

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Ninety-eighth Meeting
Geneva, 18 May 2018

EXCOM/CONCLU/98

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda.

1. The revised provisional draft agenda for the 98th meeting was adopted.

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

2. The conclusions from the 97th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/97) were adopted.

Item 4 - Matters relating to the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships.

(a) Meeting with the Chair of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships.

3. The Chair of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (CICPPP), Ms. Sedef Yavuz Noyan, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of CHLM over the past year and its plans for the future.
4. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed support for the work of CICPPP and its recent session. He considered UNECE’s work on innovation and public private partnerships (PPPs) important not only in terms of generating economic profit but also for its contributions to social and ecological progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He hoped future work on these topics would strengthen the potential of the countries in the region.
5. The representative of the European Union and its member States noted with interest the various strands of work of the CICPPP, in particular, on circular economy and concrete PPP standards and guidelines. He noted with satisfaction the establishment of a new Specialist Centre of Excellence on PPPs in Resilience in New Orleans. He asked for more information on the Third International PPP Forum organized in May 2018 and the progress achieved therein.
6. The representative of Belarus noted with satisfaction the results of the Committee’s recent 12th session. He thanked the Committee and the secretariat for their close cooperation with Belarus and their readiness to provide technical assistance to Belarus on PPPs, including in the context of the One Belt One Road project.
7. In response to the question by the representative of the European Union and its member States, the director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade division said that the Third International PPP Forum had gathered over 300 participants from governments and the private sector. Discussions had centered on guidelines for People-First PPPs and participants had heard case studies and shared experiences on the topic. Presentations had allowed participants to compare regular PPPs with People-First PPPs to assess the alignment of the latter with the SDGs. In addition, there had been a panel on women entrepreneurs and how PPPs can enhance

the participation and access of women in business. As African countries had expressed interest in the work on PPPs, UNECE would share its methodology with the Economic Commission for Africa. The report of the Forum would be available online in the following weeks.

8. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships 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.

Item 4 - Matters relating to the Inland Transport Committee.

(a) Meeting with the Chair of the Inland Transport Committee.

9. The Chair of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC), Mr. Kristof Schockaert, made a presentation to EXCOM on the achievements of the ITC over the past year and its plans for the future.

10. The representative of the Russian Federation said the ITC's 80th session had reaffirmed its leading role in developing and improving legal instruments and best practices related to sustainable mobility. He attached particular importance to increasing the standard-setting potential of the ITC. He signalled a need to work on preparation of a new international convention facilitating the crossing of borders for goods and passengers carried by rail, with a view to replacing the previous, now outdated agreement from 1952. He said that this would support progress towards the SDGs. He also took note of the conclusion of the third phase of the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) project, and the significant contribution of this work to promoting EATL, identifying bottlenecks on main routes and providing solutions for dealing with them. He said a Russian delegation, likely including representatives from academia and the private sector, would participate actively in the September 2018 international conference on the operational aspects of EATL, and that the Russian Federation could facilitate participation from CIS countries. He supported the development of a new ITC strategy to cover the period until 2030 and cited the intelligent transport systems, clean mobility and facilitated border crossings as particularly relevant areas of work. He noted that many procedural aspects relating to the global coverage of the ITC's activities remained unaddressed. Accordingly, he urged caution regarding the use of the term "global" in the draft strategy. He supported increasing the international activities of the ITC, especially the expansion of its normative and legal basis through technical assistance projects and international events dealing with inland transport. In conclusion, he expressed appreciation for the recent progress and developments in the area of road safety.

11. On behalf of the Ministry of Transport and Communication of Belarus, the representative of Belarus thanked the ITC and the secretariat for their close cooperation and noted the important role of the ITC as a forum making a direct contribution to creating an integrated region.

12. The representative of the European Union and its member States noted the broad base and relevance of the ITC's activities, including the accession of China and Pakistan to the TIR Convention and the establishment of the UN Road Safety Trust Fund. He expressed support for the Committee and its work. He underlined the importance of the Database for the Exchange of Type Approval (DETA) and the need for it to be financed from the Regular Budget. He

thanked Germany for continuing to host DETA on a temporary basis. He greatly appreciated the work on automated driving, noting that it was a priority area for the European Union and its member States, and stated that it was not necessary to provide the relevant working groups, and possibly a new working group, with resources and secretariat support in order to keep up with technological developments and speed up work on an internationally agreed framework. He concurred on the importance of the new ITC strategy and said the European Union and its member States would remain involved in its development.

13. The representative of Switzerland appreciated the important work of the ITC. He noted with interest the request for DETA to be hosted by UNECE under the Regular Budget at the latest by 2022.

14. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Inland Transport Committee 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.

15. The secretariat informed of an editorial correction to document ECE/EX/2018/L.4 that would be revised in paragraph 2 of the background section to read as follows: “The Inland Transport Committee further decided to renew the mandate of the Group of Experts on Unified Railway Law for two more years (document ECE/TRANS/274, paragraph 69) and adopt its new terms of reference as contained in document ECE/TRANS/2018/13/Rev.1.” There were no objections.

(b) Decisions on matters related to the Inland Transport Committee.

16. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves:

- i. the programme of work of the Transport subprogramme for the period 2018-2019, as contained in ECE/TRANS/2018/21, Corr.1 and Add.1;
- ii. the renewal of the mandates of the Group of Experts on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Transport Networks and Nodes and of the Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals as contained in document ECE/TRANS/274;
- iii. the renewal of the mandate of the Group of Experts on Unified Railway Law and its new terms of reference as contained in document ECE/TRANS/2018/13/Rev.1.

Item 5 - Achieving energy for sustainable development.

17. The Chair introduced informal document 2018/11, containing a position paper endorsed by the Bureau of the Committee on Sustainable Energy. He had been requested by the Chair of that Committee to share the paper with EXCOM and consider its onward transmission to the President of ECOSOC as an input to the discussions on SDG7 at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

18. On behalf of the Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, the Director of the Sustainable Energy division read a statement highlighting the main messages of the position paper.

19. The representative of the European Union and its member States wished the paper had been circulated at an earlier stage and noted that the region’s input into the HLPF had already been provided in the form of the chair’s summary of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD) in March 2018. As the paper had not been endorsed by the Committee

on Sustainable Energy, the European Union and its member States preferred that it not be submitted to the HLPF.

20. The representative of the Russian Federation attached great importance to SDG7 and the work of the Committee on Sustainable Energy relating to the latter's implementation. He had no objection to the paper's substance, but agreed with the representative of the European Union and its member States on the procedural aspect and remained doubtful about submitting to the HLPF a document that was not the product of a full-fledged intergovernmental consultation.

21. The representative of Switzerland agreed that the RFSD should be the vehicle for regional contributions to the HLPF and did not wish to see a multiplication of channels.

22. The Chair concluded that, having examined the request of the Chair of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, EXCOM decided to take note of informal document 2018/11 and to take no further action on it.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 6 - Main directions of the ongoing work of the Economic Commission for Europe on further alignment to the Sustainable Development Goals.

23. The Executive Secretary provided EXCOM with an update on the work undertaken to further align UNECE's work with the 2030 Agenda. She recalled that the sectoral committees and their subsidiary bodies had already been reporting to EXCOM on their own alignment processes and continued to explore further opportunities to enhance their contribution to SDG implementation. She informed EXCOM that, since taking office, she had initiated a comprehensive assessment of options to enhance the impact of UNECE's work, within existing mandates and without financial implications. The underlying idea was to focus on core strengths and use the UNECE multi-sectoral structure to address the SDGs in a cross-sectoral, integrated manner. Partnerships would of course be a strong focus as one of UNECE's key strengths lay in its ability to mobilize and convene a broad network external experts and stakeholders. UNECE had identified nine SDGs where it had a comparative advantage and provided the most value added: SDGs 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 15. Many of these SDGs were also the ones identified in the Secretary-General's report on repositioning the UN Development System as lacking sufficient coverage in the UN system. In order to strengthen impact in these areas, UNECE intended to enhance activities within current mandates and make proposals to relevant intergovernmental bodies as appropriate. A sharpened focus would also bring benefits in terms of visibility, brand recognition and communication. Moreover, she explained that four areas (Sustainable use of natural resources, sustainable and smart cities, sustainable mobility and smart connectivity, measuring and monitoring SDGs) had been identified where multiple SDGs converged and where UNECE could make a particularly big impact. She called these areas "SDG nexus clusters". To foster more cross-sectoral collaboration, UNECE would shift towards a matrix approach where staff would work together in a flexible way, contributing not only to sectoral work at the subprogramme level but also to common initiatives involving several subprogrammes. Cross-divisional teams would be created as flexible arrangements to strengthen synergies among UNECE sub-programmes, and identify opportunities for possible new activities in multi-dimensional high-impact areas. This informal set-up would operate within existing mandates and did not imply changes in the

subprogrammes or intergovernmental structures. No financial implications would result from the formation and operation of these teams.

24. The representative of the Russian Federation welcomed the transparency of the process and appreciated the alignment of UNECE's activities to the SDGs, also in the context of the reform of the UN Development System. He expressed concerns about recent cuts to UNECE's budget and recalled that, at the previous Commission session, member States had not reached consensus on a request initiated by the Russian Federation to be sent to the Secretary-General, regarding the importance of UNECE for SDG implementation and the resulting need for sufficient financial resources. He believed it would be wise to prepare a similar appeal for consideration at the 2019 Commission session. He favoured the further development of high impact activities and noted the need to expand their cross-sectoral applications. In the context of the Secretary-General's recommendations to reinforce national ownership, developing country-contextual responses, and ensuring the effective delivery of development results on the ground, he thought it important to improve the feedback system between UNECE and member States to ensure comprehensive support to the achievement of the SDGs. Regarding the section on UNECE's strengths in informal document 2018/12, he underlined the need for strict compliance with UNECE's mandate, on the understanding that the SDGs are indivisible, universal and interlinked. He also highlighted the cross-cutting nature of SDG10 on reducing inequalities and said UNECE activities should be aligned with SDG10 targets. He supported the nexus approach of using cross-divisional teams to achieve maximum complementarity. He said the involvement of civil society, the private sector and academia should follow UN rules and regulations. Regarding the matrix approach to the smart and sustainable cities nexus, he found it important to separate the international legal obligations of member States and capacity building and assistance from the UN Development System for the achievement of the SDGs at the national level.

25. The representative of Azerbaijan said that the many legal instruments and standards developed by UNECE improved quality of life in the region. She said UNECE was particularly relevant to the achievement of the SDGs in the context of the reform of the UN Development System. She agreed with the representative of the Russian Federation on the need for sufficient resources in support of this work and looked forward to discussing the issue at the 2019 Commission session. She appreciated UNECE's demand-driven approach and looked forward to the continuation of its country-contextual responses. Azerbaijan would continue its support to UNECE activities aimed at achieving the SDGs and intended to submit to UNECE its priority areas in this context. She hoped UNECE would remain an expert-driven organization going forward, in addition to functioning as a think tank.

26. The representative of Switzerland noted that the 2030 Agenda requires agility and a cross-cutting focus. He appreciated the Executive Secretary's presentation on how UNECE was adapting to maximize results towards SDG achievement. He inquired how exactly the flexibility described in informal document 2018/12 would materialize. He also noted the selection of the 9 SDGs where the organization had a comparative advantage and thought this would allow for better efficiency while respecting the organization's mandate. He expressed his delegation's support for the continuation of these alignment efforts and hoped they would maximize the quality and relevance of UNECE's work.

27. The representative of the European Union and its member States expressed support for the 2030 Agenda and the main direction of UNECE's work on alignment with the SDGs. He took note of the flexible, informal nature of the proposed matrix approach, that it would operate

within existing mandates, would not imply changes in subprogrammes or intergovernmental structures, or entail any financial implications. He said the actual terms of work, concrete topics and related activities must comply with UNECE's mandate and be agreed upon by member States. He emphasized UNECE's standard-setting, normative role, and the importance of not overlooking core mandated activities while aligning with the SDGs. He also underlined the necessity to work in synergy with other UN organizations and focus on areas where UNECE has a unique value added. He hoped the Executive Secretary would keep EXCOM abreast of future developments.

28. The representative of Italy supported the nexus approach and its emphasis on avoiding duplication and maximizing synergies without additional financial implications. He said Italy was informally working with several UNECE staff on a concept for a workshop on smart cities and that he would provide more information at a future date.

29. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note, with appreciation, of the efforts led by the Executive Secretary to align UNECE work to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and looks forward to further updates on the issue.

Item 7 - Annual Report on technical cooperation.

30. The Executive Secretary presented the annual report on technical cooperation for 2017 as contained in informal document 2018/13, pointing out that, for the first time, it detailed technical cooperation activities structured by the core SDGs where UNECE has the strongest impact.

31. The representative of the Russian Federation supported this new format, which allowed UNECE to showcase the support it provides to SDG implementation. He noted with satisfaction the effectiveness of this support and said that the Russian Federation intends to continue financing related activities for the countries of Central Asia.

32. The representative of Switzerland commended the report and its new format, and said it highlighted the determination of UNECE to focus on a more cross-cutting approach. He found the number of technical cooperation activities to be impressive and a sign of the effective implementation of UNECE's work plans. He also noted that 40 per cent of the activities were interregional, and that UNECE had close cooperation with relevant parts of the UN system. Switzerland supported activities related to the environment, an area whose importance was confirmed by the number of related technical cooperation activities. He was pleased to learn that the Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs) of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mongolia assessed progress with respect to green industry, transport and adaptation to climate change and he supported the incorporation of the SDGs into the EPRs. He also took note of the capacity building on sustainable management of forests carried out in five countries. He said the current structure of the report allowed for a better understanding of cross-sectoral linkages and the impact on the environment. He hoped that the increasing trend in the level of extrabudgetary contributions would continue. He requested clarification as to the relationship between the overall level of extrabudgetary resources and the resources dedicated to technical cooperation and asked if, in the future, this data could be disaggregated. He also encouraged that a subtotal for member States be included in the second annex of the report.

33. The representative of the European Union and its member States said he was pleased at the increase in voluntary contributions and highlighted that the European Commission had

contributed over USD 2 million. He encouraged the secretariat to keep the new format for the report.

34. In response to the questions raised by the delegation of Switzerland, the head of the Programme Management Unit explained that following the roll out of new financial management systems it was indeed planned to disaggregate voluntary contributions. She noted that most of the extrabudgetary contributions were dedicated to technical cooperation with the remainder going to the multilateral agreements.

35. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the comprehensive report on technical cooperation activities 2017 and takes note of the information therein.

Item 8 - Important new developments: briefing by the Executive Secretary

36. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following recent meetings:
- i. 26-28 March, Geneva: 12th session of the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships, we have just heard from the Chair on the outcomes.
 - ii. 11-18 April, New York: Mission to New York, including the launch of the UN Trust Fund for Road Safety at the General Assembly on 12 April, the launch of policy briefs on SDG7 and its interlinkages with other SDGs in support of SDG7 review at the HLPF on 18 April, and bilaterals with permanent representatives of UNECE countries to discuss, among others, the role of the Regional Commissions in the context of the UN Development System reform as well as the steps UNECE has taken to align its work with the 2030 Agenda.
 - iii. 12-13 April, Vienna: International Conference "Promoting access to affordable and decent housing through the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing"
 - iv. 13 April, Geneva: Meeting of the Executive Committee of the European group of the UN initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management
 - v. 16 April, Toronto: UNECE Coal Mine Methane Seminar at the Global Methane Forum
 - vi. 18-19 April, Wroclaw: Ministerial Conference on Inland Waterways
 - vii. 23-27 April, Geneva: UNECE Resource Management Week 2018 including the 9th session of the Expert Group on Resource Classification
 - viii. 23-27 April, Geneva: 31st UN/CEFACT Forum
 - ix. 2-4 May, London: Chief Executives Board
 - 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

37. Regarding the launch of the UN Road Safety Trust Fund, the Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that pledges of more than \$10 million dollars had already been made by the FIA Foundation, Total and 3M. A number of governments had also expressed their support. Continued engagement, also of civil society, would help ensure effective action on the ground, strengthen partnerships with governments, the private sector and all stakeholders, and advance impact, transparency and accountability. She hoped governments would offer political and financial support to the Fund. UNECE was in the process of operationalizing the Fund and

would be conducting initial fundraising in 2018. An Interim Secretariat had been established. The first Advisory Board and Steering Committee meetings were foreseen in August 2018, the second in December 2018. The Trust Fund would start to finance projects following the approval of the necessary documents by the governing bodies and the receipt of the pledged funds. The Trust Fund would prioritize projects to improve road safety in low and middle-income countries, where the majority of road fatalities occurred. She offered that UNECE could organize an informal briefing for interested member States to discuss practical questions related to the Fund.

38. The representative of the Russian Federation expressed interested in the suggested briefing.

39. The Chair concluded that EXCOM requests the secretariat to organize an informal briefing for interested delegations on the UN Road Safety Trust Fund.

40. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming events:
- i. 23-25 May, St. Petersburg: Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum
 - ii. 28 May, Haifa: MASHAV's 30th International Women Leaders Conference
 - iii. 29 May, Geneva: High-level ceremony to celebrate the accession of the Republic of Chad to the Water Convention
 - iv. 18-20 June, Geneva: 66th session of the Conference of European Statisticians
 - v. 21-22 June, Astana: Ministerial Roundtable on Forest Landscape Restoration and the Bonn Challenge in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Item 8 – Extrabudgetary projects (for approval)

41. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the extrabudgetary project contained in informal document 2018/14.

Item 9 – Other business

42. The Chair informed EXCOM that the next meeting would be held on 4 July 2018.
