

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
129th Meeting  
Geneva, 6 July 2023

**EXCOM/CONCLU/129**

**CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS**

## FORMAL SEGMENT

### Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda

1. Under this item, the Chair proposed to adopt the provisional draft agenda, as contained in document ECE/EX/2023/4, with an amendment requested by the Russian Federation, namely to include an additional agenda item in the formal segment, entitled “Hydrogen classification in the UNECE region”, which would consider extrabudgetary project 2023/25.
2. The representative of Ukraine recalled that his delegation had expressed concerns related to extrabudgetary project 2023/25 at the last meeting. He stated that his country could not approve the project as it would be funded by the UNECE Member State which continued its unprovoked and unjustified aggression against his country. He requested the secretariat to continue its search for an alternative funding mechanism for the implementation of the proposed project. He did not support to the proposed amendment of the agenda.
3. The representative of the European Union and its member States stressed the continued commitment to the constructive cooperation with all Member States within UNECE on the basis of dialogue and mutual respect. He recalled that the hydrogen project had been discussed during informal consultations on 30 May 2023, when several Member States had expressed their opposition to the project as proposed, in particular related to the funding by the country, which continued its unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine, including attacks on civilian and critical energy infrastructure. He stated that alternative options had not yet been explored that could lead to a broader support for this project. He did not support the proposed amendment of the agenda.
4. The representative of the Russian Federation requested a vote on the adoption of the agenda as amended. The representative of Belarus supported this request.
5. The results of the vote was 3 votes in favour, 29 votes against and 2 abstentions.
6. The adoption of the agenda with the proposed amendment was rejected.
7. The representative of the Russian Federation stated that her country attaches great importance to the development of energy in the European region. Russian experts are contributing to the work of the taskforce on hydrogen. She expressed disappointment with the results of the vote and noted that UNECE was losing its relevance as a platform of unpoliticized professional dialogue between all countries of the ECE region. She stated that UNECE was now turning into a subsidiary body of the European Union, which in turn was taking decisions that were not in the interest of the economic development of the region, which was the basis of the activities of UNECE, but for the sake of its own political ambitions.

8. The agenda, as contained in document ECE/EX/2023/4, was adopted.

#### Item 2 – Chair’s conclusions from the last meeting

9. The conclusions from the 128th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/128) were adopted.

### **INFORMAL SEGMENT**

#### Item 3 - Annual report on technical cooperation activities 2022 (for information)

10. The Executive Secretary presented the 2022 Annual Report on Technical Cooperation Activities to EXCOM for its information, noting that the report also contained revised resource mobilization plans for 2022-2024, pursuant to the approval of the revised Resource Mobilization Strategy by EXCOM on 29 May 2020. Overall extrabudgetary contributions had decreased by about 2 per cent in 2022 to USD 18 million, with 52 per cent being provided by member States.
11. The representative of the Russian Federation noted the substantive contribution of UNECE in achieving the SDGs in the region and highlighted the important financial support from the Russian Federation in areas such as car sharing, decarbonization of transport, statistics, innovation, renewable energy sources and energy effectiveness and simplified trade procedures. She regretted that the overall volume of extrabudgetary contributions to UNECE had been curtailed. She attributed this situation to the politization of the technical cooperation work, which had compelled the Russian Federation to stop the provision of financial resources to many necessary projects. She reminded that the main recipients of UNECE assistance were Central Asia and the Caucasus and urged to consider the consequences of blocking technical assistance projects for country beneficiaries receiving high-quality expert support from UNECE.
12. The representative of the European Union and its member States emphasized the very significant financial contribution of the European Union to UNECE extrabudgetary funding that represented over 57% of the total extrabudgetary contributions in 2022 and had increased recently. Noting that the main beneficiaries of this funding were countries of Central Asia and South-eastern Europe, he stated that this was proof of the importance that the European Union attached to technical cooperation among UNECE member States. He noted that the European Union intended to continue these activities.
13. The Executive Secretary stated that extrabudgetary funding to UNECE had decreased in 2022, while demand for resources had significantly increased, especially related to the damages in Ukraine regarding environment, energy or cities. She urged member States to provide more resources so that the organization could deliver on its mandates at this critical time.
14. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note with appreciation of the annual report on technical cooperation activities 2022 as contained in informal document 2023/27.

#### Item 4 - Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

15. EXCOM considered five extrabudgetary projects presented for approval, as contained in informal documents 2023/28, 2023/29, 2023/30, 2023/31 and 2023/32. The Chair informed that the informal consultations on project 2023/25 had not been conclusive and that the Bureau would consider how to proceed.
16. Regarding project 2023/28, the representative of the Russian Federation raised some queries about the added value compared to project 2023/29, its specific beneficiary countries, the methodology foreseen in relation with the mechanism for trade quotas (activity 11.1); and how objective the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) was for monitoring and evaluation of methane emissions. She queried if the study include an analysis of the impact of unilateral economic restrictions by specific countries.
17. The Director of the Sustainable Energy Division, Mr. Dario Liguti, explained that projects 2023/28 and 2023/29 were parallel and complementary but focused on two different segments. Project 28 concentrated on state-owned coal companies, while project 29 included not only coal private sector companies but also the gas industry stakeholders. All UNECE members with a coal mining industry would benefit from the outcomes of the project – there would be two or three specific beneficiary countries of the project that had yet to be identified. The third question related to activity 11.1, which would study whether emissions trading systems were relevant for methane mitigation. GMI was an international partnership, to which the Clean Air Task Force had contributed for many years. Not all the countries which were methane emitters participated in the GMI, but a very large number did. The methodology that was being developed was indeed objective, as it was science- and data-based. The project would look at technological issues related to methane leaks, no analysis on the impact of unilateral economic restrictions was included in the project.
18. The representative of the Russian Federation asked the secretariat to provide more details on the countries involved in and benefitting from the project and noted that, in the future, more information on applicable due diligence reviews would be appreciated.
19. The Chair informed that the Bureau would consider how to proceed with project 2023/28.
20. Regarding project 2023/29, the representative of the Russian Federation pointed out that the project was tackling two different issues: (i) the first one on reducing methane emissions from active as well as abandoned coal mines and (ii) the second one on regulating methane emissions in areas where natural gas was extracted. She asked how this second aspect could relate to the mandate of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and the role of the Group of Experts on Gas in the project.
21. The Director of the Sustainable Energy Division explained that while the leadership of the project was under the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition, the Group of Experts on Gas would indeed significantly contribute and participate to the implementation of this project.
22. The representative of the United States of America noted that the Russian Federation was a founding member of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) and any GMI methodological question could be raised directly to the GMI.
23. Regarding project 2023/30, the representative of the Russian Federation expressed

support for integrated urban planning as a very beneficial area of cooperation. She then raised some queries about the cities which would be used for best practices, the criteria applied to make this selection, the developers and platform used for hosting the online toolkit and the potential beneficiaries of the project. Finally, she wished to confirm that the secretariat would ensure a non-discriminatory approach that would allow all cities in the UNECE region to contribute best practices.

24. The Officer-in-Charge of the Forests, Land and Housing Division, Ms. Gulnara Roll, explained that all the countries of the UNECE regions would be invited to share their experiences. The selection criteria would be experiences and best practices on how to boost cooperation between the development of the local urban cadasters and the national cadastral systems in the UNECE member States. The invitation to participate would be sent to all the national focal points of the Committee on Urban Development, but also the ones of the Working Party on Land Administration. She added that the UNECE Committee on Urban Development would be developing the online toolbox, which would be hosted on the existing platform. This platform, currently managed by the Center of Excellence, hosted by the University of Geneva, had already compiled many other UNECE online training materials, including the Russian version of trainings on urban resilience and informal settlements, which were supported by the Russian Federation through an extrabudgetary project. The beneficiaries would be government officials at both national and local levels, bringing together the urban planners and land administration experts. She affirmed the inclusive approach that would be taken, with UNECE organizing online workshops with interpretation.
25. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary projects contained in informal documents 2023/29, 2023/30, 2023/31 and 2023/32.

Item 5 - Briefing by the Executive Secretary: Important new developments and key upcoming events.

26. The Executive Secretary, supplemented by the Deputy Executive Secretary, informed EXCOM of UNECE attendance at the following recent meetings and missions:
  - **15-16 May, Belgrade:** Regional Vision Zero Forum on Road Safety
  - **24-26 May, Leipzig:** International Transport Forum (OECD)
  - **30 May – 2 June, Bratislava:** GLOBSEC 2023 Bratislava Forum
  - **6-8 June, Yerevan:** Country visit and launch of the UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Armenia
  - **7-8 June, Astana:** Astana International Forum
  - **30 June-2 July, Tbilisi:** Country visit and Tbilisi Women's International Conference
  - **5-7 July, Budapest:** Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health
27. The Executive Secretary and Deputy Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming meetings:
  - **8-9 July, Dubrovnik:** Dubrovnik Forum 2023 (representing the Secretary-General)
  - **10-19 July, New York:** High-Level Political Forum

- **11 July, Washington DC:** Global Forum on Transboundary Water Cooperation for Climate and Development

Item 9 – Any other business

40. The Chair reminded delegations that the Management Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) would convene on 25- 26 July at Headquarters in New York. Inter alia, the four actionable decisions from the 70th session of the Commission would be before the Council. He invited all delegations again to liaise with their counterparts in New York to ensure that they were fully briefed on the Commission outcomes and could facilitate further consideration of the aforementioned decisions at the next stage of the governance process.
41. The representative of the United States of America wondered whether the Secretary-General had already informed about the successor to Executive Secretary Algayerova.
42. The Executive Secretary stated that the new incoming Executive Secretary would be announced very soon.
43. The Chair, once again, wished Ms. Algayerova well in her future endeavours and informed EXCOM that its next meeting would take place on 9 October in the afternoon.

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