preparation of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission

#### Background

1. During its 109<sup>th</sup> meeting, held on 17 February 2020, the Executive Committee decided ([EXCOM/CONCLU 109](#)), *inter alia*, to:
  - i. designate “Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the UNECE region” as cross-cutting theme for the high-level segment of the 69th Commission session.
  - ii. invite relevant subsidiary bodies of UNECE and the secretariat to consider how they may contribute, as appropriate, to the cross-cutting theme of the 69th Commission session within their respective mandates, ongoing work and existing resources, and while making full use of the existing nexuses.
  - iii. request the secretariat to prepare a background document on the cross-cutting theme, detailing a number of relevant UNECE activities and their impact, for discussion at the 69th Commission session.
  - iv. request the secretariat to conduct a post-session lessons learned survey to review the implications of the practice of designating a cross-cutting theme early in the process, and to present to EXCOM a proposal for the preparation of future Commission sessions taking the survey findings into account.
2. The secretariat is pleased to provide EXCOM with an update on the preparations of the sixty-ninth Commission session.

#### Engagement of relevant subsidiary bodies

3. Further to the invitation by EXCOM for relevant subsidiary bodies to contribute to the cross-cutting theme of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission, the Executive Secretary of UNECE reached out to the Chairpersons of the sectoral committees and subsidiary bodies reporting directly to EXCOM, namely the
  - Committee on Environmental Policy
  - Inland Transport Committee
  - Conference of European Statisticians
  - Committee for Sustainable Energy
  - Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards
  - Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and the Public-Private Partnerships
  - Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry
  - Committee on Urban Development, Land Management and Housing
  - Working Group on Aging
  - United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/ CEFAC).
4. The Bureaux of the above intergovernmental bodies and their subsidiaries, supported by their respective secretariats, provided a stocktake of relevant past and ongoing activities. A brief overview that highlights key findings of this stocktake is summarized in the Annex to this note.

5. The Bureaux also made preliminary suggestions for possible future focus areas of work that - within existing mandates of the subprogrammes - may yield positive results in support of promoting the circular economy and the sustainable use of resources in the UNECE region. These ideas will be further explored in the plenary sessions of the respective entities, as appropriate.

6. The rich contributions made by the intergovernmental bodies<sup>1</sup> will inform the further planning of the Commission session, including the preparation of draft decisions and elements of a high-level statement that will be presented to EXCOM in the fall of 2020 for consideration and possible inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-ninth Commission. Relevant materials will also be included in the background document on the cross-cutting theme that EXCOM requested and that will detail a number of relevant UNECE activities and their impact.

### **Relevant recent activities of the Nexus teams**

7. In recent months, the Nexus Teams of the UNECE secretariat advanced the work on the cross-cutting Commission theme. A major focus of activity was the preparation of the four Nexus publications, pursuant to XB project E 322 '*Improving knowledge of UNECE member States to design and implement integrated policies in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at regional and national levels*' ([Informal document 2019/6](#)). These are

- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Sustainable and smart cities
- Sustainable mobility and smart connectivity
- Measuring and monitoring progress towards the SDGs.

Drafts of all four publications have been prepared and are currently undergoing a peer review in the secretariat. It is foreseen that revised drafts will be circulated in the relevant sectoral Committees for further expert review and comments over the summer and early autumn. A more detailed update on the publications to EXCOM is tentatively scheduled for October 2020, with a view to finalizing the documents and submitting the executive summaries and policy recommendations to EXCOM in December as part of the substantive inputs for the Commission session. The final versions of all four publications will be available in time for the Commission session.

### **Outreach to potential partners**

8. As part of the stocktake of relevant activities, the secretariat has also identified a number of partners with relevant expertise in the area of circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources and is in the process of exploring ways to deepen the collaboration. These include other international organizations, the private sector and academia. In particular, the outreach seeks to identify

- modalities to further disseminate existing tools and standards to strengthen their uptake;

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<sup>1</sup> In light of recent developments, several Committee Chairpersons also highlighted the response of the secretariat to the COVID-19 pandemic and suggested that relevant measures to counteract the effects of the crisis be considered further for inclusion into their Programmes of Work. These aspects are further discussed at the remote informal meeting of the members of EXCOM on 10 July 2020 under agenda item 3.

- areas for joint action and potential synergies;
- identification of possible regulatory gaps that may warrant the production of additional normative instruments to strengthen circular and sustainable practices.

### **Meeting planning**

9. The Chairman of the Commission, after consultation with the Bureau and the Executive Secretary, wishes to propose 20 - 21 April 2021 as the dates for the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the Economic Commission for Europe, to be held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.

10. The Bureau also wishes to encourage member States to consider ways to commit to national and regional policy actions for a more circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources and to facilitate high-level representation at the sixty-ninth Commission session.

### **Draft decisions for consideration by EXCOM**

#### **The Executive Committee**

- **thanks the secretariat for the information update on the preparation of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission and looks forward to receiving further periodic update on this matter;**
- **pursuant to Rules 1 and 2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission, decides to hold the sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe on 20-21 April 2021 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.**
- **encourages the membership of UNECE to explore how they can contribute to the high-level theme of the sixty-ninth session, “Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the UNECE region”, and in particular to consider possible national commitments to strengthen circularity and sustainable practices at the country and transboundary level.**

## Annex

**Stocktake of key UNECE activities related to the theme of the high-level segment of the sixty-ninth Commission session, “Promoting circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources”**  
(Non-exhaustive list, based on contributions from relevant subsidiary bodies of UNECE and the secretariat – as of 15 June 2020)

Focus area	Tool/Deliverable	Description	Impact
<b>Subprogramme 1 - ENVIRONMENT</b>			
Greening the economy	Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E)  Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA)	Voluntary pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy promotes a circular economy approach	108 BACA commitments and 123 BIG-E commitments from Member states and international Organizations
Policy making	Environmental Performance Review	Assessment and recommendations for environmental governance and financing in a green economy context, comprising issues related to circular economy.	As of May 2020, 14 countries concluded progress review, incl. on achievement of 9 SDG targets related to green economy; improved policy making
Governance	Multilateral environmental agreements	Legal frameworks for international cooperation on issues related to sustainable development	Support sustainable use of natural resources and promotion of the principles of circular economy
Air quality	Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution and eight protocols	Covers all major air pollutants and emissions sources	Air emissions of some harmful substances reduced by 40 to 80% since 1990 in Europe. Acidification halted; ongoing recovery of lakes and forest soils.  Decoupling of economic growth and air pollution trends; prevention of 600,000 premature deaths annually; increase in average life expectancy by 12 months.
Water	Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)	Climate change adaption and sustainable use and management of transboundary waters	Increased resilience to climate change (directly in 5 major basins with a total population of around 35 million persons and indirectly in 13 additional basins)
	Protocol on Water and Health	Stipulates targets on water, sanitation and health	Improvements in access to drinking water and sanitation in 26 countries

Focus area	Tool/Deliverable	Description	Impact
Access to information and public participation	Aarhus Convention and its Protocols	Promote inclusive and resilient transition towards circular economy	Channelling environmental and human health concerns into the decision-making; improved trust in public administration
Risk management and mitigation	Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Espoo Convention on Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment	Promotion of circular economy and sustainable use and management of natural resources in the national planning framework	Informed policy making
	Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents	Prevention and disaster risk management	Increased industrial safety and greater disaster risk management (incl. more circular practices that reduce demand for raw materials)
<b>Subprogramme 2 - Transport</b>			
Vehicle connectivity	AC.1 Regulation on software Updates	Regulatory activities dealing with the wear of parts that must be regularly replaced	Limitation of the premature and aesthetic obsolescence of vehicles
Recyclability of vehicles	UN Regulation No. 133	Reduce environmental footprint and life cycle impact of vehicle production and disposal	Covers one quarter of all vehicles sold globally in 2019 for which 85% of the vehicle mass should be reusable/ recyclable and 95% reusable/ recoverable
Retreaded tyres	UN Regulations 108 and 109	Reduce environmental footprint and lifecycle impact of tyres for vehicles	Reuse the carcass of vehicle tyres that amounts of more than 80% of the whole tyre by renewing the tyre's tread and thus providing for a second (third) life of the tyre
Vehicle performance	UN Regulation No. 101 UN GTR No. 15 UN Regulation on WLTP (upcoming)	Globally harmonized procedure to measure fuel consumption and tailpipe CO <sup>2</sup> emissions from cars and vans	Better use of finite resources and reduced pollution

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Transport infrastructure	UNECE infrastructure agreements (AGC, AGN, AGR, AGTC)	Harmonization of key parameters for the construction, maintenance and upgrade of each of the infrastructure supporting inland transport modes, including intermodal transport	<p>Suitable use of infrastructure (prevents augmented wear for extended lifespan and reduced need for repair)</p> <p>Adaptation measures to climate change for resilience</p>
Sustainable transport and pollution prevention on water	Inland waterway infrastructure agreement (AGN), Inventory of Main Standards and Parameters of the E Waterway Network, European Code for Inland Waterways	Agreements and resolutions promoting key elements of circular economy in inland water transport	Prevention of waste generated on vessels from polluting waterways, facilitate navigability, and harmonize waste generated on board vessels for separate collection, efficient recycling and reuse
The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP)	Policy recommendations on Mobility-as-a-Service and Urban Public Transport	Policy recommendations and studies on the sharing economy and sustainable urban transport, incl. potential green jobs in cycling, the switch to increased public transport and electrification, integrating transport into urban planning, a cycling masterplan, eco-driving guidelines etc.	Decreased resource demands and environmental impact of urban transport
Recycling/ safe disposal of dangerous goods	European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) and European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN)	ADR and ADN address the design, construction, use, reuse and repair of containment systems for dangerous goods (boxes, tanks etc); Transport of damaged or waste packaging that have contained dangerous goods and of dangerous articles for recycling or disposal are subject to ADR/AND provisions.	<p>Reduction of accidents involving hazardous chemicals</p> <p>Transition to cleaner energy production and mobility systems</p> <p>Limiting the production of disposable means of containment</p>
Border crossing, food loss and food waste	TIR and eTIR	TIR provides for faster, more efficient transit through borders for trucks. eTIR renders the process paperless. ATP regulates the carriage of perishable foodstuff.	Limiting food waste through the highest standards of carriage, efficient customs procedures, priority treatment of perishable foodstuffs and the use of green lanes, diminishing wait times at borders and the use of paper documents.

Focus area	Tool/Deliverable	Description	Impact
<b>Subprogramme 3 – Statistics</b>			
Measuring Circular Economy	In-depth review of Measuring Circular Economy (under preparation)	Definitions; information needs and measurement challenges; overview of international statistical activities in the area; country practices; issues and challenges	Recommendations for improved coordination of statistical activities in the UNECE region, identification of gaps/duplication and proposals for ways to address emerging issues.
<b>Subprogramme 4 – Economic Cooperation and Integration</b>			
Innovation and investment	10 voluntary Guiding Principles on People First PPPs	Guidance material and policy recommendations to promote infrastructure investment	Enhanced resilience and responsibility towards environmental sustainability, incl. through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- resilient infrastructure</li> <li>- reduced emissions</li> <li>- increased circularity</li> <li>- promotion of revisions of national legislation</li> </ul>
	People First PPP Assessment tool	- Case studies Methodology for application of principles in infrastructure projects	
	UNECE standard on PPPs in renewable energy  UNECE/EBRD Model law and commentary	- Legal framework	
	Good practices on Innovation for the Circular Economy and Sustainable Consumption and Production (ECE/CECI/2018/3)	Guidance material	Accelerated transition to circular economy by promoting innovation for sustainable consumption and production
	Guidelines on PPPs in Waste-to-Energy	to promote the efficient use of private capital in waste to energy PPP projects	Substantially reduced waste generation (e.g. through incineration of non-recyclable solid waste through energy recovery; recovery of materials from non-recoverable waste)



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	National Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews  Sub-regional Innovation Policy Outlook (pilot)	Country-level and sub-regional policy advice and capacity building to foster innovation, e.g. in the area of sustainable public procurement practices	Strengthened scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production (SDG 12)
<b>Subprogramme 5 – Sustainable Energy</b>			
Sustainable resource management	UN Framework Classification for Resources	A global classification system for sustainable management of resources and associated technical, social, environmental, and economic challenges and opportunities	Application to anthropogenic resources particularly relevant to circular economy
Sustainable buildings	Framework Guidelines for Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings	Principles improving sustainability of buildings at all stages of design, use and disposal	Reduced emissions from buildings
Methane management	Best practice guidelines for management of methane in operating coal mines, abandoned mines, and the oil and gas sector		Conversion of recovered methane to usable energy, reducing emissions and use of polluting fossil fuels
Carbon capture	Recommendations on carbon capture and storage		Reduction of emissions in areas still dependent on fossil fuels
<b>Subprogramme 6 - Trade</b>			
Non-tariff regulatory and procedural measures (NTM)	Framework of indicators  Studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade	Evidence-based analysis on end-to-end supply chain activities to localize SDGs and generate NTM reforms	Best practices, recommendations, standards and conventions for building a conducive CE-fit system of laws and institutions (e.g. recommendations were adopted in Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the Republic of Moldova)

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<p>Food loss and food waste</p>	<p>Knowledge management tools and standards, incl.</p> <p>FeedUP@UN (by UNECE) – the App</p> <p>MAS – Website on food loss and waste</p> <p>MAS – Code of Good Practice – Reducing food loss in handling fruit and vegetables</p> <p>MAS – Simply Measuring – UNECE food loss and waste measuring methodology for fresh produce supply chain</p> <p>MAS – UNECE Portal on Standards for the SDGs</p>	<p>Food loss/waste tracking application that encompasses the entire supply chain</p> <p>Reference page to connect and build expertise among stakeholders</p> <p>Educational and training tool</p> <p>Methodology to establish baselines, benchmarking, reporting and monitoring</p> <p>Mapping tool to identify standards relevant to certain SDGs</p>	<p>Provide evidence-based system for data collection, monitoring and analysis to devise policy interventions for the establishment of a circular economy eco-system.</p> <p>Knowledge generation and sharing; capacity building among stakeholders</p>
<p>Sustainable and digital trade facilitation and value chain management</p>	<p>Policy Recommendations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transparency and Traceability for Sustainable and Circular Value Chains in Garment and Footwear</li> <li>- Sustainable Procurement PPPs in Trade Facilitation</li> </ul> <p>Standards for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Control of food quality and safety and soil contamination (eLab, eCrop, eCERT, eQuality)</li> </ul>	<p>Policy recommendations, standards, tools and capacity building activities in the areas of sustainable procurement, waste management, transparency and traceability of sustainable and circular value chains, digital trade facilitation, innovation in advanced technologies</p>	<p>Policy coherence; Harmonization of and simplification of processes, procedures and information flows; Capacity building and knowledge sharing for informed policy making, including on the enabling role of advanced technologies (e.g. blockchain, IoT, AI, cloud computing)</p> <p>Detailed overview of impacts for the circular economy, provided in the following UN/CEFACT Briefing note:</p>

Focus area	Tool/Deliverable	Description	Impact
	<p>- Traceability of value chains in Animal and animal products; Primary natural products from plant and animal origin; Fisheries (UN/FLUX); Sustainable and circular garment and footwear products and processes;</p> <p>- Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed</p> <p>- Improved control of trade in endangered species (eCITES)</p> <p>- Trans-boundary Movement of Waste</p> <p>Library of Semantic Data, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Core Component Library</li> <li>- Reference Data Models</li> <li>- Code Lists</li> <li>- UN/EDIFACT</li> </ul> <p>Tools and studies including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN/CEFACT White Papers on Blockchain for Trade and the SDGs</li> <li>• UN/CEFACT Policy Paper on Accelerating Action for a Sustainable and Circular Garment and Footwear Industry</li> </ul> <p>Pilots:</p> <p>UNECE Project on Blockchain for Sustainable and Circular Value Chains in Cotton Value Chains</p>		<p><a href="http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/cf_plenary/2020_Plenary/ECE_TRADE_C_CEFAC2020_24E-UNCEFACTdeliverablesCE.pdf">http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/cf_plenary/2020_Plenary/ECE_TRADE_C_CEFAC2020_24E-UNCEFACTdeliverablesCE.pdf</a></p>

Focus area	Tool/Deliverable	Description	Impact
<b>Subprogramme 7 – Forestry and Timber</b>			
Wood-based value chains in a circular economy.	Joint Forest Sector questionnaire (JSFQ)	Data on recovered post-consumer wood	Data collection and evaluation for informed policy making
	Joint Wood Energy Enquiry (JWEE)	Data on volumes of wood energy produced from recovered wood.	
Knowledge sharing	Panel discussions, exhibitions and outreach materials on different aspects of forests and the circular economy	Communication materials on the role of the forest sector in the circular economy	Knowledge sharing for informed policy making
	Study on “Forest and the Circular Economy”	Stock taking documents on how circular concepts relate to the forest-based sector.	Data collection and analysis for informed policy making
<b>SUBPROGRAMME 8 – Urban Development, Housing, Land Management and Population</b>			
City-level engagement	Guide to Circular Cities	Implementation framework and a compendium of best practices developed jointly with ITU and other UN agencies	Promotion of circular economy policies at local level and capacity-building for implementation
	Forum of Mayors - peer learning and exchange of good practices	Discussions on resilience and disaster risk reduction at the municipal level, incl. the importance of circular and sustainable approaches	