

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
134th Meeting
Geneva, 1 July 2024

EXCOM/CONCLU/134/Rev.1

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda

1. The Chair proposed to adopt the provisional draft agenda, as contained in document ECE/EX/2024/3, with an amendment requested by Germany, namely to include an additional agenda item in the formal segment as item 2bis, entitled “Gender Mainstreaming for Trade”. This would include consideration of the extrabudgetary project contained in document ECE/EX/2024/L.7, entitled “Decision relating to the Enabling inclusivity by gender mainstreaming the quality infrastructure for trade”. He stated that Germany had also requested that the secretariat provide a briefing on gender mainstreaming for trade.
2. The representative of the European Union and its member States supported the proposed amendment.
3. The representative of the Russian Federation opposed the amendment and emphasized that the Russian Federation is committed to the established practice of approving extrabudgetary projects in the informal segment on the basis of consensus. Tabling the project in question in the formal segment ran counter to traditional practice and was only being done to push its approval through via a vote without due discussion. He rejected such methods of working.
4. The representative of Germany explained that Germany had requested the briefing by the secretariat as this was an important topic where UNECE could support progress by its member States towards Sustainable Development Goal 5.
5. The representative of the United States supported the amendment and proposed a vote on the adoption of the amended agenda should consensus not be found.
6. The representative of Belarus opposed the amendment, noting that it was designed to force the approval of a specific extrabudgetary project of the Western bloc of the UNECE member States while this same Western bloc was blocking other extrabudgetary projects because they are sponsored by countries which the West does not like.
7. The representative of Hungary, on behalf of the member States of the European Union, proposed to vote on the adoption of the amended agenda.
8. The result of the vote was 30 votes in favour, 2 votes against and 2 abstentions.
9. The agenda was adopted, as amended.

Item 2 – Chair’s conclusions from the last meeting

10. The conclusions from the 133rd meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/133) were

adopted.

Item 2bis - Gender Mainstreaming for Trade

11. The secretariat provided a briefing on the work of UNECE on mainstreaming gender under the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6).
12. The representative of Germany said that the extrabudgetary project under consideration would build on the previous cooperation between Germany and UNECE on gender-responsive standards. Such standards can facilitate international trade by ensuring that products meet diverse needs across different markets, thus enhancing global competitiveness, broadening the customer base and helping to fulfill international regulatory requirements. The project would broaden the scope beyond the development of standards to include other institutions of quality infrastructure such as metrology or conformity assessments institutions. The International Standardization Organization had agreed to participate in the coordination and roll out of this project on a self-funded basis. Germany called on all member States to adopt the project.
13. The representative of the Russian Federation did not support the draft decision contained in E/ECE/2024/L.7, reiterating his objection to the tabling of this extrabudgetary project, which did not enjoy the support of all member States, in the formal segment. He recalled that the European Union and its member States had blocked technical cooperation projects funded by the Russian Federation for political reasons at the 123rd and 129th meetings of EXCOM. As long as the European Union and its member States used project activities as a political weapon in UNECE, the Russian Federation could not accept the approval of the projects they funded.
14. The representatives of Albania and Georgia supported the draft decision.
15. The representative of Belarus did not support the draft decision, for the reasons explained earlier at the meeting.
16. The representative of the United States supported the project and requested a vote on the draft decision.
17. The result of the vote was 33 votes in favour and 2 votes against. The decision contained in document E/ECE/2024/L.7 was adopted.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 3 - Thirty-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action: regional process

18. The Chair recalled that the global thirty-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action would take place next year at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. Regional Commissions were invited to undertake regional reviews in preparation for this global exercise. Such a regional review meeting for the UNECE region was proposed to be held in Geneva on 21-22 October 2024. EXCOM had before it informal document 2024/15, as well as the draft meeting agenda, contained in informal

document 2024/16 for consideration and adoption. He thanked delegations who had engaged in informal consultations on the issue. He also invited member States to consider contributing extrabudgetary funds for the organization of the meeting, notably to support the travel of participants, given that constraints on virtual participation that could impair inclusive regional representation from across the UNECE region.

19. The Chair concluded that EXCOM decides to hold a Regional Review Meeting for Beijing+30, in line with ECOSOC resolution E/RES/2022/5, on 21 – 22 October 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland, and in accordance with its respective mandates, subject to availability of resources. EXCOM requests the secretariat to submit an extrabudgetary proposal for approval by EXCOM at its 135th meeting in September 2024, and to regularly update EXCOM on the preparations for the Regional Review Meeting. EXCOM approves the provisional agenda for the Beijing +30 Regional Review Meeting entitled “Reviewing 30 years of Beijing Commitments to Accelerate Gender Equality in the ECE Region”, as contained in document ECE/AC.28/2024/1.

Item 4 - Preparations for the seventy-first session of the Economic Commission for Europe

20. The Chair invited EXCOM to adopt the draft decision contained in informal document 2024/17, which proposed “Climate action and resilient infrastructure for a sustainable future” as the cross-cutting theme for the high-level segment of the seventy-first session of UNECE to be held on 9 - 10 April 2025. He thanked delegations who had participated in the formulation of this proposal.
21. The Chair concluded that EXCOM adopts the draft decision on a cross-cutting theme for the high-level segment of the seventy-first session of the Economic Commission for Europe as contained in informal document 2024/17.
22. The Executive Secretary expressed appreciation for the designated theme, as infrastructure could make a significant contribution to climate action and sustainable development in the UNECE region. She said she would now approach the chairs of the UNECE sectoral committees and the entities reporting directly to EXCOM, to encourage their engagement in the preparations, and looked forward to deepening work on the theme in the lead up to the session in April 2025.

With regard to agenda item 3, the Executive Secretary expressed appreciation for the decision taken by member States to hold a Regional Review Meeting on Beijing+30. She said that the secretariat was working on the preparations and stood ready to further discuss the programme planning in informal consultations in the coming weeks.

Item 5 – Annual report on technical cooperation activities 2023

23. The Executive Secretary presented the 2023 Annual Report on Technical Cooperation Activities to EXCOM for its information. Overall extrabudgetary contributions had increased by about 42 per cent per cent in 2022 to USD 7.6 million, with 63 per cent being provided by member States. She invited member States to continue supporting UNECE by providing additional resources for its mandated activities.
24. The representative of the Russian Federation noted the significant contribution of UNECE projects to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the region.

The Russian Federation financed technical assistance projects in such important areas as railway transportation, car-sharing development, decarbonization of transport, statistics, promotion of innovation, renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and trade facilitation, and provided support to the UN Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). He noted with regret the politicization of the work of the UNECE in the field of technical assistance. Politically motivated anti-Russian decisions taken by the EXCOM in violation of the Rules of Procedure and Terms of Reference of the UNECE had forced the Russian Federation to suspend funding for many popular projects that had been successfully implemented for many years. The European Union, a number of its member States and Ukraine were responsible for the destruction of mutually beneficial ties and economic progress in the region. He hoped these countries would stop preventing beneficiary countries from receiving high-quality expert support from UNECE.

25. The representative of the European Union and its member States appreciated the significant increase in extrabudgetary contributions, particularly those coming from member States, in 2023. He noted that the contribution of the European Union had remained high. This was proof of the importance that the European Union and its member States attached to the technical cooperation work carried out by UNECE.
26. The Secretary of the Commission informed EXCOM that one of the annexes of this report, containing the Resource Mobilization Action Plans for 2023-2025, had inadvertently not been included in the document. An addendum would be uploaded on the EXCOM meeting website.
27. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note with appreciation of the annual report on technical cooperation activities 2023 as contained in informal document 2024/18.

Item 6 – Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

28. The representative of the Russian Federation opposed adoption of the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2024/22, for the same reasons as those he had outlined earlier in the meeting.
29. The representative of the European Union and its member States supported the project and took note of the intervention by the representative of the Russian Federation. He said EXCOM had witnessed on multiple occasions over the past two years obstructive behaviour by the Russian Federation on the topic of extrabudgetary projects. In all of these cases, there had been overwhelming support among the EXCOM membership for the projects in question and the Russian Federation had been the only one objecting to their approval, often for unclear reasons. The European Union and its member States therefore called on the EXCOM Bureau and the Secretariat to organize informal consultations about potential procedural adjustments to the working methods for approving extrabudgetary projects in UNECE.
30. The representative of the United States supported the points made by the representative of the European Union and its member States.
31. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary projects contained in informal documents 2024/19, 2024/20 and 2024/21. The Bureau would discuss the points made by the representative of the European Union and its member States with a view to

holding informal consultations among member States.

Item 7 - Briefing by the Executive Secretary: Important new developments and key upcoming events.

32. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the 64th session of Committee for Programme and Coordination in June 2024 had not reached consensus on the UNECE proposed programme budget for 2025, which would therefore not be recommended for approval by the General Assembly. Consideration would be deferred to the Second Committee of the General Assembly in the fall of 2024. She further informed EXCOM that the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) had heard with interest the presentation of the UNECE proposed programme budget for 2025 and the review of UNECE staffing tables justifying the continuing need for each UNECE staff position. The ACABQ report was expected in mid-September.
33. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that she would discuss in the coming week with the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management the concerns of the UNECE Secretariat regarding the termination of hybrid meeting services in Geneva and the impact this has on the work of the organization. She would also highlight the matter in bilateral meetings with representatives of UNECE member States in New York during the High-level Political Forum. She strongly encouraged delegations to continue taking an active part in discussions on this matter, including in New York, and highlighted that International Geneva needs modern conference servicing to complement the traditional collaboration formats of multilateral diplomacy.
34. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about a Memorandum of Understanding under preparation with the Organization for Cooperation Between Railways (OSJD). This would target joint projects on rail corridors, rail safety and international rail law, and help achieve an appropriate balance between the strengths of the two rail systems prevalent in the region. The work remained fully in line with the railway-related mandates of the Transport subprogramme and the activities of the UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport.
35. The Executive Secretary recalled that information on all UNECE meetings could be found on the UNECE website at <https://unece.org/info/events/unece-meetings-and-events>. She proceeded to inform EXCOM of the following recent meetings and missions:
 - **2-3 May, Tashkent:** 3rd Tashkent International Investment Forum
 - **8-10 May, Istanbul:** 8th UNECE PPP Forum
 - **22-23 May, Leipzig:** International Transport Forum 2024
 - **3-5 June, Kyiv:** Official visit of the Executive Secretary to Ukraine
 - **10-12 June, Berlin:** Ukraine Recovery Conference
 - **10 – 13 June, Dushanbe:** 3rd High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018-2028.
 - **18 June, Vilnius:** International Anti-Corruption Conference (representing the Secretary-General)
 - **27-28 June, Limassol:** UNECE Forum on ESD: Empowering Youth for Sustainable Futures – Entrepreneurship Education and Youth Engagement and

MED-9 High-Level Forum on Education for Sustainable Development and Green Transition in the Mediterranean Region.

36. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming meetings:

- **9-16 July, New York:** High-level Political Forum
- **22-23 September, New York:** Summit of the Future
- **30 September – 1 October, Geneva:** Fourth Forum of Mayors
- **21-22 October, Geneva:** Beijing+30 Regional Review Meeting
- **23-25 October, Ljubljana:** 10th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention

37. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that discussions were in progress with the UN Office in Geneva concerning a possible move by UNECE staff back to building S of the Palais des Nations by the end of 2024.

Item 8 – Any other business

38. The Chair informed EXCOM that its next meeting would take place on 9 September 2024 in the morning.
