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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Follow-up to the Ninth Environment for Europe

Ministerial Conference and preparation of the
mid-term review of the Conference's main outcomes

Organizing the mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At its twenty-eighth session (Geneva, 1–3 November 2023), the Committee on Environmental Policy requested the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to prepare a document proposing the scope, format and modalities for organizing a mid-term review of the main outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022). The Committee asked that the document be ready for its consideration at its next session.

Following up on that request, the present document proposes the scope, format and modalities for organizing the mid-term review. The document reflects comments made by the Bureau.

The Committee is invited to consider the present document with a view to the prospective approval of the proposed organization of the mid-term review in 2025 that will guide the preparation process.

I. Introduction

1. The 2009 Reform Plan of the Environment for Europe process stipulates that a mid-term review should be convened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy to assess progress in the implementation of the outcomes of each of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conferences and provide renewed impetus to the process. The review should be based on existing information and the its findings should be taken into account in the preparatory process for the next conference.¹
2. At the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022), ministers 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.²
3. In response, at its twenty-eighth session (Geneva, 1–3 November 2023), the Committee on Environmental Policy requested the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to prepare a document proposing the scope, format and modalities for organizing the mid-term review for consideration by the Committee at its next session.³
4. Following up on the above-mentioned decisions and requests, the present document proposes the scope, format and modalities for organizing the Nicosia mid-term review. Annexes I and II contain the provisional outline of the agenda of the mid-term review and the template for preparing reports, respectively. The document reflects comments made by the Bureau.
5. The Committee is invited to consider the present document with a view to agreeing on the organization of the Nicosia mid-term review in 2025, which will guide the preparation process for that review.

II. Overview of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

6. The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference addressed two main themes: (a) greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure; and (b) applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism.
7. The Nicosia Conference resulted in a number of outcomes related to its two main themes. The Conference outcomes are included in the Ministerial Declaration (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.1), the Co-Chairs' summary of the Conference (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.3) and the report of the Conference (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2). The results of the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries are reflected in the Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development and in the Co-Chairs' summary of the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.2 and ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.4, respectively).
8. On the margins of the Conference, ECE and the Environment for Europe partners organized some 40 side events on issues related to the themes of the Conference. An exhibition space housing the stands of several organizations and partners was also organized. The Nicosia Conference was attended by official delegations from 42 ECE member States and 10 non-ECE member States. The Conference gathered some 900 participants from Governments, the international community, civil society, business and the media, representing 63 countries.
9. The ECE Committee on Environmental Policy prepared the Conference. The ECE secretariat, in cooperation with the Environment for Europe partners, supported the work of the Committee. The Government of Cyprus supported the preparation, organization and

¹ ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, para. 17.

² ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.1, para. 23.

³ ECE/CEP/2023/2, para. 28.

hosting of the Conference in accordance with decisions taken by the Committee. The preparatory process and the Conference were organized based on the provisions of the Environment for Europe Reform Plan adopted in 2009 (ECE/CEP/S/152 and Corr.1, annex I), and in accordance with the procedures for the Nicosia Ministerial Conference adopted by the Committee in 2019 (ECE/CEP/2019/19).

10. The preparatory process for the Nicosia Conference commenced in 2019. Due to the restrictions brought in owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, in 2020 the Committee decided to hold the Conference in 2022 (instead of 2021, as originally decided).⁴ Therefore, the preparations included the twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh sessions of the Committee (Geneva, respectively 13–15 November 2019, 9–10 November 2020 and 3–5 November 2021) and two special sessions (Geneva, 9–12 May and 3–4 October 2022).

III. Scope of the mid-term review

11. The Reform Plan of the Environment for Europe process stipulates that particular efforts should be made by all relevant responsible actors to implement the outcomes of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conferences. Member States should regularly consider how to promote the objectives and priorities of the Environment for Europe process and strengthen implementation of the outcomes of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conferences, including through national policies and relevant partnerships. Active participation by and input from all interested countries of ECE, and in particular from interested countries of subregions with specific needs in improving their environmental situation, is crucial for the success of the activities under the Environment for Europe process.⁵

12. In accordance with the Ministerial Declaration, the mid-term review of the Nicosia Conference main outcomes will focus on reviewing progress achieved in the following clusters of topics:

- (a) Assessing the environmental consequences of the military aggression against Ukraine;
- (b) Advancing environmental governance and performance;
- (c) Promoting sustainable infrastructure;
- (d) Stimulating sustainable tourism;
- (e) Furthering regional initiatives and partnerships towards a better environment.

13. With regard to the above, the Committee, at its twenty-ninth session, may wish to consider taking specific actions to prepare background documents (short mid-term reports) for the mid-term review in 2025, in accordance with the template provided in annex II to the present document, on topics set out in sections A–E below.

A. Assessing the environmental consequences of the military aggression against Ukraine

14. Among areas for follow-up, in Nicosia, ministers recognized the need to assess the environmental consequences of the military aggression against Ukraine for both the country and the surrounding region, and invited the ECE secretariat, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and others, to prioritize assessing the most urgent environmental needs in Ukraine based on the methodology of the ECE Environmental Performance Review

⁴ ECE/CEP/2020/2, para. 19 (a).

⁵ ECE/CEP/S/152, annex I, paras. 15–16 and 18.

Programme and on the results of ongoing and planned impacts assessments, and to make recommendations to advance a sustainable recovery of the country.⁶

15. The Committee could invite the secretariat, together with UNEP, OECD and other relevant partners, to prepare a mid-term review report to assess progress achieved in assessing the environmental consequences of the military aggression against Ukraine.

B. Advancing environmental governance and performance

16. At the Nicosia Conference, ministers invited countries to continue their efforts to implement all pillars of the Shared Environmental Information System, and to address any remaining gaps.⁷

17. Ministers in Nicosia acknowledged the importance of regular, indicator-based environmental assessments and recognized the crucial importance of having access to diverse information sources and reliable, up-to-date, quality data and statistics.⁸

18. Furthermore, ministers endorsed the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews, invited ECE to conduct it, and encouraged countries to benefit from the Environmental Performance Review Programme by undertaking further reviews and considering elaborating road maps to implement recommendations.⁹

19. The Committee could invite the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to prepare a mid-term review report to assess progress achieved in implementing all pillars of the Shared Environmental Information System.

20. The Committee could also invite the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews to prepare a mid-term review report to assess progress achieved in implementing the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews.

C. Promoting sustainable infrastructure

21. Ministers in Nicosia recognized the important role that sustainable infrastructure plays in the green economy transition and underlined that 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.¹⁰

22. Ministers also welcomed the positive progress in the implementation of the voluntary commitments of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy and called upon the countries and other stakeholders to continue reporting on the existing voluntary commitments under the Batumi Initiative and consider taking on new commitments, including in the areas of sustainable infrastructure and sustainable tourism.¹¹

23. The Committee could invite stakeholders to report on the progress achieved in the implementation of their commitments in the area of sustainable infrastructure on the basis of a template prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee. On the basis of such reports, to be submitted by 31 May 2025, the secretariat, jointly with UNEP and OECD and with support from a consultant, would prepare a mid-term review report.

D. Stimulating sustainable tourism

24. At the Nicosia Conference, ministers recognized that applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism is critical for building back better the tourism sector. The

⁶ ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.1, para. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 19.

⁸ *Ibid.*, paras. 15–16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, paras. 8–9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 12.

Ministers supported efforts to reduce water and energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from tourism and committed to improving wastewater treatment and waste management in the tourism sector, and to applying circular economy principles across the tourism value chain.¹²

25. Ministers in Nicosia acknowledged the urgent need to establish a resource-oriented, pan-European e-waste management partnership and select key impact tourism indicators to be included in ECE statistical databases.¹³

26. The Committee could invite stakeholders to report on the progress achieved in the implementation of their commitments in the area of sustainable tourism on the basis of a template prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee. On the basis of such reports, to be submitted by 31 May 2025, the secretariat, jointly with UNEP, the World Tourism Organization and OECD and with support from a consultant, would prepare a mid-term review report.

E. Furthering regional initiatives and partnerships towards a better environment

27. Ministers in Nicosia welcomed the work of the GReen Economy and ENvironment Action Task Force and invited OECD to continue its activities in cooperation with relevant partners.¹⁴

28. Ministers welcomed the contribution of the European ECO-Forum to the “Environment for Europe” process and reaffirmed the essential role that civil society participation plays in enhancing decision-making to improve the environment and promote sustainable development.¹⁵

29. Ministers also acknowledged the role of regional initiatives in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the health and environment nexus and remained committed to cooperating with the World Health Organization and the health sector.¹⁶

30. Ministers in Nicosia invited Regional Environmental Centres to regularly report to the Committee on Environmental Policy on their activities.¹⁷

31. The Committee could invite the GReen Economy and ENvironment Action Task Force, the European ECO-Forum, the World Health Organization and Regional Environmental Centres to report on their relevant activities and the progress achieved in following up to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. On the basis of such reports, to be submitted by 31 May 2025, the secretariat would compile a mid-term review report.

IV. Format and modalities of the mid-term review

32. The mid-term review will be convened at the high-level segment in the framework of the thirtieth annual session of the Committee, scheduled to be held in Geneva from 26 to 28 November 2025. A tentative time schedule for the mid-term review segment is presented in annex I below.

33. Participation in the mid-term review would include high-level representatives of Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, along with representatives of business and other relevant stakeholders.

34. The mid-term review could be organized in the form of plenary sessions, multi-stakeholder round table and panel discussions, or a mixture of formats, with a view to using

¹² Ibid., paras. 10–11.

¹³ Ibid., para. 16, seventh and tenth bullets.

¹⁴ Ibid., para. 20.

¹⁵ Ibid., para. 22.

¹⁶ Ibid., para. 21.

¹⁷ Ibid., para. 21.

the available time in the most efficient manner and at the same time to ensuring the interactivity necessary for constructive and comprehensive discussions.

35. The Committee may wish to entrust the secretariat, in consultation with the Committee's Bureau and in cooperation with relevant Environment for Europe partners, to proceed with preparations for the mid-term review in line with the above proposals.

Annex I**Tentative schedule for the mid-term review**

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Proposed agenda item (format)</i>	<i>Timing</i>
Wednesday, 26 November 2025		
1	Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda (<i>plenary session</i>)	10–10.15 a.m.
5	Mid-term review (<i>plenary sessions and panel or round table discussions</i>)	10.15 a.m.–6 p.m.
5 (a)	Assessing the environmental consequences of the military aggression against Ukraine	10.15–11.15 a.m.
	<i>Coffee break</i>	11.15–11.35 a.m.
5 (b)	Advancing environmental governance and performance	11.35 a.m.–1 p.m.
	<i>Lunch break</i>	1–3 p.m.
5 (c)	Promoting sustainable infrastructure	3–3.50 p.m.
5 (d)	Stimulating sustainable tourism	3.50–4.40 p.m.
	<i>Coffee break</i>	4.40–5 p.m.
5 (e)	Furthering regional initiatives and partnerships towards a better environment	5–6 p.m.

Annex II

Proposed template for preparing reports for the mid-term review

1. Title of the report.
2. Overview of main achievements and, as appropriate, key findings or key messages (up to three pages in length).
3. Lessons learned and challenges (up to one page in length).
4. Further steps (up to one page in length).
5. Fact sheets on key findings or key messages, including their quantitative representation through graphs and pie charts to ensure a user-friendly and interactive presentation of the mid-term review reports (up to three pages in length).

The mid-term report should be up to 4,500 words (up to eight pages) in length, font Times New Roman, size 10.
