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**Economic Commission for Europe****Committee on Sustainable Energy****Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition****Nineteenth session**

Geneva, 18-19 March 2024

**Report of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition****I. Introduction**

1. The nineteenth session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition was held on 18-19 March 2024 in Geneva.
2. This report summarizes the discussions on the work of the Group of Experts at its nineteenth session. All the documents and presentations of the session are available on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) website.<sup>1</sup>

**II. Attendance**

3. The meeting was attended by experts from the following ECE member States: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom, United States, and Uzbekistan.
4. Experts from Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, and United Republic of Tanzania participated under Article 11 of the ECE's Terms of Reference.
5. African Development Bank (AfDB), Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), Inter-American Development Bank, International Energy Agency (IEA), International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO), International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Organization for Least Developed Countries, Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UN ESCAP), United

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<sup>1</sup> Official documents of the session are available at <http://documents.un.org/>. Unofficial room documents and presentations delivered at the meeting are available on the ECE website at: <https://unece.org/sustainable-energy/events/global-methane-forum-2024>.

Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, and World Meteorological Organization (WMO), were represented. Representatives from the European Union also participated.

6. The following international associations were represented: Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), European Biogas Association, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Global Food Banking Network, Global Greenhouse Gas Watch (G3W), Global Methane Initiative, Global Methane Hub, Hydrogen Council, International Gas Union, International Solid Waste Association, Ipicca, World Biogas Association, and WPC Energy (ex-World Petroleum Council).

7. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated: Association for Catalytic Control of Emissions from Stationary Sources to Air (ACCESSA), Associazione Comunita, Papa Giovanni XXIII, Avfall Norge CLOCC, BID, C40 Cities, Carbon Mapper, Catalytic Finance Foundation, Center of Excellence for Circular Economy and Climate Change for Latin America, Ceres, Changing Markets Foundation, Clean Air Task Force, Climate Bonds Initiative, Climate Policy Initiative, Council on Environment, Energy and Water, Département de Sentier, DEUS-Pollutrack, Deutsche Umwelthilfe, Ember, Energy Foundation China, Environmental Action Germany (DUH), Environmental Defense Fund, Eurogas, Fachverband Biogas, FOUR PAWS International, French Solid Waste Partnership, GAIA, GEIDCO, Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization (GEIDCO), Global Gas Centre, GSCC, GTI Energy, ICLEI, Implementa Sur, International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine methane in Poland, Istanbul Bar Association, KliK Foundation, LUMS Energy Institute (LEI), Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), NGO Fors Montenegro, Nipe Fagio, ProVeg International, PSE Healthy Energy, Research Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane in ShanXi China, Rocky Mountain Institute, Rural Development Organization, Russian Gas Society, Solutions for Our Climate, The Anaerobic Digestion and Bioresources Association (ADBA), the Energy and Resources Institute, the Global Food banking Network, The Israeli Natural Gas Trade Association, the One Goal Initiative for Governance, TP Europe BV, Yayasan Pecinta Budaya Beali (YPBB), Youth Constituency (YOUNGO), and Zero Waste Senegal Association.

8. The private sector was represented by experts from 103 companies. Academia was also represented by experts from 50 universities and scientific institutes.

### **III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2024/1

9. The Russian Federation expressed concern over unprecedented limited time allocated for the meeting, and claimed that the suggested schedule was not adequate to ensure in-depth intergovernmental exchange and comprehensive deliberations, including on the Group's work plan for 2024-2025 and draft conclusions and recommendations. It further requested the secretariat to ensure that enough time is allocated for effective consideration of all agenda items, as well as comprehensive exchange between Member-States.

10. The provisional agenda as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2024/1 was adopted without amendment.

### **IV. Opening remarks (agenda item 2)**

11. In his opening remarks, the Chair welcomed everyone to the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Experts on Coal mine Methane and Just Transition and pointed out that this is a joint meeting with the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) and a part of the Global Methane Forum 2024 jointly sponsored by UNECE, GMI, Global Methane Hub, and CCAC. He observed that this meeting symbolizes the importance that the global community now places on the need to reduce methane emissions in all sectors; further he commented that the Group of Experts and GMI should be proud of the work they have accomplished thus far, and stated

that both organizations are well prepared for work ahead, but need to expand their membership and ensure that younger members feel comfortable and supported. The Chair remarked that three Task Forces were created within the Group of Experts in the last year to more fully address the burgeoning work of the Group. Naming each of the Task Forces, Methane Emissions Reduction, Safe Operation and Closure of Coal Mines, and Just Transition, he congratulated the Chairs for their efforts to organize and hold informative and impactful meetings aimed at developing work products that will be useful to the membership and community at large. Further he pointed out that while only a few years ago many thought that coal extraction and use were waning, the reality now is that new coal mines are being opened in many areas in the ECE region, as well as in other parts of the world. The Chair concluded by saying that there is a lot of work to do and expressed his hope that new interesting ideas and concepts would be presented at the Forum. In that context he also observed that some of them might be controversial and therefore he reminded everyone that the meeting takes place on the United Nations grounds where many difficult and important decisions have been made in the past and asked the participants to honour the UN ideals and stay openminded to and respectful of any presented point of view.

12. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the work of the Bureau and the secretariat and their efforts to manage and direct the Group's work plan between annual sessions despite human and financial resource constraints and the challenging situation caused by the multiple ongoing global crises.

## **V. Activities and priorities of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and matters for consideration by the Group of Experts (agenda item 3)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/149 - Report of the Committee on Sustainable Energy on its thirty second session

13. The secretariat briefed the Group of Experts on the outcomes of the thirty-second session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy (the Committee) (Geneva, 13-15 September 2023). The Group of Experts took note that its work plan for 2024-2025 (ECE/ENERGY/2023/5) was endorsed by the Committee at its thirty-second session and by the Executive Committee of ECE at its 131st meeting (Geneva, 4 December 2023).

## **VI. Report on implementation of the work plan for 2022-2023 (agenda item 4)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2021/3 – Work plan for the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition for 2022-2023

(ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2024/5 – *Mapping Albania's readiness for green and just transition in post-coal mining areas.*)

14. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation successful implementation of its work plan for 2022-2023. The Chair and the secretariat thanked the members of the Group for their contributions to delivering on the mandated activities.

15. The Group of Experts thanked the International Centres of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane (ICE-CMM) in Poland and in China for their efforts and initiatives supporting the Group's work on disseminating and promoting best practices in methane detection, monitoring, capture, and use, and approved their annual reports for 2023, and their work plans for 2024.

16. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the development of the study Mapping Albania's readiness for green and just transition in post-coal mining areas (ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2024/5), and expressed its readiness to develop similar assessments in other ECE member States. The Group of Experts called on interested member States to engage with the secretariat in exploring possibilities for conducting such work in their coal mining and post-coal mining areas.

17. The Group of Experts thanked the Regional Advisor on Sustainable Energy for his help in developing the above-mentioned study and expressed its concern with limited availability of regular programme of technical cooperation (RPTC) funds for 2024, caused by the on-going liquidity crisis resulting from not honouring commitments towards the Organization by certain UN Member States, as well as continuing impediments posed to technical cooperation activities.

## VII. Work of Task Forces (agenda item 5)

18. The Group of Experts listened to the reports of its Task Forces (on (i) Methane Emissions Reduction, (ii) Just Transition, and (iii) Safe Operations and Closure of Coal Mines) delivered by their Chairs, approved their proposed work plans, and thanked the Chairs and members of the Task Forces for their efforts and initiatives supporting the Group's work in their respective focus areas.

## VIII. Work Plan for 2024-2025 (agenda item 6)

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/2023/5 – Work plan for the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition for 2024-2025

ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2024/3 – *Best Practice Guidance on VAM Processing*

ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2024/4 – *Coal in the 21st Century; Meeting Sustainable Development Goals and Managing Investor Expectations*

19. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the progress in implementation of its work plan for 2024-2025. The Chair and the secretariat thanked the members of the Group for their contributions to delivering on the mandated activities and asked for their further engagement to effectively deliver on the remaining tasks.

20. The Group of Experts thanked the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) for providing funds to deliver the project Strengthening national capacities to reduce coal mine methane (CMM) emissions from active and abandoned coal mines and to measure and manage methane emissions across the natural gas value chain.

21. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation progress in the development of the study on processing ventilation air methane (VAM) and thanked its principal author, Mr. Richard Mattus, as well as all the experts involved in drafting, editing, and reviewing the document for their work and valuable contributions.

22. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation progress in development of the publication titled: *Mapping Just Transition and Identifying Barriers to its Implementation and Progress in the ECE Region* (new title as per ECE/ENERGY/2023/3 approved during the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the Committee; mandate approved in the report from the Committee's 32<sup>nd</sup> session ECE/ENERGY/149 Item X.B para 52). The document is to present a new approach that sees coal mining not as a fuel supply, but as the provider of a multipurpose platform that might be an important component of the green economy, and therefore promises to facilitate the process of just transition of the fossil-based energy sector.

23. The Group of Experts endorsed the idea of building a regional platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange on Just Transition among the universities in Central Asia, provided that the necessary extrabudgetary funds can be raised for that activity.

24. One delegation claimed that the document ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2024/4 submitted by the secretariat misinterpreted universally agreed obligations with regards to coal usage and contained references not consistent with the scope and the mandate of the Group along with unobjective evaluations of the current energy crisis in the UNECE region and/or its origins.

## **IX. Fourteenth joint meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition and the Global Methane Initiative Coal Subcommittee (agenda item 7)**

25. The Group of Experts thanked the secretariat of the Coal Subcommittee of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) and its members for their continued support and collaboration.

26. The Group of Experts suggested to further explore ways to develop and implement joint projects with GMI and requested the secretariat to ensure, facilitate, and coordinate continued cooperation between the two entities.

## **X. Global Methane Forum 2024 (agenda item 8)**

27. The Group of Experts expressed its gratitude to U.S, EPA, GMI, CCAC, Global Methane Hub, and other partners for convening the Global Methane Forum 2024 (GMF 2024), and to all GMF 2024 international participants for advancing action to achieve ambitious methane mitigation targets.

28. Took note of the key GMF 2024 outcomes that promote replicable methane mitigation successes, as follows:

(a) Achieving a sustainable and decarbonized energy system would require reduction of methane emissions throughout the coal value chain. The Group of Experts called upon all actors to apply the available methane monitoring, verification, capturing, and utilization practices employing mitigation technologies as quickly and consistently as possible;

(b) The Groups of Experts encouraged stakeholders from the coal sector to undertake all possible efforts to effectively monitor, report, capture, and use methane from active and abandoned coal mines, giving due consideration to best available practices developed and advocated by the UN Member States.

## **XI. Preparations for the twentieth session of the Group of Experts (agenda item 9)**

29. The twentieth session is to be held in March 2025 in Geneva.

## **XII. Any other business (agenda item 10)**

30. The Group of Experts recalled that the delivery of a number of activities in the 2024-2025 Work Plan is dependent on the availability of extrabudgetary resources, and deemed securing such resources critical for attainment of the Group's objectives. The Group was invited to suggest potential sources of funding for the secretariat to explore.

## **XIII. Adoption of conclusions and recommendations (agenda item 11)**

*Documentation:* CMMJT-19/2024/INF.1 - Unofficial room document: Draft Conclusions and Recommendations arising from the Nineteenth Session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition dated 1 March 2024.

31. The conclusions and recommendations were adopted and are included under the relevant agenda items highlighted in this report.

#### **XIV. Adoption of the report and close of the meeting (agenda item 12)**

32. The report of the meeting was adopted, including the conclusions and recommendations, subject to any necessary editing and formatting.

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