

UNECE Group of Experts Coal Mine Methane Task Force on Just Transition

First Meeting

4 October 2023

11:00 - 12:30 (Geneva time)

SUMMARY

Participants:

Task Force Chair:

- Bobbie Foot

Task Force Members:

1. Bartłomiej Bezak
2. Yurii Bobrov
3. Neil Butler
4. Javier Cañas Andreu
5. Aida Haračić
6. Raphael Heffron
7. David Jermain
8. Bozhil Kondev
9. Kusum Lata
10. Shreya Prabhakar
11. Munira Raji
12. Annika Reynolds
13. Jennifer Rietbergen
14. Mateusz Rzeszowski
15. Paul Ségalard
16. Andriy Shulga
17. Artur Sokołowski
18. Klaudia Zwolińska-Gładys

Secretariat:

- Michal Drabik

Draft agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Discussion on the Work Plan of the TF (continuation from the last meeting)
4. Preparation for implementation of the work plan (identifying next steps, setting up a timeline, distribution of tasks) (if time permits)
5. What's new (opportunity for TF members to bring to the TF's attention relevant recent or upcoming publications, meetings, projects, policies, etc.)
6. AOB
7. Next meeting
8. Closing the meeting

Item 1. Opening of the meeting

1. The Chair of the Task Force (TF) opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

Item 2. Adoption of the agenda

2. The draft agenda was adopted without any changes.

Item 3. Discussion on the Work Plan of the TF (continuation from the last meeting)

3. The TF discussed the proposed work plan for 2023-2024. During the discussion on the document the following issues were raised:

a. “Workers’ protection” should be supplemented with “empowerment,” so that the laid off workers are not granted only with passive safeguarding mechanisms, but also with opportunities to actively develop their skills and thus improve their economic prospects (by either increasing chances to find new jobs, or to set up own businesses).

b. “Environmental consciousness” which is very important as it means recognition of the fact that people are a part of the nature and cannot chose not to be affected by it, should, nevertheless, be supplemented with “responsibility” to incentivise taking action towards environmental restoration and regeneration.

c. In reference to governance, the term “democratic” should be replaced by “participatory” to highlight the importance of people vis-à-vis the government, and to remain politically neutral. In that context, it was argued that the text assuming that people will drive the change is utopian, as in reality they are going to play rather consultative role. However, since it was decided that the document is aspirational in nature, it was agreed to leave the language that calls for people’s ownership of the transition process. There was also a call to move the paragraph on “participatory governance” to the top of the list. However, as explained by the secretariat, the terms that the presented definition of “just transition” consists of are being explained in the text in order of their appearance in the definition itself, and therefore for the sake of consistency and clarity it is better to keep them as they are, no to give an impression that some of them are more important than others.

d. The meaning of the term “economic success” was discussed. It was suggested to replace it with “improved economic situation.” However, finally the former term was found better as it is neutral, positive, and does not suggest any particular solutions. It was highlighted that in different communities the term “improved economic situation” could have different meanings and therefore it was abandoned. A request to add practical examples of “economic successes” was made. Such examples were said to be provided based on the literature review that is to take place as a part of the Work Plan implementation process.

e. Discussing the institutions, it was agreed that they not only need to have sufficient agency, resources, and capability to design, prepare for, and implement transition and the necessary supporting mechanisms, but also must be able to adapt the process to the changing needs and circumstances. A word “adapt” was said to emphasise the fact that the existing impacts, such as facility footprint or community skills are used to shape the future. It was observed that “adaptability” implies that relevant institutions already exist, which in some places might not be the case. As a result, a wording on establishment of institutions was added. A suggestion to add “unbiased” in reference to institutions was rejected as indirectly attacking the existing institutions and thus potentially alienating them. In addition, it was observed that the phrase indicating that the institutions need to act in accordance with the principles mentioned in the Work Plan suggest that they have to be unbiased.

f. It was agreed that information allowing to analyze current conditions at active coal mining regions should be collected not only at the regional and community level, but also at the national level, especially that different countries have different levels of centralization of the decision-making process.

g. Under Activity B the following deliverable was added: develop the criteria for guiding principles and good practices (this work should be done in parallel with section A).

i. It was agreed that the term “best practices” is highly contextual, because certain solutions that proved to be successful in one situation, in other circumstances can be insufficient or even harmful. As a result, the term in question was replaced by “good practices”. At the same time a higher-level term “guiding principles” indicating components which in the great majority of cases are necessary for a successful just transition was added.

4. The secretariat was requested to reflect the comments made during the meeting in the text of the Work Plan, and to make the updated document available to TF members (**please note** that it is available in the shared folder accessible from the [TF's webpage](#). It is saved in the "Work plan for 2023-2024" folder as a "Work Plan – clean" file. The TF Members are kindly asked to review the document and provide their final comments and/or edits in track changes by **COB Friday 1 December**).

5. It was decided that the Work Plan is to be finalized before the next Task Force's meeting, at which the document is to be endorsed, allowing the Task Force to move to its implementation phase. Consequently, the Task Force members were kindly asked to provide their last comments (if any) beforehand.

Item 4. Preparation for implementation of the work plan (identifying next steps, setting up a timeline, distribution of tasks)

6. Since a discussion on the work plan has not been completed, consideration of matters under this item were postponed until the next session.

Item 5. What's new

7. Under this item the participants had an opportunity to bring to the TF's attention relevant recent or upcoming publications, meetings, projects, and policies that they find of value and worth sharing.

8. The Task Force was presented with the Economic Diversification Strategy in Northern Colombia. The relevant documentation is to be made available in the shared folder.

9. It was decided to move this item higher up in the agenda for the next meetings.

Item 6. Any other business

9. The secretariat reported on the [Sustainable Energy Week](#) that took place on 11-15 September and featured 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 delivered a session dedicated to Just Transition, during which it presented a new concept of coal, in which the latter is not perceived as merely a fuel, but a multi-purpose resource. In that context, the Task Force was informed that the Committee had supported the presented approach and "noted that coal, not as a fuel but as a multi-purpose resource, can serve the needs of the emerging clean energy economies, and thus significantly broaden the range of opportunities for just transition strategies." (Report of the Committee on Sustainable Energy on its thirty second session, ECE/ENERGY/149, para. 51 (b) [ECE/ENERGY/149 \(unece.org\)](#)).

Item 7. Next meeting

10. The next meeting of the TF will take place at the beginning of December. The secretariat will distribute a poll requesting the TF members to identify the most convenient date and time.

Item 8. Closing the meeting

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