



Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Environmental Policy****Working Group on Environmental
Monitoring and Assessment****Twenty-sixth session**

Geneva, 18 and 19 April 2024

**Report of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring
and Assessment on its twenty-sixth session****I. Introduction****A. Background**

1. The Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) approved,¹ during its 132nd meeting (Geneva, 13 February 2024), the mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment for the period 2024–2028, as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1.

2. The mandate of the Working Group states that it should: support the development of environmental monitoring and information systems in Europe and Central Asia, and their alignment with the Shared Environmental Information System and open data principles and pillars, including on the monitoring and measuring of emerging themes such as sustainable infrastructure and tourism and circular economy, as well as green economy; help to address the gaps identified in the seventh pan-European environmental assessment and support the development of regular pan-European environmental assessments and regular national state-of-the-environment reporting; provide an inclusive platform for ECE member States, partner organizations and other institutions and networks with relevant expertise in the area to discuss advances in the area of environmental monitoring and assessment (e.g., technological progress, legislative and policy developments or governance), and the integration of environmental, economic and social information and data; enable the development of capacity to tackle specific challenges in environmental monitoring and assessment; and strengthen partnerships and mobilize people and resources to create, analyse and use knowledge to inform policymaking across the pan-European region.²

¹ See Decisions related to the Environment subprogramme (ECE/EX/2024/L.2), para. 6 (b). Available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/ECE_EX_2024_L.2_E.pdf.

² ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1, para. 9 (a)–(e).



3. The twenty-sixth session of the Working Group was held on 18–19 April 2024 in Geneva.³ Web-streaming was enabled for participants who could not join in-person. The participation of experts from countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as the web-streaming, were financially supported by Austria, Switzerland and the European Union through the EU4Environment – Water Resources and Environmental Data programme.

B. Attendance

4. Environmental experts and statisticians from the following countries attended the meeting in-person: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

5. Representatives of the European Union, the European Environment Agency, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme and the Group on Earth Observations also participated in the meeting.

6. Furthermore, a representative of Spain gave a presentation remotely.

7. The session was also broadcast through an online video platform to allow others to follow the discussions. Representatives of Liechtenstein, Paraguay, Tunisia, Türkiye, the European Investment Bank and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia followed the meeting online, including the Centre International de Droit Comparé de l'Environnement, Cœur d'Afrique - Fondation Roger Milla, the Ecoforum of NGOs of Uzbekistan, the Association pour la sauvegarde de l'environnement et le développement durable, the Clean Climate and Environment Campaign Initiative, Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University (Ukraine), Colorado State University (United States of America) and Saint Petersburg State University (Russian Federation).

C. Procedural matters

8. The meeting was opened by the Chair of the Working Group, Ms. Maia Javakhishvili (Georgia).

II. Adoption of the agenda

9. The Chair provided an overview of the agenda of the Working Group as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/1 and asked the Working Group for comments.

10. The representatives of Ukraine and then of the Russian Federation made statements (available on session web page).

Working Group decisions and recommendations

11. The Working Group adopted the agenda as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/1.

III. Adoption of the report of the twenty-fifth session

12. The secretariat summarized the outcomes of the twenty-fifth session of the Working Group (Geneva, 2–3 May 2023), as contained in the report of that session

³ Meeting documents and other information, including informal documents, presentations and statements, are available on the session web page at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/twenty-sixth-session-working-group-environmental-monitoring-and>.

(ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2) and informed the Working Group of the status of implementation of the decisions and recommendations made at the twenty-fifth session. The secretariat asked the Working Group for comments.

13. The Chair invited the Working Group to adopt the report.

Working Group decisions and recommendations

14. The Working Group adopted the report of the twenty-fifth session of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2.

IV. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference

15. The secretariat reported on relevant decisions made by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-eighth session (Geneva, 1–3 November 2023) and informed the Working Group about activities to support relevant outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022).

16. The Chair suggested that the Working Group's activities might contribute to the mid-term review on the outcomes of the Nicosia Ministerial Conference to be conducted in 2025 by the Committee on Environmental Policy. She highlighted the progress reports on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System on the themes of air and of waste and circular economy and the results of strengthened reporting on the environment in the pan-European region.

17. The representative of Austria highlighted the importance of sound waste and e-waste management and the support of the United Nations in that field. He also emphasized that further improvements were needed, including related to the monitoring and sound management of end-of-life vehicles, considering the persistent challenges of applicable laws being bypassed, including in the European Union, and of the export of vehicles to other countries, for instance, in Africa. Interest was expressed in learning more about the activities of the ECE Sustainable Transport Division in that area. The representative of Austria confirmed the support of Environment Agency Austria for a regional training workshop on the production and use of waste and circular economy statistics and indicators, provisionally scheduled for 20–21 June 2024 in Vienna (hybrid).

18. The Chair then recalled that, during the previous session, in 2023, the Working Group had started a discussion on countries or organizations leading or co-leading specific programme activities or areas and that Austria and Georgia had expressed their interest in co-leading activities on air quality.⁴ The Chair also informed the Working Group about a presentation foreseen later in the current session, under the item on developments in environmental monitoring, on that topic. The Chair then renewed the invitation to countries and organizations to express to the secretariat their interest in leading or co-leading an activity or area, in writing by 30 June 2024.

19. A Vice-Chair of the Working Group then presented the draft annual timetable of activities for 2025 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/4), the preparation of which was required under the Working Group's terms of reference.⁵ A representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina suggested that, under programme area 1 on supporting the development of environmental monitoring and information systems, support for institutional strengthening and legislative improvement should be given high priority. Furthermore, under programme area 4 on engaging in capacity development assistance, the detailing of capacity gaps in environmental monitoring and assessment and especially in producing environmental indicators should be given high priority, given the challenges in assessing and defining indicators and problems

⁴ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2, paras. 23–24.

⁵ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1, para. 14.

at the national level. No other amendments were requested, and the Working Group was invited to approve the document.

20. A Vice-Chair of the Working Group then presented the Outline for the revised guidelines on environmental monitoring and reporting (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/3). The representative of the Netherlands emphasized that a statement to the effect that the guidelines aimed to inform the public and support research should be included in the publication and that, for the purposes of transparency, it would be important to describe well what was monitored and how. More detailed information on the timeline for the development of the revised guidelines was requested. One member of the Working Group proposed merging the topics of soil and land use in the publication, whereas other members emphasized the importance of maintaining a distinction between the two for monitoring purposes. The representative of Austria explained the differences between, and purposes of, monitoring of land use and cover and of soil. He also confirmed the relevance of including a chapter on the monitoring of contaminated sites and biomonitoring. The representative of North Macedonia confirmed her country's availability to contribute to the drafting of the chapters on monitoring of air and on environmental reporting and indicators, but also emphasized that North Macedonia would not be in a position to provide financial support. The representative of Italy pointed out that the dissemination of environmental information was an important topic, as were linkages to the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, disaster risk reduction and data integration. A representative of the European Environment Agency suggested introducing foresight work into the guidelines to help provide an outlook on the environment and confirmed the Agency's interest in seeing how that area of work could be strengthened. The representative of Georgia mentioned the importance of making efforts in reporting and transparency, also in view of compliance with her country's accession to the European Union.

21. The Chair thanked those who already confirmed their willingness to contribute and invited other countries and organizations to become part of the drafting group for the publication on environmental monitoring and reporting, or to contribute through other means. She invited countries to inform the secretariat about planned contributions by 31 May 2024. The Chair also informed the meeting that the secretariat would hire at least one consultant to support the work on the revision of the guidelines.

22. The Working Group was invited to approve the Outline for the revised guidelines on environmental monitoring and reporting, in anticipation of a publication being issued in 2024 or 2025, subject to the availability of resources.

23. The representative of the European Environment Agency presented recent developments at the Agency and the 2025 edition of the State and Outlook Report, which was also relevant for the implementation of the Working Group's mandate and terms of reference. The speaker informed the Working Group about the themes and sectors to be covered in the Report, and the results of monitoring of the sustainability transition that would be included. The Report would be published towards the end of 2025 as a digital product, based on the Agency's knowledge base and including data from 2024. The speaker also referred to many other knowledge products produced by the Agency between the editions of the State and Outlook Reports and stated that knowledge was considered as a service concept. He also highlighted the need for more flexibility and for the quicker production of necessary knowledge in support of decision-making. A representative of the Netherlands commented on the timeline for data provision and data updates. A representative of Austria informed the meeting about an ongoing exercise in the European Union Eastern Neighbourhood countries to produce the sustainability transition indicators being included in the upcoming State and Outlook Report; he also encouraged the collection and sharing of greenhouse gas emissions data by countries. Furthermore, he suggested that a pilot activity to produce the same sustainability transition indicators in countries of Central Asia could be launched with the help of the Working Group, also in support of the next pan-European environmental assessment.

Working Group decisions and recommendations

24. The Working Group:

- (a) Took note of the relevant decisions made by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-eighth session;
- (b) Confirmed its commitment to continue its support to the implementation of the outcomes of the Nicosia Conference, subject to the availability of resources;
- (c) Requested the secretariat to brief the Committee on Environmental Policy on the activities implemented to support the outcomes of the Nicosia Conference;
- (d) Proposed to contribute the following to the mid-term review of the Nicosia Conference to be conducted in 2025 by the Committee on Environmental Policy:
 - (i) The progress reports on the implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System on the themes of air and of waste and circular economy;
 - (ii) Findings on those themes from other activities of the Working Group;
 - (iii) Results from strengthening reporting on the environment in the pan-European region;
- (e) Requested the secretariat to continue to inform the Committee on Environmental Policy about the activities on environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting;
- (f) Welcomed the expression of interest by Environment Agency Austria in contributing to the regional training workshop on the production and use of waste and circular economy statistics and indicators, provisionally scheduled for 20–21 June 2024 in Vienna (hybrid);
- (g) Invited members of the Working Group to express to the secretariat their interest in leading or co-leading an activity or area in the timetable, in writing by 30 June 2024;
- (h) Adopted the timetable of activities for 2025 as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/4, as amended during the session;
- (i) Agreed on the outline of the revised guidelines on environmental monitoring and reporting, amended to incorporate changes proposed during the session;
- (j) Welcomed expressions of interest by the representatives of Austria, Georgia and North Macedonia to contribute to the drafting or review of the revised guidelines;
- (k) Requested the secretariat to provide further details on the timeline for development of the revised guidelines to the members of the Working Group by 6 May 2024;
- (l) Invited other members of the Working Group to express their interest in contributing to the drafting or review of the revised guidelines by 31 May 2024;
- (m) Requested the secretariat to inform the Committee on Environmental Policy of the outcomes of the agenda item.

V. Resource requirements

25. The secretariat provided information on the financial resources available to support the Working Group's meetings and its other activities. The secretariat highlighted the importance of members of the Working Group promoting the work of the Working Group and supporting fundraising efforts in order to enhance monitoring, assessment and knowledge development in the region.

Working Group decisions and recommendations

26. The Working Group:

(a) Took note of the limited financial resources available for the implementation of activities under the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme;

(b) Expressed appreciation to those countries and organizations currently supporting financially the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme – Austria, Switzerland and the European Union;

(c) Requested its members and the secretariat to continue their fundraising efforts to enable the full implementation of activities planned for the period 2024–2025, including the revision of the guidelines on environmental monitoring and reporting and the holding of the next sessions of the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators and the Working Group.

VI. Developments in environmental monitoring

27. In introducing the agenda item, the Chair emphasized the role of the Working Group as a knowledge-sharing platform. She noted various areas where there was a lack of sufficient monitoring and understanding, including on chemicals in the environment and their implications for human health. The Chair then invited the secretariat, representatives of international and regional organizations and member States to present the latest developments, good practices and initiatives related to environmental monitoring, including on the use of new technologies such as Earth observations.

28. A representative of UNEP then presented the Global Framework on Chemicals and its global monitoring. The five strategic objectives of the Framework were emphasized, including ensuring that legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms and capacities were in place and that comprehensive and sufficient knowledge, data and information were generated, available and accessible. The speaker then outlined relevant targets of the Framework, out of 28 targets in total, including targets B3 to generate data and B7 to make available comprehensive monitoring and surveillance data and information on concentrations and potential exposure sources of chemicals in humans, other biota and environmental media. The speaker also informed the Working Group about the establishment of an open-ended ad hoc group on measurability and indicators and called for cooperation and coordination. Representatives of Uzbekistan and of the secretariat emphasized the relevance of the work on chemicals and expressed their willingness to work and collaborate with UNEP on the topic. A representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted the need to coordinate and combine targets with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to simplify processes to identify and consider future needs and objectives.

29. A representative of the Group on Earth Observations presented the Group's work on the use of Earth observations and geospatial information to complement environmental monitoring. She presented several examples of Earth observations being used for monitoring, including for mapping deforestation and the monitoring of wildfires, Arctic sea ice decline and greenhouse gas emissions and fluxes. A representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina inquired about the Group's cooperation with national authorities and work on disaster risk reduction and early warning. The representative of the Group informed the meeting about ongoing cooperation with the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. A representative of Austria noted a lack of cooperation related to monitoring, data availability and information-sharing by providing the example of Cyprus, where reports and information often only covered the southern half of the country.

30. A representative of the Finnish Environment Institute then provided an update on developments regarding and uptake of novel environmental monitoring and quality assurance methods in Finland, including the use of Earth observations, cloud computing, machine learning and environmental deoxyribonucleic acid in monitoring.

31. The representatives of Austria and Georgia, as topic co-leads, provided an overview of developments and planned activities to enhance air quality monitoring, assessment and reporting in the region.

32. A representative of Montenegro stated that her country's air quality regulations had been updated thanks to a European Union funded-project that had helped to prepare for air quality control. The country was ready to move forward in that area but was waiting for the subregional air quality database currently being developed – named RAVEN – to be compatible with the national system. The representatives of Uzbekistan and of the Republic of Moldova also shared some recent developments at the national level. The representative of Austria invited the European Union and the European Environment Agency to ensure the availability and sharing of data across the pan-European region. A representative of Azerbaijan expressed interest in learning more from other countries about institutional set-ups at the national level, particularly relating to climate change monitoring responsibilities.

Working Group decisions and recommendations

33. The Working Group:

(a) Thanked the representatives of Austria, Finland, Georgia, UNEP and the Group on Earth Observations for sharing recent developments, including on the application of novel technologies in environmental monitoring;

(b) Confirmed its commitment to continue strengthening environmental monitoring in the region, including related to chemicals, subject to the availability of resources;

(c) Invited its members to regularly share information with other members on relevant developments in the area of monitoring;

(d) Recommended the extension, where feasible, of indicator-based reports, innovative information products and remotely sensed environmental data layers covering the member States of the European Union or the European Environment Agency to cover other countries of Europe and Central Asia.

VII. Developments relating to environmental information systems and reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System

34. The ECE secretariat presented an overview of the results and findings of the progress review of the environmental theme “air quality and air pollution” (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/5) based on the replies submitted by countries. The Working Group was then invited to discuss and approve the report.

35. Further to the decision of the Working Group at its twenty-fifth meeting to review the theme “waste and, as appropriate, circular economy” in 2024,⁶ an ECE consultant introduced the reporting template of the Shared Environmental Information System review of the theme “waste and circular economy”.

36. The progress review was intended to assess where the region stood with knowledge on waste and circular economy in order to derive the right measures to address gaps.

37. The Chair informed the meeting that the progress review would be supported by a regional training event on the revised ECE waste and selected circular economy indicators. The Working Group was also invited to decide on a theme for review in 2025.

38. The secretariat introduced the upcoming regional training event.

39. The secretariat then introduced next steps and the proposal for data submission for selected indicators eventually together with the questionnaire for the assessment of the Shared Environmental Information System.

⁶ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2, para. 51 (b).

40. The Chair recalled that, during its past sessions, the Working Group had agreed to review the theme waste and, as appropriate, circular economy in 2024, and that agreement was needed on the topics to be reviewed in 2025 and perhaps in 2026. The secretariat then introduced a poll on that topic and invited the Working Group members to share their opinion.

41. Representatives of member States and international and regional organizations then presented the latest developments and good practices related to environmental information systems.

42. A representative of Serbia provided an overview on pollutant release and transfer register implementation in Serbia and developments related to the synergistic implementation of the register and the Shared Environmental Information System. The representative of Austria highlighted the importance of public availability and accessibility of data and referred to the Austrian system, which allowed access to all data by the public, including by requesting comprehensive information from companies.

43. A representative of the Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research then presented the Italian Environmental Information System and the information it covered, including spatial information. He also provided an overview of the database of environmental indicators, environmental reporting in Italy and lessons learned.

44. Representatives of the Group on Earth Observations presented the Group's Global Ecosystems Atlas, Global Heat Resilience Service and activities under its Global Water Sustainability Initiative. They provided examples of how Earth observation and machine learning were used for supporting environmental monitoring and forecasting, such as of ecosystems, flood events or heatwaves. A representative of Montenegro expressed interest in cooperation and the services provided by the Group in support of the development of countries.

Working Group decisions and recommendations

45. The Working Group:

(a) Adopted the Shared Environmental Information System report on the review of the environmental theme "air quality and air pollution" as contained in document ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/5;

(b) Welcomed the use of the revised ECE environmental indicators by countries and in Shared Environmental Information System progress reviews;

(c) Took note of information provided on the upcoming Shared Environmental Information System review on waste and circular economy;

(d) Requested the secretariat to prepare, together with the Working Group, the Shared Environmental Information System review on waste and circular economy as an official document for the next session of the Working Group;

(e) Took note of information provided on the planned regional training workshop on waste and circular economy and encouraged its members to participate therein;

(f) Thanked the secretariat, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and Environment Agency Austria for organizing the planned training workshop and the European Union for its financial support;

(g) Suggested, tentatively, reviewing the environmental themes "biodiversity" in 2025 and "energy" in 2026 by using the Shared Environmental Information System assessment framework, while employing the revised ECE environmental indicators;

(h) Requested the secretariat to explore the possibility of organizing a regional training event on the revised indicators within the theme for 2025;

(i) Thanked the representatives of Serbia, Italy and the Group on Earth Observation for sharing developments in establishment and implementation of information systems at national and international level;

(j) Invited members of the Working Group and international organizations to continue sharing good practices related to information systems;

(k) Requested the secretariat to brief the Committee on Environmental Policy on the outcomes of the agenda item.

VIII. Regular pan-European environmental assessment and environmental reporting to strengthen environmental policy

46. The Chair introduced the agenda item and invited members of the Working Group to share examples of implemented and planned activities to support the implementation of the monitoring-, reporting- and assessment-related outcomes of the Nicosia Ministerial Conference and the seventh pan-European environmental assessment. She recalled that the secretariat had shared a summary of relevant outcomes of the Nicosia Ministerial Conference prior to the current meeting to help facilitate the discussion.

47. Representatives of several countries, including North Macedonia, Austria and Azerbaijan, reported and commented on national examples to support the Nicosia Ministerial Conference outcomes. The Chair congratulated the countries on their activities and invited the Working Group to report on future activities as well.

48. The Working Group's mandate and terms of reference foresaw support for the development of regular pan-European environmental assessments.⁷ At its twenty-fifth session, the Working Group had welcomed ideas and approaches for the planned eighth pan-European environmental assessment and requested the secretariat, together with Working Group members, to develop a draft concept to be presented at the next session of the Working Group.⁸

49. The secretariat therefore presented a draft concept of an eighth pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/6). The Working Group was invited to consider the information and agree on next steps.

50. The Chair recalled that the Working Group's mandate and terms of reference also envisaged assistance regarding the streamlining of environmental reporting in support of environmental policymaking.⁹

51. A representative of the secretariat presented and provided guidance on the reporting template under the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. He also provided some lessons learned from the latest reporting exercises and some recommendations that might be of relevance for member States, and informed participants about the upcoming reporting exercise under the Protocol.

52. The secretariat reported on the support ECE had provided jointly with UNEP in the preparation and launching of the *National State of the Environment Report: Uzbekistan*¹⁰ and plans to support a similar exercise in Turkmenistan.

Working Group decisions and recommendations

53. The Working Group:

(a) Welcomed the draft concept of the eighth pan-European environmental assessment and requested the secretariat to forward it to the Committee on Environmental Policy;

⁷ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1, para. 11 (a).

⁸ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2, para. 60 (a).

⁹ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1, para. 11 (b) (ii).

¹⁰ Khaniya Asilbekova and others (n.p., Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change of Uzbekistan/International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2023).

- (b) Agreed to support the securing of funding through discussions with members of the Committee on Environmental Policy;
- (c) Confirmed its support for the selection of indicators and in assessing the extent to which Earth observations could be used to generate indicator value;
- (d) Confirmed its support for the provision of national data for selected indicators;
- (e) Thanked its members for their efforts to implement relevant outcomes of the Nicosia Ministerial Conference;
- (f) Agreed to provide regular updates on the activities implemented by countries and organizations to support the environmental monitoring- and assessment-related outcomes of the Nicosia Ministerial Conference;
- (g) Thanked the ECE secretariat to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers for sharing guidance on reporting thereunder;
- (h) Invited its members to consider the information and guidance in future reporting and to provide regular updates to the Working Group.

IX. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data

54. The secretariat provided an overview of global and regional environmental policy events in 2024 relevant to the work of the Working Group. A representative of UNEP then provided an overview of relevant outcomes and resolutions of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (Nairobi, 26 February–1 March 2024).

55. The Chair recalled that the Working Group had expressed interest in sharing developments and experiences related to monitoring a circular economy and plastics.

56. A representative of the European Environment Agency presented, online, the Agency's Circularity Metrics Lab and activities by the Agency on the monitoring of plastics. A representative of Montenegro emphasized the country's interest in developing new indicators using data on microwaste and microplastics on beaches and in the sea. A representative of Austria highlighted the importance of plastic circularity and the reduction of microplastics and nanoplastics pollution. The secretariat mentioned ongoing efforts in the statistics community to measure plastic flows.

57. Representatives of the ECE Statistical Division then provided an overview of: ongoing work by ECE to measure circular economy; the revised Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators; and climate-change-related statistics. A representative of North Macedonia expressed interest in learning more about examples on microdata-sharing and a representative of Italy highlighted the importance of sharing practical examples, if possible.

58. A representative of Statistics Netherlands presented data needs for climate change mitigation and monitoring a just transition. A representative of Azerbaijan expressed interest in learning more about the use of the system at the national level.

59. A representative of UNEP gave an online presentation on the use of remote sensing, satellite imagery and other tools and technologies to monitor the environment in Central Asia. A representative of Environment Agency Austria presented the latest developments under the European Union-funded EU4Environment – Water Resources and Environmental Data programme. A representative of Armenia highlighted the usefulness of that programme and thanked the experts and organizations involved in that regard.

60. The Chair then invited the Working Group to discuss how the work on environmental information, data and indicators, including in relation to a green and circular economy, as well as geospatial and Earth observation data, could best support the development of integrated assessments, reporting on and implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and other activities related to the Working Group. Meeting participants were also invited to

discuss relevant topics for the twenty-seventh session of the Working Group, scheduled to take place in 2025.

Working Group conclusions and recommendations

61. The Working Group:

(a) Thanked the representative of UNEP for presenting the outcomes of the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP and took note of information provided on recent and upcoming ECE regional events that were related to the activities of the Working Group;

(b) Also thanked the representatives of the European Environment Agency, the ECE Statistical Division, Statistics Netherlands, UNEP and Environment Agency Austria for sharing relevant work, including on circular economy, the monitoring of plastics, climate change-related statistics and the monitoring of a just transition;

(c) Invited representatives of regional and international organizations, as well as national agencies, to provide regular updates to the Working Group on upcoming events, initiatives of relevance and good practices;

(d) Took note of the suggestions on topics for the twenty-seventh session of the Working Group;

(e) Requested the secretariat to inform the Committee on Environmental Policy of the outcomes of the agenda item.

X. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment at the national level

62. Members of the Working Group, including those representing countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, were invited to give a short presentation on major actions undertaken since the previous meeting regarding, as appropriate:

(a) Production of environmental reports, analyses and assessments based on environmental information and indicators, including through the use of the Shared Environmental Information System;

(b) Modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks, in particular, those on air, water and soil;

(c) Improvements in data quality assurance and control, as well as in data management;

(d) Improvements in data policy and institutional and regulatory mechanisms and technical solutions for data exchange between various ministries and agencies (ministries of environment, environment agencies and ministries of agriculture, energy, health, industry, transport and water) and with other users, including the public;

(e) Implementation of recommendations regarding environmental monitoring and assessment made in national environmental performance reviews;

(f) Developments related to the use of new technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and Earth observation for environmental monitoring;

(g) Cross-cutting developments such as integrating a gender perspective into environmental monitoring and assessment activities.

63. The representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Spain, Ukraine and Uzbekistan reported on progress in environmental monitoring and assessment and efforts to enhance digitalization since the twenty-fifth session of the Working Group.

Working Group conclusions and recommendations

64. The Working Group thanked the speakers and welcomed the presentations by the representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Spain, Ukraine and Uzbekistan on progress in environmental monitoring and assessment.

XI. Other business

65. No other business was raised by members of the Working Group.

XII. Closure of the meeting

66. The Chair informed the Working Group that the report of the meeting and the list of participants would be finalized by the secretariat for circulation to the Working Group after the meeting. The two documents would be posted on the meeting web page.

67. The Chair informed the Working Group that the next session was tentatively scheduled to be held in Geneva, on 10–11 April 2025.

68. The Chair invited the Working Group to take part in the evaluation of the meeting.

69. The Chair closed the meeting.
