

UNECE



Annual Report

2023



United Nations

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Introduction by the Executive Secretary

2023 continued to test the resilience of our region.

The multifaceted humanitarian and socioeconomic impacts of the enduring war against Ukraine, in addition to multiple crisis affecting UNECE member States, are having profound impacts right across the region and beyond.

With our economies still facing the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions have become a driver for economic fragmentation. Socioeconomic inequalities continue to grow, and the triple environmental crisis of climate change – with 2023 being the hottest year ever recorded –, pollution and biodiversity loss, requires more urgent intervention than ever before.

Against this stark backdrop, the work of UNECE is more important than ever. In the 75 years of its existence, UNECE has proven to be a unique platform for cooperation among countries in the pan-European region and beyond, facilitating economic development and integration. Yet, with multiple ongoing crises, our SDGs status report revealed that the region is further away from achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development than it was a year earlier.

Our member States came together for the [70th session of the Commission](#) in April, where they agreed that UNECE's 75 years of multilateral cooperation on regulatory and policy instruments should be harnessed to address the immense sustainable development challenges facing the region. They put a special focus on our practical instruments to accelerate the digital and green transition – from digitalized customs procedures of the eTIR system, to hundreds of eBusiness and trade facilitation tools, multilateral environmental agreements, cutting edge statistical work, and so much more.

Honoured by my appointment by the Secretary-General as Executive Secretary of UNECE, I began my tenure in September 2023 with firm conviction of the continued need to work together to find common solutions to the problems of our region.

In these times of renewed international tensions, let's not lose sight of the benefits of multilateralism, rooted in dialogue and cooperation, which are the raison d'être of the United Nations.

The selection of highlights in this report illustrates how pooling expertise and knowledge can help us address collective challenges. For example, the 50 censuses conducted in the region during the current round – guided by UNECE recommendations – will underpin all policymaking and the work of the United Nations in the region for around the next decade. The Trees in Cities Challenge grew to include over 80 cities from 31 countries worldwide which together have pledged to plant 12 million trees. The Sustainability Pledge, which supports improved traceability in the complex value chains of the garment and footwear sectors, reached over 100 commitments from 750 industry actors; while a new UNECE Public-Private Partnerships and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System has already been used to help 200 PPP projects align with the SDGs.

Among many milestones in UNECE's intergovernmental engagement, member States affirmed at the ICPD30 regional conference their commitment to rights and choices in response to demographic shifts shaping the region; 10 countries announced their intention to join the Water Convention at the UN Water Conference, with 5 joining in 2023 alone; and Heads of State and Government committed to building on 25 years of cooperation under the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), adopting the Baku Declaration. At COP28 in Dubai, UNECE was fully mobilized to advance climate action in some 35 high-level engagements and ensured strong involvement on key topics in over 80 events.

To help countries respond to the overlapping crises and get on track for the 2030 Agenda, in 2024 UNECE will double down on its support to its Programme Countries, in close cooperation with UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators, leveraging the expertise of our Regional Advisors. We will also continue our close collaboration with regional UN entities through the Regional Collaborative Platform for Europe and Central Asia.

As we pass the tragic milestone of two years since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, support to the Ukrainian government in UNECE's areas of expertise will remain a priority in our work. Key activities will include further supporting reconstruction planning in urban areas, assessing environmental damage, promoting sustainable PPPs for infrastructure redevelopment, and facilitating the country's low-carbon energy transition. I reiterate the Secretary-General's urgent call for a just and sustainable peace, in line with the UN Charter and international law -- for Ukraine, for Russia and for the world.

In 2024, I look forward to the adoption by the Inland Transport Committee (20-23 February) of a strategy to decarbonize inland transport; to advancing gender equality at the Beijing+30 Regional Review Meeting (21-22 October); and to accelerating climate action at the Global Methane Forum in Geneva (18-21 March) and at COP29 in Azerbaijan, among many highlights across our areas of expertise.

UNECE will be fully engaged with our partners across the UN system to contribute to the Summit of the Future under the auspices of the General Assembly (22-23 September). Building up to this key occasion, the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (13-14 March) will provide an important opportunity to bring regional perspectives on the Pact for the Future, and generate momentum towards the Summit, harnessing the strong involvement of governments, UN entities and all stakeholders at the regional level – including civil society and youth. Taking this work forward as part of a more networked and inclusive multilateralism as enshrined in [Our Common Agenda](#), UNECE's 2024 Forum of Mayors (30 September-1 October) will take the form of a Cities' Summit of the Future.

Together let us join forces to address our shared challenges, accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and charting a course for our sustainable future.

Tatiana Molcean
Executive Secretary
of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

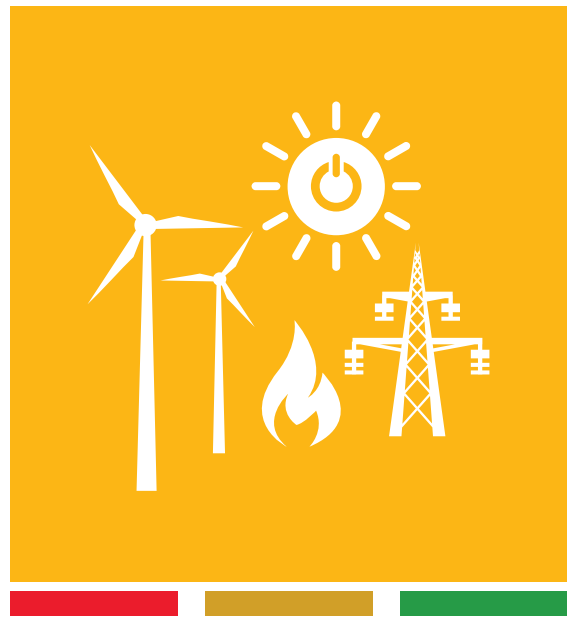


Economic Cooperation and Integration

- The new UNECE [Public-Private Partnerships \(PPP\) and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System \(PIERS\)](#) methodology was used in more than 200 PPP projects. Close to 50 of these projects, from 33 countries and totalling a capital expenditure of USD 38.7 billion, were presented at UNECE's Annual International PPP Forum, held in Athens in May.
- Sustainable and climate finance needs in Central Asia are estimated at USD 38 billion per year up to 2030. UNECE and partners trained over 85 public officials to help the region capitalize on Public-Private Partnerships to meet these needs.
- UNECE published a [Legal Framework for PPPs in Support of the SDGs](#) and a Practical Guide on PPPs for Sustainable Economic Recovery and Reconstruction in Support of the SDGs.

- Member States endorsed [Guidelines on delivering Public-Private Partnerships projects for sustainable economic recovery and reconstruction in support of the Sustainable Development Goals](#) which include practical policy recommendations for policy makers on how PPP projects can be accelerated in the reconstruction phase in post-disaster and post-war contexts.
- To advance the circular economy, the [Circular STEP](#) network provided a vibrant stakeholder engagement platform for more than 25 government-nominated focal points, including 16 from countries with economies in transition. UNECE also adopted Guidelines on Promoting Circular Economy in PPPs for the SDGs and Guidelines on PPPs for the Sustainable Development Goals in Waste-to-Energy Projects for Non-Recyclable Waste: Pathways towards a Circular Economy.
- The Transformative Innovation Network (ETIN) facilitated discussion between stakeholders on fostering an innovation-conducive environment and [strategic learning](#) opportunities.

- An [interim Innovation Policy Outlook](#) strengthened the knowledge base to help Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus countries harness innovation as a driver for sustainable development.
- The [Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Armenia](#) provided the government with recommendations – including on funding availability, cross-sectoral coordination, and education and training – to address current challenges and build a robust innovation ecosystem that can adapt and thrive in the face of future changes and opportunities.



Sustainable Energy

- As countries continued to cope with energy shocks, UNECE helped governments identify technology and policy options to attain resilient and carbon-neutral energy systems and to accelerate the sustainable energy transition across the region.
- More than a dozen new papers, guidance documents, case studies and reports supported decision making on how to build resilient and carbon neutral energy systems, contributing substantially to discussions at the High-Level Political Forum, the G20 and COP28.
- UNECE and partners initiated the development of an [AI-powered platform](#) to help build resilient energy systems.
- The United Nations Resource Management System (UNRMS) was endorsed for global adoption by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as [global standard](#) for sustainable and integrated management of natural resources. The 9th Asia-Pacific Energy Ministers' Meeting also invited its application in the region.
- The [draft EU Critical Raw Materials Act](#) stipulated the use of the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC), also recalling the applicability of UNECE Aarhus and Espoo Conventions.
- Providing practical support to member States, UNECE undertook more than 55 workshops, training sessions, and webinars, reaching more than 4,050 professionals, nearly a third of which were women. UNECE also established a Resource Management Young Member Group. Some 45 missions in 12 member States involved over 100 days of on-site support, resulting in the training of more than 1,700 experts.
- UNECE launched a Hydrogen Task Force, a cross-group of experts that focuses on classification, value chain development and synergies with renewable energy sources.
- Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan vowed to join the Global Methane Pledge, building on longstanding cooperation with UNECE. ECOSOC also adopted a resolution for effective management of coal mine methane, inviting governments to embrace monitoring, reporting and verification measures. UNECE guidance can support efforts across the fossil fuel sectors.
- A UNECE report showed that [Central Asia](#) would need a massive shift rather than a massive increase in investment to reach net zero by 2050. Today, fossil fuels account for 95% of total energy supply in the region.
- A UNECE-led partnership supported Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan to address the readiness of the building supply chain industry to deliver the needed materials, technologies, and equipment for [high-performance buildings](#). It also aims to connect building energy efficiency with Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement.
- UNECE and partners supported North Macedonia in its green energy transition by [building capacities to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy projects](#), supporting the implementation of a Green Finance Facility, targeting small and medium enterprises and underserved individuals and households. Investments enabled by this facility are expected to result in more than 70,000 MWh of annual energy savings, over 80,500 tonnes of CO₂-eq emissions avoided, and 10.7 MW in new renewable energy capacity installed.



Environment

- As the [review of the Gothenburg Protocol](#) showed the need for strengthened measures to avoid sustained damage to health, ecosystems, food production and the climate, Parties to the Air Convention decided to launch negotiations on a revision of the Protocol, starting in 2024.
- Excessive and inefficient use of Ammonia means up to 80% of this vital nutrient is released into the environment, negatively impacting air and water quality and the climate. A report on behalf of the [Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen](#) under the UNECE [Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution](#) put forward solutions to halve nitrogen pollution from agriculture and the food system in Europe, including reducing meat and dairy consumption, fertiliser use and food waste.
- Five countries acceded to the [Water Convention](#) – Iraq, Namibia, Nigeria, Panama and The Gambia – bringing the total number to 52 Parties, with many more in the accession process. The Convention also supported transboundary water cooperation processes in Western Africa, Central America, on the Senegalese-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin, on the Prut River (shared between Moldova, Ukraine, Romania), on the Dniester River (shared between Ukraine and Moldova) and other transboundary basins.

Global workshops throughout the year brought together more than 1,000 policymakers and key water actors around topics such as development of agreements for transboundary water cooperation, financing of transboundary water cooperation, conjunctive water management of surface and groundwaters and the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus.

- North Macedonia became the 28th country to join the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health. In 2023, the Protocol brought together stakeholders to [increase resilience to climate change in the water and sanitation sector](#) by identifying key needs and exchange good practices in preparing for and responding to extreme weather events and slow-onset, long-term changes. It also supported Montenegro to identify policy actions to address limitations in access to water, sanitation and hygiene, and helped Albania to launch its self-assessment exercise on equitable access.
- Water cooperation and access to water, sanitation and hygiene were high on the agenda of the [first UN Water Conference in 30 years](#), as reflected in numerous commitments to the Water Action Agenda and plenary statements by dozens of countries highlighting the Water Convention.

- The Third Environmental Performance Review (EPR) of Kyrgyzstan and the EPR of Mauritania were reviewed by the UNECE Committee on Environment Policy. The two [EPRs make 89 and 88 recommendations](#) and address 61 and 85 SDG targets covering 14 and 16 SDGs, respectively. The Fourth Cycle of EPRs kicked off with the [review of Tajikistan](#). UNECE also supported the implementation of EPR recommendations on [waste management](#), [climate change](#) and [disaster risk reduction](#).
- The Industrial Accidents Convention helped build capacities for mine tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution in Central Asia. UNECE also supported UNEP on the implementation of UNEA Resolution 5/12 on the environmental aspects of minerals and metals management, sharing its knowledge and tools in all five regional consultations and the global consultation. UNECE and partners further supported the government and stakeholders in [Serbia to agree on the draft National Programme for Industrial Safety](#).
- [Meetings of Parties to the Espoo Convention and Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment](#) brought together some 50 countries, international organizations, civil society and other stakeholders to discuss how to strengthen these treaties' role in the energy transition, the circular economy and for green financing. Some 30 compliance cases were examined and draft decisions prepared, including regarding the lifetime-extension of several nuclear power plants, hydro power plants and mining activities.

Ukraine brought the Bystroe Canal Project, after almost 20 years under review, in compliance with the Convention. Since its entry into force in 1997, the Convention has been applied over 1,000 times.

- Countries marked [25 years since the adoption of the Aarhus Convention](#). Guinea Bissau opened new horizons for environmental democracy in Africa and worldwide by becoming the [first country outside the pan-European region](#) to join the Convention. UNECE and partners helped strengthen Parties' capacities in diverse areas including: public participation in decision-making on large-scale infrastructure; access to justice in cases related to [climate change and biodiversity protection](#), energy-related and pollution from chemicals and waste; [digital access to information for a green and circular economy](#); public participation for good governance, a healthy environment and sustainable development; and [Living Modified Organisms/Genetically Modified Organisms](#).
- The [Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention](#), Michel Forst, assisted Parties and interested Member States to ensure the safety of environmental defenders.
- Ministers from across the region committed to urgent action to [safeguard our environment and health](#), harnessing UNECE multilateral environmental agreements and tools.
- UNECE issued first-of-its-kind [biodiversity monitoring guidelines](#) to help countries implement the Kunming-Montreal framework.



Forests

- 40% of the world's forests are in the UNECE region, from which 60% of wood products worldwide originate. More than 75% of certified forests are in the UNECE region.
- To strengthen knowledge about these resources, UNECE published three forest resource data briefs, the Forest Product Annual Market Review, national market statements, regional forest overviews, statistics, forecasts, and studies including on engineered wood products.
- UNECE also analyzed forest products' contribution to a circular economy and sustainable consumption and production patterns.

- [Forests in the UNECE region](#) cover close to 35% of the land and are the key elements of carbon storage and a source of unique nature-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change. UNECE published data on carbon storage and sequestration, and published a study on forest damage and disturbance in the region.
- A policy brief warned that boreal forests - which are among the planet's largest carbon sinks - are at risk of losing their captured carbon, highlighting the urgent need for action to increase the resilience and [adaptation of boreal forests](#) to climate change impacts.
- UNECE advanced urban forestry in the region through the San Marino Regional Urban Forestry Action Plan. The global [Trees in Cities Challenge](#) grew to include over 80 cities from 31 countries which together have pledged to plant 12 million trees. UNECE's Tree PAL initiative now includes the Informal Expert Network on Urban Nature with over 200 participants. UNECE also provided policy guidance on low-carbon construction.

- To support data-driven sustainable forest management and inform climate policies and biodiversity conservation, UNECE developed an innovative data collection platform, published Guidelines on developing forest information systems, and trained countries in data collection.
- Over 100 stakeholders were trained on urban resilience and launched and piloted the "Resilient Green Cities Toolkit". UNECE also launched NaturEatTown (NET) to help manage urban food resources.
- Among wide ranging efforts to raise awareness of the potential and impact of trees and forests, UNECE launched The [UN Forest Podcast](#), with guests including Academy Award winner Michelle Yeoh.
- A UNECE/FAO/ILO [report](#) revealed that systemic change is needed to provide a safe and healthy working environment for the estimated 33 million people working in the forest sector worldwide.



Housing, Land Management and Urban Development

- Leaders from over 40 cities worldwide reaffirmed the value of sharing experience, knowhow and partnerships as part of an inclusive multilateral process at the Third [UNECE Forum of Mayors](#). The Forum adopted [recommendations](#) to member States, inviting them to endorse Principles of Urban Regeneration and to involve cities and facilitate their participation in relevant UN processes. The recommendations were subsequently adopted by [84th Session of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management](#).

- UNECE Smart Sustainable City Profiles provided [Almaty](#) (Kazakhstan), [Podgorica](#) (Montenegro) and [Tbilisi](#) (Georgia) with recommendations to face complex challenges of rapid urbanization.
- The UNECE Country Profile outlined comprehensive recommendations to support [San Marino](#) in its sustainable and inclusive housing, land management and urban development policy.
- To help cities in the region to ensure inclusive development amid persistent challenges, UNECE published a [COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements](#).
- The Committee endorsed [Principles for Green Finance for Sustainable Real Estate, Infrastructure and Urban Transformation Projects](#), whose development was supported by the Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Finance for Cities and Infrastructure, hosted by LIUC University in Italy.

- A [UNECE online training portal](#) developed with the Centre of Excellence hosted by the University of Geneva provided interactive training resources and additional materials on urban resilience, SDG localization, and legalization of informal settlements.
- UNECE further mobilized Centres of Excellence across the region to build knowledge and capacities in areas ranging from cities' green transition, to youth homelessness prevention, sustainable city financing, energy efficient housing and beyond. In 2022, UNECE recognized the [City Diplomacy Lab](#) at Columbia Global Centers in Paris as a Centre of Excellence
- UNECE and partners kicked off a project to improve five pilot informal settlements in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, based on recommendations of the UNECE Smart Sustainable City Profile and an action plan to promote urban resilience prepared by the city with assistance of UNECE and UN Capital Development Plan.
- A UNECE report highlighted the need to accelerate [digitalization in land administration](#), at the same time warning of data security issues and the digital divide.

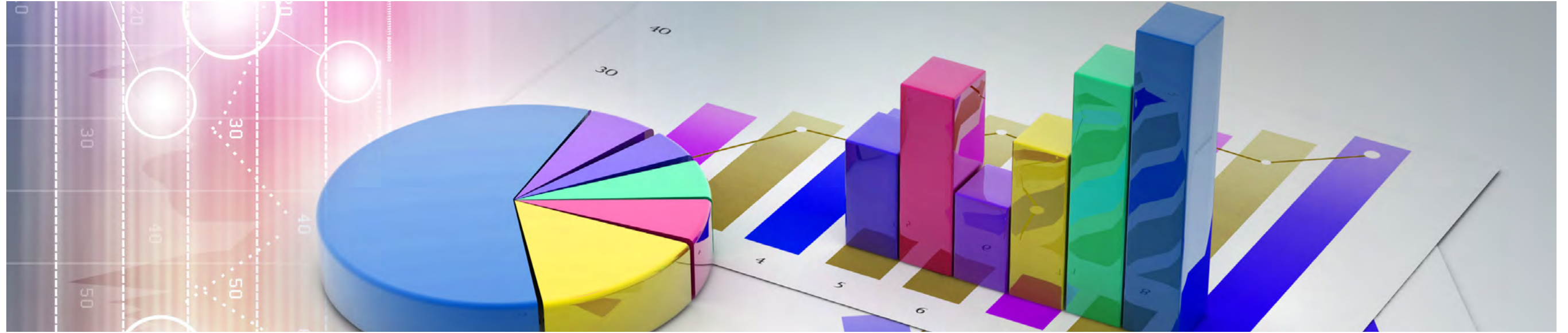
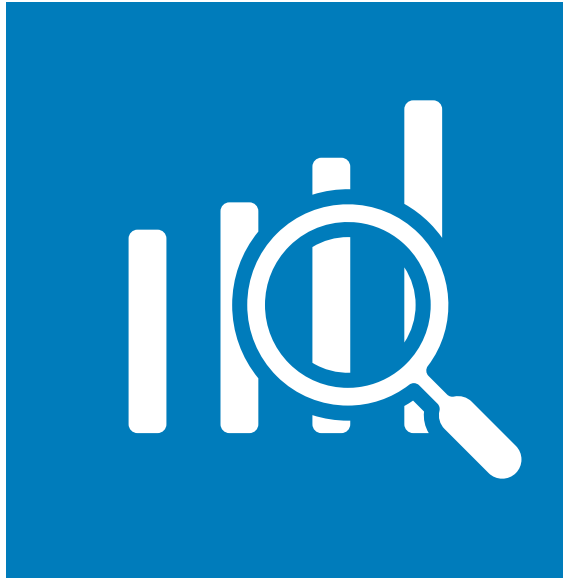


Population

- UNECE and UNFPA reviewed progress in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in the region ahead of the 30th anniversary of its adoption. The [UNECE Regional Conference on ICPD30 'Population and Development: Ensuring Rights and Choices'](#) stressed that rights and choices must underpin policy responses to societal shifts including population ageing and fertility decline. The regional report found that progress has been made overall on achieving many of the ICPD goals, but also raised alarm that in a number of areas progress has slowed or even reversed, linked to various crises and a growing pushback on gender equality and reproductive rights.

- A UNECE Policy Brief addressed the issue of [Older Persons in Vulnerable Situations](#), with a focus on income and housing, health and long-term care, prevention of violence, abuse and neglect, and social participation. UNECE also launched an interactive online course to help policymakers and other interested stakeholders develop a strategic framework to mainstream ageing.
- UNECE, in collaboration with UNFPA, developed comprehensive resources for a new workshop format on Age-Sensitive Analysis and Policy Formulation, providing a practical tool for mainstreaming ageing into policies. The course format was piloted successfully in the Republic of Moldova as well as Georgia, in close collaboration with the respective National Focal Points of Ageing and Governments. In total 177 policymakers participated in the training, which is expected to be replicated in other countries across the region.

- As the international community marked 75 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNECE called for commitment and practical measures from governments and all stakeholders in the region to [uphold the human rights of all persons including those with disabilities](#), who are nearly three times more likely to be unemployed than those without disabilities. Older persons, who are more likely than younger persons to have a disability, may face both ageism and discrimination based on disability status.



Statistics

- In the face of multiple intersecting crises in the region, UNECE's regional [SDG status report](#) urged member States to redouble efforts to avert a further crisis of sustainable development. It highlighted that the region is on track to achieve only 21 targets (18% of the 115 measurable targets) by 2030. This is down from 26 targets assessed as being on track in 2022. For 79 targets (up from 64), progress must accelerate if the target is to be met, while for 15 targets (as in 2022), the trend needs to be reversed.
- Censuses and the information they provide on populations, their distributions and characteristics and how these change over time, are key to all policymaking and underpin the work of the entire UN system. All the 50 population and housing censuses conducted by UNECE member States in the decennial 2020 round have followed the UNECE Conference of European Statisticians [Census Recommendations](#).

- In the largest ever effort of its kind, a multi-year UNECE project kicked off to produce internationally agreed [guidance and advice for conducting the next round of censuses](#), foreseen around 2030.
- More than 80% of countries worldwide have implemented the Generic Statistical Business Process Model in their national statistical offices by the end of 2023.
- Most countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia have now implemented national legislation based on the UNECE Generic Law on Official Statistics and the Guidance on Modernizing Statistical Legislation. High-Level ministerial meetings of Chief Statisticians from the region stressed the importance of national legislation to ensure independent factual information.
- Global Assessments of the National Statistical System were conducted in Kazakhstan and in Georgia, showing strong follow-up on previous recommendations and commitment to implementing new recommendations.
- Relying on UNECE guidance and technical assistance, Kazakhstan started to produce the multidimensional poverty index to measure SDG target 1.2.

- 30 countries reported that the CES Set of Core [Climate Change-Related Statistics](#) and Indicators was useful to them in producing national (and internationally comparable) climate change-related indicators.
- The Conference of European Statisticians endorsed the conceptual framework and a list of proposed indicators for measuring the circular economy, building consensus among stakeholders on the definition of a circular economy for measurement purposes.
- The UNECE High-Level Group on Modernisation for Official Statistics developed a [White Paper](#) to help national statistical offices establish a common understanding of the potential implications and opportunities of Large Language Models and advanced AI in their work.
- UNECE released guidance to help producers of official statistics to [produce synthetic data](#), which could potentially allow detailed 'microdata' to be released safely, while preserving their analytical value.



Trade

- The fifth [UN Global Survey](#) on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation found that the overall implementation rate of general and digital trade facilitation measures increased by more than six percentage points between 2021 and 2023. In the UNECE region, average trade facilitation implementation increased from 76% in 2021 to 80% in 2023. Recommendations on trade facilitation and standards on e-business developed by UNECE's UN/CEFACT provide key tools to support progress in all countries.
- [The Sustainability Pledge](#), which supports the traceability of environmental, social and governance (ESG) compliance in garment and footwear value chains, reached 100+ pledges from 750+ industry actors. Its toolbox was tested in 20 blockchain pilots covering 23 countries worldwide. UNECE experts are working to replicate this initiative in the agri-food and critical raw materials sectors.
- UNECE adopted three new and eight revised [agricultural quality standards](#), including new standards for inshell pecans, pecan kernels, and certain small fruits, and a new recommendation (standard on trial) for sweet potatoes.
- [UN/CEFACT](#) adopted a Recommendation on Private Sector Participation in National Trade Facilitation Committees, supporting implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. It also adopted updates to UN/EDIFACT and UN/CCL, two information exchange standards that are crucial for cross-border paperless trade, as well as updates to UN/LOCODE, a unique global system offering geographical coding for trade and transport locations. For UN/EDIFACT, one leading global shipping company reported sending over 250 million messages per year using this standard, with 113,000 messages being sent from one ship alone when entering a port.
- UNECE launched a [compendium to support micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises](#) in their efforts to embrace circular economy models. These businesses account for over 90% of registered enterprises in the region.
- A new version of the UN Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide e-learning platform was launched and presented in Albania, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. This training tool, available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish, has received over 7 million hits to date, from more than 300,000 single users.
- A revised Recommendation on Metrological Assurance of Conformity Assessment and Testing adopted at UNECE will support countries to put in place well-functioning metrological processes.
- UNECE issued a [study assessing the trade facilitation framework of the Republic of Moldova](#), identifying needs to help deliver on commitments under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. UNECE also [trained Turkmenistan's government officials](#) on regulatory and procedural trade measures as part of the country's accession to WTO.



Transport

- Ministers and heads of delegations from all UN regions requested that UNECE develop a strategy document on [reducing greenhouse gas emissions in inland transport](#) based on UN legal instruments under the purview of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC).
- ITC adopted the [Model Rules on the Permanent Identification of Railway Rolling Stock](#), which will facilitate financing and acquisition and provide certainty to financial institutions. This is the 60th legal instrument on inland transport under UNECE's purview.
- A major amendment to the European Agreement on Main and International Railway Lines (AGC) introduced the concept of International Railway Passenger Hubs to the AGC network with the aim of creating greater access to railways and encouraging the shift to more environmentally friendly rail transport.
- UNECE contributed to high-level celebrations of the first [World Sustainable Transport Day](#), highlighting the key role of the harmonized regulatory framework and practical tools provided by its Inland Transport Committee, which performs functions equivalent to those of ICAO for aviation and IMO for maritime transport.
- The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme ([THE PEP](#)) pushed forward cooperation on child and youth-friendly mobility, sustainable tourism mobility, and for climate friendly, healthy and energy saving mobility in Europe. THE PEP Steering Committee reviewed a draft comprehensive pan-European strategy on transport, health and the environment, to be adopted in 2024.
- At the [Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries](#) (LLDCs) held in Yerevan (14-15 December), UNECE stressed the importance of UN transport conventions and trade facilitation tools to achieve better connectivity. On average, LLDCs spend nearly two times more of their export earnings for the payment of transport and insurance services than developing countries, and three times more than developed economies.
- UNECE's World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) adopted a [regulation to measure emissions from braking systems](#) under repeatable and reproducible laboratory conditions. This is the first regulatory tool in the world to look at non-exhaust particle emissions from cars and vans.
- The World Forum also adopted a global regulation to [measure tailpipe emissions](#) in real driving conditions, as well as a new UN Regulation to [increase the safety of children in buses and coaches](#). In addition, UNECE initiated the development of [battery durability requirements](#) for electric heavy-duty vehicles.
- [Iraq acceded to the TIR Convention](#), joining all its neighbours as Contracting Parties. This opens up perspectives for the more efficient and secure flow of goods across the Middle East, connecting with markets across all of Europe, Asia – including India, Pakistan and China – and beyond. The TIR system, used by over 34,000 transport and logistic companies, reduces cross-border transport time by up to 80%, and costs by up to 38%.
- The [first eTIR transport](#) took place between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, paving the way to a digital era in international transport and transit.
- To facilitate transport infrastructure financing, UNECE and the Islamic Development Bank launched the [International Transport Infrastructure Observatory](#), a web-based platform that hosts data on networks including road, rail, inland waterways, ports, airports, intermodal terminals, logistics centres, and border crossing points across Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Western Mediterranean and North Africa.



Support to Ukraine

- Since the start of the war, UNECE has responded to a number of requests for assistance from the government of Ukraine.
- UNECE is part of the UN Country Team in Ukraine, and all responses are coordinated through the Office of the Resident Coordinator.
- UNECE rolled out comprehensive support to Ukraine in 2023, including for:

Urban development



- Mobilizing experts from across the region, UNECE [helped Ukraine draft a law to address housing challenges](#), which include tens of thousands of destroyed and damaged homes, and the need to house 3.7 million internally displaced persons as of January 2024.
- Under the [UN4UkrainianCities](#) initiative, UNECE advanced efforts to support the development and operationalization of reconstruction master plans for the cities of Kharkiv and Mykolaiv following the establishment of dedicated interagency Task Forces and partnerships with international architects since 2022.
- UNECE is also developing a [municipal investment tracker](#) for greater transparency in reconstruction projects. In addition to the cities of Kharkiv and Mykolaiv, the investment tracker will also be piloted by the smaller urban areas of Irpin and Borodyanka.

Infrastructure recovery



- A joint assessment by the Government of Ukraine, the World Bank Group, the European Commission and the UN, estimates the cost of reconstruction and recovery to have grown to \$411 billion.
- UNECE developed a way to apply the PPP and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System (PIERS) methodology flexibly and effectively in Ukraine. The [methodology](#) was translated into Ukrainian, is referenced in Ukraine's draft law No. 75088 and is being used in the assessment of several pilot reconstruction projects.

Energy



- To help Ukraine rebuild with a resilient, carbon-neutral energy system, a UNECE study identified strategies, technology and policy options for a green and just energy transition. UNECE also conducted an analysis of Ukraine's critical raw material resources.
- Ukraine is among beneficiary countries of a major UNECE-led [project to decarbonize the construction sector](#).

Statistics



- To help Ukraine address the technical and methodological challenges arising from the war in the collection of data and production of official statistics, UNECE has compiled resources (manuals, guidance etc.) and supported training and expert assistance by mobilizing an international volunteer network.

Innovation



- UNECE launched the [Interim Innovation Policy Outlook](#), where Ukraine is one of several beneficiary countries. A country-specific Innovation for Sustainable Development Review for Ukraine will support a National Strategy on Science, Technology and Innovation.

Environment



- Ukraine is Party to all 5 UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements, which can support sustainable reconstruction efforts.
- UNECE convened an [inter-agency group to coordinate assessment of environmental damage in Ukraine](#). Activities in 2023 helped to foster coherence between assessments, as well as the use of earth observations and remote sensing. The group also oversaw a comprehensive mapping of the existing, ongoing and planned assessments of environmental damage and a preliminary identification of critical areas for remediation.
- UNECE trained over 500 representatives of Ukraine's regional and local authorities in applying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to spatial and urban plans. The government of Ukraine also adopted Guidelines on SEA for Urban Planning Documents, developed with the assistance of UNECE and EU funding through the [EU4Environment](#) project.
- Ukraine introduced [mandatory reporting by enterprises on greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants](#), putting into action commitments under the UNECE Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs. UNECE also supported Ukraine and advised on compliance with obligations under the Aarhus Convention, including to [facilitate public access to information](#) and public participation on environmental matters during the war.
- UNECE, in partnership with EIB, launched a project on strengthening industrial safety in Ukraine through enhanced implementation of and alignment with the Industrial Accidents Convention, following the country's accession in 2022.



Climate Action

- 2023 was the hottest year on record. As the people of the region and around the world increasingly felt the impacts of climate change, from wildfires to flooding, heatwaves and drought, UNECE continued to provide practical tools to support countries in their climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, to leverage financing, and to strengthen collaboration.
- These efforts crystallized around the COP28 UN Climate Change Conference (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 30 November - 12 December), where UNECE pushed for climate action in some 35 high-level engagements and brought strong involvement on key topics in over 80 events.

Highlights include:

- Calling for coordinated action to align [Critical Raw Materials](#) (CRM) extraction and use with sustainable development. These materials are needed to scale up renewable energy technologies, battery production and the mass shift to electrification. UNECE highlighted UNFC and UNRMS as key resource management tools, together with UNECE treaties to ensure that environmental and human rights issues are fully taken into account.
- Advocating for [transition finance](#), which will be needed for hard-to-abate sectors and small businesses to decarbonize and to support the just transition in fossil-fuel dependent sectors. While green finance has more than tripled since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, investments required to decarbonize hard-to-abate industries have not kept pace.
- Pushing for the [decarbonization of inland transport](#), which accounts for 77% of the transport sector's overall carbon footprint. The Inland Transport Committee is developing a strategy to decarbonize the sector, leveraging UN legal instruments.
- Promoting [water cooperation](#) for climate action, clean energy, peace and health. Key measures discussed include strengthened cooperation on cross-border waters – which account for 60% of global freshwater flow – supported by the UN Water Convention.
- Expanding the role of forests for mitigation and adaptation, in particular in urban environments. UNECE launched the [Trees in Dry Cities Coalition](#) and promoted wood-based construction.
- Bringing together the international statistical community to call for greater coordination to [improve statistics](#), address persistent gaps, and to fully leverage existing data systems for urgent climate action. UNECE highlighted the key role of Official Statistics, supported by the Conference of European Statisticians.
- Recalling the need to uphold the public's rights and key role in climate change negotiations and in shaping climate action policies, facilitated by the Aarhus Convention. Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Convention, Michel Forst, was strongly engaged to push for the [protection of climate activists](#).

5 GENDER EQUALITY



The 2023 UNECE Regional SDGs status report revealed that amid interlocking crises, only one target on gender equality (on technology for women's empowerment) was on track for 2030, with urgent efforts needed to accelerate progress on gender equality in a number of other areas. It also showed the need to close data gaps, as progress can currently only be measured for less than half of targets.

GOAL 5	GENDER EQUALITY
■ 5.b	Technology for women empowerment
■ 5.1	Discrimination against women & girls
■ 5.4	Unpaid care and domestic work
■ 5.5	Women in leadership
■ 5.2	Violence against women & girls
■ 5.3	Early marriage
■ 5.6	Reproductive health access & rights
■ 5.a	Equal economic rights
■ 5.c	Gender equality policies

Source: <https://w3.unece.org/sdg2023/progress-assessment.html>

UNECE redoubled support in 2023 to member States to realize gender equality and women's economic empowerment as a catalyst for broader SDGs progress. Examples include:

- National delegations from across the UNECE region renewed commitments to securing the rights of women and girls, addressing gender-based violence, and closing gender gaps in employment, unpaid work, income and other areas at the [UNECE Regional Conference on International Conference on Population and Development \(ICPD\)](#). Gender inequalities feature prominently in the regional report on ICPD, "Ensuring Rights and Choices amid Demographic Change".
- UNECE [Policy Brief on Ageing on Older Persons in Vulnerable Situations](#) highlighted disadvantages women face across the life course that heighten their risk of vulnerable situations later in life.
- The Forum of Mayors brought together women mayors to discuss the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within local governments (in only 8 UNECE countries with available data are 40% or more of seats held by women in local governments, compared to 13 countries where 40% or more of seats are held by women in national parliaments).
- UNECE's work on gender statistics expanded to the area of trade, linking existing data sources on trade and businesses, without the need for new data collection. This paves the way for regular gender-in-trade measurement through official statistics.
- Discussions on integrating gender equality and women's empowerment within PPP modalities including in the 7th edition of the UNECE [International PPP Forum](#) and the 7th session of the [Working Party on PPPs](#) will be taken forward into the development of guidance material for the design and delivery of infrastructure projects.
- The UNECE Declaration on Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development reached 86 signatories, reflecting the growing momentum of gender mainstreaming. A new publication explained [Why Gender-Responsive Standards are Better for Everyone](#).
- The SPECA Working Group on Gender and the SDGs held its first in-person meeting since 2019 in Azerbaijan, bringing together five SPECA countries to address gender equality as a catalyst for global connectivity and transformative growth in the region.
- Gender equality was integrated in the Environmental Performance Review for Mauritania across all sectors. Women's role in participatory processes, education for sustainable development and environmental statistics received targeted attention.
- UNECE supported Montenegro in assessing and responding to [gender-specific challenges of equitable access to water and sanitation](#), including in institutional settings such as schools and healthcare facilities, especially in relation to menstrual hygiene.
- More than 825 women (representing 48% of the total) participated in 100+ policy discussions and dialogues on matters pertaining to sustainable energy, climate impacts of energy production, just transition, and sustainable energy solutions. More than 1,200 women from the energy sector directly benefited from capacity building initiatives and training undertaken by UNECE in 17 member States.
- In partnership with UNESCO, UNECE contributed to an inventory of tools and approaches for gender contextualisation in relation to SDG 6 'Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all'.
- UNECE promoted gender equality considerations as part of a human rights-based approach under the Aarhus Convention and Protocol on PRTRs.
- UNECE supported member States to report on gender equality considerations in their forestry sector market statements for [FORESTA 2023](#). A UNECE, FAO and ILO study on [Occupational safety and health in the future of forestry work](#) assessed gender-specific concerns.
- Gender disaggregation of data was emphasised within the revision of the environmental indicator guidelines.
- The Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme Steering Committee continued awareness raising on gender issues.
- UNECE built and updated coherent gender disaggregated data in relation to road safety. Gender considerations were also included in the recently completed project on car-sharing and car-pooling initiatives in Central Asia.

Road Safety



- The 2023 [Global Status Report on Road Safety](#) showed a 5% drop in deaths since 2010, indicating that efforts to improve road safety are having an impact. But with over 3,200 deaths every day, and crashes remaining the leading cause of death for young people aged 5-29, much greater action is required.
- UNECE is the custodian of the 7 [United Nations road safety legal instruments](#), applicable worldwide, which offer countries a basis to legislate to increase the safety of roads, vehicles and traffic.
- It hosts the only [permanent United Nations intergovernmental forum on road safety](#), and the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations, which both gather participating countries from all around the world. In 2023, UNECE celebrated the 50th anniversary implementation of the UN regulation on safety-belts, which has saved millions of lives over the past five decades; presented and discussed the preliminary findings and recommendations of the Road Safety Performance Review (RSPR) of Uzbekistan; and supported Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in improving road safety legislation and strategies.
- UNECE also hosts the secretariats of the Special Envoy for Road Safety and of the UN Road Safety Fund.
- The Secretary-General's [Special Envoy for Road Safety](#), Jean Todt, continued to mobilize political support for concrete road safety measures, visiting 28 countries to meet high-level government officials, mainly in low- and middle-income countries which account for 90% of the 1.19 million annual road deaths.
- Supported by his advocacy efforts, Viet Nam and Andorra joined the 1958 agreement, which sets out harmonized regulations to improve vehicle safety, Türkiye joined agreements on road signs and signals, along with Maldives, which also joined the Convention on road traffic.
- The Special Envoy and JCDecaux launched a [Global Road Safety campaign](#) to address the first cause of mortality for young people aged 5-29 that will appear on billboards in public areas and online over the next two years.
- The [UN Road Safety Fund](#) won the Prince Michael International Road Safety Award for its impactful projects in almost 90 low- and middle-income countries across five regions (up from 46 countries in 2022). These projects have been made possible with the help of generous contributions of just under USD 30 million. Looking ahead, the Fund will prioritize funding for the adoption and implementation of laws and standards related to road safety and unlocking sustainable domestic financing. To continue its vital SDG 3.6 mandate to help halve road deaths, the UNRSF will also be seeking new contributions for 2025-2030, totalling USD 30 million.



Regional UN system in Europe and Central Asia collaborates on key transitions and crisis response

- The [2023 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development](#), convened by UNECE in close collaboration with the Regional Collaborative Platform for Europe and Central Asia, demonstrated the ability of the regional UN system to jointly identify policy areas that require scaled-up action.
- In 2023, cooperation between the regional UN entities, organized through the [Regional Collaborative Platform \(RCP\) for Europe and Central Asia](#), focused on jointly supporting transitions in key policy areas and responding to multiple crises and conflict in the region.
- In view of insufficient progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, the regional UN entities prioritized their contributions to accelerating SDG implementation in high-impact policy areas, leveraging the momentum generated around global summits such as the SDG Summit in September 2023. These areas included environment and climate change; digital transformation; gender equality; social protection; and sustainable food systems.
- The UN in the region also acted jointly to coordinate its response to multiple crises, conflicts and human rights challenges.
- Furthermore, the regional [Issue-based Coalitions \(IBCs\)](#) and groups, the RCP's main substantive and operational arm, provided targeted and demand-driven policy support to the country level.
- The IBCs and groups co-chaired by UNECE or with UNECE engagement achieved progress in some crucial areas:
 - The [Issue-based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change](#) organized a workshop with UN Country Teams (UNCTs) on integrating climate change, pollution, biodiversity and just transition in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework processes. This helped develop ideas for future collaboration at country and regional levels, and resulted in further commitments to work on water issues in Central Asia.
 - The [Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems](#) issued key knowledge products on food security and nutrition in Europe and Central Asia and on the follow-up to the UN Food Systems Summit. Furthermore, the IBC together with the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub organized a Regional Preparatory Meeting for the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment.
 - The [Digital Transformation Group](#) issued a UN Digital Development Toolbox to support delivery on digital issues in Europe and Central Asia, accompanied by a webinar for UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators.
 - The [Issue-based Coalition on Gender Equality](#) increased awareness and knowledge on the pushback against gender equality in the region with two webinars featuring experiences from the UN system and external experts.
 - The [Regional Coordination Group on Data and Statistics](#) provided contributions for the 2023 [UNECE annual SDG report](#) on the impact of various regional and national actions on sustainable development outcomes and coordinated capacity development activities on data and statistics.



Strengthening support to programme countries

- In 2023 UNECE further strengthened [collaboration with the 17 programme countries in the region](#) (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Republic of Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) and Kosovo (SCR 1244).
- This work is led by a robust system of UNECE Regional Advisors, under the leadership of the Deputy Executive Secretary. Deepened cooperation with the Resident Coordinator system and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) further sharpened UNECE support to governments.
- Highlights of UNECE's country-level engagement in 2023 include:

- Enhancing national capacities for environmental monitoring, reporting and information sharing in Uzbekistan: UNECE, together with UNEP and FAO Uzbekistan, supported the country in preparing a National State of the Environment Report, which aims to communicate key environmental issues and trends to citizens, experts, and policymakers. This included training on the use of a common and comparable set of priority environmental indicators based on UNECE Guidelines.
- Training of policymakers in age-sensitive analysis and policy formulation in Moldova and Georgia: UNECE, in collaboration with UNFPA, developed comprehensive guidance and a workshop format that can be easily scaled up. Following their successful piloting in the two countries, other countries in the region have already signalled their interest in replicating the workshop format.
- Assessing economic feasibility of energy efficiency measures and use of renewable energy sources in the Republic of Moldova: a UNECE study will help the government implement renewable energy and energy efficiency measures for public sector buildings such as schools, kindergartens, hospitals, and cultural centers.
- Assisting Albania and Serbia in closing coal mines and ensuring a just transition: a UNECE study and workshop supported the two countries towards the design and implementation of a programme for an efficient, safe, and environmentally conscious mine closure in line with a green economy and just transition, ensuring sustainable use of natural resources.
- Developing forest information systems and digitalization in the forest sector in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe: UNECE and FAO introduced national experts to state-of-the-art technologies and analytical methods for the development of national forest information systems, supported by UNECE guidance.
- Fostering transformative innovation in the Western Balkans by facilitating mutual learning and benchmarking policy efforts against international best practices: a UNECE workshop supported governments in the region to create a policy assessment framework for transition economies. The Innovation Policy Outlook for the Western Balkans will support governments' efforts to foster transformative innovation.



Marking [25 years of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia \(SPECA\)](#), the first summit of Heads of State and Government of SPECA participating States adopted the Baku Declaration. It endorsed a roadmap for the digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, and welcomed plans to establish a dedicated SPECA Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

SPECA, jointly supported by UNECE and UNESCAP, is a unique country-led platform to strengthen subregional cooperation in Central Asia and facilitate its integration into the world economy.

MAJOR EVENTS 2024

JAN FEB MAR

Q1

- **Inland Transport Committee** (86th session)
20 – 23 February | Geneva
- **Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**
13 – 14 March | Geneva
- **Global Methane Forum 2024**
18 – 21 March | Geneva

APR MAY JUN

Q2

- **UNECE Resource Management Week 2024**
22-26 April | Geneva
- **UN/CEFACT Forum**
29 April-1 May | Geneva
- **8th UNECE International PPP Forum**
8 – 10 May | Istanbul | Türkiye
- **Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships**
22 - 24 May | Geneva
- **Conference of European Statisticians Plenary**
17 - 21 June | Geneva
- **Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards**
26 - 28 June | Geneva

JUL AUG SEP

Q3

- **UN/CEFACT Forum**
8 – 10 July | Geneva
- **High-Level Political Forum 2024**
8 – 17 July | New York
- **UNECE Sustainable Energy Week**
including the Committee on Sustainable Energy
16-20 September | Geneva
- **UN Summit of the Future**
part of the UNGA high-level week
22 – 23 September | New York
- **Forum of Mayors**
30 September – 1 October | Geneva

OCT NOV DEC

Q4

- **Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management**
2 - 4 October | Geneva
- **Beijing+30 Regional Review Meeting**
21 – 22 October | Geneva
- **10th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention**
23-25 October | Ljubjana | Slovenia
- **Joint session of the UNECE Committee on Forests & the Forest Industry and the FAO European Forestry Commission**
6 - 8 November | Geneva
- **Committee on Environmental Policy**
13 - 15 November | Geneva
- **Standing Working Group on Ageing**
20 - 22 November | Geneva
- **COP29**
11 - 24 November | Baku | Azerbaijan
- **13th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention**
27 - 29 November | Geneva
- **44th session of the Executive Body of the Air Convention**
09 - 12 December | Geneva

Budget

Financial Resources

(in thousands of US Dollars)

Type of budget resources		2022 Appropriation/ Allotment
A	Regular Budget (Section 20)	
	Post items	35,590.1
	Non-Post items	1,639.3
	Total	37,229.4
B	Regular Programme Of Technical Cooperation (Section 23)	
	Other staff costs	1,690.3
	Non-Post items	851.8
	Total	2,542.1
C	United Nations Development Account (Section 35)	
	Non-Post items	1,466.6
D	Extrabudgetary - Technical Cooperation & General Trust Funds	23,657.6
Grand Total		64,895.7

UNECE Member States



ALBANIA



ANDORRA



ARMENIA



AUSTRIA



AZERBAIJAN



BELARUS



BELGIUM



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



BULGARIA



CANADA



CROATIA



CYPRUS



CZECHIA



DENMARK



ESTONIA



FINLAND



FRANCE



GEORGIA



GERMANY



GREECE



HUNGARY



ICELAND



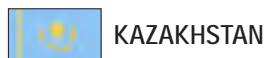
IRELAND



ISRAEL



ITALY



KAZAKHSTAN



KYRGYZSTAN



LATVIA



LIECHTENSTEIN



LITHUANIA



LUXEMBOURG



MALTA



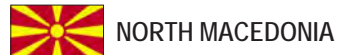
MONACO



MONTENEGRO



NETHERLANDS



NORTH MACEDONIA



NORWAY



POLAND



PORTUGAL



REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



ROMANIA



RUSSIAN FEDERATION



SAN MARINO



SERBIA



SLOVAKIA



SLOVENIA



SPAIN



SWEDEN



SWITZERLAND



TAJIKISTAN



TÜRKIYE



TURKMENISTAN



UKRAINE



UNITED KINGDOM



UNITED STATES



UZBEKISTAN

Media impact in 2023



- Over 20,700 media articles covering UNECE's work in 78 languages. Major sources include: Washington Post, The Guardian, Le Monde, El Pais, Al Jazeera, Newsweek, Wall Street Journal, the New Yorker, Tagesspiegel, La Vanguardia, CNN, Nature, Forbes, Politico, El Mundo



- 220 UNECE press releases and news



- Over 2 million people reached on social media



- Over 488,000 impressions on LinkedIn

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