Economic and Social Council

Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

**Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation
and Standardization Policies (WP.6)**

Thirty-first session
Geneva, 24–26 November 2021

Report of Working Party on Regulation Cooperation and Standardization Policies on its thirty-first session

I.   Introduction

1.   The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) held its thirty-first session from the afternoon of 24 to 26 November 2021.

2.   Experts from the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States attended: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Canada, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America. Representatives of the European Commission (EC) were also present. Experts from the following non-ECE member States attended Australia, Bangladesh, China, Dominican Republic, Kenya, Saudi Arabia and Trinidad and Tobago.

3.   The following United Nations bodies and international organizations participated: United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The following inter- and non-governmental organizations participated: ASTM International, Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), European Committee for Standardization (CEN), European Committee for Electrotechnical Standards (CENELEC), European Environmental Citizens' Organization for Standardization (ECOS), Global Trade Professionals Alliance, Ingénieurs du Monde, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), International Federation of Standards Users, International Network for Standardization of Higher Education Degrees, International Organization of Legal Metrology (OIML), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP) and World Trade Organization (WTO).

4.   Observers were also present at the invitation of the secretariat including representatives of private sector companies, associations, academia and civil society organizations from various United Nations regions.

5.   The Deputy Executive Secretary of ECE launched the meeting, reminding how important and timely the topics of WP.6 are in this post-pandemic time. WTO reported that at least two-thirds of the notifications related to COVID-19 have been about standards and

regulations. The Commission emphasized that ECE is a strong platform for inclusive dialogue and can help overcome normative and governance gaps and can help achieve double digit circularity. The Chair of WP.6 followed on thanking all experts and all delegations for the recent achievements and the continuation of work despite the pandemic. She stressed the importance of regulatory cooperation and encouraged the teams to keep up their excellent efforts.

II. Adoption of the agenda (Agenda Item 1)

6.   The secretariat informed the annual session that the draft agenda ECE/CTCS/WP.6/1 had been amended and presented the revised draft agenda ECE/CTCS/WP.6/1/Rev.1.

7.   **The Working Party adopted the revised agenda of its thirty-first session (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/1/Rev.1) without modification. (Decision 1)**

III. Election of officers (Agenda Item 2)

8.   **The Annual Session, in accordance with the Commission's rules of procedures and established practice, elected Ms. Heidi Lund (Sweden) as Chairperson and Ms. Gabrielle White (Canada) as Vice-Chairperson and Ms. Rosie Seville (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) as Vice-Chairperson for the period of 2021–2023. (Decision 2)**

9.   Several delegations expressed their gratitude to the outgoing Chair, Ms. Marion Stoldt (Germany) and the outgoing Vice-Chair Mr. Valentin Tataritsky (Belarus) as well as the continuing Vice-Chair Mr. Miroslav Chloupek (Czechia). The importance of these leadership roles was reminded, especially for the proper functioning of a working party.

10.   The outgoing Chair passed the chairpersonship of the rest of the meeting to the Chair-elect who reminded the engagement and leadership that Ms. Stoldt has provided within WP.6 for nearly a decade and the key areas which have been launched and enhanced under her tenure. The Chair-elect then emphasized some of the forward-looking topics the group should take into consideration such as digitalization and sustainability. She noted that technical regulation and conformity assessment might need further focus in the work of WP.6 in the coming years to support sustainability efforts. She also stressed the importance of digitalization, notably to achieve objectives of traceability, objectivity and verification.

IV. Matters arising (Agenda Item 3)

11.   The Chief of Market Access Section underlined some of the recent developments within the parent body of WP.6, the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS) and within ECE. The SCTCS session was held on 21–22 June 2021 and endorsed the 2021 Programme of Work for WP.6; he underlined some interesting discussions and deliverables from that session including several studies on COVID-19 impact assessments targeting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia (ECE/CTCS/2021/4). The SCTCS session also endorsed the completion and publication of the Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in Serbia (ECE/TRADE/460).

12.   He also underlined the recent developments from the sixty-ninth session of ECE, held on 20–21 April 2021. Member States committed to step up efforts to promote circular economy approaches and sustainable use of natural resources in the existing relevant ECE sectoral work programmes as appropriate (E/2021/37-E/ECE/1494). This is the reason for the agenda item 9 panel discussion on circular economy in relation to the topics under WP.6.

13.   The Secretary of WP.6 explained the Silence Procedure which was applied to the conclusions of the Informal Virtual Consultation of 2020 and which will also be applied to the decisions and report of this thirty-first session. He reminded that there were a number of conclusions outlined in the Chair's Note of the November 2020 meeting, available in

document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/2. These conclusions and the report in general were already approved through the Silence Procedure and brought up at this meeting in order to formally record these under an official decision number.

- Conclusion 1: The adoption of the agenda of the 2020 informal consultation.

- Conclusion 2: Mr. Miroslav Chloupek, First Deputy President of the Czech Office for Standards, Metrology and Testing, the Czech Republic, was elected as Vice-Chair of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies for the period 2020–2022.

- Conclusion 3: The Informal Virtual Consultations took note of the secretariat's report on matters arising.

- Conclusion 4: The meeting noted with thanks and adopted the report of the Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative (GRSI) and requested the Initiative to report at the 2021 session.

- Conclusion 5: The Informal Virtual Consultations noted with thanks the joint report of the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (GRM) and the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS) groups and congratulated the teams and the secretariat for the achievements. The meeting requested the secretariat to report on further developments in GRM and MARS at the 2021 session.

- Conclusion 6: The meeting recommended the Revised *Recommendation P on Crisis Management by Regulatory Systems* (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2011/4/Rev.1) for approval in Silence Procedure after the meeting. The meeting noted the revised concept on a new Recommendation V on addressing product non-compliance risk in international trade (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/6) and requested GRM to complete the Recommendation for adoption at the 2021 session.

- Conclusion 7: The meeting took note of the report and thanked Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) for cooperation and coordination with ECE. The meeting invited the organization to report again at the 2021 session.

- Conclusion 8: The meeting took note of the reports and presentations of the initiatives and thanked them for their contribution towards the international discussion on standards, standardization, and the use of standards and education on standards. The meeting requested the teams and initiatives to assess their work and report to the 2021 session.

- Conclusion 9: The meeting took note of the information provided by the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and thanked them for cooperation and coordination with ECE. The meeting invited the organizations to report again at the 2021 session.

- Conclusion 10: The meeting took note with appreciation of the progress report of the capacity-building activities, fully supported the continued implementation of the project and requested the secretariat to continue reporting in 2021.

- Conclusion 11: The meeting took note of the secretariat's report and regretted the financial constraints forcing the secretariat to change formal trilingual meetings into Informal Virtual Consultations.

- Conclusion 12: The meeting took note of the programme of work of the Trade Subprogramme including that of WP.6.

14.   **The Working Party adopted the Chair's Note on the Informal Virtual Consultation of November 2020 (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/2) and the 12 conclusions therein, through ECE Silence Procedure. (Decision 3)**

15.   Conclusion 6 on the approval of the revised *Recommendation P on Crisis Management in Regulatory Systems*, document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/11, was circulated as a separate Silence Procedure in order to finalize the document for publication. This item has already been recorded as approved but is reminded during this meeting in order to record it officially under a session decision number.

16.   **The Working Party approved, through an ECE Silence Procedure, the revised** *Recommendation P on Crisis Management in Regulatory Systems* **in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2020/11 after its Informal Virtual Consultation of November 2020. (Decision 4)**

V.   Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (Agenda Item 4)

17.   The Chair of the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS) presented the recent activities and the nineteenth annual meeting of this group as outlined in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/3. She underlined the challenges introduced by COVID-19 for risk-based market surveillance as well as the solutions implemented by certain countries. Cooperation has been a key element. Trade in personal protection equipment (PPE) significantly rose with the pandemic. MARS plans to continue sharing experience – especially in light of the growth of e-commerce; to finalize and publish a revision of the Market Surveillance Glossary; to review existing recommendations; and deliverables and continue to enhance the global and regional market surveillance networks.

18.   **The Working Party adopted the report of Advisory Group on Market Surveillance (MARS) (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/3). It mandated the secretariat and the Advisory Group to continue to report on an annual basis on its activities. (Decision 5)**

VI.   Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (Agenda Item 5)

19.   The co-convenors of the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (GRM) presented the recent activities and the report of its annual session as outlined in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/4. GRM has been working on a survey aimed at gathering international best practices in the management of the COVID-19 crisis (based on *Recommendation P on Crisis Management in Regulatory Frameworks*) which will be circulated shortly and is looking into the possibility of expanding its work towards artificial intelligence (AI) initiatives within regulatory systems. GRM plans to pursue these activities as wells as explore best practices in reviewing safety regulations, promote the work of GRM and strengthen a network of relevant organizations.

20.   **The Working Party adopted the report of the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (GRM) (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/4). It mandated the secretariat and the Group of Experts to continue to report on an annual basis on these activities. (Decision 6)**

21.   One of the key deliverables over this period has been the completion of *Recommendation V on Addressing Product Non-Compliance Risks in International Trade* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/5). It recommends that Governments develop and implement integrated risk management strategies in border control; develop harmonized, cross-agency criteria for the evaluation of non-compliance risk; and that Governments establish/strengthen cooperation among regulators. The co-convenors of GRM also presented the document *Managing Risk for Post-Pandemic Trade: Guide for Border Regulatory Agencies* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/INF.1). This guide is the result of a collaboration between GRM and the International Trade Centre (ITC) and is proposed as a joint publication as initially presented to the twenty-ninth session. The guide consolidates a roadmap to implement the related ECE recommendations on this topic (R, S, T and V).[1]

22.   **Member States approved the new** *Recommendation V on Addressing Product Non-Compliance Risks in International Trade* **(ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/5). They mandated the secretariat to report on its implementation. They encouraged the donor**

---

[1] ECE *Recommendation R on Managing Risk in Regulatory Frameworks*; ECE *Recommendation S on Applying Predictive Risk Management Tools for Targeted Market Surveillance* and ECE *Recommendation T on Standards and Regulations for Sustainable Development*.

community to make resources available for capacity-building projects to assist member States in its implementation. **(Decision 7)**

VII. Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (Agenda Item 6)

23.   The acting Chair of the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (START) set out the importance of this group in supporting *Recommendation L on International Model for Transnational Regulatory Cooperation Based on Good Regulatory Practice* and the initiatives that have been engaged on such cooperation as outlined in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/6. Over this past period, work was able to continue virtually and in partnership with other organizations such as ISO and IEC.

24.   The Pipeline Safety initiative is working on new transport systems and technical requirements for liquified natural gas and hydrogen, and a relevant project is being developed globally. They will be seeking further substantive results and guidance with which they aim to bring this forward as a future recommendation within WP.6 and will work on this in the coming period.

25.   There was a comment on the proposed initiative on cybersecurity, confirming that the current approach is on target. It was noted that further consultation on this complex field would be beneficial.

26.   **The Working Party adopted the report on the sectorial initiatives (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/6). It requested the secretariat and the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (START) to continue to report on an annual basis on these activities and encouraged member States to report on interest and feasibility of these sectoral initiatives. (Decision 8)**

27.   The acting Chair of START stressed the importance of education on standardization in support of *Recommendation I on Education on Standards-Related Issues* as presented in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/7. The education on standardization initiative (START-Ed) has been discussing issues of interest to companies concerning standards and how to potentially include these in educational programmes. He reminded the work which has been achieved in this area, including the conceptualization of a training in fifteen modules. He invited all interested education institutions and delegations to join this initiative.

28.   **The Working Party took note of the update on activities under the START-Ed initiative (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/7) and thanked participating delegates and experts for their contributions. The Working Party recommended the continuation of this initiative. (Decision 9)**

VIII. Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative (Agenda Item 7)

29.   The Chair of the Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative (GRSI) presented the achievements under this initiative over the past year as outlined in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/8. Three project teams have been established to progress the activities. The first on knowledge sharing and training has finalized a questionnaire aiming to learn more about organizations' gender action plan, training and research on the topic; this questionnaire will be available online shortly and all delegates are invited to circulate it to their standards development organizations and respond. The second project team is working on a methodology for assessing and developing gender-responsive standards; it has just finalized a document on methodology which has been circulated for an internal review. This document is expected to be available in the coming months as an advanced publication. The third project team is dedicated to network development and has participated in a number of events to disseminate the work of GRSI. Finally, the Chair of GRSI explained that work on gender-responsive standards and gender-inclusive standards development is a recurring work item which will continue in the foreseeable future; it is therefore suggested that this initiative be transformed into a team of specialists.

30.   The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland expressed its enthusiastic support of GRSI and its work. They are developing a *Flex Standard* aimed at improving the inclusiveness of data used in standards-making results of which they look forward to sharing in the future. They support the work within GRSI promoting dialogue and deployment of best practices and proposed that the group develop a strategic engagement plan to study best ways to disseminate this work.

31.   **The Working Party adopted the report on activities of the Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative 2020–2021 (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/8). It encouraged member States to engage in dialogue with standards bodies in their jurisdiction to become signatories of the ECE *Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development*. It further requested the secretariat to continue its awareness-raising efforts and to report on activities at the next session. (Decision 10)**

IX.   Report on capacity-building (Agenda Item 8a)

32.   The ECE secretariat has been carrying out a project entitled "Enhancing Usage and Uptake of Standards for Sustainable Development, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls" since July 2019 thanks to a contribution from the German Cooperation Fund through the Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB). The progress of this project is presented in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/9 and aims to provide further mapping of standards to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); to produce two training materials on "Standards for the SDGs" and on "Gender-Responsive Standards"; and to organize a series of virtual workshops on these topics. The activities shall progress in the coming months and close with a high-level event in the second quarter of 2022.

33.   **The Working Party took note of the progress report on the Standards for Sustainable Development Goals project, phase II (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/9) and thanked the Government of Germany and Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) for their generous contribution. The Working Party requested the secretariat to continue to report on the technical activities of this project. (Decision 11)**

X.   Programme of work for 2022 (Agenda Item 8b)

34.   The Working Party develops an annual programme of work which covers the activities for the coming period. The proposed programme of work for 2022 in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/10 reflects the planned work of each of the subgroups and provides a few words on the pertinence of each of these areas of work to the overall objective of WP.6. The Chair underlined that this will entail a review of some of the existing recommendations and deliverables and this plans to enhance the implementation of a number of key recommendations such as Recommendations I, L, U and V.[2]

35.   **The Working Party adopted the programme of work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies for 2022 (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/10). (Decision 12)**

36.   The WP.6 Chair underlined the importance of the three subgroups: MARS, GRM and START. As outlined in the annexes of the programme of work for 2022 in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/10, these three groups request the renewal of their mandate for a further two-year period in order to continue their work.

37.   **The Working Party recommended the extension of the mandates of the MARS Group, of the START Team and of the GRM Group as proposed in the annexes of document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/10 and requested the secretariat to seek, as**

---

[2] ECE *Recommendation I on Education on Standards-Related Issues*, ECE *Recommendation L on International Model for Transnational Regulatory Cooperation Based on Good Regulatory Practice*, ECE *Recommendation U on Gender-Responsive Standards* and ECE *Recommendation V on Addressing Product Non-Compliance Risks in International Trade*.

appropriate, the approval of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards and of the ECE Executive Committee. (Decision 13)

XI. Activities of other United Nations Economic Commission for Europe bodies and other international organizations of interest to WP.6 (Agenda Item 8c)

38.   The representative of the secretariat of the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee of WTO underlined that this Committee provides a forum to review the operation of standards and regulations and promotes regulatory cooperation. Transparency is key and to achieve this and deal with the over 3,000 notifications Member Governments submit each year, it has set up e-Ping, an electronic notification and alert system. She also referred to the information notes and updates related to COVID-19 that WTO has been issuing. The TBT Committee also serves as a forum to discuss specific trade concerns and review implementation; here, the standards and guidance developed by ECE are often referenced. She also pointed out potential further synergies with the work of ECE, given the increasing focus on environmental and gender issues at WTO.

39.   The External Relations Manager of ISO reminded the long-standing cooperation which exists between WP.6 and ISO and she looks forward to future collaboration. She stressed their engagement to support the Paris Agreement of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP). She emphasized the crucial support role that international standards can play and introduced the ISO Climate Action Kit bringing together the tools of ISO that help tackle climate change.

40.   The Secretary of the IEC Conformity Assessment Board provided a ten-year retrospective of collaboration between IEC and WP.6. This included collaboration on the 2011 *United Nations Common Regulatory Objectives Framework* as well as the 2016 recommendations F and G.[3] This has also included multiple presentations at each other's meetings as well as World Standards Cooperation Workshop in 2014 and high-level meetings around the regions in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Republic of Moldova. IEC believes that this collaboration is creating value for the world and looks forward to further collaboration.

41.   The Chair of UN/CEFACT announced two areas of potential, future cooperation with WP.6: the creation of a gender-responsive code list for honorifics which would potentially be inherited in all electronic business exchange messages (and all messages that use UN/CEFACT maintained code lists) and a project on risk management in relation to Single Window. She also underlined the cooperation which has been built with several other key organizations which are reusing UN/CEFACT e-business standards, such as the EC Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), the International Maritime Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and ISO. Much of this work is based upon the core semantics of the UN/CEFACT standards.

42.   ASTM International provided a brief update on recent activities and projects, highlighting the long-standing successful relationship with WP.6 and other international organizations. Among recent initiatives is the publication of an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) case study titled "International Regulatory Co-operation and International Organizations: The Case of ASTM International". In placing ASTM on a level playing field with other international standards organizations, the report documents that ASTM voluntary consensus standards are relevant in today's global economy and are being used by industry and Governments worldwide to support technologies/sectors such as additive manufacturing, sustainable aviation fuels, unmanned aviation systems, circular construction, and others. Furthermore, ASTM recently launched a "Global Collaboration Forum on Personal Protective Equipment" with the aim to address technical

---

[3] ECE *Recommendation F on Creation and Promotion of International Agreements on Conformity Assessment* and ECE *Recommendation G on Recognition of Conformity Assessment Procedures and Results.*

challenges facing PPE, including standardization needs. ASTM continues to pursue gender-responsive actions as well as a broader diversity equity and inclusion strategy.

43.   The ICC Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva underlined the importance of the topics developed under WP.6 for the business community. Indeed, ensuring a level playing field for all actors and encouraging harmonization of standards and processes across borders is key. He underlined the work engaged within ICC on the transition to a more circular economy as well as efforts to assist in harmonizing international standards. ICC is also promoting the implementation of the *Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records* (MLETR) of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). He looks forward to further exchanging with WP.6 in the coming months to find future synergies.

44.   The EEC Minister for technical regulation highly appreciated the long-standing cooperation with WP.6 and stressed the relevance of this interaction. EEC has adopted 51 technical regulations, the implementation of which provides for the possibility of applying the requirements of international standards. At the same time, for a number of technical regulations, the proportion harmonized with international standards reaches 88 per cent, especially in such areas as low-voltage equipment and equipment operating in explosive environments. The Minister stressed that the conformity assessment system of EEC is also based on best international practices and is constantly being improved. Work continues on the development of an effective control and market surveillance system, including taking into account a risk-based approach. EEC has launched a digital platform that will provide not only digital transformations of all technical regulation processes, but will also create conditions for digital interaction during the design, production and launch of products on the market. The digital platform being created will also improve the mechanisms of accreditation and conformity assessment. Work is also underway to create the Eurasian quality assurance infrastructure.

45.   The representative of the EC Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) highlighted the long history of EC participation in WP.6 meetings and offered a preview of the new standardization strategy that is set to address the developments in the last decade. EC recognizes both the technical and political significance of standardization, especially in strategically important areas like cybersecurity, offshore wind energy, chemical safety, space data, batteries and hydrogen power. It aims to set up an early information system of relevant international standardization initiatives to ensure that the output reflects European strategic priorities and common democratic and human rights values. As EC has embarked on green and digital transition towards climate-neutrality and sustainability, and is working towards creating a single market for services, it recognizes the importance of standards and looks forward to potential collaboration.

46.   **The Working Party took note of the information provided by other organizations. It requested the secretariat to continue to explore options for cooperation with other organizations within the remit of the scope of Working Party 6. (Decision 14)**

XII. Working Party terms of reference (Agenda Item 8d)

47.   Following an internal evaluation of ECE in 2019, it was proposed that WP.6 review and update its terms of reference in line with the *Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of Working Parties within UNECE* (ECE/EX/1, paragraph 3(d)). The evaluation further suggested that this review reflect as appropriate the priorities of the 2030 Agenda. The current terms of reference were adopted in 2004. It was suggested that a revision could include a mission statement, the main aims of the work, references to the relevant ECE guidelines, and a list of activities the Working Party shall undertake (similar to the current document of 2004). It was also suggested that this revision include a provision to revise the terms of reference on a regular basis of perhaps every five years. The Chair requested the mandate from the Working Party to have the Bureau prepare such a revised document with the assistance of the secretariat and suggested that delegates could provide input up until 15 February 2022 with written comments to the secretariat sent to regulatory.cooperation@un.org.

48.   The delegation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland supported the revision of the WP.6 terms of reference and supported the regular review of such a terms of reference on a regular basis which is best practice.

49.   **The Working Party took note of the ECE evaluation and the proposal to review and update its terms of reference. It asked the Bureau to follow up on the recommendations set out in the evaluation and to present a revised terms of reference to the next annual session, as appropriate. (Decision 15)**

XIII.   Panel discussion: circular economy and regulatory cooperation and standardization (Agenda Item 9)

50.   The Director of the ECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division underlined the importance of the topic of circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources, following the decisions taken by the sixty-ninth session of ECE in April 2021. She referred to the activities in response to the Commission decisions by several of the Working Parties and Teams of Specialists serviced by the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, resulting in circularity-related discussions in the field of innovation, supply chain traceability, and public-private partnerships. The Director expressed her gratitude to WP.6 for devoting time and expertise to this important topic.

51.   The Chair followed on to explain the areas where WP.6 could likely contribute on this theme, especially on cooperation on standards and on efforts addressing and avoiding regulatory fragmentation and eventual enhanced focus on product design. UNCTAD explained the work they are doing on consumer protection which underline the good practices that businesses could put in place and the importance of standards. ECOS reminded some key aspects of circular economy and the work to be done to come to a consensus on these concepts which is where ECE could make a positive contribution: supporting a strong and inclusive standardization system that fosters open debate and gives a voice to all interested stakeholders.

52.   The Finish Safety and Chemicals Agency (TUKES) underlined that the aim of market surveillance is to ensure that products placed on the market are compliant with regulations. Legislation sets the minimum level which products need to comply to, and this limit needs to be something that can be measured and/or monitored. This can be challenging with circular economy setting also defining this kind of requirements. Current regulations might also make trade in reused products difficult for economic operators. It was underlined that regulations need to be reasonable and enforceable. There is discussion of a digital product passport that would include information on the origin of the product, the construction, repair and disposal.

53.   The Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment (SWEDAC) presented "Conformity assessment in circular economy – today and in the future", with current examples from where product legislation does not support a circular approach. Looking into the future he pointed out that conformity assessment (for example testing, inspection, certification, verification) used in the right way can be an enabler for future trustworthiness in circular economy supported by international standards with clear requirements on the object for conformity assessment. This can be used during public procurement or by companies to fulfil legislations and people/companies to make an active choice between products.

54.   Verification can be a good tool for circular economy because it takes a long time for the targets to be finalized, notably because of new technologies. Such verification is already being used for corporate social responsibility and greenhouse gas emissions which allow entities to make self-declarations which can then be verified. Such verification is also being used for energy technical verification. Lifecycle cost analysis on how a product can be circulated will also be necessary in the future. In this area, standards are needed; it is important to use international standards in order to ensure harmonization.

55.   The co-convenor of GRM presented the five recommendations on risk management and how these can contribute to strengthen the effectiveness of a transition to circular economy. These rely quite heavily on regulatory frameworks for the delivery of better

outcomes and therefore ways of strengthening the design and implementation of regulatory frameworks. He concluded that risk management and such recommendations should assist in developing the new thinking behind the transition to a more circular economy.

56. It was further underlined that re-thinking and re-drafting regulation is an enormous challenge and that the current linear model is integrated into current processes. New regulations can't be drafted until clear instructions can be given. WP.6 can contribute with its convening power and standardization policies.

57. The Chair of GRSI exposed how to move towards a gender-responsive circular economy. The main focus of circular economy work until now seems to be on environment outcomes and much less on societal outcomes. She stressed that women are differentially affected by both sustainable and unsustainable production and consumption patterns. Standards for the circular economy need to be gender-responsive as they need to maximize the positive outcomes of circular economy for both people and planet. It was suggested that existing and emerging standards for circular economy identify opportunities for improvement through wider consultation, especially with those groups making gender-responsive standards. WP.6 could work towards recommendations on this topic.

58. The Director of OIML, reminded that metrology engages directly with the challenges and opportunities concerning the circular economy and regulatory cooperation, including effective and responsive industry policy design, development and implementation. Metrology also interacts with allied industries such as transportation, agriculture and health as well as integrated horizontal disciplines including trade and economic development. He underlined the importance of standards and regulatory design and cooperation for society, business and government. He further explained how metrology is part of product traceability and safety and therefore directly contributes to reuse, repair, remanufacture, and repurpose principles.

59. It was also noted that traceability has a specific meaning for metrology which may not be the same as that for circular economy; WP.6 may consider working on this. Measuring performance of products for their impact on climate change and environmental impacts can contribute to the trustworthiness in traceability. WP.6 can contribute to ensuring international alignment of value chains both from a business and regulatory perspectives. A gap analysis among economies of different levels could be useful.

60. The acting Chair of START explained the importance of education in approaching circular economy. He reminded some of the key points on circular economy and that it is important to separate technical issues from political issues, that production and consumption also need to be responsible, that products should be conceived responsibly with longer life spans, that all solutions have positive and negative points. He situated the START-Ed initiative as a potential place to provide guidance on the topic, reminding that education is a key factor for a successful transition to circular economy.

61. SCTCS Vice-Chair congratulated for the success of the annual session of WP.6. He underlined the importance of the work of WP.6. He stated that it is important that the shift to circular economy does not become a barrier to trade; it is a social issue and standards need to reflect that, which could also be covered by WP.6 in its regulatory cooperation mandate dealing with trade issues. He suggested that WP.6 bring forward these points to SCTCS in June 2022, underlining what has already been approved that supports circular economy and what could be done in the near future.

62. A general comment was raised on how to ensure that the regulatory framework is making a concerted push towards circularity on a global level. The global supply chains are interlinking trade actors across the world, so it would make sense if the global rules are working in harmony to promote the transition. What would be the best avenues to pursue in this respect, where could we realistically expect to have results? Are bilateral and regional trade agreements the best way, due to their ability to take on the newest trends and integrate them quickly into the regulatory machinery, or should we look at more multilateral approach and drive the circularity through an international organization?

63. With a view to sharing information on ongoing initiatives and activities, it was asked if we are all on the same page on circular economy? Are there specific questions that need to

be taken on board? Are there potential overlaps with other organizations? To create consensus, it is necessary to demonstrate that there is a project that functions well; EC suggested that WP.6 consider the EU Multi-Stakeholder Platform Rolling Plan on Standardization. It was suggested that WP.6 might consider developing a recommendation on this topic. It was also suggested that there may be some cross-fertilization with other groups under ECE such as the Team of Specialists on Environmental, Social and Governance Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains or the Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies.

64.   The ISO technical committee 323 initiated in 2019 on circular economy has over 70 members and a dozen observers. The committee is developing six standards on topics such as framework and principles for implementation; guidelines on business models and value chains; measuring circularity framework; performance-based approach; business model implementation; and product circularity data sheet. The representative of ISO encouraged ECE to establish liaison with this group in order to promote cross-fertilization. The ISO technical committee 127 on earth-moving machinery has also developed a number of circular economy standards.

65.   The delegation of Albania underlined that their procurement law has been updated in order to ensure that it is sustainable according to environmental, social and labour criteria. Western Balkan countries signed a "Green Agenda"; Albania, signatory to this agreement, plans to integrate its supply chains to the European Union as well as to keep track of the entire life cycle of products. They appreciate participating in WP.6 in order to identify best practices and to contribute the perspective of a developing economy. The delegate stressed the role of standards to avoid that circularity does not become a barrier to trade. The delegation noted the needs of developing economies who require continuous cooperation and technical and financial support.

66.   The delegate from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland stressed the importance of ensuring the effectiveness of regulatory and standards systems, so that these reach their objectives, including that of circularity. She stressed that secure and resilient supply chains for critical minerals are essential for the global shift to a green energy system. This encompasses the importance of environmental, social and governance standards as well as the importance of conformity assessment and the corresponding digital tools to track and trace these movements.

67.   It was underlined that capacity-building and technical assistance are crucial to better realize the normative function of ECE. In the new United Nations Development Account Project on "Harnessing the Power of Trade for the Circular Economy Transition", ECE intends to foster collaboration and experience sharing.

68.   **The Working Party took note of the theme of the ECE sixty-ninth session (circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources) and the links that this theme can have with the core activities of the Working Party. It requested the Bureau to explore these links and propose options for supporting the transition to a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources within available resources and in cooperation with relevant international and regional organizations and development partners, as appropriate. (Decision 16)**

XIV. Other business (Agenda Item 10)

69.   The secretariat announced that it has been able to reserve meeting room facilities for next year's annual session. This would be planned from the afternoon of 2 November to 4 November 2022, a two and a half-day meeting. The morning of 2 November has also been reserved in order to eventually have a GRSI or other meeting. The Chair expressed her wish that next year's session be held physically only, if the evolution of the pandemic permits. This would allow more fruitful discussions on the side lines of the meeting and the very important network building that usually accompanies these meetings.

70.   **The Working Party decided to hold its thirty-second session from 2 November 2022 (afternoon session only) to 4 November 2022 (all day). It may be preceded by a**

half-day meeting without interpretation of the Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative. (Decision 17)

XV. Adoption of the report (Agenda Item 11)

71.   **The Working Party adopted the decisions and the report of its thirty-first session. It requested the secretariat to edit it as necessary and finalize it for publication. (Decision 18)**