

Economic Commission for Europe
Committee on Sustainable Energy

Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane
Sixteenth session

Geneva, 3-4 March 2021

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of Conclusions and Recommendations

DRAFT Conclusions and Recommendations arising from the Sixteenth Session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane

Agenda Item 2: Election of officers

1. The Group of Experts elected a Bureau to take over from the end of the sixteenth session until the end of the eighteenth session. The elected members are: Mr. Raymond Pilcher (Raven Ridge Resources, Inc.) as Chair, and Ms. Aida Haracic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Mr. Jacek Skiba (Poland), Mr. Sergey Shumkov (Russian Federation), Mr. Igor Yashchenko (Ukraine), Mr. Özgen Karacan (United States of America), Ms. Volha Roshchanka (United States of America), Mr. Zhixin JIN (International Centre of Excellence on CMM in China), Mr. Clemens Backhaus (A-TEC Anlagentechnik GmbH), Mr. Clark Talkington (Advanced Resources International, Inc), Mr. Yuriy Bobrov (Association of Donbass Mining Towns), Mr. Neil Butler (HEL-EAST Ltd), Mr. David Creedy (Sindicatum Sustainable Resources) and Mr. Lukasz Kroplewski (independent expert), as Vice-Chairs.

2. The Group of Experts agreed, for the sake of ensuring continuity of the Bureau, that not all officers be elected at the same time. This approach is in line with the practice of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and other groups of experts.

Agenda Item 3: Opening remarks

3. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the work of the Bureau and the secretariat and their efforts to manage and direct the Group's work plan between annual sessions despite human and financial resource constraints and the unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agenda Item 4: Activities and priorities of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and matters for consideration by the Group of Experts

(a) Key messages and policy recommendations for the sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe

4. The Group of Experts supported the decision of the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-ninth session to request the Economic Commission for Europe at its sixty-ninth session to consider a decision on near-term acceleration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through action on gases and buildings (ECE/ENERGY/133, paragraph 7). The Group of Experts noted that its work on methane has a notable near-term benefit for both climate and quality of life and proposed to continue its activities on management of methane emissions from coal-related activities in the transition to a sustainable future.

5. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the Committee's endorsement of the "Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Recovery and Use from Abandoned Coal Mines" (ECE/ENERGY/128 and ECE Energy Series No. 64) and the invitation to member States to take appropriate measures to ensure broad dissemination and application of the Best Practice Guidance.

6. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the decision by the Committee to invite the Economic Commission for Europe to propose to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that it endorse the Best Practice Guidance and recommend its application worldwide. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to keep the Group apprised of any developments.

(b) Support for declaration of an International Decade for Methane Management

7. The Group of Experts repeated its strong support for declaration by the UN General Assembly of an International Decade for Methane Management. The Group of Experts agreed to liaise with the Global Methane Initiative to seek the support of UN Member States for such a declaration.

(c) Carbon neutrality as a pathway to sustainable energy and the role for the Group of Experts

8. The Group of Experts noted the request of the Committee on Sustainable at its twenty-ninth session for closer cooperation among the expert groups to address cross-cutting issues, notably related to the project on “Enhancing the understanding of the implications and opportunities of moving to carbon neutrality in the ECE region across the power and energy intensive industries by 2050” (Carbon Neutrality project)” led by the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems. The Group of Experts on CMM agreed to offer its support to the project and invited interested experts to participate.

(d) Strategic review of the ECE sustainable energy subprogramme

9. The Group of Experts noted that consultations with member States will be held in 2021 to finalize the draft strategic review of the ECE sustainable energy subprogramme (ECE/ENERGY/2020/12) with a view to having the text approved and adopted at its thirtieth session. The Group of Experts further noted the calls for the work of the Committee on Sustainable Energy to reflect the scale, scope, role, and values of the United Nations in making concrete, measurable progress on energy and to that end the Committee had encouraged closer cooperation among the subsidiary bodies on cross-cutting issues.

(e) Rules of procedure of the Committee on Sustainable Energy

10. The Group of Experts noted that Rules of Procedure for the Committee on Sustainable Energy were endorsed by the Committee at its twenty-ninth session (Annex I to ECE/ENERGY/133). These Rules apply to the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. The Group of Experts further noted that the objective of instituting Rules of Procedure for the Committee is to streamline the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, to provide a basis for accelerated delivery of the sustainable energy subprogramme, and to solidify ECE’s reputation as a credible, relevant, and responsive partner.

Agenda Item 5: New developments and challenges in the coal sector

11. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the new CMM-related projects and initiatives undertaken in ECE member States presented during the session. The Group of Experts noted the importance of coal mine methane degasification and use and agreed to work towards development of rules, regulations, and standards to encourage the financing and development of coal mine methane degasification and use projects.

12. The Group of Experts noted the feedback received during the meeting on challenges faced by the coal sector related to coal mine closures or impending cessation of coal mining activities. The Group of Experts further noted that this feedback mirrors feedback received from participants during workshops organized by the Group in recent years. Noting that there is relevant expertise and experience within its membership, the Group of Experts proposed that it could offer support to member States considering shutting coal mines on preparation of coal mines and coal mining regions and communities for mine closure and reorientation of local economies.

Agenda Item 6: Report on implementation of the work plan for 2020-2021

13. The Group of Experts noted that implementation of the work plan for 2020-2021 is on track and thanked members for their support in ensuring on time delivery of quality products and events.

14. The Group thanked the International Centres of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane (ICE-CMM) in Poland and in China for their work to disseminate and deploy the family of methane-related Best Practice Guidance documents, approved their annual reports for 2020 and approved their work plans for 2021. The Group further noted the encouragement from the Committee on Sustainable Energy to establish additional centres and requested the secretariat to seek additional extrabudgetary resources to this end.

15. The Group of Experts recalled its decision at its fifteenth session to explore further the proposal made by the European Commission to develop jointly best practices on: (i) monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) of methane emissions from the coal sector at facility level, (ii) monitoring methane emissions from surface mines, and (ii) mine closure. The Group noted with appreciation the establishment of a Task Force to develop a document describing the systems in place in the United States and other countries that provide MRV of emissions and mitigation of methane. Noting that the document likely will inform legislation that under consideration by the European Union as a part of its efforts to reduce methane emissions, the Group of Experts requested the document to be finalized as soon as practicable and issued as a parliamentary document for the seventeenth session.

Agenda Item 7: Future work of the Group of Experts

16. Noting the request of the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its twenty-ninth session that its expert groups consider in their work the changing social, environmental, and economic contexts for their activities and the principles of a just transition, the Group of Experts agreed to revise its mandate and work to align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and embrace the principles of a just transition. The revised mandate and revised name of the Group are contained in document ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2021/4.

17. Noting that its mandate expires on 31 December 2021, the Group of Experts agreed to recommend that its mandate be renewed for a further two years to 31 December 2023.

18. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to submit the proposed revised mandate and revised name of the Group, as well as the mandate renewal request, for consideration by the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its thirtieth session.

Agenda Item 8: Work plan for 2022-2023

19. The Group of Experts approved its draft work plan for 2022-2023 subject to incorporation of amendments to document ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2021/3 agreed at the meeting. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to submit the draft work plan for 2022-2023 to the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its thirtieth session.

Agenda Item 10: Eleventh joint meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and the Global Methane Initiative Coal Subcommittee

20. The Group of Experts thanked the Coal Subcommittee of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) and its members for their continued support and collaboration.

21. The Group of Experts expressed interest in continuing to develop joint projects with GMI and requested the secretariat to ensure, facilitate, and coordinate continued cooperation between the two entities.

22. The Group of Experts expressed its interest in participating in the next Global Methane Forum. The Group requested the secretariat to ensure that topics related to the work of the Group are featured in the event's agenda to the extent possible.

Agenda Item 11: Preparations for the seventeenth session of the Group of Experts

23. The seventeenth session will be held in March 2022 in Geneva.

Agenda Item 12: Any other business

24. The Group of Experts noted the need to secure additional extrabudgetary resources to deliver results-oriented projects.