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Committee on Environmental Policy

Twenty-ninth session

Geneva, 6–8 November 2024

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Outcomes of the work of the Bureau

Outcomes of the work of the Bureau for the period January–June 2024

Report by the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy

Summary

At its twenty-eighth session (Geneva, 1–3 November 2023), the Committee on Environmental Policy requested its 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 in November 2024. The present document outlines the outcomes of the Bureau's work during the period January–June 2024, with a view to supporting the Committee's work at its twenty-ninth session (Geneva, 6–8 November 2024).

Introduction

1. At its twenty-eighth session (Geneva, 1–3 November 2023), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy agreed to hold its next regular session in Geneva, on 6–8 November 2024, and 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.¹
2. During the intersessional period, the Bureau worked by means of electronic consultations and met in-person in Lisbon, on 4 June 2024.
3. The Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy comprises the Chair, from Portugal, and Vice-Chairs, from Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Italy, the Republic of Moldova, Switzerland and Uzbekistan.

I. Provisional annotated agenda for the Committee’s twenty-ninth session

4. During its meeting in June 2024, the Bureau considered for approval the draft provisional annotated agenda for the Committee’s twenty-ninth session (ECE/CEP/2024/1) and the provisional time schedule for the meeting (information paper No.1) with the amendments made at the meeting.
5. The Bureau asked the secretariat to:
 - (a) Add an agenda item on multilateral environmental agreements serviced by the Environment subprogramme on the first day of the meeting by decreasing time allocated to agenda items 5 and 11. Under the new agenda item, chairs/vice-chairs/secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements will be invited to brief the Committee on recent (since the last Committee on Environmental Policy session in November 2023) achievements under the respective agreement. Interactive online tools could be used to put questions to the meeting participants under this agenda item;
 - (b) Explore possibilities to organize an informal meeting with the chairs/vice-chairs of multilateral environmental agreements and the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy back-to-back with the twenty-ninth session of the Committee in November 2024.

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

6. At its meeting in Lisbon, the Bureau discussed the time frame for the preparation and the outline of a document on implementation of a regionwide approach to sustainable infrastructure in the pan-European region and agreed on the following:
 - (a) The secretariat will prepare the draft outline based on the suggestions made by the Bureau members at its Lisbon meeting, and circulate it to the Bureau for further comments/revisions;
 - (b) Based on the feedback from the Bureau and in cooperation with partners (United Nations Environment Programme, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) the secretariat will finalize the outline and submit it as an information paper to be discussed by the Committee at its twenty-ninth session;
 - (c) Based on the outcomes of the Committee’s session, the secretariat will instruct a consultant to draft a paper, which will eventually be submitted as an official document to the Committee’s thirtieth session (Geneva, 26–28 November 2025).

¹ See ECE/CEP/2023/2, paras. 76 (c) and 81.

7. The Bureau suggested inviting the United Nations Environment Programme to organize a side event on sustainable infrastructure during the lunch break on the first day of the twenty-ninth session of the Committee.

8. The Bureau also discussed draft document ECE/CEP/2024/6 on the scope, format and modalities for organizing the mid-term review and agreed to:

(a) Organize the mid-term review in the format of the high-level segment on the first day of the thirtieth session of the Committee (26 November 2025);

(b) Include the environmental assessment of Ukraine as a separate topic of the review;

(c) Ask the secretariat to finalize document ECE/CEP/2024/6 based on the comments received at the Bureau meeting and submit it as an official document of the twenty-ninth session of the Committee.

III. Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting

9. At its twenty-eighth session, the Committee endorsed the new mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment for the period 2024–2028 and decided to extend the mandate and terms of reference of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators until end-2025.²

10. The Committee also 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 2024.³

11. During its meeting in June 2024, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the outcomes of the twenty-sixth session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (Geneva, 18–19 April 2024) and on the follow-up to the Committee’s decision to defer its decision on converting the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators into a Joint Working Group on Environmental Statistics and Indicators until the next regular session of the Committee in November 2024.

12. The Bureau expressed its willingness to enhance cooperation with the Conference of European Statisticians and suggested organizing an informal meeting between the two chairs to discuss the issue of the Joint Task Force and agree on the next steps as needed.

13. The Bureau also suggested inviting the Chair of the Conference of European Statisticians to participate in the twenty-ninth session of the Committee, in order to facilitate discussions on the proposal made to convert the Joint Task Force into a standing body.

IV. Strategic foresight

14. At its twenty-eighth session, the Committee 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.⁴

15. At its meeting in Lisbon, the Bureau welcomed the information provided by the secretariat and Cranfield University (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) on the project “Shaping environmental policy in the pan-European region through applying foresight methodologies” and agreed to:

(a) Hold an online capacity-building workshop to gain familiarity with horizon scanning and sensemaking activities in the course of October 2024;

² ECE/CEP/2023/2, paras. 35 (b) and 43 (b).

³ Ibid., 43 (a).

⁴ Ibid., para. 17 (c).

(b) Also hold an in-person sensemaking workshop back-to-back with the twenty-ninth session of the Committee and to schedule it for the afternoon of 5 November 2024 (2–6 p.m.).

V. Annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2025 and outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2026

16. During its meeting in June 2024, the Bureau took note of the draft annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2025 (ECE/CEP/2024/5) and agreed to submit it as an official document of the twenty-ninth session of the Committee with no further revision.

17. The Bureau also took note of the outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2026 and agreed to submit it as an information document of the twenty-ninth session of the Committee with no revision.

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

18. At its twenty-eighth session in November 2023, the Committee:

(a) Decided that the document “Countries eligible for financial support to participate in meetings and events”,⁵ approved at its twenty-seventh session, should remain in force for another year;

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

(i) Reviewing the effectiveness of the current 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 the 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.⁶

19. During its meeting in June 2024, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the matter and, after discussing possible options, expressed its view that, at this stage, the option of indexing the thresholds by inflation rate should be prioritized when drafting information paper No. 9 on countries eligible for financial support to participate in meetings and events. The Bureau decided to discuss the draft paper at the additional meeting of the Bureau to be held in September–October 2024 (format and dates to be decided).

VII. Calendar of meetings

20. During its meeting in June 2024, the Bureau took note of the information paper containing a proposed schedule of meetings of the Committee on Environmental Policy and its Bureau for the period 2025–2027 and agreed to submit it as an information document of the twenty-ninth session of the Committee with the amendments made at the meeting (to tentatively schedule the Tenth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference for 6–8 October 2027).

⁵ Available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/CEP-27_EligibilityCriteria_IP.8.e.pdf.

⁶ ECE/CEP/2023/2, para. 74 (a)–(b).

VIII. Election of officers

21. During its meeting in June 2024, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat and agreed on the following steps:

(a) The secretariat would circulate a message asking the current Bureau members if they wished to put forward their candidatures for the Committee on Environmental Policy Bureau elections at the upcoming session of the Committee in November 2024;

(b) Based on the replies of the Bureau members, the secretariat would prepare a draft information paper listing those Bureau members who had expressed interest in continuing to serve in the Committee on Environmental Policy Bureau in 2025 and would circulate the paper to the Committee members;

(c) Based on the replies of the Committee members, if any, the paper would be finalized and submitted to the Committee for consideration at the forthcoming session in November 2024.

IX. Other business

22. During its meeting in June 2024, the Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the preparations for the seventy-first session of the Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva, 9–10 April 2025).
