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Committee on Environmental Policy

Twenty-eighth session

Geneva, 1–3 November 2023

Report of the Committee on Environmental Policy on its twenty-eighth session

I. Introduction

1. The Committee on Environmental Policy held its twenty-eighth session in Geneva from 1 to 3 November 2023. The present report is based on a summary of the session's outcomes and the decisions taken, as adopted on 3 November 2023.

A. Attendance

2. Delegations from the following 33 member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) attended the meeting: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uzbekistan. An observer from Mauritania participated in the meeting.

3. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Europe and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe were also present.

4. Other national, regional and international organizations and bodies were represented at the meeting, including: the European Union, represented by the European Commission, and the Permanent Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

5. Representatives of the following civil society organizations and academia participated in the session: Children and Youth International, the Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development "ECO-Accord", the European ECO-Forum, the European Law Students' Association and Zoï Environment Network.

B. Opening of the session and organizational matters

6. Ms. Tatiana Molcean (Executive Secretary, ECE), Mr. Arnold Kreilhuber (Director, UNEP Regional Office for Europe) and Ms. Francesca Racioppi, (Head, European Centre for Environment and Health of the WHO Regional Office for Europe) made welcoming remarks.



The Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy welcomed participants and recalled the main objectives of the session.

7. The Committee adopted the agenda of its twenty-eighth session (ECE/CEP/2023/1), taking into account the proposed time schedule as presented in information paper No. 1/Rev.1.

II. Outcomes of the work of the Bureau

8. The Chair reported that, during the intersessional period, the Bureau had worked by means of electronic consultations – including an online meeting on 8 March 2023 – and met in Geneva, on 8 June 2023, to prepare the current session of the Committee. The outcomes of the Bureau’s work were presented in document ECE/CEP/2023/3. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the outcomes of the Bureau’s work under the respective agenda items.

9. The Committee expressed appreciation to the Bureau for its good work in fulfilling the mandates assigned to it by the Committee.

III. Sustainable development in the region

10. Ms. Monika Linn (Principal Adviser, Office of the Executive Secretary, ECE) in her capacity as ECE focal point for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, presented¹ developments related to the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region. The Committee was informed that the 2024 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region would be held in Geneva as a hybrid meeting on 13 and 14 March 2024 under the theme “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Economic Commission for Europe region in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.”

11. A representative of the ECE secretariat briefed the Committee on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals by multilateral environmental agreements managed by the ECE Environment Division.

12. The Committee was briefed on the progress made under each of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements in support of the 2030 Agenda. Presentations were made by the following speakers:

- A representative of Georgia as a Vice-Chair country of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)
- A representative of Slovenia as the Chair country of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers
- A representative of Switzerland as a Bureau member of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention)
- A representative of the ECE secretariat on the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment
- A representative of the ECE secretariat on the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention)
- A representative of the ECE secretariat on the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention)

¹ Presentations made during the session are posted on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) website: <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Committee-on-Environmental-Policy/events/379785>.

- Mr. Harry Liiv (Estonia), Chair of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)
- A representative of Hungary as the Chair country of the Protocol on Water and Health

13. The Committee:

(a) Welcomed the information provided on the main developments at the regional level regarding the 2030 Agenda;

(b) Also welcomed the information provided on progress made by the multilateral environmental agreements managed by the environment subprogramme;

(c) Underscored the importance of ECE multilateral environmental agreements to foster implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, mitigate and adapt to climate change, reduce disaster risks, prevent and reduce pollution, support the green energy transition and sustainable deployment of renewable energies, protect biodiversity and promote a circular economy;

(d) Noting that implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) would be reviewed in 2024, recognized that reporting on the environmental dimension of Sustainable Development Goal 16 would be a significant challenge;

(e) Called upon member States that had not yet done so to accede to or ratify ECE environmental conventions and their protocols, in particular the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (Gothenburg Protocol), the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, the Protocol on Water and Health and the Protocol on Civil Liability;

(f) Welcomed the growing accession to ECE multilateral environmental agreements by countries outside the ECE region. Also welcomed the growing interest and participation by countries outside the ECE region in the work of ECE multilateral environmental agreements, including in those not open at the global level;

(g) Expressed appreciation for the many capacity-building activities carried out under the multilateral environmental agreements that had contributed to their enhanced implementation. Noted, at the same time, that needs remained great, in particular in relation to governance and integration with other sectoral policies and measures;

(h) Underlined the important role of the many partners engaged in the work of ECE multilateral environmental agreements, including United Nations regional commissions and United Nations country teams, to advance implementation at the national level;

(i) Decided to actively promote the impact and results of ECE multilateral environmental agreements at the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (Nairobi, 26 February–1 March 2024) and at the United Nations Summit of the Future (New York, 22–23 September 2024);

(j) Expressed concern at the prevailing lack of financial resources to support the work of the secretariat of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements. While mandated work had continuously increased, the flow of United Nations regular budget resources had stalled and voluntary resources were neither sustainable nor predictable, with serious risks for the delivery of the secretariat's mandate;

(k) Expressed appreciation to Ms. Linn for her long and fruitful cooperation under the Environment for Europe process and other matters of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

IV. Outcomes of the seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe

14. Ms. Nicola Koch (Chef de Cabinet and secretary, Economic Commission for Europe) briefed the Committee on the outcomes of the seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva, 18–19 April 2023).

15. Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin (Deputy Executive Secretary, ECE) briefed the Committee on strategic foresight and its possible application in ECE and Committee on Environmental Policy activities.

16. Mr. Marco Keiner (Director, ECE Environment Division) further expounded on the matter of possible application of strategic foresight in ECE and Committee on Environmental Policy activities.

17. The Committee:

(a) Welcomed the information provided on the outcomes of the seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe, including on strategic foresight and its possible application in ECE and Committee on Environmental Policy activities;

(b) Acknowledged the need for continuous efforts in order to increase the relevance of the Committee for the ECE member States and improve complementarity with other activities within ECE, with the aim of enhancing the Committee's contribution to the work of the Commission as a whole in assisting countries of the region in implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Asked the secretariat to further reflect on how to develop/implement strategic foresight at the subprogramme level and prepare a proposal to be discussed by the Committee at its twenty-ninth session (Geneva, 6–8 November 2024).

V. Follow-up to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and preparation of the mid-term review of the Conference's main outcomes

18. The Chair recalled that, during and after the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022), the secretariat had received oral and written feedback from several delegations.

19. The Chair also recalled that the secretariat had conducted a brief survey to collect feedback from the participants on the preparation, organization and running of the Nicosia Conference. The Committee was informed that the results of the evaluation survey, with the lessons learned, had been summarized in information paper No. 2.

20. A representative of the ECE secretariat briefed the Committee on the results of the evaluation survey.

21. Following a discussion, the Committee took note of the results of the survey on the Nicosia Conference, in which respondents:

- Highlighted the excellent organization of the Conference and its successful outcomes.
- Expressed gratitude to Cyprus for its warm hospitality and efficient preparation of the Conference.
- Underlined the continuing relevance of the Environment for Europe process.
- Hailed the excellent work of the ECE secretariat in organizing the Conference.
- Expressed deep appreciation for the role of partner organizations in organizing the Conference, in particular UNEP, the World Tourism Organization and WHO, from the United Nations system, but also the European Environment Agency, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the non-governmental organization (NGO) European ECO-Forum.

22. The Chair recalled the Nicosia mandate on the regionwide approach to sustainable infrastructure, namely, as stated in the Ministerial Declaration: “We will explore the way forward for the pan-European region, including through innovation, nature-based solutions and engagement with the private sector. The future regionwide approach to sustainable infrastructure should provide the basis for common goals, targets and criteria for

policymaking, financing, performance monitoring and replicability of practices that best suit domestic and transboundary needs.”²

23. The Chair informed the Committee that the intention expressed in the above-mentioned quote had been reflected in the draft proposed programme budget of ECE for 2024.

24. A representative of UNEP gave a presentation on the International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure and how they could be used at the regional level.

25. The Committee:

(a) Took note of the information provided by the representative of UNEP on the International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure and their possible implementation at the regional level;

(b) Asked the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to prepare a document on implementation of a regionwide approach to sustainable infrastructure in the pan-European region by providing the basis for common goals, targets and criteria for policymaking, financing, performance monitoring and replicability of practices that best suited domestic and transboundary needs, to be discussed by the Committee at its twenty-ninth session.

26. The Chair recalled that, in their Declaration, ministers had invited the Committee on Environmental Policy to convene a mid-term review in 2025 to assess progress in the implementation of the main outcomes of the Nicosia Conference.³

27. The Chair suggested that the mid-term review could be organized in a similar manner to the 2019 mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016) (ECE/CEP/2017/16).

28. The Committee asked the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to prepare a document proposing the scope, format and modalities for organizing the mid-term review, which could be discussed by the Committee at its twenty-ninth session.

29. The Chair recalled that ministers in Nicosia had invited the ECE secretariat, in cooperation with UNEP, OECD and others, to prioritize assessing the most urgent environmental needs in Ukraine based on the methodology of the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme and on the results of ongoing and planned impact assessments, and to make recommendations to advance a sustainable recovery of the country.⁴

30. The Chair informed the Committee that the secretariat had prepared information paper No. 10 on an informal inter-agency coordination group on environmental assessments for Ukraine.

31. A representative of the ECE secretariat briefed the Committee on the activities of the above-mentioned informal inter-agency coordination group on environmental assessments for Ukraine.

32. Following a discussion, the Committee took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the activities of the informal inter-agency coordination group, encouraged member States to consider providing financial and human resources to support the work of the group, and invited the secretariat to present an updated information to the Committee at its next session.

VI. Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting

33. The Chair informed the Committee that the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment had recently held its twenty-fifth session (Geneva (hybrid),

² ECE/CEP/S/2022/7, para. 9.

³ Ibid., para. 23.

⁴ Ibid., para. 4.

2–3 May 2023). The Group had prepared a new mandate and terms of reference for the period 2024–2028 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1), an annual timetable of activities for 2024 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/4), a five-year outline of activities (informal document No. 1)⁵ and the report of its session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2).

34. A representative of the ECE secretariat briefed the Committee on recent work of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and presented its new mandate and terms of reference and annual workplan for 2024.

35. The Committee:

(a) Took note of the information provided and welcomed the activities of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment;

(b) Endorsed the new mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group for the period 2024–2028, as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1, and agreed to forward them to the ECE Executive Committee for approval;

(c) Took note of the timetable of activities of the Working Group in 2024 as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/4, as well as the five-year outline of activities;

(d) Encouraged member States and organizations to provide in-kind and financial support to the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme;

(e) Thanked Austria, Switzerland and the European Union for their financial support;

(f) Also thanked UNEP – including the secretariat to the Convention on Biological Diversity – and the European Environment Agency, together with the United Nations Statistics Division, OECD, WHO and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, for their substantive support to the Programme;

(g) Encouraged countries to submit to the secretariat their self-assessment reports under the Shared Environmental Information System review on the theme “air” by the end of November 2023;

(h) Took note of the information provided on the expected eighth pan-European environmental assessment;

(i) Encouraged its members to increase the use of the common set of ECE environmental indicators in state-of-the-environment reporting and to further harmonize data flows across the region.

36. The Chair informed the Committee that the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators had held its nineteenth session in Geneva, from 3 to 4 November 2022, after the Committee’s special session in Nicosia (3–4 October 2022) and again in Geneva, from 16 to 17 October 2023.

37. Ms. Ševala Korajčević, Chair of the Joint Task Force, briefed the Committee on recent work by the Joint Task Force.

38. The Committee:

(a) Took note of the information provided and welcome the activities of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators;

(b) Welcomed the revision of the Guidelines on the Application of Environmental Indicators and requested the publication of the 2023 edition in English, French and Russian.

39. The Chair recalled that the Joint Task Force was serviced jointly by the Environment and Statistics Divisions of ECE under both the Committee and the Conference of European Statisticians.

40. The Chair informed the Committee that the Conference of European Statisticians had approved the replacement of the Joint Task Force by a Joint Working Group on

⁵ Available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/twenty-fifth-session-working-group-environmental-monitoring-and>.

Environmental Statistics and Indicators and endorsed the Joint Working Group's mandate and terms of reference, pending approval also by the Committee.⁶

41. The Chair also informed the Committee that the new mandate and terms of reference (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2023/3) and a five-year outline of activities for the Joint Working Group (ECE/CEP-CES/GE.1/2023/5) were available on the meeting web page under "Other materials". Delegates might also find information paper No. 11 on the "Proposed replacement of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators with a Joint Working Group on Environmental Statistics and Indicators".

42. A representative of the ECE secretariat presented the proposed replacement and recent decisions by the Conference of European Statisticians.

43. Following a discussion, the Committee:

(a) Took note of the proposal made to convert the Joint Task Force into a Joint Working Group and decided to defer its decision until the next regular session of the Committee in November 2024;

(b) Decided to extend the mandate and terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators until end-2025.

VII. Environmental performance reviews

44. The Committee proceeded with the peer review of the Environmental Performance Review of Mauritania. The Review's 17 chapters and associated recommendations (information paper No. 4) had earlier been examined by the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews together with Mauritanian experts at a meeting held in Geneva on 9 and 10 October 2023.

45. The Minister for the Environment of Mauritania informed the Committee of the intention of the Government of her country to develop a road map and establish cooperation mechanisms to implement the numerous recommendations made in the Environmental Performance Review of Mauritania and stressed the need for technical assistance and capacity development, in addition to financial support to the country. In particular, the Minister expressed appreciation to Germany for providing technical and financial assistance for the decentralized management of natural resources during the past 20 years in Mauritania. In addition, she highlighted the value of the pan-African Great Green Wall Initiative aiming to restore the continent's degraded landscapes and revitalize communities across Africa, in which Mauritania was actively engaged, striving to enable decent living conditions for people and improving capacities and competences of Mauritanian youth to accelerate the restoration of ecosystems and conservation of flora and fauna in the country. Furthermore, she stressed the potential of her country in terms of renewable energy sources, both from solar and green hydrogen sources, and referred to several ongoing partnerships working to develop such renewable energy sources. Lastly, she highlighted developments in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development in her country and emphasized the timeliness and value of the Review for Mauritania.

46. An adviser to the Ministry for the Environment of Mauritania presented key achievements and main challenges in advancing the environmental agenda for the sustainable development of the country, within the substantive framework of the Review. He spoke of considerable progress made in developing laws, policies and institutions governing environmental protection and sustainable development, including a new law on municipal solid waste adopted in 2023, and presented key operational activities in Mauritania. Nonetheless, the country was facing many challenges, including the size of the territory, two thirds of which was desert and arid; the scarcity of water resources; desertification and persistent drought; increasing flooding; increasing pressure on forest resources; the boom in gold panning; waste management, in particular the introduction of technical landfill centres; a lack of reliable data on the state of the country's forest formations; a lack of human and financial capacity; coastal erosion and vulnerability; rapid demographic growth and

⁶ ECE/CES/105, para. 29.

urbanization of the coast; inflation; declining economic growth (coronavirus disease, falling mineral exports, cessation of oil production, etc.); and the decline in the rate of ratification of international conventions and the adoption of regulatory texts and the lack of enforcement thereof.

47. The Vice-Chair of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (Switzerland), in his capacity as rapporteur designated by the Expert Group, shared key findings in selected areas (legal, policy and institutional framework; waste and chemicals management; and fisheries, maritime economy and the environment) of the Review and the steps necessary to address the identified challenges. He informed the meeting that the Review made 88 recommendations and addressed 85 targets covering 16 Sustainable Development Goals. Delegates subsequently intervened, commenting on and asking questions regarding the Review of Mauritania and congratulating the country for having undertaken a review of its environmental performance.

48. The Committee also peer reviewed the Third Environmental Performance Review of Kyrgyzstan. The Review's 18 chapters and associated recommendations (information paper No. 3) had initially been examined by the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews together with experts from Kyrgyzstan participating by virtual means at a meeting held in Tbilisi from 15 to 16 September 2022, and subsequently agreed on by the Expert Group at its meeting held in Geneva on 9 and 10 October 2023.

49. The Head of the Climate Policy Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision of Kyrgyzstan presented the key achievements and main challenges in advancing the environmental agenda for the sustainable development of the country, within the substantive framework of the Third Review. She informed the Committee of progress in developing a new, and revising the existing, legal and policy framework, and in enhancing the environmental institutional framework that had resulted in her Ministry being gradually upgraded from a State Agency to its current status in 2021. Key national development and security policies included provisions related to environmental sustainability, adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction. Kyrgyzstan pursued the implementation of its Programme of Green Economy Development, including through a new plan of actions until 2028. In the field of waste management, the country had introduced principles of extended responsibility of producers for packaging recycling. In the field of biodiversity conservation, the country had prepared the national strategy and action plan for the next period and worked on preparing the seventh report to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

50. The Chair of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (Estonia), in his capacity as rapporteur designated by the Expert Group, shared key findings in selected areas (legal, policy and institutional framework; water management and waste and chemicals management) of the Review and the steps necessary to address the identified challenges. He informed the meeting that the Review made 89 recommendations and addressed 61 targets covering 14 Sustainable Development Goals. In the ensuing discussion, delegates intervened, making comments and asking questions regarding the Third Review of Kyrgyzstan and congratulating the country for having undertaken a review of its environmental performance.

51. The Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy informed the Committee that, following a request from the Committee made at its special session in October 2022, the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews had prepared the document Guidance on the conduct of the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews (ECE/CEP/2023/6) and submitted it to the current session of the Committee for adoption. Furthermore, the Chair informed the meeting that the Guidance document had been prepared taking into account the document Options for the conduct of the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews (ECE/CEP/2023/7), developed based on the results of a survey (information paper No. 8).

52. The secretary to the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews presented an overview of recent and planned activities under the Environmental Performance Review Programme. Activities included three workshops based on recommendations of environmental performance reviews related to waste management, climate change and disaster risk reduction, respectively, hosted by the Government of North Macedonia with financial support from Germany and in-kind support from North Macedonia. The workshops

had enjoyed a good participation rate totalling up to 44 participants from 18 target countries. In each workshop, participants had valued the exchange of international good practices and of national experiences and made a set of recommendations to advance the topics under discussion.

53. Delegates subsequently shared information on activities related to implementing recommendations of their environmental performance reviews. The representative of Uzbekistan stressed the usefulness of having a road map to facilitate the implementation of recommendations made in the Third Review of Uzbekistan (2020) and stated that, in his country, the Review had triggered a number of policy decisions demonstrating the value of carrying out such reviews. Furthermore, he reported that Uzbekistan would be interested in participating in a regional review of environmental performance of countries of Central Asia, should such an exercise be considered by other interested countries.

54. The Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy emphasized that, as at November 2023, the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews consisted of seven experts provided in-kind by the Governments of Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Montenegro, Romania and Switzerland, and invited other countries to nominate their representatives to the Expert Group with a view to increasing the number of experts to facilitate the expert reviews of recommendations made in the environmental performance reviews.

55. The Committee:

(a) Adopted the recommendations contained in the Third Environmental Performance Review of Kyrgyzstan (information paper No. 3) and encouraged the country to develop a road map to implement said recommendations;

(b) Adopted the recommendations contained in the Environmental Performance Review of Mauritania (information paper No. 4) and encouraged the country to develop a road map to implement said recommendations;

(c) Adopted the Guidance on the conduct of the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews, as presented in document ECE/CEP/2023/6, and invited eligible countries to benefit from an environmental performance review while considering the provisions of the Guidance, to the extent possible taking into account the national context of each country under review;

(d) Welcomed the information provided on the activities of the Environmental Performance Review Programme and expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for the excellent work in support of the Programme;

(e) Also welcomed the start of the Fourth Environmental Performance Review of Tajikistan;

(f) Further welcomed the next environmental performance reviews to be conducted, namely the Fourth Environmental Performance Reviews of Montenegro, and of the Republic of Moldova;

(g) Welcomed the information provided on and recognized the value of the three workshops recently organized for ECE environmental performance review countries in support of their efforts to implement environmental performance review recommendations related to waste management, addressing climate change and disaster risk reduction (Skopje, respectively, 19–20 September, 2–3 October and 16–17 October 2023);

(h) Expressed sincere appreciation for the work of the ECE Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews;

(i) Also expressed appreciation to countries and organizations providing support to the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Romania, Switzerland and UNEP);

(j) Invited other countries to nominate their representatives to the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews, with a view to facilitating the expert review of environmental performance reviews;

(k) Took note of the information provided by the secretariat on resource mobilization for the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme in 2022–2023 and, in particular, thanked:

- (i) Austria, Germany and Switzerland for their financial support;
- (ii) France, Germany, Italy, North Macedonia and Portugal for providing expertise;
- (iii) UNEP and the Economic Commission for Africa for providing expertise;
- (iv) United Nations country teams and the United Nations Development Programme for substantive and logistical support;
- (v) Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Romania, Switzerland and UNEP for having delegated their experts to serve in and support the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews;

(l) Encouraged delegations to provide in-kind (expert) and financial support to the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme;

(m) Expressed appreciation for the close cooperation of the ECE Environment, Statistical, Sustainable Energy, Economic Cooperation and Trade and Sustainable Transport Divisions and the Sustainable Development and Gender Unit with the Environmental Performance Review Programme.

VIII. Cross-sectoral activities

56. The Chair informed the Committee that, as per established practice, the secretariat had prepared a briefing note entitled Cross-sectoral activities under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Environment subprogramme, for the Committee's consideration at its twenty-eighth session (ECE/CEP/2023/4). The note presented the recent developments and plans for the future related to those activities and contained recommendations to the Committee concerning future work under its auspices.

57. A representative of the ECE secretariat updated the Committee on the recent developments under the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development.

58. A representative of the ECE secretariat updated the Committee on the recent developments under the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP).

59. A representative of the WHO Regional Office for Europe briefed the Committee on the recent developments under the European Environment and Health Process.

60. A representative of the ECE secretariat updated the Committee on the recent developments in mainstreaming a gender perspective in environmental activities.

61. The Committee took note of the information provided in the document on Cross-sectoral activities under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Environment subprogramme (ECE/CEP/2023/4), and:

(a) Took note of the information provided on the work of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development and encouraged its members from the countries participating in the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development to remain informed of the process at the national level by establishing and maintaining working contacts with the Steering Committee members and focal points from their national administrations and NGOs;

(b) Welcomed the outcomes of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest, 5–7 July 2023) and reconfirmed its commitment to contribute to the European Environment and Health Process;

(c) Also welcomed the work under THE PEP, and invite its members to contact THE PEP secretariat should they wish their country to be involved in any of the activities thereunder, especially the Partnerships and the work on strategy and possible legal instruments, or to provide in-kind and financial support for activities under THE PEP;

(d) Took note of the information provided with respect to gender mainstreaming across ECE activities and in environmental activities carried out by the Environment Division since the Committee's last session;

(e) Recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming in environmental activities, particularly in the light of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals;

(f) Supported international initiatives to promote gender equality and welcomed continued cooperation and coordination with the United Nations bodies and other relevant international forums and actors to that end;

(g) Agreed to continue to mainstream a gender perspective in its activities.

IX. Regional advisory services and collaboration activities

62. The Regional Adviser for Environment briefed the Committee on regional advisory services in environment and on cooperation with other international organizations, including United Nations resident coordinators and United Nations country teams.

63. The Committee welcomed the information provided on regional advisory services in environment and on cooperation with other international organizations, including United Nations resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, and invited the secretariat to continue to inform the Committee of relevant developments on regional advisory services in environment.

X. Presentation and exchange of views on the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

64. The Chair recalled that, at its special session held in Geneva from 9 to 12 May 2022, the Committee had welcomed the information provided by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the outcomes of the resumed meeting of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (Nairobi (hybrid), 28 February–2 March 2022) and invited the UNEP Europe Office to continue to inform the Committee of relevant developments under the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP.⁷

65. Mr. Kreilhuber (Director, UNEP Regional Office for Europe) informed the Committee of the preparatory work for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (Nairobi, 26 February–1 March 2024).

66. The Committee:

(a) Welcomed the information provided by UNEP on the preparatory work for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, to be held in Nairobi from 26 February to 1 March 2024;

(b) Invited the UNEP Regional Office for Europe to continue briefing the Committee on relevant developments under the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, and in particular on the outcomes of its sixth session, at the next session of the Committee.

⁷ ECE/CEP/S/2022/2, para. 55.

XI. Annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2024 and outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2025

67. The Chair recalled that, in line with the “Sequential review of the proposed programmes of work of ECE subprogrammes”, approved by the Executive Committee at its 115th meeting (Geneva, 5 March 2021), the Committee was invited to adopt the draft programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2024 (ECE/CEP/2023/5) and recommend that it be approved by the Executive Committee. The programme of work was based on the ECE proposed programme budget for 2024 (A/78/6 (Sect. 20)) and followed the annual budget format approved by General Assembly resolution 77/267 on shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: review of changes to the budgetary cycle, of 30 December 2022 (A/RES/77/267).

68. Based on the sequential review procedure, the Chair invited the Committee to consider the “Outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2025” (information paper No. 5) and to provide recommendations on those components, as necessary. Those recommendations agreed by the Committee and included in its decisions would be reflected in the proposed programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2025.

69. The Committee:

(a) Adopted the draft programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2024 (ECE/CEP/2023/5) and recommended that it be approved by the Executive Committee;

(b) Took note of the “Outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2025”, as contained in information paper No. 5.

XII. Criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events

70. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-seventh session (Geneva (hybrid), 3–5 November 2021), the Committee had approved the revised criteria for providing financial support for participation in meetings and events, as presented in information paper No. 8, and requested the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to periodically verify the availability of data for 2021 and, if available for all countries with economies in transition, to prepare revised criteria for financial support for subsequent approval by the Committee.⁸

71. The Chair informed the Committee that, throughout 2023, the secretariat had repeatedly examined the availability of the relevant data. After assessing the situation in mid-October 2023, the secretariat had prepared an updated version of the criteria for the consideration of the Bureau.

72. The Chair also informed the Committee that the Committee’s Bureau, at its meeting on 31 October, had considered the revised and updated criteria and advised against their approval by the Committee.

73. The secretariat presented the Committee key findings in information paper No. 8 “Countries eligible for financial support to participate in meetings and events”.

74. The Committee:

(a) Decided that the document “Countries eligible for financial support to participate in meetings and events”, approved at its twenty-seventh session, should remain in force for another year;

⁸ ECE/CEP/2021/2, para. 63.

⁹ Available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/CEP-27_EligibilityCriteria_IP.8.e.pdf.

(b) Requested the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to prepare a document:

(i) Reviewing the effectiveness of the present mechanism for providing financial support for participating in meeting and events adopted by the Committee on Environmental Policy in 2013;

(ii) Reviewing also possible adjustments to the current mechanism, for example, by taking into account inflation index;

(iii) Reviewing further possible alternatives that could be considered instead of the current mechanism and providing recommendations to the Committee at its next regular session;

(c) Recommended that all the countries consider including the cost of participation of their delegates to the Committee and other relevant meetings in their national budgets, as the decision of the Committee next year might affect their eligibility for financial support for participation in meetings and events.

XIII. Calendar of meetings

75. The Chair recalled that, at its twenty-seventh session, the Committee had approved the proposed schedule of Committee and Bureau meetings until 2024.¹⁰ She informed the Committee that the proposed schedule of meetings of the Committee and its Bureau for the period 2024–2026 was presented in information paper No. 6.

76. The Committee:

(a) Approved the proposed schedule of Committee and Bureau meetings for the period 2024–2026 (information paper No. 6);

(b) Welcomed, and agreed to, the proposal of Portugal to host the Bureau meeting on 4–5 June 2024 in Lisbon;

(c) Decided to organize the Committee's twenty-ninth session in Geneva, from 6 to 8 November 2024.¹¹

XIV. Election of officers

77. The Chair informed the Committee of the following changes in the Bureau membership:

- On 10 October 2023, the secretariat was informed that the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection of Germany had decided to designate Ms. Léa Bigot (Policy Officer of the Ministry), to the Bureau instead of Mr. Michael Bass, who had retired.
- On 3 October 2023 the secretariat was informed that the Ministry of Climate of Estonia had decided to designate Ms. Marina Bantsenko (Adviser, International Affairs Department) to the Bureau instead of Mr. Kaupo Heinma.

78. Furthermore, the Chair informed the Committee that, based on the recent replacements and new nominations received, the secretariat had prepared information paper No. 7 presenting the list of candidates for the Bureau to be elected by the Committee.

79. The Committee:

(a) Decided to elect the following Bureau of the Committee:

1. Ms. Elisabete Quintas Da Silva (Portugal) – Chair

¹⁰ ECE/CEP/2021/2, para. 72.

¹¹ The session will take place on 6 and 7 November (morning and afternoon) and 8 November (morning).

2. Ms. Bantsenko (Estonia) - Vice-Chair
3. Ms. Bigot (Germany) - Vice-Chair
4. Ms. Alessandra Fianza (Italy) - Vice-Chair
5. Ms. Maria Nagornii (Republic of Moldova) - Vice-Chair
6. Ms. Martine Rohn-Brossard (Switzerland) - Vice-Chair
7. Mr. Jakhongir Talipov (Uzbekistan) - Vice-Chair
8. Ms. Nino Tkhilava (Georgia) - Vice-Chair

(b) Expressed appreciation to the outgoing members of the Bureau, Mr. Bass and Mr. Heinma, for their work.

XV. Other business

XVI. List of decisions

80. Supported by the secretariat, the Chair compiled and presented a summary of the outcomes of the twenty-eighth session and the decisions taken. Following a discussion, the draft list was finalized and approved.

XVII. Closure of the meeting

81. The Committee requested the Bureau and the secretariat to follow up on the Committee's decisions, including by preparing the documents and reports necessary for the Committee's work at its next session.

82. The Committee expressed appreciation for the work of the interpreters in servicing the current meeting.

83. The Committee expressed sincere appreciation for the work of the ECE secretariat.

84. The Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.
