

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
One hundredth Meeting
Geneva, 21 September 2018

EXCOM/CONCLU/100

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

Meeting of the Executive Committee
21 September 2018

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda.

1. The revised provisional draft agenda for the 100th meeting was adopted.

Item 2 – Chair’s conclusions from the last meeting.

2. The conclusions from the 99th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/99) were adopted.

Item 3 - Matters relating to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards.

(a) Meeting with the Chair of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards.

3. The Vice-Chair of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards (SCTCS), Mr. Daniyar Mukashev, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of SCTCS over the past year and its plans for the future.

4. The representative of Belarus expressed his full support for the work of the SCTCS and its future planned activities and mentioned that the implementation of the recommendations of an SCTCS study of Belarus was ongoing.

5. The representative of the Russian Federation attached great importance to the removal of barriers for trade and the simplification of trade procedures, including in the context of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He welcomed the new Terms of Reference of the SCTCS and thought they would ensure cooperation towards the 2030 Agenda. He commended issuance of recommendations for various countries and the activities to implement these recommendations. He noted the significant increase in the number of participants at the Working Party 7. He expressed satisfaction at the adoption of policies on normative regulation formulated by Working Party 6 as a basis for shared technical regulations in the Eurasian Economic Commission.

6. The representative of the European Union and its member States noted with satisfaction the high number of new and revised agricultural quality standards adopted by Working Party 7 and the strengthening of work on food loss and prevention in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12. He requested information on the first working meeting with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea regarding the SDGs on 9–12 October 2018 at the Icelandic Marine Research Institute. He expressed support for the proposed decisions.

7. In response to the question by the representative of the European Union and its member States, the Secretary of the SCTCS explained that the Secretary of Working Party 6 would attend the meeting in Iceland and brief member States about its outcomes at the upcoming session of the Working Party in November 2018. The Iceland meeting would be primarily about fisheries. UNECE’s participation would align with the nexus approach and contribute a whole-of-UNECE approach, as input would come from multiple work areas: UN/CEFACT via its

work on sustainable fisheries and Working Party 6 via its focus on risk management. Following the Iceland meeting, UNECE would evaluate possibilities for future cooperation and consider whether and what form of financing would be necessary.

8. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Steering Committee and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

(b) Decisions on matters related to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards.

9. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves:
- i. the revised Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards as contained in document ECE/CTCS/2018/2;
 - ii. the Programme of Work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization for 2018–2019 as contained in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2017/6; and
 - iii. the activities of the Working Party on Agricultural Quality Standards for 2018 as contained in document CE/CTCS/WP.7/2017/2, paragraphs 48–51.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 4 - Preparations for 2019 Commission Session

10. The Executive Secretary presented informal document 2018/24, containing a concept note and programme outline for the 2019 Commission session, to be held on 9-10 April 2019. The secretariat proposed the topic of “Smart Sustainable Cities: Drivers of Sustainable Development” as a thematic focus for the session, owing to the key role of cities for sustainable development and their potential bring together cross-sectoral areas of work in line with UNECE’s “nexus” approach to the SDGs. The high-level segment would focus on national priorities and good practices related to sustainable cities in the region, UNECE initiatives aimed at supporting governments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda, and the impact of relevant UNECE norms, standards and conventions at the national and regional level. A roundtable would also highlight the importance of cooperation and partnerships in the work on smart sustainable cities, involving a broad range of stakeholders also from civil society, academia, the private sector, and the UN system. The Executive Secretary also informed EXCOM of her proposal to hold a “Day of Cities” on the day before the Commission session, with a roundtable of mayors from the region for peer learning on urban issues, an information fair showcasing innovative solutions towards smart and sustainable cities in the region, and discussion on how UNECE’s outputs could assist in the transition towards smart sustainable cities. She hoped EXCOM would express support to the proposed topic. She also encouraged delegations to facilitate high-level representation from capitals and make proposals as to mayors could be invited. She informed EXCOM that the draft agenda and a list of draft decisions items for the session would be discussed further at an informal consultation on 10 October 2018.

11. The representative of Azerbaijan agreed that smart sustainable cities was an important topic for the SDGs, touching on not only traditional aspects such as urban planning but also transport, energy technologies and green economy. He added that this topic was also addressed

by other UN organizations and therefore allowed for interaction and a cross-sectoral approach. Smart sustainable cities allowed citizens full enjoyment of civil, political, cultural, economic and social human rights. He supported the Executive Secretary's proposal.

12. The representative of the Russian Federation said the Commission's significant capacity in terms of expert analysis and standard setting should be used fully to achieve the SDGs, and that UNECE should support economic cooperation in the region, including by resolving normative divergences, simplifying trade and customs procedure and developing transport and energy infrastructure. Regarding the proposed theme for the Commission session, although he agreed that smart and sustainable cities were important to achieving the SDGs, he underlined that the mandate of the Commission was broader. Moreover, he felt it was important for the session to address UNECE's positioning in the context of the reform of the UN Development System (UNDS). He also cautioned that introducing the practice of dedicating the Commission's session to one specific issue would require the adoption of a multiyear programme of work which has to be aligned with the topics of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development while avoiding duplication and overlaps. He expressed readiness to discuss these issues further during informal consultations.

13. The representative of the European Union and its member States agreed that smart and sustainable cities was a topic crucial for sustainable development, and one which brought together multiple strands of UNECE's work. Therefore, he found the proposed theme timely and relevant and was ready to endorse it. He also found merit in the proposed "Day of Cities". He appreciated the compact structure proposed for the Commission session. He favoured an early preparation of draft session outputs, including a list of possible draft decision, in order to ensure a smooth and fruitful session. He expressed readiness to further engage in informal consultations.

14. The representative of Switzerland welcomed and supported UNECE's nexus approach, as it would break silos, bring divisions together to collaborate, create synergies and generate new knowledge that would position UNECE to address future challenges. He found the proposed session theme relevant and thought it would allow to articulate UNECE's strengths in a cross-sectoral and concrete manner. It could also demonstrate how UNECE adapts to tackle current and emerging issues. He expressed readiness to further engage in informal consultations.

15. The representative of Slovakia supported the proposed theme and found it relevant, recalling that Slovakia chaired the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management and had contributed to the development of the Geneva UN Charter for Sustainable Housing. He indicated that he would solicit ideas for the session from his capital.

16. The representative of Italy echoed the representative of the European Union and its member States in strongly supporting the proposed theme. The Italian Permanent Mission in Geneva, the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance, together with other partners, would co-organize a workshop in Milan on 10 December 2018 which aligned with the theme. He had the following comments on the concept note:

- i. Smart buildings (as recalled in the UNECE Policy Framework for Sustainable Real Estate Markets) should be defined as follows: "A smart building is highly energy efficient and covers its very low energy demand to a large extent by on-site or district system-driven renewable energy sources.

- ii. On the topic of urban regeneration (also as recalled in the above Policy Framework), requalification and regeneration of existing housing & building stock – even of public property – should not be disregarded.
- iii. On the topic of smart land, it is important to ensure the same infrastructures and the same quality of life for all people in the country. Therefore, it is necessary to support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning. A disparity between the development of smart cities and the urban and suburban land all around would result in migratory flux and internal problems.

17. The representative of Belarus thought the concept note provided a good base for further planning and expressed readiness to engage in informal consultations. He felt smart and sustainable cities was a complex topic where important cross-cutting results could be achieved, and was moreover relevant for all member States. Nevertheless, he felt the session needed to address the role of UNECE in the context of the reform of the UNDS as this was of great strategic importance. He hoped the Executive Secretary would be able to provide information on the second phase of the reform after her visit to New York for the General Assembly. He thought member States should follow the matter closely as the discussions in New York could determine the future of UNECE.

18. The Chair underlined that the relevant parts of the reform would likely be completed before April 2019 and thus render discussion on the topic at the Commission session moot. He said he intended to organize consultations as needed to enable member States to provide input into the reform process. He also assured delegations that an overall theme would not prevent them from bringing any issues they wished for to the Commission session and its outputs.

19. The Executive Secretary thanked delegates for their support to the proposed theme. She informed EXCOM that deliberations at ECOSOC on the reform process had been pushed back from February to May 2019 and assured delegations they could still address the reform during the general segment of the Commission session. She acknowledged that UNECE had a broad mandate but thought it would be appropriate to select one thematic topic for the first day of the session and felt smart and sustainable cities was an appropriate one as all divisions contributed to that nexus. She clarified that there would be no duplication of work with the Regional Forum. The purpose of the latter was solely to address the SDGs to be reviewed at the 2019 High-level Political Forum. The following SDGs had been chosen in New York: SDG 4 (quality education); 8 (decent work and economic growth); 10 (reduced inequalities); 13 (climate action); and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). By contrast, the Commission session would provide direction to UNECE's work for the next two years.

20. The Chair concluded that EXCOM welcomes the early start of the preparations for the 2019 Commission session and supports "Smart Sustainable Cities" as its overall theme in principle. EXCOM requests the secretariat to hold informal consultations for interested delegations to further refine the session's agenda. EXCOM encourages member States to facilitate high level attendance at the session and to propose to the secretariat cities from the UNECE region that may be invited to showcase good practices in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the proposed "Day of Cities".

Item 5 - Repositioning of the United Nations Development system.

21. In view of the upcoming review of the regional assets of the UNDS, including the Regional Economic Commissions, which would include dialogue between member States and a consultant for the preparation of a report, the Executive Secretary provided member States with an update on the latest state of the UN Development System reform. She detailed UNECE's engagement at the country level, and highlighted areas where UNECE provided special value added to the UNDS and existing good practices that facilitate effective UNDS collaboration in the region. She also mentioned some proposals for improved collaboration among the relevant UNDS actors and for making UNECE expertise more widely used. She solicited an exchange of views with member States based on the following questions:

- i. How does your delegation see UNECE's role in the revamped UNDS- at all levels (global, regional and national)?
- ii. What does your delegation consider to be key assets of UNECE that provide special value added?
- iii. How can UNECE's policy and technical expertise be harnessed even more effectively and more systematically in support of the new Resident Coordinator System and revamped UNDAFs at the country and subregional levels?

22. The representative of the Russian Federation noted with satisfaction that UNECE would not need to undertake additional efforts as part of the first phase of the UNDS reform. He was pleased that the cooperation between UNECE and other regional actors has been recognized as a benchmark example among all regions. He welcomed the active involvement of the Executive Secretary in the preparation of reform proposals for the second phase. He commended the UNECE leadership for its transparency and engagement with member States in the context of the reform. He found it very important to confirm the relevance of UNECE's mandate for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, highlighting in particular the simplification of trade procedures, including via electronic documents, the mobilisation of private capital for projects of social and/or environmental significance, green economy and sustainable energy systems.

23. The representative of the European Union and its member States likewise expressed satisfaction that the cooperation between UNECE and other regional actors has been recognized as successful. On the second phase of the reform, he agreed that options should be provided on a region-by-region basis and that the specificities of each region should be recognized. He emphasized that UNECE's mandate defines its role as fostering economic exchange across the region. UNECE's unique normative, standard-setting work was relevant, and of global nature in many cases. He noted that this could be considered as a key asset that provides special value added. On the topic of country-level engagement, he agreed that UNECE already has longstanding, fruitful and efficient collaboration with programme countries and Resident Coordinators and said that this should continue. He expressed interest in the proposals for improved collaboration and thought concrete ideas such as the Resident Coordinators having back to back meetings with the Regional UN System merited consideration. With regard to the global level, he said it was good that many UNECE products were used outside the region. He expressed interest in the Executive Secretary's proposals to make UNECE expertise more widely used, with due consideration paid to the utility and resource implications of such proposals. He thought all parts of the UN system and member States needed to join forces to make the UNDS reform a success. He noted a need to assess possible efficiency gains in order to make the UNDS system more efficient and allow it to concentrate on its core tasks. He noted that the reform offered an opportunity for UNECE to bring its structure and business model in line with the 2030 Agenda. He expected UNECE to keep offering a good model for the other

Regional Commissions, attached strong importance to its normative function, and said that the European Union and its member States continued to recognize the value of UNECE's work and to support the organization. He said he was eager to continue engaging on this topic, including with the consultant who would help prepare the review report.

24. The representative of Slovakia aligned himself with the representative of the European Union and its member States. He emphasized UNECE's unique role among the Regional Commissions as a creator of norms and standards that are truly global and accepted in all regions. He thought these tools were of special value added for the UN system. He thought that, although regional specificities must be recognized, UNECE's mandate should not be changed by the reform. UNECE should remain the de facto world leader in the development of standards and norms which improve people's lives and support progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He in particular commended the cooperation between UNECE and UNDP on the preparation of a report on progress towards the SDGs in the Western Balkans, noting that this process was particularly important in light of sharing lessons learned, and supporting the necessary economic reforms that would help the Western Balkan countries reach European Union standards.

25. The representative of Switzerland echoed the view the UNECE is not comparable to the other Regional Commissions, and that its identity should build on its specific mandate and expertise. He noted that UNECE delivers many products and services to governments in the region and beyond, and that this is sometimes done through the UN Country Teams. He felt it would be useful to reflect this service and product delivery in all its dimensions during discussions with the consultant. He felt there was potential in exploring how UNECE could work as an interface at the global, regional and national levels; how to better connect and be recognized at all these levels, and also how to get the different actors at these levels to improve their uptake of UNECE's products. He welcomed and looked forward to further discussing the proposals for improved collaboration within the region and globally. He hoped the secretariat could provide information on the composition of the task team that would draft the Secretary-General's report. He was keen on further engaging on this topic, including with the consultant.

26. The Executive Secretary appreciated the support and feedback from member States. On the matter of cooperation between regional actors, she also highlighted the cooperation between the different Regional Commissions, noting the first accessions from countries outside the UNECE region to the Water Convention, and the adoption of a legal instrument in the ECLAC region that was based on the Aarhus Convention. She said that the UNECE region had developed innovative tools and technologies and that helping to transfer them to other regions formed part of UNECE's value added. She hoped member States would communicate the messages expressed during the meeting to their New York counterparts, so that they could voice support for UNECE at Headquarters.

27. The Chair concluded EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the information provided. EXCOM encourages delegations to engage directly with the fact-finding process of the review of the regional assets of the UN Development System, to share their views on the UNDS reform, in particular on the positioning of UNECE. EXCOM also encourages delegations to liaise with their counterparts in New York to ensure that member States' views on the matter are well represented during deliberations at UN Headquarters. EXCOM requests the secretariat to provide the information on the composition of the Task team as soon as feasible.

Item 7 - Important new developments: briefing by the Executive Secretary

28. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM of the outcomes of the informal consultations on the 2019 Regional Forum for Sustainable Development which had taken place on 17 September 2019. Member States had agreed on the following:

- i. The 2019 Forum would last 1.5 days, starting on Thursday, 21 March 2019 at 3 p.m. due to the availability of interpretation quotas.
- ii. The substantive focus would be review of five SDGs, in line with the High-level Political Forum: SDG 4 (quality education); 8 (decent work and economic growth); 10 (reduced inequalities); 13 (climate action); and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).
- iii. In addition to the usual opening and closing, there would be a High-level Policy segment, peer learning round tables on the five SDGs under review, and a segment that connects the dots between the different SDGs. All segments should be organized as interactive and practical as possible.

29. UNECE would continue to work closely with its partners from the regional UN system in organizing the event. The concrete content and set-up of the different segments would be discussed at the next round of informal consultations on 10 October 2018. She urged member States to consider chairing the 2019 Regional Forum, recalling that the past three editions had been chaired by the Czech Republic, France and Switzerland, respectively. She also noted that a draft decision extending the mandate to hold the Regional Forum beyond 2019 would be submitted to EXCOM in December 2018, for agreement and onward submission to the 2019 Commission session for consideration.

30. The representative of the Netherlands inquired as to whether UNECE was involved in the 16-17 October 2018 preparatory workshop for the countries presenting Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) at the 2019 High-level Political Forum.

31. The secretariat clarified that this was a regular annual workshop coordinated by UN DESA for all countries undertaking a VNR in a given year. UNECE has provided input into the content and structure of the workshop.

32. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the first meeting of the governing bodies of the UN Road Safety Trust Fund (9-10 August 2018, Geneva). She noted that representatives from five Member States representing each of the United Nations Regions (Argentina, Lebanon, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Sweden) had been appointed to the Advisory Board, alongside UN, private sector donor, civil society and academic partners, enshrining the Fund's broad partnership-based approach to improving road safety. The Steering Committee, in turn, was comprised of representatives from all five UN Regional Commissions alongside UN partners (UNICEF and WHO), one member State donor and one private sector donor. She said that the two bodies had adopted their Rules of Procedure, endorsed a fundraising strategy and operation manual outline, and approved the establishment of the Trust Fund Secretariat and its budget. The Secretariat would be hosted at UNECE, reporting substantively to the governing bodies and administratively to UNECE. She pointed out that the project document for the establishment of this secretariat was tabled under Item 8 and recalled that the costs of the secretariat would be covered by the Trust Fund. She also informed EXCOM that the second meeting of the Advisory Board and the Steering Committee would take place on 21 and 22 November 2018, respectively. The meetings were expected to adopt the final fundraising strategy and policy, the Global Framework Plan of Action for Road Safety, funding criteria and priorities and the operations manual. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM

that private sector contributions had reached USD 14 million. She hoped all governments would consider contributions and urged them to contact the head of the interim Trust Fund Secretariat, UNECE's Director of Sustainable Transport Mr. Yuwei Li, if they wished to become a donor. For the rest of 2018, UNECE would focus on recruitment for the Trust Fund Secretariat, organize the second meeting of the Advisory Board and Steering Committee, prepare the remaining documents required for operationalization for the Trust Fund, organize a call for proposals of pilot projects and continue fundraising efforts.

33. The representative of the Russian Federation appreciated the professional organization of the meetings of the governing bodies of the Trust Fund and confirmed the attendance of the Russian First Deputy Minister of Interior Affairs at the second meeting in November. The Russian Federation attached great importance to improving road safety and had implemented measures which had decreased fatalities from road accidents by a third in the past six decades. Although a great deal remained to be done internationally, he hoped the Trust Fund would be a key instrument in ensuring cooperation, creating a sustainable transport system and extending access to transport networks. He expressed readiness to support the Trust Fund, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of multilateral efforts to improve road safety, including in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

34. The Executive Secretary recalled the global review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly to be undertaken in 2020. She informed EXCOM that UN Women has initiated the preparatory process for this Beijing+25 review and that UNECE aimed to hold its regional review meeting on 29 and 30 October 2019 in Geneva, subject to EXCOM decision. She noted that issues such as meeting topics, format, participants and financial resources would be provided to EXCOM for discussion and decision at its next meeting.

35. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) planned to be signed with the

- i. Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD). The purpose of the MOU is to provide a framework of strengthened cooperation and understanding, and to facilitate collaboration between ICSD and UNECE, focusing on the ecological SDGs, environmental governance, green economy and resource efficiency, climate change adaptation, biodiversity and ecosystem management, water quality and waste management.
- ii. The Centre for Transportation Studies for the Western Mediterranean (CETMO): The purpose of the MoU is to promote the development of an international, integrated intermodal transport and logistics system for CETMO partner countries as well as to enhance cooperation on the development of the International Transport Infrastructure Observatory operated by the Sustainable Transport Division.
- iii. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The MOU will focus on cooperation in the fields of environment, transport, economic cooperation and integration, energy and trade, to help accomplish the UNECE Strategic Framework 2018-2019.

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

- i. 9-18 July, New York: High-level Political Forum
- ii. 10 August, Geneva: 1st meeting of the Advisory Board of the Road Safety Trust Fund

37. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming events:
 - i. 24-28 September, New York: General Assembly
 - ii. 1-2 October, Geneva: UNECE Regional Conference on ICPD+25
 - iii. 1-5 October, Geneva: Urban Week 2018, including a roundtable on SDG 11, the 3rd meeting of the Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings, the 79th session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management.
 - iv. 10-12 October, Astana: 8th Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention
 - v. 15 October, Vienna: 2018 OSCE Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting
 - vi. 17-22 October, Bratislava: EuroGeoSurveys General Assembly and 3rd annual meeting of the OECD GREEN Action Task Force
 - vii. 26 October, New York: Dialogue of the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions with the Second Committee

Item 7 – Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

38. Regarding the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2018/27, the representative of the Russian Federation noted that, at the last session of the Committee on Competitiveness, Innovation and Public-Private Partnerships, interested countries had agreed to participate in an innovative policy index in the context of a pilot project. He noted that the word “pilot” was not mentioned in the extrabudgetary project proposal under discussion and should be added. He stated that such an index should not lead to a comparison and ranking of countries, which would not be in line with the principals and aims of UNECE’s capacity building and technical cooperation activities. He recalled that the Russian Federation had financed multiple Innovation Performance Reviews (IPRs), including for the beneficiary countries of the proposed project. He thought it was important for the IPRs and the proposed index to mutually reinforce and not contradict each other. Therefore, he proposed that the project be further developed and tabled for EXCOM approval at a later date.

39. The Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division thanked the Russian Federation for its support over the past years. She said the intention behind the project was not to compare or rate countries, and had no objection to immediately amending the project proposal to include the word “pilot”. The format of the index had not yet been agreed and could very well be something other than a number. The index would allow countries to identify gaps in their innovation policies and determine what kind of capacity building and technical assistance would be needed to close them.

40. The representative of the Russian Federation said he could approve the project if the documentation clearly reflected that the index was a pilot. As the topic was of great importance to his country, he requested regular updates from the secretariat on progress.

41. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2018/26. EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2018/27 with the understanding that a) the index component of the project is a pilot, b) that the index will not be used for the purpose of rating, and c) that interested delegations will be informed on the progress of the implementation of the project at their request.

Item 8 – Other business

42. The Chair informed EXCOM that the next meeting would be held on 31 October 2018.
