

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
130th Meeting
Geneva, 9 October 2023

EXCOM/CONCLU/130

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda

1. The Chair proposed to adopt the provisional draft agenda, as contained in document ECE/EX/2023/5, with an amendment requested by the United States of America, namely to include an additional agenda item in the formal segment as item 4bis, entitled “Dissemination of best practices in coal mine methane monitoring, reporting, capture and abatement”. This would include consideration of the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2023/28.
2. The representative of the Russian Federation opposed the amendment and emphasized that the Russian Federation is committed to the established practice of approving extrabudgetary projects in the informal segment on the basis of consensus. She noted that informal consultations to answer the questions of interested member States on this project had not taken place and that the tabling of extrabudgetary projects in the formal segment ran counter to the established practice of EXCOM.
3. The representative of Belarus expressed disappointment at the continuing abuse by the Western bloc of the UNECE of its majority in the Commission in order to push through politicised decisions that run counter to the pragmatic goals of the Commission and the majority of the UNECE member States. She emphasized that the group of countries was deliberately and unceremoniously destroying the UNECE foundations and the EXCOM work and imposing their dictate on the Commission without fail. This politicisation of the UNECE exacerbates divisions and distrust in the Commission and paralyses the full implementation of its mandate to promote the economic development and integration of Europe. Such practices in multilateral platforms are unacceptable for Belarus, and on this ground she opposed the amendment and declared that, accordingly, she would not be able to support a decision on the substance of the additional agenda item. She called upon member States to solve issues through dialogue and consensus.
4. The representatives of the European Union and its member States and of the United Kingdom supported the proposed amendment.
5. The representative of the United States requested a vote on the adoption of the agenda, as amended.
6. The result of the vote was 38 votes in favour, 2 votes against and 2 abstentions.
7. The agenda was adopted, as amended.

Item 2 – Chair’s conclusions from the last meeting

8. The conclusions from the 129th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/129) were adopted.

Item 3 - Matters relating to the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships:

a) Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships

9. The Chair welcomed the Chair of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (CICPPP), Mr. George Katapodis (Greece), who made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of the Committee over the past year and its plans for the future. He invited EXCOM to approve the Programme of Work of the Economic Cooperation and Integration subprogramme and the renewal of the mandate of the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies.
10. The representative of Uzbekistan emphasized Uzbekistan's commitment to innovation and science as drivers of sustainable economic and social growth. The national strategy for innovative development includes priorities such as introducing innovation in all sectors, supporting scientific research (particularly applied research in the fastest growing sectors of the economy), and promoting technology and science commercialization.. He expressed appreciation for the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review for Uzbekistan and requested continued support to implement its recommendations.
11. The representative of Greece acknowledged the importance of public-private partnerships (PPP) in the growth of the Greek economy and debt reduction. He expressed support for UNECE's work in this domain and commitment to contributing further.
12. The representative of Kyrgyzstan highlighted the successful introduction of the UNECE PPP and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System (PIERS) in Kyrgyzstan and the evaluation of Kyrgyz PPP projects against the SDGs. He recalled that Kyrgyzstan was a candidate for the Bureau of the Working Party and noted that his country was interested in a UNECE Innovation Policy Outlook (IPO) for Central Asia and actively participated in related capacity building activities.
13. The representative of Montenegro highlighted the recent UNECE seminar on transformative innovation in the Western Balkans that had taken place in Montenegro, emphasizing the importance of innovation for achieving the SDGs. Montenegro and UNECE would deepen cooperation on innovative development in the sub-region, including a benchmarking exercise to measure policy progress.
14. The representative of Georgia highlighted Georgia's pioneering role in testing the methodology of the IPO and appreciated the results of the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Georgia, which had led to the adoption of a groundbreaking law on innovation-enhancing procurement. She acknowledged the positive impact of the IPO and the related capacity building in the form of a study tour to Norway. She expressed interest in a second full-fledged IPO.
15. The representative of the Russian Federation commended the work of the CICPPP,

including under the IPO for Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, the UN-ECE Transformative Innovation Network (ETIN), and the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). The latter was a priority for the Russian Federation, who financed several projects in the sub-region in several areas of UNECE's mandate. She welcomed the Standard on PPP/Concession Legal Framework in support of the SDGs as a practical tool for stimulating private investment. She believed that the guidelines on promoting circular economy in PPPs for the SDGs would raise awareness, ensure equal access for all to government services and increase economic efficiency.

16. The representative of the European Union and its member States underscored the importance of innovation, competitiveness, and public-private partnerships for delivering green and digital transformation. The technical cooperation activities in these areas contributed to further economic integration in the UNECE region. He took note of the work of ETIN for the Western Balkans and the event on promoting women's entrepreneurship in transition economies organised with SPECA and looked forward to the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Ukraine. He also welcomed the PPP standard and its related guidance and the work of UNECE on leveraging PPP methodologies for the reconstruction of Ukraine.
17. The representative of Austria expressed readiness to deepen cooperation with UNECE on innovation and recalled that it was already sharing its extensive experience on innovation-enhancing procurement. Given its strong trade relationships with the Western Balkans, Austria was interested in UNECE's work in this sub-region.
18. The representative of Germany attached great importance to the cross-cutting theme of digital and green transformations and welcomed the efforts of CICPPP to facilitate these transformations in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. He expressed satisfaction regarding the cooperation on ETIN and highlighted the role played therein by the German Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovation. He noted that ETIN effectively served as a platform for a diverse group of stakeholders to exchange ideas, share best practices and chart the path towards a more sustainable digital and green future. On PPPs, Germany welcomed the upcoming publication of standards and the use of UNECE PPP methodologies for the reconstruction of Ukraine.
19. The representative of Türkiye underlined the importance of the UNECE International PPP Forum for experience sharing and capacity building and said that the PPP competition held at that event motivated countries to implement projects in line with the SDGs. Türkiye was proud to have submitted the winning project to this competition.
20. The representative of the Republic of Moldova appreciated the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of the country and the follow-up capacity building programme that had resulted in a Roadmap on Innovation and Technology Transfer. She requested further support for implementing the Roadmap and expressed interest in a second IPO.
21. The representative of Portugal aligned with the statement of the representative of the European Union and its member States. Noting that innovation is a key driver of sustainable development, she appreciated the role of ETIN as a platform for policy

dialogue and peer learning among innovation policymakers.

22. The representative of Tajikistan expressed gratitude for the fruitful cooperation on PPPs, noting that UNECE provided practical tools adapted to the needs of countries. He highlighted the PIERS methodology and requested support for training public officials in its use. Tajikistan also expressed interest in a review of its progress in implementing PPPs since the first UNECE assessment report 10 years ago.
23. The representative of Norway recalled the study visit by Georgian policymakers to Oslo of September 2023, which had allowed Norway to share its experience on innovation-enhancing procurement in cooperation with UNECE.
24. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Committee and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

b) Decisions on matters relating to the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships

25. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the Programme of Work of the Economic Cooperation and Integration subprogramme for 2024, as contained in document ECE/CECI/2023/5; and the renewal of the mandate of the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies for two years until 2025.

Item 4 - Matters relating to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards:

a) Meeting with the Chair of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

26. The Chair welcomed the Chair of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS), Mr. Zdenko Lucic (Croatia), who made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of the Steering Committee over the past year and its plans for the future. He invited EXCOM to approve the Programme of Work of the Trade subprogramme and of two of its subsidiary Working Parties, as well as the revised Terms of Reference for one of those Working Parties.
27. The representative of Uzbekistan noted that the national development strategy focused on strengthening the export potential of the country and on increasing the number of enterprises implementing international standards, and looked forward to cooperating with UNECE in implementing these priorities. He also noted that UNECE and the Ministry of Investments, Industry and Trade of Uzbekistan were preparing a study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade.
28. The representative of Georgia stated that his country had benefited from UNECE studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The action-oriented recommendations from these studies had advanced the national trade policy and its integration into regional and global supply chains. Georgia remained committed to cooperation with UNECE.

29. The representative of the Russian Federation appreciated the recent UNECE studies on Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Moldova. She welcomed the focus of the subprogramme on integration. She recalled the Memorandum of Understanding between UNECE and the Eurasian Economic Commission which framed joint activities and called for a new plan for such activities. She also noted that the Russian Federation had supported the chairmanship of Croatia and the participation of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in the Bureau of SCTCS.
30. The representative of Kazakhstan welcomed the work under SPECA carried out by the SCTCS as well as the CICPPP. Kazakhstan had co-hosted a side event on the role of digitalization for sustainable trade at the Astana International Forum. The President of Kazakhstan had recently highlighted digital and green transformation, innovation, export diversification, public procurement and food and agriculture as key pillars of national economic growth. These areas aligned with the mandate of UNECE and Kazakhstan looked forward to intensifying related cooperation.
31. The representative of the European Union and its member States appreciated the integration of topics related to the digital and green transition and sustainable development (e.g. traceability, gender equality, circular economy) into the programme of work. He also highlighted the promising start of the Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards and welcomed that the trade activities are well articulated with those of other organisations. He emphasized the importance of fostering regional economic integration through UNECE, particularly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. He suggested exploring changes in the governance structure of SCTCS to increase effectiveness and better leverage synergies with UN/CEFACT and other international bodies.
32. The representative of the Republic of Moldova highlighted the ongoing capacity building work within the country in the context of the UNECE study on regulatory and procedural barriers. She announced plans to organize a capacity-building event in Chisinau, focusing on the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Moldova sought support for capacity building and for additional assessments on digital economy and circular economy.
33. The representative of the United Kingdom emphasized the importance of trade in achieving the economies of scale and technology dissemination required for a green transition. Working Party 6 had a valuable role to play in unlocking the potential of standards and regulatory cooperation for green trade. She commended the work of the Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards and encouraged mainstreaming of this best practice in other areas of UNECE's normative work. The United Kingdom welcomed the partnerships forged by UNECE with relevant organizations such as WTO, UNCTAD, UNEP and ISO and the sharing of experiences across both government- and industry-led standardization spheres. across government, industry, and organizations to advance the circular economy and sustainable trade. She encouraged a sustained focus on such partnerships.
34. The representative of Kyrgyzstan highlighted the development of agricultural export potential as a priority for the country. He expressed gratitude for the recent UNECE Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade and requested further capacity

building support for raising awareness among farmers and agricultural processing companies, with a view towards improved competitiveness and integration into global supply chains.

35. The representative of Poland aligned with the statement made by the representative of the European Union and its member States. She commended the work of UNECE on reducing food loss and waste in agricultural supply chains, noting the importance of addressing such inefficiencies to improve food security and mitigate their impact on climate change.
36. The representative of Canada expressed its support for the efforts of Working Party 6, particularly in developing gender-responsive standards and the focus on the circular economy. She emphasized the importance of considering gender responsiveness when addressing sustainability and climate change.
37. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Steering Committee and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

b) Decisions on matters relating to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

38. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves:
 - (a) the Programme of Work of the Trade subprogramme for 2024 as contained in document ECE/CTCS/2023/10;
 - (b) the Programme of Work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies as contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/12;
 - (c) the Programme of Work of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards as contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.7/2022/20; and
 - (d) the revised terms of reference of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies as contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/11.

Item 4bis - Dissemination of best practices in coal mine methane monitoring, reporting, capture and abatement:

39. The Director of the UNECE Sustainable Energy Division provided a briefing on the work of the secretariat on the dissemination of best practices in coal mine methane monitoring, reporting, capture and abatement.
40. The representative of the Russian Federation did not support the draft decision contained in E/ECE/2023/L.13, reiterating her objection to the tabling of this extrabudgetary project in the formal segment that did not enjoy the support of all member States. She noted that at the previous meeting of EXCOM, the Russian Federation had put forward several questions and had requested an informal briefing to address them that had not taken place yet.

41. The representative of Belarus did not support the draft decision, for the reasons explained earlier at the meeting.
42. The Director of the UNECE Sustainable Energy Division noted that the secretariat had circulated a note to member States on 7 July answering the above-mentioned questions, and that informal consultations had been convened on 1 and 4 September 2023.
43. The representative of the United States requested a vote on the draft decision.
44. The result of the vote was 24 votes in favour and 2 votes against. The decision, contained in document E/ECE/2023/L.13, was adopted.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 5 - Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

45. The Chair recalled that, at its last meeting, EXCOM had not reached consensus on the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2023/25. The donor had since informed the secretariat that the funds originally earmarked for the project could be rerouted to another project previously adopted by EXCOM. The EXCOM Bureau welcomed this constructive approach. The proposed project contained in informal document 2023/38 had been withdrawn.
46. Regarding project 2023/35, the representative of the Russian Federation agreed with the need for further development and support for the UN Framework Classification of Resources (UNFC) and the UN Resource Management System (UNRMS). As the project was geared towards all countries and towards the energy sectors of the whole region, she believed that work under the project should involve representatives of all interested member States. She requested that experts from the Russian Federation be allowed to take part in all activities (including all Working Groups and Sub-groups) of the Expert Group on Resource Management without discrimination.
47. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2023/35.
48. Regarding project 2023/36, the representative of the Russian Federation raised several questions: Which experts would carry out the studies and develop the tools and models mentioned in the project proposal? Would these experts be impartial, devote equal attention to every UNECE member State, especially taking into account a truly hostile position of the donor towards the Russian Federation? What was the added value of the project as compared to 2023/35? She also noted that the studies and recommendations developed by the proposed Centre of Excellence in the United Kingdom could only apply in the national context, as not all member States could support the approaches and recommendations of British experts, and as the recommendations may not be compliant with the legislation and standards of all member States if they were developed without the participation of all member States. She also inquired what other centres would be involved in the project and what was meant by the phrase “strengthening cooperation on

the basis of a new knowledge exchange platform and knowledge dissemination among project partners, interested parties and the broad public”. She requested that the secretariat provide detailed responses to these questions and convene a related informal briefing for member States before a decision was taken on the project.

49. The Director of the UNECE Sustainable Energy Division replied that member States were at liberty to implement or not the recommendations produced, in line with their own policies and priorities. He affirmed that the secretariat conducted its work in accordance with UN rules and therefore with full impartiality. This project differed from the previous one discussed in that it addressed UNRMS whereas the other one addressed UNFC. The two projects were complementary. Notably, this project would focus on sustainable use of critical raw materials by introducing circular economy principles. Four British universities and the British Geological Survey would be opening the Centre of Excellence, and the recommendations and tools the Centre developed would be shared internationally via the above-mentioned knowledge exchange platform and other Centres, notably the ones already established in Moscow and in Mexico. He called on all member States to support the dissemination of these knowledge outputs.
50. The representative of the Russian Federation reiterated her request for an informal briefing where Russian experts should be invited to participate.
51. The representative of the European Union and its member States supported the project and regretted the delay in its approval caused by the request of the Russian Federation. He called on the EXCOM Bureau and the secretariat to ensure that it could be approved at the next meeting of EXCOM.
52. The representative of the United Kingdom said the proposed Centre of Excellence would develop case studies on the application of UNFC and UNRMS in certain sectors relevant to the circular economy transition. These would of course be specific to the British context but could also provide broader lessons for member States. She also recalled that the secretariat had indeed held informal consultations on 1 and 4 September to which all member States had been invited.
53. The Chair informed that the Bureau would consider how to proceed with project 2023/36.
54. Regarding project 2023/37, the representative of the Russian Federation inquired what was meant by “automated exchange of data”, how the collection of information would be carried out, and how member States would be contacted in this context. She underscored that the United Nations could only use official statistics provided by member States. She noted the importance of the provision of information on the forest sector by all member States and of ensuring open access to such information.
55. The Director of the Forests, Land and Housing Division explained that the project was linked to a previously adopted one on forests and forest knowledge for resilient, low carbon urban and rural communities. UNECE had regular contact with all member States to collect their official data and then made it available to all member States. “Automated data exchange” referred to an application programme interface – a standard process used by United Nations statistics. Participation in this platform would happen only with the consent of the member State and those who did not wish to participate could continue reporting their statistics using Excel. She also recalled that the possibility of developing

such a platform had been discussed at the 44th session of the joint FAO/UNECE Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management in June 2023.

56. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2023/37.
57. Regarding project 2023/39, the representative of Turkmenistan thanked the donor and secretariat for its work in preparing the project and reaffirmed the commitment of Turkmenistan to making the proposed study a success.
58. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2023/39.
59. Regarding project 2023/40, the Chair informed EXCOM that it had undergone the requisite due diligence procedure for private sector entities. As no comments were made by delegations, the Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2023/40.

Item 6 - Briefing by the Executive Secretary: Important new developments and key upcoming events.

60. The Executive Secretary recalled that information on all UNECE meetings could be found on the UNECE website at <https://unece.org/info/events/unece-meetings-and-events>. She proceeded to inform EXCOM of the following recent meetings and missions:
 - **30 August, New York:** ECOSOC endorsed UNRMS and recommended its use to all UN Member States.
 - **11-15 September, Geneva:** UNECE Sustainable Energy Week, which featured the 32nd session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and the 10th session of the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy.
 - **20 September, Brussels:** Launch of the new UN Global Road Safety campaign by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety and JCDcaux.
 - **2-6 October, Geneva:** Urban Resilience Week, which included the 3rd Forum of Mayors followed by the 84th session of the UNECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management and its side events.
61. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming meetings:
 - **16 October, Geneva:** Briefing to UNECE delegations on UNECE activities at COP-28
 - **19-20 October, Geneva:** Regional Conference on ICPD30 "Population and Development: Ensuring Rights and Choices"
 - **6-8 November, Almaty:** 3rd Almaty Energy Forum

- **21 - 23 November, Baku:** 2023 SPECA Economic Forum and the eighteenth session of the SPECA Governing Council
- **30 November – 12 December, Dubai:** COP-28
- **20-23 February 2024, Geneva:** 86th session of the Inland Transport Committee
- **13-14 March 2024, Geneva:** 2024 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
- **18-20 March 2024, Geneva:** 2024 Global Methane Forum

Item 7 – Any other business

62. The representative of Ukraine made a statement about the situation in his country. *Inter alia*, he highlighted the extensive environmental damage inflicted by the Russian Federation in the course of its military aggression against Ukraine. He called on the international community to assess the environmental damage from the war, hold the aggressor accountable for it, and contribute to ecological restoration and a green transition of the economy. He also denounced the efforts of the Russian Federation to disseminate disinformation and shift the blame for these damages onto Ukraine, including via a Note Verbale that the Russian Permanent Mission had circulated among UNECE member States.
63. The representative of the Russian Federation raised a point of order, noting that the issues raised by the delegation of Ukraine did not relate to the agenda nor to the mandate of UNECE and should be discussed at the relevant competent fora and not at EXCOM.
64. The representative of the United States supported the representative of Ukraine and said that the narrative promoted by the Russian Federation in a Note Verbale circulated to member States misrepresented reality. She called on the Russian Federation to stop its unprovoked and unjustified war on Ukraine.
65. The representative of the Russian Federation once again raised a point of order and called on member States to cease their provocative statements. She noted that the Russian Federation had proof of the responsibility of Ukraine in inflicting the environmental damages caused by the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam, which made it difficult to supply water to Crimea and disrupted agriculture in the Kherson region.
66. The representative of the European Union and its member States demanded that the Russian Federation stop its disinformation campaign and reiterated solidarity with Ukraine.
67. The representative of Canada thanked Ukraine for the update and recognized the negative impacts of the war on the country. She called on the Russian Federation to end its unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine.
68. The representative of the United Kingdom said the actions of the Russian Federation were a transparent attempt to misinform, divert and distract from the impacts of the war it had started. These impacts affected not only Ukraine but also the broader UNECE

region, affecting food and energy security, among others. The United Kingdom stood in solidarity with Ukraine.

69. The Chair informed EXCOM that its next meeting would take place on 4 December 2023 in the morning.
