

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
Ninety-sixth Meeting  
Geneva, 30 January 2018

**EXCOM/CONCLU/96**

**CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS**

## **FORMAL SEGMENT**

### Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda.

1. The provisional draft agenda for the 96<sup>th</sup> meeting was adopted.

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

2. The conclusions from the 95<sup>th</sup> meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/95) were adopted.

## **FORMAL SEGMENT**

### Item 3 - Matters relating to the Working Group on Ageing.

#### (a) Meeting with the Chair of the Working Group on Ageing.

3. The Chair of the Working Group on Ageing (WGA), Mr. Edmundo Martinho, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of WGA over the past year and its plans for the future. He sought EXCOM’s approval for the renewal of the mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Ageing for the period 2018-2022 and the programme of work of the Population component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme for 2018-2019. He also informed EXCOM that the WGA had decided to set up a consultation group, currently composed of Austria, Germany, Portugal and Slovenia with the Russian Federation as an observer, to explore the possibility of a resource-neutral transformation of the WGA to a standing sectoral committee without prejudice to the work of UNECE in other areas of its mandate. This was done pursuant to paragraph 38 of the Lisbon Ministerial Declaration from the UNECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing (Lisbon, September 2017).

4. The representative of the Russian Federation welcomed the outcomes of the Lisbon Conference and commended its smooth organization. He said the Russian Federation was committed to fulfilling the key objectives of the Lisbon Declaration, and noted the WGA’s important role in supporting contacts between national coordinators, ensuring interagency cooperation and improving the awareness of the international community on the topic of ageing. He supported the decisions put in front of the EXCOM.

5. On the topic of the transformation of the WGA to a sectoral committee, the representative of the Russian Federation emphasized that UNECE’s priority was economic development rather than social issues, and thought that a new committee could lead to a refocusing in UNECE’s work, and in turn to a review of UNECE’s mandate and possibly further reforms. He also said that, in the current environment of budget cuts, a new committee would require reallocation of resources, possibly to the detriment of other work areas. In terms of the consultation group, he requested a clarification as to the Russian Federation’s status therein and confirmed that his country wished to be a full-fledged member.

6. The representative of the European Union and its member States commended the Lisbon Conference, recognized the value of the WGA's other 2017 outputs, and took note of the planned activities for 2018. He supported the decisions presented to EXCOM.

7. The representative of Belarus said his government had recently joined the work of the WGA and expressed interest in the demographical issues addressed, such as raising the retirement age, the growth of the population of elderly people and the resulting pressure on social payouts. He said extending the mandate of the WGA and exploring the possibility of transforming it to a sectoral committee would be important contributions to the challenges related to ageing and demographic issues in the UNECE region.

8. Mr. Martinho thanked delegations for their words of support. In response to the comments by the Russian Federation, he noted that the transformation of the WGA to a sectoral committee would make the added value of its work clear to all stakeholders and bring stability. He also said that ageing created challenges to all societies in terms of economic and social development, housing and social assistance and was therefore very much relevant to economic concerns. He recalled that the Lisbon Declaration had called for this transformation, if it indeed took place, to be resource-neutral. In terms of the Russian Federation's status in the consultation group, he said the country would be most welcome to join the group as a full-fledged member in order to ensure that the final decision reflects all its concerns.

9. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Working Group on Ageing for the comprehensive report. EXCOM appreciates being informed about the activities and achievements of the Working Group and being kept aware of future directions of its work.

(b) Decisions on matters related to the Working Group on Ageing.

10. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves:

- i. the renewal of mandate of the Working Group on Ageing for the period 2018–2022 and its terms of reference as contained in the Annex to document ECE/EX/2018/L.1;
- ii. the programme of work of the Population component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme for 2018–2019 as contained in document ECE/WG.1/2017/5.

Item 4 - Matters relating to the Committee on Housing and Land Management.

(a) Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Housing and Land Management.

11. On behalf of the Chair of the Committee on Housing and Land Management (CHLM), Mr. Elshad Khanalibayli from the Committee's Bureau made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of CHLM over the past year and its plans for the future. He sought EXCOM's approval for the programme of work of the Housing and Land Management component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme for 2018–2019.

12. The representative of Azerbaijan commended the organization of the 2017 session of the CHLM and welcomed the resulting Geneva Ministerial Declaration. She expressed satisfaction about the alignment of the Committee's work with the 2030 Agenda and the close and active cooperation between her government and the Committee. She supported the decision presented to EXCOM.

13. The representative of Belarus said the CHLM's activities reflected the interests of his country. He noted that this work would be needed also after 2030 and suggested to keep the focus on the issues and not exclusively on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to avoid the impression that the CHLM could not exist without that connection. He said that the preparations of the country profile of Belarus on housing and land management had begun in 2017 and that related activities would take place in 2018, and looked forward to the continuation of this successful interaction.

14. The representative of the Russian Federation welcomed the outcomes of the 2017 session of the CHLM, including the Geneva Ministerial Declaration. He said it would be a good basis both for establishing state policy on housing and urban development, and implementing the relevant strategies at regional and local levels. He noted that Russian parliamentarians and non-governmental organizations were interested in CHLM's work. He also appreciated CHLM's cross-sectoral activities such as the ones on energy efficiency standards in buildings, whose results would be useful both within and outside the UNECE region. He supported the decision before EXCOM.

15. The representative of the European Union and its member States commended the 2017 session of the CHLM, including the Geneva Ministerial Declaration, and expressed appreciation for the Committee's good work. He mentioned CHLM's strengths including engaging with the New Urban Agenda, the United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) project, the cooperation with the EU Partnership on Housing and Urban Agenda for the EU, and took note of the planned activities for 2018. He recognized the relevance of the urban agenda to the 2018 High-level Political Forum which will review implementation of SDG 11, and underscored the importance of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing in this context. He supported the decision presented to EXCOM.

16. The representative of Switzerland appreciated the work of the CHLM, saying it was an important forum for dialogue and exchange of experiences, with valuable outputs such as the study on housing for migrants. He said Switzerland continues to be committed to the Committee's work and supports the decision before EXCOM.

17. The representative of the Czech Republic aligned himself with the statement made by the representative of the European Union on behalf of its member States. He said CHLM effectively facilitates exchange of best practices. He appreciated CHLM's pioneering work on sustainable housing via studies, publications, and collection and dissemination of best practices. He thought that the Working Party on Land Administration's work on e-governance and strengthening property rights was groundbreaking, and that the Real Estate Market Advisory Group was an excellent platform with multistakeholder involvement from the private sector, local authorities and academia. He highly valued the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, noting it was a unique political document that effectively supports member States as they seek to ensure access to decent, adequate and affordable housing for all. He commended the ministerial segment of the 2017 CHLM session where high level representatives from governments including the Czech Minister of Regional Development affirmed their commitment to promote the implementation of SG11, the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing and other relevant global and regional commitments through intergovernmental, cross-sectoral cooperation. He supported the decision before EXCOM.

18. The representative of the United States of America noted that multiple international organizations were working on U4SSC, with UNECE and the International Telecommunications Union in the lead. He inquired as to the possibilities open to member States to engage with the initiative. He added that many emerging technologies were relevant to this initiative and wondered whether any of the organizations engaged therein had a mandate to work on those issues. He supported the decision before EXCOM.

19. The representative of Kazakhstan commended the CHLM's excellent work in facilitating exchange of experience and best practices between member States. She noted that CHLM was collaborating with her government on a country profile of Kazakhstan's housing sector and looked forward to the launch event for the study at the Astana Economic Forum in May 2018. She confirmed Kazakhstan's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the study.

20. In response to the question by the representative of the United States of America, the secretary of CHLM said that member States could provide inputs into the U4SSC initiative by participating in the joint events organized and contributing to the Smart City Profiles. This would also allow member States to interact with the other organizations involved. She also pointed out that information on products developed within the initiative was widely circulated to member States and presented at CHLM sessions and events.

21. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Committee on Housing and Land Management 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 Housing and Land Management.

22. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the programme of work of the Housing and Land Management component of the Housing, Land Management and Population subprogramme for 2018–2019, as contained in document ECE/HBP/2017/7.

## **INFORMAL SEGMENT**

### Item 5 – Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2018

23. The Executive Secretary briefed EXCOM on the preparations for the 2018 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD). (A handout with the latest information was circulated in the room and posted on the UNECE website.)

24. The representative of Belarus said the deputy chair of the upper house of the Belarussian parliament would represent his country in the event in his capacity as the national coordinator for the SDGs. He said the side events were of great interest, particularly the one organized by the Eurasian Economic Commission on SDG implementation at the sub-regional level, and encouraged delegates to participate. He also recalled that Belarus was organizing a Regional Sustainable Development Goals Coordination Leaders Forum (Minsk, 21-22 February 2108), with expected participation by many high-level officials including the Deputy-Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank. The event would have a special focus on

crosscutting topics including inequality and gender issues, and its outcomes would be presented at the high-level segment of the RFSD.

25. The representative of the Russian Federation confirmed his government's readiness to cover some of the expenditures related to the event. He also encouraged delegations to participate in the RFSD side event mentioned by the representative of Belarus. He expressed support for the Minsk event.

26. The representative of Switzerland said the round tables on exchange of experiences in SDG implementation had the potential to be very meaningful and hoped for a high quality dialogue.

27. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the state of preparation of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2018 and encourages active participation by all member States.

#### Item 6 – Evaluation of cross-sectoral collaboration in the Economic Commission for Europe (2017).

28. The Executive Secretary introduced informal document 2018/3, containing the report of and management response to the evaluation “Review of UNECE efforts to promote cross-sectoral collaboration and the integrated approach to sustainable development work”, carried out as part of the EXCOM-approved 2016-2017 Evaluation Workplan. She explained that some of the recommendations of the report were only partially accepted as many of the concerns outlined in the report had already been in the process of being addressed, only without the additional layers of internal coordination suggested by the evaluator. She also noted that the implementation of several of the recommendations would likely be affected by the upcoming repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on Agenda 2030, soon to be subject to consideration by ECOSOC, and the management reform of the United Nations, including the proposal to transition from biennial to annual programme budget documents. She concluded by saying that the secretariat would keep EXCOM updated on the implementation of the management response to the evaluation.

29. The representative of the Russian Federation thought the implementation of the report's recommendations would enhance the joint work of UNECE's divisions and contribute to the implementation of the SDGs in the region. Regarding the proposal to establish an online forum where the secretaries of the sectoral committees could exchange experiences, he wondered whether this would create additional burdens on the secretariat and the committee bureaux, and who would report on the work of the forum. He thought UNECE's support to member States in implementing the SDGs in itself created a platform for cross-sectoral interaction and did not find it advisable to create additional coordinating structures that could take up scarce resources. He also hoped that the current structure of UNECE would be preserved in the repositioning of the UN development system.

30. The representative of the United States of America thought the report showed that UNECE was on the right track. He also pointed out that the SDGs were cross-cutting in themselves and recalled a recent report of the Secretary-General on the UN development system highlighting the importance of cross-sectoral work. Noting that robust coordination between the different ministries within a country was also key, he appreciated UNECE's efforts in encouraging such collaboration. In line with Recommendation 5 of the report, he suggested

that the sectoral committees actively consider how their work could be enhanced by cross-sectoral collaboration. He also inquired as to whether the secretariat could update EXCOM on the implementation of these recommendations after 6 months.

31. The representative of the European Union and its member States said that improved cross-sectoral collaboration within UNECE was positive provided it unlocked higher returns in the implementation of the organization's mandate. He also requested an update on the ongoing review of administrative processes in UNECE.

32. In response to the Russian Federation, the Executive Secretary said she did not consider the internal mechanism for the secretaries of the sectoral committees to be an additional burden and that it would simply serve to improve communication on the topic and hopefully enhance cross-sectoral collaboration. In response to the United States of America, she said that many cross-sectoral initiatives already existed in UNECE but agreed that more could be done. She agreed to the request to report back within 6 months.

33. In response to the Russian Federation, the Chief of the Programme Management Unit explained that the establishment of a community of practice among the secretaries of the sectoral committees was a common practice in line with how networks of staff were connected in the rest of the UN secretariat in various areas, and that staff would engage as much as their workload permitted. She also noted, in response to the United States of America, that the secretariat reported on the implementation of the management response to each evaluation at 6 months intervals, and that these reports were posted on the Open UNECE website.

34. Regarding the ongoing review of administrative processes, the Secretary of the Commission said this was an internal exercise that consisted mostly of knowledge sharing on how to ensure better adherence to internal administrative processes and streamline workflows. She cited guidance on how to prepare templates on extrabudgetary projects for submission to EXCOM as an example. The organization's intranet had been strengthened as a result to make guidance more readily available to all staff.

35. The Chair suggested that the 6 months updates be done as informal briefings, and only be added to the EXCOM agenda in the case of a specific need.

36. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the evaluation "Review of UNECE efforts to promote cross-sectoral collaboration and an integrated approach to sustainable development work" and the management response to the document.

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

37. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the Secretary-General had directed UNECE, supported by the Special Envoy on Road Safety, to take the necessary steps to establish a United Nations Trust Fund on Road Safety in keeping with UNECE's proposal, in time for the General Assembly meeting on road safety of April 2018. The launch in April would signify the legal establishment of the Fund with potential initial contribution. The full operations of the fund will begin at a later stage. UNECE has already started discussions with relevant partners. The current proposal is to establish a two-tiered governance structure with an Advisory Board and a Steering Committee. The Advisory Board will provide strategic direction to the Fund. The Steering Committee will be the decision-making authority, including

on the allocation of funds. Among other grants management responsibilities, UNECE will provide the secretariat to both of these bodies, funded by resources of the Fund itself. It is envisaged that the Advisory Board will be chaired by the Chair of the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety. This will provide a strong link to the intergovernmental process, the UN Road Safety legal instruments and Member States. In order to capture a broad range of perspectives, representatives from governments, civil society, private sector and academia will also join the Board. The Steering Committee, meanwhile, will have representatives from all UN agencies and departments working on road safety, the Regional Commissions, and the World Bank. This will prevent duplication of work and maximise synergies. UNECE will not chair the Steering Committee given its role as the secretariat. The Executive Secretary hoped all governments would give political and financial support to the fund.

38. The representative of the European Union and its member States hoped for further updates as the work progresses, and also information on the involvement of the private sector in the fund's activities.

39. The representative of Germany aligned herself with the representative of the European Union and its member States. She asked if there would be a possibility for the member States to participate in the discussion on the fund's administrative and governance structures before the General Assembly.

40. The Executive Secretary said she hoped the private sector would be strongly engaged in the fund and that the Special Envoy on Road Safety would do his utmost to that end. In response to Germany, she recalled that the draft proposal on the establishment of the fund, including proposals for its administration and governance, had been widely circulated to all member States for comment in the past. She said the secretariat now had to implement the proposal, as little time remained before the relevant General Assembly session. She also noted that the fund was being established in collaboration with the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office which had extensive experience on good practices related to pooled financing mechanisms.

41. The acting director of the Transport Division noted that the member States would be able to participate in the governance structures of the fund and thereby provide input into the criteria for the allocation of funding.

42. The Chair asked the secretariat to include the fund as a standing item on EXCOM's meeting until the above-mentioned April meeting of the General Assembly.

43. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the Fifth Committee had concluded its deliberations on UNECE's 2018-2019 proposed programme budget and had approved UNECE's submission. She thanked the delegations who had made their voices heard during the deliberations and helped to explain UNECE's work and resource requirements in New York. She provided the following details on the 2018-2019 programme budget:

- i. It would be reduced by 1.7 per cent from the 2016-2017 programme budget.
- ii. This reduction included the abolition of three posts (one D1 in Executive Direction and Management (Programme Management Unit), one GS-OL in the programme of work (Sustainable Energy Division) and one GS-OL in Programme Support (Information System Unit). No serving staff was affected by the post cuts.
- iii. These reductions have been partially offset by the establishment of a P-4 Programme Officer post responsible for evaluation, and the reduction in non-post resources under travel of staff, consultants and external printing.



- iv. An amount of \$62,300 was also reduced under the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (Section 23) in order to achieve the total required level of 1.7 per cent.
  - v. The proposed reductions, while painful, have been designed to minimize the impact on the implementation of mandates.
44. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following recent meetings:
- i. 11-14 December, Geneva: 37th session of the Executive Body of the Air Convention.
45. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming events:
- i. 20-23 February, Geneva: 80th session of the Inland Transport Committee
  - ii. 1-2 March, Geneva: 2018 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.

Item 8 – Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

46. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2018/4.

Item 9 – Other business

47. The Chair informed EXCOM that the next meeting would be on 19 March 2018.

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