

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Ninety-seventh Meeting
Geneva, 19 March 2018

EXCOM/CONCLU/97

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

Meeting of the Executive Committee
19 March 2018

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda.

1. The revised provisional draft agenda for the 97th meeting was adopted.

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

2. The conclusions from the 96th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/96) were adopted.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 3 – Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2018

3. The Executive Secretary gave a brief assessment of the 2018 Regional Forum (1-2 March 2018), mentioning that the number of participation from all relevant stakeholders had increased by 50 per cent to around 600, and that the survey responses received so far from these participants rated the Forum positively. She informed delegations that the report of the event was under preparation and would be submitted to DESA by mid-April as the official input from the region to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF). She noted that the programme of the HLPF was still under development and would most likely include an opportunity for the regions to present the outcomes of their Regional Forums. She informed that the 2019 Regional Forum would take place some time between mid-March and early April of that year. She concluded by thanking Switzerland and the Russian Federation for their financial contributions, Ambassador Michael Gerber of Switzerland for chairing the event, UNECE staff working on the Forum, and the delegations for their participation.

4. The representative of the Russian Federation stated that the Regional Forum had been successful and that it was an important intergovernmental platform for consideration of a wide range of issues and multilateral cooperation. He noted that his delegation stood ready to provide comments to the draft chair’s summary of the event. He welcomed the participation in the Regional Forum of the Eurasian Economic Commission and its presentation on its experience on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He said that it would be important going forward to ensure more participation from the private sector.

5. The representative of Switzerland noted that the quality of the event had improved from the previous year, with more space for interactive dialogue, and appreciated the mix of participants from Geneva and capitals. He welcomed the emphasis on interlinkages between the SDGs and said this should be continued and strengthened in the next Regional Forum. He agreed that participation from the private sector should increase going forward. He also noted that the set-up some of the meeting rooms had been less conducive to interactive dialogue than others, especially given the large number of participants, and hoped this could be improved in the future. He underlined that the SDGs under review at the 2019 HLPF did not correspond as closely to UNECE’s areas of expertise and encouraged reflection on how the quality of the round tables could be ensured in this context.

6. The representative of the United States of America thanked the secretariat and the government of Switzerland for the excellent programme and meeting facilities. He noted that the role of moderator was crucial to ensure the quality of the round tables, and hoped to have strong moderators with clear instructions, in an environment that facilitates conversation, in the future. He also inquired if the chair's summary of the event would be the region's only input to the HLPF.

7. The representative of the European Union and its member States likewise commended Switzerland and the secretariat for the organization of the event. He appreciated the more dynamic and interactive round tables but hoped that, in the future, they would focus more on region-specific aspects of sustainable development, peer learning and experience in the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNR). He welcomed UNECE's provision of advice to member States on VNRs. For future editions, he suggested a shorter high-level segment with more time dedicated to exchange of experience between countries in a round table format and expert moderators to improve the knowledge sharing. He appreciated the participation of civil society and international organizations and wished to see more private sector participation. He suggested that future editions could take advantage of the assembled pool of experts by including problem-solving workshops on specific challenges faced by member States in SDG implementation. If applicable to the global level, the practical solutions provided by experts to these challenges could be forwarded to the HLPF for the benefit of all Member States.

8. The Executive Secretary welcomed the proposal from the European Union and said UNECE would be happy to work on it in cooperation with member States. In response to Switzerland, she agreed that the interlinkages of the SDGs were important. She explained that, related to this, UNECE was strengthening the alignment of its work with the SDGs and particularly their cross-sectoral aspects. She hoped to present the results of this work to EXCOM soon. In response to the United States of America, she said the programme of the HLPF was still under preparation but stated that it could be assumed there would be an opportunity to present the results of the Regional Forum. She also said that there might be other opportunities for UNECE to contribute at the event. She informed EXCOM that DESA had set up an ad hoc technical advisory group on reviewing progress towards SDG 7 and that UNECE had provided input.

9. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the good organization of the 2018 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE region and invites the secretariat to take into account comments from member States in the planning for the 2019 Forum.

Item 4 - Annual Report on evaluation 2017.

10. The Executive Secretary presented the annual report on evaluations for 2017, submitted to EXCOM following a decision from the 91st meeting. She invited EXCOM to take note of the report.

11. The representative of the United States of America appreciated the reporting on evaluations and said they were key to ensuring that UNECE and its work were fit for purpose. He also found the Open UNECE website very useful as the information contained therein helped member States understand the outcomes of ongoing work and the impacts of their contributions. He hoped UNECE would also focus on qualitative and quantitative evaluation

and measurement of the outcomes of its work, in ways that are simple and meaningful to member States and easily comparable to similar activities elsewhere in the UN secretariat. He reiterated support for strengthening the gender dimension of UNECE's work.

12. The representative of the Russian Federation said the regular reporting helped to improve the effectiveness and transparency of UNECE's work and expressed a particular interest in the assessment of technical assistance projects. He also underlined the importance of ensuring that the recommendations of evaluations are implemented going forward.

13. The representative of the European Union and its member States took note of the evaluation activities scheduled in 2021 and said he would be in favour of retaining a certain level of flexibility in the evaluation plan given the document's long-term perspective. He encouraged the continuation of the good work carried out on evaluations as well as of the regular reporting to EXCOM on the subject.

14. The representative of Switzerland recalled that he had proposed the EXCOM decision on evaluations at the 91st meeting, in order to make better use of evaluations as tools for change, to improve institutional knowledge, and to strengthen the link between the recommendations of the evaluation and the forward planning of UNECE's activities. He hoped that the lessons learned from evaluations would improve the performance of the division being evaluated. He asked if, going forward, the annual report could present the percentage of recommendations from evaluations that have already been implemented.

15. The Executive Secretary agreed to the request of the representative of Switzerland.

16. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the annual report on evaluations for 2017.

Item 5 – Report on the implementation of the Resource mobilization strategy of the Economic Commission for Europe.

17. The Executive Secretary presented the report on the implementation of the UNECE Resource Mobilization Strategy adopted by EXCOM in September 2016. She recalled that the Strategy foresaw a multi-year effort on resource mobilization and said that these efforts would be informed by the outcomes of the ongoing discussions about the proposed reform of the UN development system. In the meantime, UNECE would focus its efforts on the following:

- i. More active communication and promotion of UNECE's programmes and achievements both regionally and globally;
- ii. Optimizing outreach in specific meetings;
- iii. Fostering engagement with United Nations system partners; Member States; and the European Union and European Commission funding instruments;
- iv. Approaching potential new donors including from the private sector and
- v. Exploring innovative approaches to fundraising.

18. The representative of the Russian Federation requested information on the results of the work done by the resource mobilization officer in 2017 and wondered if this position would be retained going forward. He said that effective work based on member States' needs was important for attracting additional financing. He felt extrabudgetary projects should be carried out without prejudice to the substantive work of the secretariat and supported a balanced approach in this regard.

19. The representative of the European Union and its member States inquired if the position of the resource mobilization officer would be retained going forward. He also asked if the nine cross-sectoral initiatives identified in the report would remain the flagship initiatives or if new ones would be identified. He thought it would be useful for UNECE to provide prospective donors with a consolidated and regular overview of funding requests for any given period. He added that the EU Delegation in Geneva remained available to channel proposals to the European Commission.

20. The representative of the United States of America noted that paragraph 37 of the report indicated that “streamlining administrative procedures is essential for resource mobilization efforts” and queried if documentation for extrabudgetary projects was considered an administrative burden. He argued that this documentation helped member States understand the proposed work and the impact on staff time. He noted that working on extrabudgetary projects reduced the amount of time staff spend on the regular programme of work that member States had approved and expected as main deliverable. Going back to the connection between administrative processes and resource mobilization, he inquired if there had been times when potential donors had not supported UNECE due to excessive administrative burden, as implied by the report. He also asked if the administrative streamlining mentioned in paragraph 37 would lead to a reduction in the amount of information provided to EXCOM on extrabudgetary projects and whether EXCOM’s role in reviewing these projects would be changed.

21. The representative of Switzerland supported the points made by the representative of the European Union and its member States. He sought clarification on the nature of the flagship initiatives mentioned in the report.

22. The Executive Secretary explained that the position of resource mobilization officer had been established on a trial basis in September 2016 and would not be extended as a result of budget cuts and non-availability of sustainable programme support resources. The staff member would be reabsorbed by her parent organization on 1 April 2018. She said the flagship projects had been considered priority areas at the time of the donor meeting of April 2017 but had unfortunately not received sufficient support. While these areas remained important, future priorities for extrabudgetary funding would be determined by the ongoing work on aligning UNECE with the SDGs, the reform of the UN Development System, and increased cross-sectoral cooperation. She agreed to the request of the European Union and its member States on regular reporting. In response to the representative of the United States, she said that administrative streamlining would be influenced by the ongoing reform processes. UNECE was committed to providing the same level of information and transparency to EXCOM going forward.

23. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the report on the implementation of the UNECE resource mobilization strategy. EXCOM encourages the secretariat to seek out potential new donors as identified in the Resource Mobilization action plan.

Item 6 – Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (information update on intergovernmental process).

24. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the recent Zero Draft Plus of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration that was currently under discussion at UN Headquarters contained the following proposals pertaining to the Regional Commissions:

- i. To employ the technical expertise of the Regional Economic Commissions and the United Nations Country Teams to support the implementation efforts of Member States at regional and national levels respectively;
- ii. Each region will convene a Regional Migration Review Forum, to take place in 2020, 2024 and 2028;
- iii. Each of the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions shall organize the respective Regional Migration Review Forum, in close consultation with relevant regional organizations.

25. The Executive Secretary pointed out that holding regional review meetings would have budgetary implications. She recalled that in 2017, member States had determined that the regional consultations related to the Global Compact in the UNECE region should focus only on statistical work and refrain from discussing other dimensions. This had been identified as a gap in subsequent global discussions. In case the proposal for the Regional Commissions to hold regional review meetings remained in the final Global Compact, the Executive Secretary said that UNECE could address this gap by using its convening power and organizing the meeting in cooperation with other UN partners working on various aspect of migration. She recalled that the same modality was used by the other Regional Commissions, and by UNECE in the organization of the regional review meetings of the Beijing Platform for Action (another area where UNECE's mandate did not cover all facets). She said that the UNECE would of course be guided by the member States in this matter.

26. The representative of Belarus said that Member States had not reached an agreement so far on the above-mentioned proposals and that some countries were even asking for this language to be removed from the Global Compact. He reiterated that UNECE's mandate as applies to this discussion was limited to the topic of statistics.

27. The Chair recalled that he had informed the co-facilitators leading the negotiations that, unlike the other Regional Commissions, UNECE's mandate on the topic of migration was limited. He said that the review of the role of the Regional Commissions that was ongoing in the separate discussion on the reform of the UN Development System also had the potential to influence these discussions.

28. The representative of the Russian Federation felt UNECE was not the most appropriate platform for a regional review given its limited mandate and doubted that sufficient resources could be mobilized. He said he would be prepared to discuss other options, including in informal consultations.

29. The representative of the European Union and its member States said that UNECE should wait for the Global Compact to be finalized and then consider the possibility of a constructive role to play within its existing mandate.

30. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the information on the ongoing negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. UNECE

will revisit this issue in future meetings taking into account the evolution of the negotiations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

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

31. The Executive Secretary introduced the new Director of the Transport Division, Mr. Yuwei Li.

32. Under the agenda item “cooperation with other organizations”, the Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about an upcoming Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Institute of Road Traffic Education, with the goal of promoting accession to and implementation of the UN road safety legal instruments. The Executive Secretary also informed EXCOM about ongoing work towards a series of MoUs with a network of universities, selected cities and the Boston University Institute for Sustainable Energy in support of the implementation of the Framework Guidelines for Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings.

33. Under the agenda item “The United Nations Trust Fund on Road Safety”, the Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the secretariat had prepared the terms of reference for the fund as well as an MoU for UN partners that would participate in it. The terms of reference were aligned with the widely-circulated consultation appear and addressed links to the World Bank’s Global Road Safety Facility and UN activities in transport via the composition of the Advisory Board and the Steering Committee. She informed that the establishment of the fund was foreseen in time for the General Assembly discussion on “improving global road safety” on 12 April 2018 and hoped member States would attend the launch event planned for that day at UN Headquarters in New York. The Executive Secretary encouraged governments to give political and financial support to the fund.

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

- i. 20-23 February, Geneva: 80th session of the Inland Transport Committee;
- ii. 21 February, Minsk: Regional SDG Coordination Leaders Forum;
- iii. 1-2 March, Geneva: 2018 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development;
- iv. 8 March, Geneva Motor Show: Symposium on the Future Networked Car.

35. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming events:

- i. 20 February, Geneva: Briefing by the Deputy Secretary-General on the reform of the UN Development System;
- ii. 21 March, Geneva: Forests and Sustainable Cities: The Sky Is The Limit;
- iii. 26 March, Geneva: Library Talk on the Gender Pay Gap;
- iv. 26-28 March, Geneva: 12th session of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships;
- v. 12-13 April, Vienna: International Conference, Promoting access to affordable and decent housing through the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing;
- vi. 13 April, Geneva: Meeting of the Executive Committee of the European group of the UN initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management;
- vii. 18-19 April, Wroclaw: International Ministerial Conference on Inland Water Transport -Connecting by Inland Navigation;

- viii. 23-27 April, Geneva: UNECE Resource Management Week 2018 including the 9th session of the Expert Group on Resource Classification;
- ix. 23-27 April, Geneva: 31st UN/CEFACT Forum;
- x. 3-4 May, Geneva: 4th session of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards;
- xi. 7-9 May, Geneva: UNECE International Forum on people-first PPPs for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Item 8 – Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

36. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal documents 2018/7 and 2018/8.

Item 9 – Other business

37. The Chair informed EXCOM that the next meeting would be held on 18 May 2018.
