

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Ninety-fifth Meeting
Geneva, 11 December 2017

EXCOM/CONCLU/95

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

Meeting of the Executive Committee
11 December 2017

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda.

1. The provisional draft agenda for the 95th meeting was adopted.

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

2. The conclusions from the 94th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/94) were adopted.

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 3 - Matters relating to the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

(a) Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

3. The Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy (CSE), Mr. Jürgen Keinhorst, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of CSE over the past year and its plans for the future.

4. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed satisfaction with work to implement the energy-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He welcomed the recommendations of the 8th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (Astana, June 2017) and hoped the 9th edition, scheduled to take place in Kiev in 2019, would be a good platform for agreeing to effective steps to fast-track the achievement of those SDGs. He requested further information on the programme of work and dates of the Kiev event. He welcomed that work on modelling energy development strategies had started as part of the Pathways project and hoped to see the results during the first quarter of 2018. He supported the decision items tabled under Item 3b of the agenda.

5. The representative of the European Union and its member States appreciated efforts to align CSE’s work with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. He noted with satisfaction the concrete and useful outputs of the Committee, such as guidelines on energy efficiency in buildings jointly developed with the Committee on Housing and Land Management, and the United Nations Framework Classification on Resources. Regarding the collaborative process of the organization of the International Fora on Sustainable Energy and UNECE’s cooperation with other Regional Commissions in that context, he hoped the lessons learned from the Astana event would be applied by the secretariat in the future. He said they would follow with interest upcoming discussions on possible changes to the subsidiary structure of the Committee.

6. The representative of Belarus expressed support for the Committee both in terms of specific products and in terms of a spectrum of comprehensive negotiating efforts on energy issues relevant to the region. He noted the importance of continuing cooperation with other international organizations including the Regional Commissions, UN Environment, the United

Nations Industrial Development Organization and the International Renewable Energy Agency.

7. Mr. Keinhorst thanked delegations for their words of support. He said the date of the Kiev event would be confirmed as soon as possible. He expected that the results of the modelling exercise mentioned by the representative of the Russian Federation would be ready during the first quarter of 2018.

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

(b) Decisions on matters related to the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

9. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves:

- a. the programme of work for 2018–2019 of the subprogramme on sustainable energy as contained in ECE/ENERGY/2017/11/Rev.1;
- b. the renewal of the mandate for the Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency until 31 December 2019 and its Work Plan for 2018–2019, as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/2017/5;
- c. the renewal of the mandate for the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Production from Fossil Fuels until 31 December 2019 and its Work Plan for 2018–2019, as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/2017/6;
- d. the renewal of the mandate for the Group of Experts on Renewable Energy until 31 December 2019 and its Work Plan for 2018–2019, as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/2017/4;
- e. the renewal of the mandate for the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane until 31 December 2019 and its Work Plan for 2018–2019, as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/2017/7;
- f. the renewal of the mandate for the Group of Experts on Gas until 31 December 2021 and its Work Plan for 2018–2019, as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/2017/10; and;
- g. the Work Plan of the Expert Group on Resource Classification for 2018–2019, as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/GE.3/2017/2/Add.1.

Item 4 - Matters relating to the Conference of European Statisticians.

(a) Meeting with the Chair of the Conference of European Statisticians.

10. The Chair of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), Ms. Marjo Bruun, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of CES over the past year and its plans for the future.

11. The representative of Belarus appreciated the work carried out by the Conference and the subprogramme and supported the priorities identified for 2018 and beyond. He emphasized the importance of capacity building and harmonization of existing practices with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and other relevant guidelines and recommendations.

12. The representative of the United States of America appreciated the close cooperation between his government and CES. Regarding informal document 2017/62, he noted that paragraph 26 indicated a past focus on capacity building in the countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus whereas paragraph 27 seemed to signal that capacity building priorities might be changing, and requested a clarification.

13. The representative of the Russian Federation appreciated CES' efforts to develop common methodologies for statistical work. These efforts were appreciated by the Russian Statistical Service as well as by different regional integration entities including the CIS Statistical Committee. He underlined the need, going forward, to overcome information gaps in official statistics and observe the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. He also noted the importance of working independently from the economic and political considerations to ensure fully representative data, and said that timely statistics were in the interest of all member States. He supported the decision items tabled under Item 4b of the agenda.

14. The representative of the European Union and its member States thanked the CES for its work. He noted the alignment of this work with the 2030 Agenda, in particular on the development of statistics for the SDGs. He said the issue of geospatial data should be a strong consideration in future work. He noted that various task forces were being discontinued with new ones, as well as new steering committees, being proposed, and supported this shift in the subsidiary structure of CES. He took note of the upcoming discussion on the creation of a stand alone body on national accounts.

15. The representative of Switzerland said the work on modernization of statistical systems was highly appreciated and noted that many UNECE guidelines and recommendations in statistics were widely used in the region and beyond. In the UNECE region, there is good cooperation between CES and the statistical bodies of OECD and the European Union. In light of the challenges and opportunities presented by the 2030 Agenda, he said it was vital for such cooperation to occur at a global level and thought that the Regional Commissions had an important role to play in this context. UNECE's products are relevant beyond its region as well as to the work of the UN Statistical Commission. At its 49th session in March 2018, the latter will discuss the question of whether the UN needs a head statistician. The representative of Switzerland believed this could be vital to improve the already good cooperation between the Regional Commissions and other entities in statistics and reduce the burden on member States. He thanked the Committee, the Statistics division, member States and international organizations participating in the work of CES and said his country would remain active in that area. He supported the decision items being tabled under Item 4b of the agenda.

16. The representative of Sweden aligned himself with the representative of the European Union and its member States. He appreciated the work carried out by CES and the secretariat and noted that independent, good quality statistics were fundamental for a democratic society. Sweden is active in this work and benefits greatly from its cooperation with CES. He particularly appreciated the work of the High-level Group on Modernization of Official Statistics, and its demand-driven approach to the topic, as well as the work on statistics for the SDGs, geospatial information and statistical information. He supported the decision items being tabled under Item 4b of the agenda.

17. The representative of Lithuania appreciated the report of Ms. Bruun. She said the proposed changes to the structure of CES, including the possible creation of a stand alone body

on national accounts and the creation of various task forces and steering committees, were timely and welcome.

18. Ms. Bruun thanked the delegates for their words of support. In response to the United States, she clarified that in the past, capacity building activities had focused on basic statistical capacity. These activities would continue. Meanwhile, the activities mentioned in paragraph 27 of informal document 2017/62 referred to capacity building on statistics for SDG and modernization of official statistics. She noted all countries needed support in these areas.

19. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Conference of European Statisticians for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Conference and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

(b) Decisions on matters related to the Conference of European Statisticians.

20. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves:

- a. the programme of work of the Statistics subprogramme for the period 2018–2019, as contained in document ECE/CES/2017/13;
- b. the mandates and terms of references of the following Teams of Specialists established under the Conference of European Statisticians:
 - i. Steering Group on statistics for Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2018–2022;
 - ii. Steering Group on poverty and inequality for the period 2018–2022;
 - iii. Steering Group on population and housing censuses for the period 2018–2022;
 - iv. Steering Group on consumer price indices for the period 2018–2022;
 - v. Task Force on exchange and sharing of economic data for the period 2018–2020;
 - vi. Task Force on education satellite accounts for the period 2018–2019;
 - vii. Task Force on measuring old-age population in institutions for the period 2018–2019;
 - viii. Task Force on waste statistics for the period 2018–2020; and
- c. the renewal of the mandate of the High-level Group for the modernization of official statistics (HLG-MOS) for the period 2018–2022, as contained in the Annexes of ECE/EX/2017/L.14.

Item 5 - Matters relating to the Committee on Forests and Forest Industry.

(a) Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Forests and Forest Industry

21. The Chair of the Committee on Forests and Forest Industry (COFFI), Ms. Marta Gaworska, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of COFFI over the past year and its plans for the future.

22. The representative of the United States appreciated the extensive work of COFFI and noted that the combination of an effective secretariat and subsidiary science teams uniquely fostered technical communication and bridged the gap between forest science and forest management in the region. He welcomed the ongoing cooperation with the European Forestry Commission (EFC) and the adoption of the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW).

23. The representative of the Russian Federation welcomed the adoption of the Warsaw IPoW at the recent joint session of the EFC and COFFI. He highly rated the contributions to the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan on Forests, including the provisions on bolstering the role of the Regional Commissions in implementing relevant global decisions. He noted the contributions of the Chair, Bureau of COFFI and the secretariat in the preparation of the IPoW and appreciated the excellent organization by Poland of the recent joint session of the EFC and COFFI in Warsaw in October 2017 and of the 4th European Forest Week. Regarding future areas of work, his government was particularly interested in the Forest Sector Outlook Studies and ready to participate as an observer in the preparation of European Forest Sector Outlook Studies 3. His government was also ready to join the preparation of the ECE/FAO regional report “State of Europe’s Forests 2020” and would submit official statistics if that report were to carry a UN status. He concluded by saying that the Russian Federal Forest Agency might propose to organize the next EFC/COFFI joint session in 2019 in the Russian Federation.

24. The representative of Kazakhstan expressed full support to the work of COFFI and the Warsaw IPoW. He stressed the importance of capacity building for the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus. He announced that Kazakhstan would host a Ministerial conference in June 2018 on forest landscape restoration under the Bonn Challenge. This event would be co-organized with the ECE/FAO Joint Forestry and Timber section with support from Germany and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. The results of the event are expected to lead to increased forest areas in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

25. The representative of the European Union and its member States welcomed the Warsaw IPoW, appreciated the work of COFFI, and took note of the wide array of results and outputs from the past year. He looked forward to the completion in 2018 of products such as the report on forest ownership in the region and the studies on valuation and payments for forest ecosystems and green jobs in the forest sector.

26. The representative of Switzerland thanked Poland for hosting the joint session and the 4th European Forest Week. Having hosted the previous edition of these events, Switzerland appreciated the considerable effort this required, and was satisfied with the results of the Warsaw meeting and the adoption of the IPoW. He noted that the latter constituted an excellent basis for fruitful cooperation between EFC and COFFI. He further said that Swiss national experts actively participated in the relevant task forces and appreciated the exchange of information and best practices. He also welcomed the regular exchanges of results in the joint ECE/FAO working groups. He said Switzerland welcomed the regional contributions to global processes such as the 2030 Agenda and the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030. He supported the decision items tabled under Item 5b of the agenda.

27. Ms. Gaworska thanked delegates for their words of support, and hoped for continued engagement by member States in the implementation phase.

28. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Committee on Forests and Forest Industry for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Conference and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

(b) Decisions on matters related to the Conference of European Statisticians.

29. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves:
- a. the programme of work of the Forestry and Timber subprogramme for 2018–2019, as contained in document ECE/TIM/2017/11, with the amendments adopted by the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry, as contained in ECE/EX/2017/L.15;
 - b. the renewal of the mandate of the Joint ECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics and Management for the period 2018-2021, as contained in document ECE/TIM/2017/2, Annex I, Part II;
 - c. the renewal of the mandate for the period 2018-2019 and terms of reference of the following ECE/FAO Teams of Specialists on:
 - i. Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management;
 - ii. Sustainable Forest Products;
 - iii. Forest Products Statistics;
 - iv. Wood Energy;
 - v. Forest Sector Outlook;
 - vi. Forest Policy (Forest Policy Network);
 - vii. Forest Communication (Forest Communicators' Network);
 - viii. Green Jobs in the Forest Sector (Joint ILO/ECE/FAO Expert Network), as contained in ECE/TIM/2017/2, Annex I, Part II.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 6 – Update on evaluation activities: Evaluation Workplan 2020–2021 (for approval)

30. The Chair informed EXCOM that the Executive Secretary could not attend the meeting due to official travel and requested the Deputy Executive Secretary to introduce the item.
31. The Deputy Executive Secretary said that, as per past practice, EXCOM was requested to approve the evaluation workplan for 2020-2021 as contained in informal document 2017/64 Rev.1.
32. The representative of Switzerland said he did not object to the workplan. Given the document's long-term perspective, he wondered if in the future it would be possible to adapt it.
33. The representative of the European Union and its member States noted that all four planned internal evaluations were to be conducted by external consultants and asked why they could not be conducted by internal staff.
34. The representative of the Russian Federation noted that it would be difficult to predict in 2017 which subprogrammes would be in need of evaluation in 2020 and seconded the question of the representative of Switzerland.
35. The Deputy Executive Secretary pointed out that the workplan had been prepared in accordance with UNECE's EXCOM-approved evaluation policy. He said the hiring of external consultants aimed at respecting the independence of the evaluation function, and that the workplan could be adapted in the future if needed.

36. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the Evaluation Workplan 2020-2021 contained in informal document 2017/64 Rev.1 with the understanding that adjustments may be made as necessary.

Item 7 – Strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management:
Proposal for greater collaboration between Economic Commission for Europe and Europe
Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management

37. The Deputy Executive Secretary recalled that, at the 67th Commission session, member States had requested the secretariat to develop a proposal on how UNECE could collaborate more closely with the Europe Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Europe) and said that this proposal was now submitted to EXCOM in informal document 2017/65. Since the Commission decision, UNECE had been developing closer ties with UN-GGIM: Europe, with the assistance of DESA. A successful joint UNECE / UN-GGIM: Europe Workshop had been held in November in Stockholm, on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Standards to support the production of statistics for the SDGs. UNECE had also hosted in November 2017 a meeting of the UN-GGIM: Europe Executive Committee where the discussion with representatives of the UNECE work programmes on statistics, environment, and housing and land management had centred on areas of common interest. Participants had agreed to further explore areas for joint activities with these programmes. The Deputy Executive Secretary noted that the main directions of work, as well as concrete joint activities for 2018-2020 that could be executed within existing resources, were listed in the proposal and hoped EXCOM could approve these. He said the secretariat would report back periodically on the progress of the work.

38. The representative of the Russian Federation did not object to the proposal, but requested additional information as to the expected concrete and practical results of this collaboration for both specialized agencies in member States and for international cooperation in information exchange in general. He believed this would help solve the problem of sustainable financing for the activities in the secretariat's proposal. He said this work should not divert resources from the existing activities of the Statistics division.

39. The representative of the European Union and its member States supported the proposal, in particular the factors listed under headings 3 and 4 of informal document 2017/65. He said developing the cooperation between the two organizations in accordance with the proposal would allow for fruitful interaction in an agile fashion and within available resources. He requested the secretariat to report on the progress of the work no less than once per year.

40. In response to the Russian Federation, the Director of the Statistics division noted that the CES Bureau had been strongly advocating increased engagement with UN-GGIM: Europe since 2015. She recognized the relevance of working with the geospatial information community and said the division had to adapt in order to remain relevant itself. She assured EXCOM that this would not divert resources from other activities but would be accomplished by allocating resources more efficiently. In terms of concrete results and working principles, she listed the following:

- a. Integration of statistics and geospatial information;
- b. Cross-sectoral collaboration with other UNECE subprogrammes on the area of geospatial information;

- c. Ensuring that all UNECE member States are involved: She noted that the UN-GGIM: Europe plenary sessions had so far been attended mostly by member States of the European Union and took place without Russian interpretation. UN-GGIM: Europe's most recent plenary session had agreed to invite all UNECE member States to future sessions, with UNECE facilitating this participation.

41. The representative of the Russian Federation thanked the secretariat for the satisfactory responses provided.

42. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the main directions of work and the proposed collaborative activities for 2018-2020 between UNECE and UN GGIM: Europe as contained in informal document 2017/65. EXCOM requests the secretariat to report back periodically on the progress of this work.

Item 8 – Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2018

43. The Deputy Executive Secretary said that, following informal consultations that had continued until the previous week, the secretariat had submitted the draft provisional agenda and draft informal programme of the 2018 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development to EXCOM. He hoped EXCOM would approve the agenda and said the secretariat would further elaborate, in consultation with member States, a detailed programme in the coming weeks.

44. The representative of Switzerland appreciated that consensus on the draft provisional agenda and informal programme had been reached during the informal consultations. He thought it was important to ensure that the Regional Forum become a platform to discuss the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It should not be restricted to the topics discussed in the UNECE sectoral committees but also bring new perspectives through multi-stakeholder participation. He informed EXCOM that Professor Peter Messerli of the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Bern, who had been designated by the Secretary-General to draft the global report on sustainable development, was prepared to contribute to the Regional Forum.

45. The Chair concluded that EXCOM decides to endorse the draft annotated provisional agenda for the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region (1-2 March 2018) as contained in informal document 2017/66 and requests the secretariat to develop the more detailed programme in consultation with member States.

Item 9 - Important new developments: briefing by the Executive Secretary

46. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed EXCOM of a planned Memorandum of Understanding with the EuroGeoSurveys (AFACT), not-for-profit organization representing 37 national geological surveys and some regional surveys in Europe, which advises on sustainable development of on- and off-shore natural resources. The purpose of the MoU is to strengthen development and application of the UN Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) in line with the SDGs. The MoU will facilitate promotion of UNFC in Europe, and help draw from the expertise of EGS to support adoption of UNFC in other regions. The MOU will have no financial implications on either party.

47. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed EXCOM of a planned Memorandum of Understanding with the Enniscorthy High Performance Building Education Center to establish

a UNECE Center of Excellence in Enniscorthy in Ireland. This MoU will contribute to UNECE's activities related to energy efficiency in buildings and, more specifically, the Framework Guidelines for Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings that were endorsed by the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

48. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following recent meetings:
- a. 7-9 November, New York: Chief Executive Board
 - b. 8-10 November, Geneva: 78th session of the Committee on Housing and Land Management
 - c. 14-15 November, Rovaniemi: Arctic Spirit Conference
 - d. 14-17 November, Geneva: 23rd session of the Committee on Environmental Policy
 - e. 27 November, Antalya: Global South-South Development Expo
 - f. 29 November, Ashgabat: 28th Meeting of the Energy Charter Conference and Ministerial Meeting: "Mobilising Investment for Sustainable Energy Future and Diversified Transportation Routes"
 - g. 4-6 December, Nairobi: 3rd UN Environment Assembly
 - h. 5-6 December, Dushanbe: SPECA Economic Forum and 12th session of the SPECA Governing Council.
 - i. 11 December, Ashgabat: International Conference hosted by the Government of Turkmenistan and the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia on the topic "10 years of Cooperation for Peace and Prosperity of the Region".
49. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming events:
- a. 11-14 December, Geneva: 37th session of the Executive Body of the Air Convention.

Item 10 – Other business

50. The Deputy Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that negotiations on the proposed programme budget for 2018-2019 were ongoing in the Fifth Committee and that further budget cuts, in particular in programme support costs, would seriously impact the ability of UNECE to deliver on its mandates and programme activities. He encouraged member States to engage on the discussions concerning UNECE at UN Headquarters.

51. The Chair informed EXCOM that the next meeting would be on 30 January 2018 and wished all delegations a peaceful holiday season and a good new year.
