

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
131st Meeting
Geneva, 4 December 2023

EXCOM/CONCLU/131

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/2023/6, with an amendment requested by the United Kingdom, namely to include an additional agenda item in the formal segment as item 3(b)bis, entitled “Update on Resource Management in the ECE Region”. This would include consideration of a decision relating to the extrabudgetary project contained in draft decision ECE/EX/2023/L.16. He stated that the United Kingdom had also requested that the secretariat provide a briefing on its work on sustainable resource management under this item.
2. The representative of the Russian Federation opposed the amendment and emphasized that the Russian Federation was committed to the established practice of approving extrabudgetary projects in the informal segment of the meeting, on the basis of consensus.
3. The representative of Belarus reiterated the unacceptability of the policy of a certain group of the UNECE Member States aimed at blocking some extrabudgetary projects and pushing others because of their political preferences and current geopolitical objectives. She said that an objective basis for amending the agenda did not exist and opposed the non-consensus amendment, and declared that accordingly she would not be able to support a decision on the substance of the amendment.
4. The representative of the United Kingdom said that the United Nations Framework Classification (UNFC) and the United Nations Resource Management System (UNRMS) were valuable tools to facilitate a responsible and sustainable supply of materials. She believed that the project would further academic collaboration between member States in pursuit of circular resource, which was timely in view of COP28, and requested EXCOM to adopt the amended agenda.
5. The representatives of the European Union and its member States, the United States and Ukraine supported the proposed amendment.
6. As there was no consensus, the representative of Spain proposed to vote on the adoption of the agenda, as amended.
7. The result of the vote was 33 votes in favour, 2 votes against and 2 abstentions.
8. The agenda was adopted, as amended.

Item 2 – Chair’s conclusions from the last meeting

9. The conclusions from the 130th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/130) were adopted.

Item 3 - Matters relating to the Committee on Sustainable Energy:

a) Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy

10. The Chair welcomed the Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy (CSE), Mr. Jürgen

Keinhorst (Germany), 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 sustainable energy subprogramme for 2024; the workplans and renewal of mandates of 7 Group of Experts, the workplan of the Expert Group on Resource management, and the extension of the mandate of the Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency standards in buildings.

11. The representative of Uzbekistan expressed gratitude for the ongoing support to the energy reforms in Uzbekistan. He highlighted in particular the cooperation on the UNECE Carbon Neutrality Toolkit, the UNECE-ESCAP project on energy connectivity in Central Asia, the Platform on Resilient Energy Systems, and the work on the pathways to sustainable hydrogen production, the water-energy nexus, energy efficiency of buildings and sustainable resource management. Uzbekistan looked forward to the Global Methane Forum in 2024.
12. The representative of the Russian Federation emphasized the need to avoid politicization. He hoped for further constructive work on the basis of transparency and openness on the Platform on Resilient Energy Systems. He highlighted the support offered by the International Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Resource Management in Moscow, including trainings for experts and cooperation agreements signed with countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and said the Centre was ready to cooperate with its counterparts in other countries. He emphasized the leading role of the Centre in Central Asia. The Russian Federation supported the work on hydrogen as well as the work of the Groups of Experts on Energy Efficiency and on Cleaner Electricity Systems. He also highlighted the successful results of the technical support project on sustainable hydrogen production financed by the Russian Federation. He stated that the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy was focusing on a single country to the detriment of other important issues and hoped this would be rectified. He also welcomed efforts to engage youth participation and informed that specialists from the BRICS Youth Energy Agency participated in the work of the Resource Management Young Member Group.
13. The representative of the United Kingdom emphasized the importance of strong commitments to mitigate emissions and partnerships to accelerate a just transition. She appreciated the cooperation of the Committee with other committees, including on the water-energy nexus, and commended its efforts to promote gender parity. The United Kingdom looked forward to updates on the Platform on Resilient Energy Systems.
14. The representative of Georgia highlighted the impactful contributions by the Committee to Georgia's sustainable energy landscape, highlighting recent initiatives on strengthening food and energy resilience, improving the energy efficiency of rural small businesses, and the Renewable Energy Hard Talks in 2016 and 2021.
15. The representative of the European Union and its member States acknowledged the impact of the aggression by the Russian Federation on Ukraine and its energy infrastructure on the energy sector and appreciated the efforts of the Committee to bring relevant results despite challenges. He highlighted the work on the Platform on Resilient Energy Systems, coal mine methane, sustainable resource management (including UNFC and UNRMS), the report on “Rebuilding Ukraine with a Resilient, Carbon-Neutral Energy System” and the roadmaps for the Republic of Moldova and Central Asia. He welcomed the setting-up of the Taskforce on Hydrogen and encouraged government representatives to actively participate in the work of the Committee.
16. The representative of the United States appreciated the reports describing the impacts of the war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine on energy systems. The United States looked forward to the Global Methane Forum in 2024 and invited delegations to engage with their capitals to promote participation.
17. The representative of Albania welcomed the efforts to improve access to affordable and clean

energy while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. He expressed appreciation for the work of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition, particularly the mapping of the readiness of Albania for transition in post-coal mining areas and the development of a relevant Geographic Information Systems database.

18. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy 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 Sustainable Energy

19. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the programme of work of the sustainable energy subprogramme for 2024, as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/2023/1; the work plans and the renewal of the mandates of the Groups of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems, the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition, the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency, the Group of Experts on Gas and the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy for the period 2024–2025 with the possibility of extension, as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/149; the work plan of the Expert Group on Resource Management for the period 2024–2025, as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/149; and the extension of the mandate of the Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings for 2024–2025 and its terms of reference, as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/2023/10.

c) Update on Resource Management in the ECE Region (Item 3(b)bis)

20. The secretariat of the UNECE Sustainable Energy Division provided a briefing on its work on sustainable resource management, as requested by the representative of the United Kingdom.
21. The representative of the Russian Federation did not support decision ECE/EX/2023/L.16. He reiterated his objection to considering an extrabudgetary project which did not enjoy the support of all member States in the formal segment. He expressed appreciation for the constructive informal consultations convened by the secretariat on the topic. However, the Russian Federation could not support the project due to inability of the donor to adhere to universally recognised UN principles, including multilateralism and non-discrimination, coupled with a Russophobic attitude.
22. The representative of the United Kingdom saw tremendous value in the UN Framework Classification and the UN Resource Management System (UNRMS) for ensuring sustainable resource use and expressed eagerness to scale up collaboration with UNECE and its member States in this field. The proposed project would leverage the expertise developed in the United Kingdom through the National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research programme and establish an International Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Resource Management in the country. This would provide academic support to the use of the UNRMS in the region to facilitate the circular transition, reduce carbon emissions in priority sectors. She highlighted that the secretariat had provided answers to all the questions from member States at the above-mentioned informal consultations and called on EXCOM to approve the draft decision. The United Kingdom objected to attempts by the Russian Federation to misinform, divert and distract from the impacts of its unjustified illegal invasion of Ukraine.
23. The representative of Belarus did not support the draft decision, for the reasons explained earlier in the meeting.
24. The representatives of the European Union and its member States, the United States and Ukraine supported the draft decision.

25. The representative of Spain requested a vote on the draft decision.
26. The result of the vote was 34 votes in favour and 2 votes against. The decision contained in document E/ECE/2023/L.16 was adopted.

Item 4 - Matters relating to the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management

a) Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management

27. The Chair welcomed the Chair of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (CUDHLM), Ms. Stefanie FÜRER (Switzerland), who made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of the Committee over the past year and its plans for the future. She invited EXCOM to approve the Programme of Work of the Housing and Land Management Component of Housing, Land Management and Population Subprogramme for 2024 and the extension of the mandate of the Working Party on Land Administration until 2030.
28. The representative of the Russian Federation welcomed the results achieved by the CUDHLM, especially on common approaches and best practices, and appreciated the implementation of technical support projects financed by the Russian Federation and the capacity building for countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia on smart sustainable cities. He did not object to the decisions tabled for EXCOM approval.
29. The representative of Switzerland welcomed the results achieved by the CUDHLM on common approaches and best practices and the active and broad dissemination of its outputs. She highlighted the Forum of Mayors as an innovative format that promoted multi-level good governance and looked forward to continued support to the rebuilding of Kharkiv and Mykolaiv.
30. The representative of the European Union and its member States welcomed the efforts of the latest Forum of Mayors on bringing local governance issues to the United Nations. He also appreciated the work on Voluntary Local Reviews, the United for Smart Sustainable Cities initiative, and the UN4UkrainianCities initiative, noting that the projects implemented under the latter were particularly important in the current context.
31. The representative of the United Kingdom appreciated the dynamic role played by the latest Forum of Mayors and welcomed its efforts to promote linkages between regions and localise the SDGs. She commended the UN4UkrainianCities initiative.
32. The secretariat informed EXCOM that a briefing would be held on the Forum of Mayors on 15 December 2023.
33. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management 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 Urban Development, Housing and Land Management

34. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extension of the mandate of the Working Party on Land Administration until 2030 and its draft terms of reference for the period 2025–2030 as contained in document ECE/HBP/2023/5; and the programme of work of the Housing and Land Management Component of Housing, Land Management and Population Subprogramme for 2024, as contained in document ECE/HBP/2023/7.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 5 - Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

35. Regarding project 2023/45, the representative of the Russian Federation inquired which specific areas would be addressed in the modernization of official statistics and which projects would be undertaken by the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS).
36. The Officer-in-Charge of the UNECE Statistics Division replied that the HLG-MOS undertook two or three projects every year which were selected at a workshop that took place annually in November. At this workshop, experts discussed the many proposals received by the secretariat. The proposals that received the most support were then selected for implementation. This year, the two chosen projects pertained to the impact of generative Artificial Intelligence on the producers of official statistics and to the transition to open-source technology in the context of proprietary software used by national statistical offices.
37. Regarding project 2023/48, the representative of the Russian Federation raised several questions: Which transport corridors would be involved? Would the work link to existing coordination mechanisms under the UNECE Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5)? Could the secretariat provide any details on the high-level networking event for representatives of UNECE member States and partner organizations envisaged to take place in the margins of the eighty-sixth annual session of the Inland Transport Committee? Was there a list of participants for this event? Would invitations be sent only to those countries that were on the above-mentioned transport corridors, or to all UNECE member States?
38. The Officer-in-Charge of the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division replied that the high-level event would be open to all UNECE member States and that a list of participants did not yet exist. The project work would be across corridors rather than on a specific corridor and would link to the work of WP.5.
39. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary projects contained in informal document 2023/43, 2023/44, 2023/45, 2023/46, 2023/47 and 2023/48.

Item 6 - Proposed Programme Plan 2025 (for information)

40. The Deputy Executive Secretary presented the 2025 draft proposed programme plan as contained in informal document 2023/49 to EXCOM for information, noting that it reflected recommendations made by UNECE sectoral governing bodies and that the final submission to the Office of Programme Planning Budget and Finance would happen in January 2024, upon receipt of the instructions issued by the Controller.
41. The representative of the European Union and its member States highlighted the UNECE legal instruments in the areas of transport and environment and said that the attractiveness of these to member States from outside the region should be a priority. He felt it would be important to highlight the potential of UNECE to contribute to digital and green transformations in global initiatives like the Summit of the Future. He inquired whether the secretariat could share any information about the budget discussions in New York.
42. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the 5th Committee had heard the report of the Secretary-General and received the opinion of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. It was expected to render its decision by the end of the year, including on the two new posts for UNECE, requested by the seventieth Commission session, and on some non-post expenditures. He called on all member States to use their negotiating power in New York to support the UNECE budget as proposed, highlighting that

non-post items such as travel and furniture had faced reductions for many years and that this made it difficult to deliver on the mandate of the organization.

43. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the 2025 draft proposed programme plan.

Item 7 - 2025 Evaluation Plan (for approval)

44. The Deputy Executive Secretary presented the Evaluation Workplan for 2025 as contained in informal document 2023/50 to EXCOM for approval. He informed that one evaluation at the programme-level was proposed, with the objective to assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of UNECE data use and information management approaches for 2020-2025. In line with the UNECE Evaluation Policy and previous Evaluation Workplans, it would be conducted by one external consultant, at the standard rate previously used by UNECE for programme-level evaluations.
45. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the Evaluation Workplan for 2025 as contained in informal document 2023/50.

Item 8 - Preparations for the 2024 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the Second Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

46. The Deputy Executive Secretary briefed EXCOM on the preparations for the 2024 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and presented the draft agenda for approval. The secretariat would convene further informal consultations to develop the programme of the event. He thanked Germany and Switzerland for their financial support.
47. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the provisional agenda for the 2024 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, as contained in informal document 2023/51.
48. The Deputy Executive Secretary briefed EXCOM on the preparations for the Second Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to take place on 11 March 2024 and presented the draft agenda for approval. UNECE and the International Organization for Migration would convene further informal consultations to develop the programme of the event. He highlighted that substantive contributions to the meeting by the UNECE would be limited to its current mandate and activities in the area of migration, in other words, statistics.
49. The representative of Hungary stated that Hungary had not signed the Global Compact and did not participate in it. He emphasized the voluntary nature of participation and hoped the differing positions of member States would be respected.
50. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the provisional agenda for the second session of the Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the ECE region to be held on 11 March 2024, as contained in document 2023/52.

Item 9 – Partnerships (for information)

51. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the updated modalities of partnerships at UNECE. The purpose of partnerships was to further implementation of the mandate of UNECE, increase impact of the ground and enhance visibility. Partnerships with a financial component were handled via agreements such as Host Country Agreements. Extrabudgetary projects with donor contributions were presented to EXCOM for approval.

Partnerships without a financial component, should they need to be formalized, would require a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with EXCOM being informed prior to signature. All MoUs were made available on the UNECE website.

52. The representative of the European Union and its member States appreciated the proposed modalities and improved transparency.
53. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the partnership approach and modalities followed by the UNECE secretariat.

Item 10 - Briefing by the Executive Secretary: Important new developments and key upcoming events.

54. The Executive Committee heard a video message from the Executive Secretary who was on mission at COP28. The message highlighted the extensive UNECE engagement at COP28 on topics such as critical raw materials, urban forests, statistical guidance for achieving national climate objectives, financing the green transition, decarbonizing transport, transboundary cooperation on air pollution and water etc. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that she had already invited proposals from the UNECE sectoral committees on the cross-cutting theme for the next Commission session and that informal consultations would be convened on 24 January 2024 with a view to present a shortlist to the EXCOM meeting in February 2024 for consideration. During these consultations, the secretariat would also provide an update on the latest developments on hybrid meeting formats. She also informed EXCOM that she would hold a briefing for the Permanent Representatives of member States on 7 February 2024 to discuss the UNECE engagement at COP28, the priorities for the new year and some of the key events of 2024.
55. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed EXCOM of the following recent meetings and missions:
 - **19-20 October, Geneva:** ICPD30 Regional Conference
 - **26-27 October, Venice:** Venice Sustainable Fashion Forum
 - **1-3 November, Geneva:** 28th session of the Committee on Environmental Policy
 - **8-10 November, New York:** UN Sustainable Development Group Principals Meeting
 - **20-23 November, San Marino:** FORESTA 2023: Joint session of the ECE Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission
 - **23-24 November, Baku:** SPECA Economic Forum and Governing Council and SPECA Heads of State Summit
56. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming meetings:
 - **11-14 December, Geneva:** 43rd session of the Executive Body of the Air Convention
 - **12-15 December, Geneva:** 9th Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and 5th Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment
 - **14 and 15 December, Yerevan:** Ministerial Meeting of the Landlocked Developing Countries on the topic “Enhancing equitable, affordable, and inclusive transport connectivity as a driver for more sustainable and resilient economies in LLDCs”.
 - **Early February 2024:** Planned mission by the Executive Secretary to Brussels to engage with officials from the European Commission
 - **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 11 – Any other business

57. The representative of the Russian Federation referred to an interview with the Chair that had been recently published on swissinfo.ch, which erroneously stated that the extrabudgetary project supporting the reconstruction of Kharkiv and Mykolaiv had been put to a vote at EXCOM at the request of the Russian Federation. He stated that the project had been approved by consensus and asked the Chair to contact the website in question to request a corrigendum.
58. The Chair replied that this corrigendum had already been issued.
59. The Chair informed EXCOM that its next meeting would take place on 13 February 2024 in the afternoon.
