

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ninety-third meeting
Geneva, 26 September 2017

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Informal document No. **2017/43**

**Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
for the UNECE Region 2018 - status of preparations and next steps**

Note by the secretariat

Status of preparations

1. **Mandate:** Following the first stand-alone Regional Forum held on 25 April 2017, the Commission decided at its 67th session to establish the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region, which, while retaining its intergovernmental character, would serve as a regional mechanism to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to convene it annually in Geneva in the years 2018 and 2019, in close cooperation with the entities of the regional United Nations system (E/2017/37-E/ECE/1480, decision B(67)).

2. **Thematic focus:** The Regional Forum 2018 will be aligned with the theme (“*Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*”) and the SDGs that are in focus at next year’s High-level Political Forum (HLPF). The SDGs under in-depth review in 2018 will be SDG 6 on water, 7 on energy, 11 on cities, 12 on sustainable consumption and production, and 15 on terrestrial ecosystems and forests, in addition to the annual review of SDG 17 on partnership. Also, 15 UNECE member States¹ have already expressed their interest to present Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the 2018 HLPF. Potential topics of discussion at the Regional Forum 2018 are being developed within UNECE and will also be consulted within the regional UN system.

3. **Organization:** Preparations for the Regional Forum in 2018 will take into account the feedback received from this year’s Regional Forum, including through a participants’ survey. Among the main lessons learned from the one-day Regional Forum in 2017 is that there was not enough time for all speakers to engage and that there should be an even stronger focus on peer learning in smaller groups. Therefore, discussions are being held to obtain a number of rooms in the International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG), including a large room for the plenary and smaller rooms for interactive round tables in groups of about 30-40 participants.

Next steps

4. To proceed with practical preparations, member States may wish to consider and decide on the following initial points:

- Switzerland has expressed interest to chair the next Regional Forum. **EXCOM may wish to accept the proposal by Switzerland to chair the Regional Forum in 2018.**
- Extending the duration of the Regional Forum would provide additional space for high-level interventions in the plenary as well as for meaningful exchange and peer learning in smaller groups. **EXCOM may wish to extend the Regional Forum 2018 to 1.5 or, preferably, 2 days.**

¹ Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Canada, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and Switzerland.

- 1 and 2 March 2018 have been identified as possible dates, with almost no feasible alternatives due to room constraints, competing meetings and other factors. **EXCOM may wish to confirm 1 and 2 March 2018 as dates for the next Regional Forum.**

- The detailed modalities and programme of the Regional Forum 2018 will be developed in close consultation with member States. **EXCOM may wish to request the secretariat to launch a process of informal consultations to determine the modalities and programme of the Regional Forum 2018, starting in the first half of October 2017.**
