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# Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy

## Report by the Chair

# Report from the Chairperson of the Committee on Sustainable Energy

1. At its ninety-fifth meeting (Geneva, 11 December 2017), the Executive Committee (EXCOM) approved the programme of work of the sustainable energy subprogramme for 2018–2019 and renewed mandates and work plans for the subsidiary bodies of the Committee on Sustainable Energy (the Committee), as contained in documents ECE/EX/2017/L.11 and L.12 from 27 November 2017.

2. This report outlines the main achievements of the Committee in implementing its programme of work in the period between December 2017 and November 2018 and the outcomes of its twenty-seventh session (26–27 September 2018).

# I. Achievements since the twenty-sixth session of the Committee

3. Since its twenty-sixth session (26–28 September 2017), the Committee has continued to debate the ongoing transformation in the global energy sector with a particular interest in emerging business models and technology innovation in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The gaps between commitments that countries have under the Paris Agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and what is needed to achieve sustainable energy persist. The persistence of the gaps is why the Committee has chosen the theme "accelerating and deepening the transition to sustainable energy systems" for its meetings going forward.

4. Currently, the activities of the sustainable energy subprogramme fall into three broad categories: i) sustainable resource management; ii) deep transformation of the energy system; and iii) reducing the environmental footprint of the energy sector. The Committee oversees implementation of the following flagship projects and activities (supported by extrabudgetary funding): Pathways to Sustainable Energy; Methane Management in Extractive Industries; High-Performance Buildings; and International Fora on Energy for Sustainable Development. A mapping of the sustainable energy subprogramme processes and activities that support countries in achieving the energy-related objectives of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) is contained in document ECE/ENERGY/2018/2.

5. Key achievements since December 2017 comprise:

(a) Organising the Ninth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development and Energy Ministerial in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 12–15 November 2018, in partnership with the other four United Nations Regional Commissions (ECE/ENERGY/2018/3), the Government of Ukraine, and other key international organisations working on energy topics. Over 400 participants gathered over four days to reflect on ways to accelerate and re-direct change, including measures to close the gaps between action and ambition given the social innovation that must accompany technology innovation and decarbonization;

(b) Preparing an assessment[1] of the progress in attaining energy for sustainable development in UNECE as a complement to the "Global Tracking Framework" report prepared by the custodian agencies[2] in the context of Sustainable Energy for All (SEforAll),

[1] "Global Tracking Framework: UNECE Progress in Sustainable Energy," https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47830

[2] The World Bank, International Energy Agency, International Renewable Energy Agency, United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and World Health Organization.

and engaging the energy community in a broader reflection on appropriate indicators and data for energy for sustainable development;

(c) Contributing substantially to the meetings of the Technical Advisory Group on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 of the United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), drafting two policy briefs to substantiate the inputs of the Regional Commissions to the SDG 7 review at the HLPF in July 2018, and commenting on the remainder of the briefs;[3]

(d) Reporting on progress of the flagship project "Pathways to Sustainable Energy" and exploring adaptive policy responses including with increased stakeholder engagement and conceptualizing an early-warning system to be presented to the Committee in 2019 (ECE/ENERGY/2018/1). The Committee received a full update on the status of the project with the objective to integrate reactions to shape the next project phases and develop new analytical foci and technology deep dives;

(e) Further broadening the application of the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) by endorsing the global deployment of a resource management tool aligned with the 2030 Agenda, bridging documents between the national standards of the People's Republic of China classifications for petroleum and solid minerals and UNFC (ECE/ENERGY/2018/4 and ECE/ENERGY/2018/5 respectively) and by developing specifications for the application of UNFC to anthropogenic resources (ECE/ENERGY/2018/6);

(f) Continuing the successful roll-out of renewable energy "hard talks" in Kazakhstan and Bosnia Herzegovina to explore the findings of the report "UNECE Renewable Energy Status Report 2017"[4], and to discuss concrete recommendations for the host countries;

(g) Progressing energy performance of buildings with launch of a High-Performance Buildings Initiative (HPBI) to deploy and disseminate UNECE's "Framework Guidelines for Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings" and to advance the performance of buildings broadly. The HPBI comprises: 1) a global network of International Centres of Excellence on High-Performance Buildings that will provide on-the-ground implementation assistance for building owners and developers, contractors, architects, engineers and planning officials; and 2) a consortium of universities, the Global Building Network, to undertake both research into building materials, design, and construction and quality education of next generation architects and engineers;

(h) Further increasing the visibility of UNECE's regional impact through implementing the project "Application of a biogas technology model for rural areas in Kyrgyzstan" and organizing a series of capacity building events under the UN Development Account project.[5]

# II. Main outcomes from the twenty-seventh session of the Committee

6. 2018 was the year of the first progress review of SDG 7 implementation by the HLPF. Main findings from the evaluation confirmed the outcomes of the Committee's own

[3] "Policy Briefs in Support of the first SDG 7 Review at the UN High-Level Political Forum 2018," https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018

[4] http://www.unece.org/energywelcome/areas-of-work/renewable-energy/unece-renewable-energy-status-report.html

[5] https://www.unece.org/energywelcome/areas-of-work/regional-advisory-services/projects/application-of-biogas-technology-model-for-rural-areas-in-kyrgyzstan.html

assessment of the status of energy in the UNECE region, namely that urgent action is needed to leave no one behind to achieve SDG 7 and consequently other SDGs.[6]

7. Achieving SDG 7 remains within reach as technology, innovation, new business models and strategic shifts in policy are accelerating the transformation of the energy system. The role of the Regional Commissions remains critical for an effective and coordinated response to an increasing number of development needs. The role includes both experience sharing and capacity building. There is a common need for enhanced regional action to achieve the scale of change necessary to build a resilient and inclusive society. For example, in every region there is a need for human and institutional capacity for energy planning and management, monitoring and data collection systems, dissemination and information-sharing between institutions, greater engagement with the private sector, transparency and accountability and a stronger role for science and research.

8. 2018 has been the hottest year on record, following the three hottest years on record. The recent report from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC; SR1.5 Summary for Policy Makers) indicates that current pledges are not sufficient to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The report suggests that with the national pledges as they stand, global warming will exceed 1.5°C, so practices and technologies that remove $CO_2$ from the atmosphere at a global scale will be required to return warming to 1.5°C later. The IPCC has never been so outspoken about the urgency and scale needed to reduce 'net' $CO_2$ emissions to zero to limit expected temperature increases. Recommendations made by the IPCC refer to transformations in a number of sectors, including buildings, industry, transport, energy, and agriculture, forestry and other land uses. The Committee and its subsidiary bodies are already active in a number of these sectors.

9. During the twenty-seventh session, the Committee confirmed the vital role that energy plays as an enabler for improving quality of life and highlighted its links not only to climate but to other sectors such as water, health, and infrastructure. It therefore approved alignment of activities not only with SDG 7, but also with SDGs 9, 11, 12, 13, and 17. The Committee encouraged nexus work and linkages to be reflected in all efforts to the extent that resources are available.

10. As it has in the past, the Committee underlined the importance of improving energy efficiency. Reduced energy demand improves options available for meeting energy requirements consistent with an integrated climate and development agenda, whereas greater energy demand would require more supply from low-carbon options. Demand-side actions including improving energy efficiency in buildings and reducing consumption of energy- and greenhouse-gas intensive products in industry through behavioural and lifestyle changes should be emphasised. Effective demand-side measures would allow for greater flexibility in how we structure our energy system. Such measures are not easy to implement, and barriers have prevented the most efficient practices from being deployed.

11. Making changes in one sector can have consequences for another as sectors are not independent of one another. In other words, the choices that we make now as a society for one sector can either restrict or expand our options later. Fundamental changes to the development model of key oil and gas exporting countries look inevitable, given the links to climate change and air pollution. Switching to natural gas in the medium-term can both reduce the carbon intensity of energy and improve both urban air quality and energy supply options. Improving fuel efficiency and fuel switching to alternatives will be especially important for the UNECE region – 80% of today's energy mix is fossil-based and fossil energy will remain important for the foreseeable future.

12. The complexity of the energy equation is one of the reasons the Committee decided that the challenges of the 2030 Agenda are best met through integrative nexus activities that

[6] "Global Tracking Framework: UNECE progress in sustainable energy," http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47830&L=0

"energy for sustainable development" offers. As a consequence, UNECE is exploring alternative pathways countries might consider for achieving their national targets while contributing to global and regional objectives. The flagship project "Pathways to Sustainable Energy" is an important vehicle for understanding the gaps that exist in meeting the energy-related objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the opportunities available to close the gaps. It will also allow countries to understand and appreciate the choices that other countries have. The expectation is that improved understanding may set the stage for strengthened commitments and pursuit of real action. After evaluating interim results, the Committee is preparing a country consultation process leading to a high-level discussion of how the countries of the UNECE region can make commensurate efforts to attain energy for sustainable development.

13. Recognizing the role that growing atmospheric concentrations of methane play in climate change and the imperative for near-term remediation, the Committee recommends to the United Nations Economic and Social Council that 2020 be declared the International Year of Methane in support of the Global Methane Challenge and its partner organizations. In the view of the Committee, such a declaration would be a recognition of the role gas will have to play in attaining the SDGs while deploying best practices in managing methane emissions along the gas value chain, improving urban air quality, achieving needed synergies between renewable energy and natural gas to enhance the energy efficiency in the whole energy system, and highlighting a range of emerging issues such as hydrogen, the future uses of gas, biogas, and exporter and importer dialogue.

14. The United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) provides countries, companies, financial institutions and other stakeholders with a tool for sustainable development of energy and mineral resource endowments. UNFC applies to energy resources including oil and gas; renewable energy; nuclear fuel; mineral resources; injection projects for the geological storage of $CO_2$; and anthropogenic resources such as secondary resources recycled from residues and wastes. The emerging challenges in these sectors are the sustainable, environmental-friendly, carbon neutral and efficient development and production of energy and raw materials required for a growing population. Innovations in production, consumption and transportation are fundamentally challenging how energy and material sectors function today. As a unique tool for harmonizing policy frameworks, government oversight, industry business processes and efficient capital allocation, UNFC can manage the natural resources required for the present and future needs of society and facilitate attainment of the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular due to its focus on environmental and social issues. The Committee has approved development of a full-fledged United Nations Resource Management System (UNRMS) based on UNFC.

15. The Committee is well placed to develop strategic responses to achieve a low-carbon world based on strong international cooperation and a scaling up of countries' combined ambition beyond current pledges. The Committee sees itself as a platform that drives towards action at a national and community levels. It seeks ways to reinforce this role in the future. The twenty-seventh session was organised to set in motion a consultation with the Committee to sharpen and reorient the structure of the Committee's work in response to shifting needs and to explore potential partnerships for enhanced capacity building and sharing of experiences.

16. The full list of conclusions and recommendations arising from the twenty-seventh session of the Committee can be found in document ECE/ENERGY/119.

# III. Major activities planned for 2019 and beyond

17. Looking forward, the Committee recommended priority actions that are sensible economically, environmentally, and socially under all circumstances and that therefore should be pursued aggressively and diligently to drive achieving the 2030 Agenda, namely

sustainable resource management, energy efficiency improvements in buildings, industry, and transport and methane management in the extractive industries. Focus areas arising from the twenty-seventh session are listed below:

## Pathways to sustainable energy

18. Modelling efforts and workshops have continued to implement the extrabudgetary project "Pathways to Sustainable Energy", approved by EXCOM on 16 September 2016 (informal document 2016/55). The project aims to increase capacities of UNECE member States to create a solid base for policy dialogues on different options through the development, implementation and tracking of national sustainable energy policies that are aligned with international agreements, see also document ECE/ENERGY/2018/1 for a complete overview and intermediate results.

19. After the discussion of major driving forces, critical uncertainties and unknowns with influence on energy systems development, the project will now move to the preparation of policy pathways and early warning systems to alert countries who may not be on track to achieve their targets. The Committee will be consulted on results and draft political messages in its open-ended session in May and will thus inform the consultation on the Committee procedures and structures mentioned above.

20. The Pathways project has progressed with extrabudgetary support from the Russian Federation, and both Germany and the United States of America have supported the project by sponsoring activities of two modelling institutions. The Committee recognised the need for further extra-budgetary support and issued a broad call for additional donors.

## Tenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development

21. The Committee endorsed the international forum process as an effective collaboration among the five Regional Commissions and key international partners for each Commission to support its respective member States in attaining objectives. Preparations for the Tenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development will begin in collaboration with partners early in 2019.

22. The focus of the anniversary event, planned for fall 2019 will explore selected nexus areas in line with the agenda of the Secretary General, who recently pointed to six areas for the 2019 United Nations Climate Summit: energy transition; industry transition; resilience; local action and cities; finance and carbon pricing; and nature-based solutions. Each of these areas is addressed in whole or in part by the activities of the Committee. The agenda will unite all technology options with regional cooperation, investment and financing aspects. In this context, the Committee stressed the importance of a holistic approach for implementing the 2030 Agenda and recommended a broad view of energy for sustainable development, as is already reflected in the international fora process.

## Tracking progress of sustainable energy in the UNECE region

23. The World Bank has approached UNECE to explore continuation of the work related to tracking of sustainable energy progress in the UNECE region, leading to an updated regional status report of the "Global Tracking Framework" on attainment of energy for sustainable development, pending available resources. A proposal for funding this work by the custodian agencies is in preparation. The other four Regional Commissions have already secured the funding needed to enable their participation. UNECE's notable contribution in the previous round was the assessment of progress toward the broader objectives of energy

for sustainable development, including addressing all energy-related objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the exploration of appropriate complementary indicators.

24. The Committee, under the leadership of its Chair, will also remain closely engaged with the HLPF's annual review of SDGs, in particular SDGs 9, 11, 12, 13, and 17, as recommended above. SDG 13 (climate) will be reviewed in 2019. As far as SDG 7 is concerned, the Committee requested close involvement of the sustainable energy subprogramme in the now renamed "SDG 7 Technical Advisory Group" (former ad hoc Technical Advisory Group) to maintain proactive inputs into forthcoming SDG 7 reviews. Such inputs could be based on joint work among all Regional Commissions to develop a broader set of energy indicators. In this context, the Committee expressed support for UNECE's continued involvement in UN Energy.

## Modernisation of energy infrastructure

25. Under the leadership of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane, work has continued to progress a project that brings together the expertise of all the subsidiary bodies to create a replicable and flexible transformational business model for structural change of large industrial complexes. The Committee endorsed the development of a case-specific model to demonstrate how to modernize an industrial complex that has grown over time to embrace up-stream energy production, industrial facilities, and accompanying residential/urban infrastructure. Nearby population centres provide the workforce for these complexes and both benefit from employment opportunities and render themselves vulnerable to secondary impacts on the local economy, including exposing their communities to a degraded local environment. In the UNECE region, there are several such complexes where mining, power generation, metallurgy, manufacturing and shipping facilities have grown into dense, interrelated centres. The more profound the transition towards low-carbon energy and green economy that is undertaken by a country, the more competitive and sustainable the relevant economy can become.

26. So far, the project has engaged with interested partner organisations and international financial institutions to develop approach and lessons learnt from regions already undergoing such changes in a proactive manner. It is expected that the expertise provided by the Committee's subsidiary bodies can contribute to integrating energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions while cleaning the fossil-based structures. The work would bring to bear the range of expertise found in the UNECE energy subprogramme (managing methane accumulations, efficient energy production from coal and gas, improving industrial and end-use energy efficiency, optimizing resource management, and enabling the introduction of renewable energy technology) to enhance the environmental, social, and economic performance of the site in line with the 2030 Agenda. Once a host-country has been found, work on pilot projects can begin.

## UNFC and United Nations Resource Management System

27. In September 2018, Ukraine amended its national classification to be aligned with the latest version of UNFC. This amendment makes Ukraine's classification up-to-date with international standards and comparable globally. Finland is applying UNFC for minerals. Finland, Norway and Sweden have developed Guidance to Apply UNFC for minerals. Many other initiatives will progress in 2019. The Russian Federation has indicated interest that the BRICS Bank be mandated to use UNFC for lending decisions. The Russian Federation is also supporting development of a UNFC for Eurasia. Having bridged its petroleum system to UNFC, the Russian Federation will work on bridging its solid minerals system in 2019 and beyond. The European Union is using UNFC to harmonize its raw materials data. At the initiative of the European Commission, in particular D.G. GROW, a UNFC for Europe is under discussion. The 55 African countries with the support of the African Union

Commission have agreed to apply UNFC Africa-wide. Work on development of a UNFC for Africa will continue. China has now bridged its minerals and petroleum systems to UNFC. The bridging documents will help promote in-depth exchanges and cooperation between China and UNECE in the field of sustainable energy, advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and extend international cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative. China is looking to extend deployment of UNFC throughout the BRI community. Mexico is testing application of UNFC to selected petroleum projects as a prelude to broader adoption of the system nationally. Other countries in Latin America are now looking to UNFC and a UNFC for this region is under consideration.

28. Sustainable Resource Management is crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda. But countries and companies have difficulties to manage natural resources sustainably. The challenge today is not the availability of resources, but how they could be produced in a socially, environmentally and economically acceptable manner. It is essential to have not only public support for resource projects, but also investor confidence to secure the financial capital required for development. A new resource management system is needed from the standpoints of global policy requirements, macroeconomic management, integrated resource management and the need for secondary resource management to support a circular economy. UNFC and a United Nations Resource Management System (UNRMS) based on UNFC are the tools to rewrite the resource management narrative needed if the world is to make progress on the 2030 Agenda. UNRMS will focus on progression of resource projects, social and environmental acceptability and investment readiness. It will be a tool for governments and industry to manage resources more sustainably.

## Global Year of Methane

29. The Global Methane Initiative is an international public-private initiative that advances cost-effective, near-term methane abatement and recovery and use of methane as a clean energy source in three sectors: biogas, coal mines, and oil and gas systems. Working in collaboration with other international organizations, the Initiative has allied with UNECE as well as with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) to reduce global methane emissions. Focusing collective efforts on methane emission sources is a cost-effective approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase energy security, enhance economic growth, improve air quality and improve worker safety. The Global Methane Initiative has launched the Global Methane Challenge to promote global actions to reduce methane emissions. It has done so because: 1) methane is a powerful greenhouse gas and emissions are on the rise; 2) methane is a short-lived climate pollutant, so reductions now can have significant near-term benefits; and 3) cost-effective technologies to monitor, capture, and use methane are widely available today. The suggestions embraced in the challenge include: 1) establishing systematic, comparable, and transparent monitoring activities and emissions inventories; 2) establishing action plans to reduce methane emissions; 3) improving public awareness; 4) undertaking capacity building, providing technical support, and arranging project finance; 5) pursuing mitigation activities; and 6) implementing best practice policies.

30. UNECE has in hand its best practice guidance for managing accumulation of methane in operating coal mines and is developing further best practice guidance for pre-mining drainage and for abandoned coal mines. In addition, UNECE is developing best practice guidance for monitoring and reporting methane emissions in the extractive industries. Dissemination and deployment of these monitoring and remediation procedures would accelerate reduction in atmospheric concentrations of methane.

31. The declaration of 2020 as the International Year of Methane in support of the Global Methane Challenge and its partner organizations sets the stage for collaboration with the other Regional Commissions and with the United Nations Development Program across a number of activities that would serve to deploy and disseminate UNECE's products. Natural

gas is expected to make important contributions to attainment of the 2030 Agenda, including possible displacement of coal for power generation, penetration of the markets for mobility, and enabling sustainable urban environments. However, methane has a climate forcing factor that is well over 100 times that of $CO_2$. As a consequence, the anticipated expansion of the role that natural gas might play in support of sustainable development can only work if the environmental challenges of methane losses can be addressed. The Committee agreed to support the Global Methane Challenge through development of best practice guidance for monitoring, reporting and verification of methane losses and on remediation, through assessment of natural gas as a strategic option for countries to pursue their commitments under the 2030 Agenda, and through its work on mobility and LNG. Activities to support the Global Methane Challenge through an International Year of Methane would include activities and events not covered by UNECE's regular budget, but only to the extent that extra-budgetary funds were made available. These activities would include training workshops, awareness raising campaigns, and demonstration projects undertaken in collaboration with actors across the UN family of organisations.

## Deep transformation of the energy system through electricity

32. A country's reform agenda needs to be much wider than energy, and the Committee has been discussing the role of electricity as well as natural gas as ways to support diversification, cost-effective deployment of low-carbon energy, phasing out subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption, and measures to develop clear and more efficient energy technologies. It is about using a well-functioning energy sector to enhance growth and development. In this context, it is important to ensure that climate resilience is fully integrated into planning energy infrastructure and investments that are at risk from climate change and variability. Investment in power grids and promotion of cross-border interconnections will accelerate access to electricity, improve efficiency, and accelerate penetration of variable renewable power.

33. Given the critical role electricity is making to deep transformation in energy systems, the Committee has asked the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production from Fossil Fuels to change its name to Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems and to consider all aspects of systems transformation and resiliency to low-carbon energy supply in future work plans. It has requested the subsidiary body to coordinate with the other groups of experts to develop a proposal on how the work on electricity could be organized more effectively. Related recommendations will be shared during the country consultation and in the Committee session in May.

## High-Performance Buildings Initiative

34. As noted above, the HPBI comprises: 1) a global network of International Centres of Excellence on High-Performance Buildings that will provide on-the-ground implementation assistance for building owners and developers, contractors, architects, engineers and planning officials; and 2) a consortium of universities, the Global Building Network, to undertake both research into building materials, design, and construction and quality education of next generation architects and engineers. Activities in 2019 and beyond will include extending both the global network and the university consortium. Efforts will include the solicitation of extra-budgetary funding to support both work under the ECE Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency in Buildings and the education and outreach programmes of the global network and university consortium. Additional work will be undertaken to develop a library of case

studies demonstrating global applicability of UNECE's Framework Guidelines for Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings.[7]

# IV. Possible changes to the subsidiary structure of the Committee

35. The energy transition is ongoing around the world and it is complex. In order to better respond to the fast-moving energy agenda and to create a more dynamic and proactive set of activities, the Committee, under the leadership of its Bureau, is rethinking its procedures, structures, and activities to deliver more compelling outcomes. These reflections will be informed by the results of the project "Pathways to Sustainable Energy," the results of the Global Tracking report and the HLPF review, but they also must be seen in context and must align with the ongoing reform process set in motion in December 2017 at the Seventy-second Session of the General Assembly, in which Member States approved the change from a biennial to an annual budget period on a trial basis from the beginning of 2020 onwards.

36. To this effect, the Committee will undertake an extended consultation on the approach it wishes to take – both in terms of mandates, structures and content – to support UNECE member States' efforts at deep transformation of their energy systems. The consultation will lead to an informal, open-ended Committee session on 16 May 2019 in Geneva with decisions expected at the Committee's twenty-eighth session on 25–27 September 2019, which will then be presented to EXCOM following the session.

37. It is expected that future mandates and work plans for the subsidiary bodies, as they will be prepared for the Committee's twenty-eighth session, give special attention to joint activities across sectors within governments and within ECE in addressing energy nexus issues, and will explore potential partnerships for enhanced capacity building and sharing of experiences and lesson learned.

# V. Follow-up to the 2017 session of the Economic Commission for Europe

38. All the activities of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and its subsidiary bodies are designed to help member States achieve the energy-related objectives of the 2030 Agenda and to reduce the environmental footprint of the energy sector. To this end, it is recommended to the EXCOM that certain decisions regarding the energy dossier be forwarded to the 68th Commission for consideration, notably:

(a) Recommended that the UNECE's Framework Guidelines for Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings and their derivative High-Performance Buildings Initiative be deployed and disseminated widely, specifically drawing on the capacities of the five Regional Commissions and the United Nations Development Programme;

(b) Recognizing the role that growing atmospheric concentrations of methane play in climate change and the imperative for near-term remediation, recommended to the United Nations' Economic and Social Council that 2020 be declared the International Year of Methane in support of the Global Methane Challenge and its partner organizations.

[7] http://www.unece.org/energywelcome/areas-of-work/energy-efficiency/activities/energy-efficiency-in-buildings.html

# VI. Intersectoral activities: new activities and/or progress in existing intersectoral activities

## Nexus between energy and environment and gender

39. The nexus among energy and other key development challenges (e.g. water, food, health, education, and gender) suggests that numerous opportunities can arise from wider cross-sector perspectives and more holistic decision-making. Work will continue a number fronts, in particular with the Environment Division.

40. Going forward, the Committee will increase its efforts to promote the gender perspective throughout its system, including by raising awareness on gender mainstreaming in energy-related activities; promoting the incorporation of a gender perspective in meeting agendas and presentations; and, creating a supportive environment for expert participation, policies, regulations and innovative development that consider both women's and men's needs in the energy sector.

# VII. Technical cooperation activities

41. Regional advisory services are key in the eyes of the Committee to respond to the needs to member States going forward. Document ECE/ENERGY/2018/9 describes the activities in the region in detail.

# VIII. Cooperation with other organizations

42. The Committee considers working in partnership with others to achieve SDG 7 as a fundamental modus operandi, and in consequence, representative experts of the private sector, academia, and not-for-profit organizations are regular participants in its sessions. The value of this collaboration cannot be overstated given the complexity of the issues in achieving sustainable energy. In consequence, and as every year, the Committee strives to deepen the existing relationship with the other four Regional Commissions, the World Bank Group, the International Energy Agency, the International Renewable Energy Agency, SEforAll, the Energy Community, and the International Energy Charter on tracking progress towards attainment of the energy-related SDGs and targets.

43. This year, it has notably increased outreach to academic institutions (Penn State University, Boston University, and Dartmouth College) to achieve the objectives of the sustainable energy subprogramme, and it will seek the extension of this outreach to other academic institutions in other sub-regions of UNECE going forward. The Committee renewed its encouragement to engage with other organizations and groups with relevance for UNECE energy activities to ensure complete coverage of relevant data and analysis, including deepened collaboration with organizations comprising UN Energy and with other intergovernmental, industrial, and civil society organizations.