

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
113<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
Geneva, 22 January 2021

**EXCOM/CONCLU/113/Corr.1**

**CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS**

Meeting of the Executive Committee  
22 January 2021

## **FORMAL SEGMENT**

### Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda.

1. The provisional draft agenda for the 113<sup>th</sup> meeting was adopted.

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

2. The conclusions from the 112th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/112) were adopted.

### Item 3 - Update on Special Procedures during COVID-19 period - Extension of Special Procedures during COVID-19 period.

3. The Chair recalled that EXCOM had adopted special procedures in April 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure business continuity, including, inter alia, the submission of decisions taken at informal meetings to a silence procedure for adoption.

4. The Secretary of the Commission informed that, since the last meeting of EXCOM, four silent procedures had taken place related to formal meetings with remote participation, namely the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Working Group on Ageing, the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the Working Party on Passive Safety, the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the Group of Experts on the Permanent Identification of Railways Rolling Stock, and the 120<sup>nd</sup> session of the Working Party on General Safety Provisions. Silence had not been broken for any of these four procedures. Full details were available on the UNECE website.

5. The representative of the European Union and its member States found the experience with special procedures positive and appreciated that they provided the opportunity to progress UNECE’s work despite the restrictions on meeting servicing.

### Item 4 - Matters relating to the Conference of European Statisticians:

#### (a) Meeting with the Chair of the Conference of European Statisticians;

6. 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. She highlighted the renewal of the partnership agreement between the UNECE Secretariat and UN-GGIM: Europe for the period 2021–2023. She invited EXCOM to approve the Programme of Work of the Statistics subprogramme for 2021 as well as the terms of reference of two task forces under CES.

7. The representative of the European Union and its member States commended the work of CES and supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM’s approval. She looked forward to future cooperation on measuring circularity in the region, in light of the fact that the theme for the 2021 Commission session has been designated as “Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the UNECE region”.

8. The representative of Serbia likewise commended the work of CES and supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM’s approval. As a member of the CES Bureau, Serbia appreciated

the recommendations from CES to national statistical offices to ensure stability of statistical production during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the Conference's technical cooperation activities, from which Serbia had greatly benefited. He looked forward to the Conference's input to the 2021 Commission session on measuring circularity.

9. *[N.B. Due to technical issues, the representative of the United Kingdom was unable to make a statement at the meeting. On the instruction of the Chair, the text was provided to the secretariat and has been reflected in these conclusions.]* The representative of the United Kingdom likewise commended the work of CES, highlighting the sharing of international best practice and guidance concerning the role of official statistics in the response to the pandemic and the efforts to promote international statistical cooperation. She also recognized the valuable role of the High-Level Group for the Modernization of Statistics (HLG-MOS) in continuing to support the development of standards in response to the changing global context and emerging opportunities. The United Kingdom worked with the Group to develop a global community for machine learning in official statistics. She supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

10. The representative of Belarus appreciated the work of the Conference and its technical assistance provided to Belarus. He supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

11. The representative of the Russian Federation commended the work of CES and said it continued to play an important role especially in the context of Covid-19 pandemic and in monitoring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He welcomed plans for further development of the regional platform on SDGs and the launch of a Russian language version of the web portal "UNECE Dashboard for SDGs", noting the need to ensure that the data contained therein was representative and comprehensive. He emphasized the importance of impartial approaches to the work of the Conference and supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

12. The representative of Switzerland said UNECE was a key player in the global statistical world and contributed its regional know-how to the global level in the spirit of leaving no one behind. A great example of this was the work of the HLG-MOS. Switzerland had contributed to the development of the UNECE Dashboard for SDGs due to the importance it attached to the coordinating role of CES in the work on statistics for the SDGs in the region. He pointed out that the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN World Data Forum would take place in Bern in October 2021 and would provide a good opportunity to address key relevant issues. He supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

13. The representative of Albania appreciated the work of UNECE on statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda and related capacity building efforts. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, he said the organization had an important role to play in raising awareness of how to better use existing data sources or define new ones, as needed. Albania's national statistical institute was involved in a project to support evidence-based decision making in the context of the pandemic. He supported the decisions tabled for EXCOM's approval.

14. 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 relating to the Conference of European Statisticians;

15. The Chair concluded that EXCOM approves the Programme of Work of the Statistics subprogramme for 2021 as contained in documents ECE/CES/2020/16 and ECE/CES/2020/16/Add.1, and the terms of reference of the Task Force on statistics on children, adolescents and youth for 2020—2022 and of the Task Force on using new data sources for measuring migration and cross-border mobility for 2020—2022, as contained in ECE/EX/2021/L.1. EXCOM welcomes the renewal of the partnership agreement between the UNECE Secretariat and UN-GGIM: Europe for the period 2021–2023.

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

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

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

17. The representative of the United States expressed satisfaction that COFFI had been able to continue its work despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States continued to support efforts under the Warsaw Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) including capacity building and reporting on sustainable forest management in the Caucasus and Central Asia and the report on forest characteristics and wood products production and trade throughout the region. He said forest and sustainably produced forest products were important tools for achieving climate and other benefits. He welcomed the formation of the Team of Specialists on Boreal Forests and the work on reporting on forest disturbances, the latter being a particularly pressing issue in the United States.

18. The representative of the European Union and its member States looked forward to continued cooperation on the development of the new IPoW for 2022-2025 and suggested that this be done taking into consideration the experiences from the implementation of the Warsaw IPoW.

19. The representative of the Russian Federation commended the work of COFFI and said the long-term partnership between UNECE and the Food and Agriculture Organization would facilitate the strengthening of international cooperation in protecting forests and implementing a new IPoW. He supported the continuation of the work on boreal forests as well as the protection of forests from wildfires and other harmful factors.

20. The representative of Switzerland appreciated the work of COFFI, including the Forest Products Annual Market Review and the inputs to the Global Forest Resources Assessment and the pan-European reporting on forests and sustainable forest management. He welcomed the regional studies on the forest sector workforce, forest ownership and forest products conversion factors and appreciated the capacity building and policy advice provided to the Caucasus and Central Asia on ecosystem restoration and sustainable forest management. He also noted the important work on the Forest Sector Outlook Study. Recalling the ongoing UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, he supported relevant UNECE efforts at both the national (e.g. the Bonn Challenge) and the local level (e.g. the Trees in Cities Challenge) and hoped for the continuation of efforts related to the Decade.

21. The representative of Poland supported the statement made by the representative of the

European Union and its member States. She said Poland had been honoured to host the meeting which had adopted the Warsaw IPoW, welcomed its results, and hoped for the continuation of such successful cooperation.

22. The representative of Kazakhstan appreciated the support provided by UNECE in the development of a master plan for forest sector development until 2030, as well as an action plan for its implementation. Forest landscape restoration was a priority in Kazakhstan, who had pledged to restore over 5 million ha by 2030 under the Bonn Challenge and the ECCA30 initiative. He looked forward to further capacity building and policy advice from UNECE in this context.

23. *[N.B. Due to technical issues, the statement of the representative of Georgia was partially interrupted at the meeting. On the instruction of the Chair, the text was subsequently communicated to the secretariat and has been included in these conclusions.]* The representative of Georgia reiterated her country's firm commitment towards combating climate change and making forests sustainably managed in light of the increasing threats posed by deforestation and land degradation. In line with its Association Agreement with the European Union, Georgia had committed to implement special measures to facilitate the protection of the forest and combat illegal tree felling and its associated trading. Establishing a proper forest monitoring system was therefore key for the country and UNECE had supported the development of such a system through the elaboration of national principles, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. Georgia had also joined the Bonn Challenge in 2018, committed to implement afforestation/reforestation activities on degraded lands and assist natural regeneration by 2030, and participated in the development of the regional strategy for landscape restoration and greening the infrastructure of the Caucasus and Central Asia. She appreciated the support offered by UNECE to Georgia and considered this cooperation a good method for achieving national and international objectives.

24. *[N.B. Due to technical issues, the representative of Uzbekistan was unable to make a statement at the meeting. On the instruction of the Chair, the text was subsequently communicated to the secretariat and has been reflected in these conclusions.]* The representative of Uzbekistan appreciated the work of UNECE on strengthening monitoring of sustainable forest management and forest landscape restoration efforts. Uzbekistan had already achieved its pledge, made in 2018, restore over 500,000 ha of degraded landscapes under the Bonn Challenge. Uzbekistan had actively participated in the development of the regional Strategy for landscape restoration and greening the infrastructure of the Caucasus and Central Asia and believed it would support the acceleration of forest landscape restoration in the region. The country had also greatly benefited from the UNDA project for development of Accountability Systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia and hoped for further support on developing the Forest Information and Monitoring System. Building on the successful cooperation with UNECE on forest landscape restoration and monitoring sustainable forest management, Uzbekistan had sent a request to the secretariat for support in the development of the Forest Code and looked forward to further collaboration.

25. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the Chair of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry 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.

## **INFORMAL SEGMENT**

### Item 6 – Preparations for the sixty-ninth session of the Economic Commission for Europe

26. The Secretary of the Commission provided an update on the informal consultations process and hoped EXCOM would be in a position to approve the draft agenda for the session. She said member States had been refining the draft decisions and the high-level statement to be submitted to the consideration of the Commission, aiming to table them at the next meeting of EXCOM for onward submission to the session. An informal consultation was planned for the following week, with a view to agree on the text of draft decisions proposed by the Committee on Sustainable Energy.

27. The Executive Secretary thanked member States for their active engagement in the informal consultations and in facilitating the formulation of voluntary commitments. She had held several bilaterals at ministerial level on the latter topic and had received indications of readiness from governments to submit strong voluntary commitments. The secretariat stood ready to further support this process as needed.

28. The representative of the European Union and its member States appreciated the constructive atmosphere during the preparation of the high-level statement and the draft decisions, thanked the secretariat for its effective support, and looked forward to further cooperation on circular economy.

29. The representative of the Russian Federation likewise appreciated the constructive atmosphere and the support by the secretariat and stood ready to participate in coordinating the other decision items for the session.

30. The representative of Switzerland also appreciated the transparent and inclusive preparatory process and expressed satisfaction with the content of the high-level statement.

31. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the update on the preparations. EXCOM approves the draft provisional agenda for the 69th Commission session as contained in E/ECE/1493.

### Item 7 - Preparations for the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2021.

32. The Executive Secretary briefed EXCOM on the preparations for the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD) 2021. She said the secretariat had received an expression of interest from Romania, proposing Mr. László Borbély, State Counsellor to the Prime Minister's Office, as Chairperson for the event. She thanked Romania for this suggestion and hoped that EXCOM would be in a position to endorse it. In keeping with past practice, the secretariat would welcome expressions of interest to co-chair the Regional Forum from non-EU member States.

33. The representative of the European Union and its member States looked forward to actively engaging in the event. She announced that the government of Portugal wished to propose Mr. Francisco Andre, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation at the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to co-chair the RFSD with Mr. Borbély.

34. The representative of Switzerland appreciated the excellent preparatory process for the

RFSD and looked forward to the event. The Swiss delegation would be headed by Mr. Jacques Ducret, special envoy of the Swiss Federal Council for the SDGs. He welcomed Romania and Portugal as co-chairs.

35. The representative of Albania said his country's delegation to the event would be headed by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs. The government was working to ensure an inclusive delegation with parliamentarian, civil society and youth representation.

36. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the update on the preparations. EXCOM accepts, with appreciation, the offers of Romania and Portugal to co-chair the 2021 Regional Forum. EXCOM encourages non-EU member States interested in co-chairing the event to contact the secretariat as soon as possible.

#### Item 8 - Preparations for the eighty third session of the Inland Transport Committee

37. The secretariat briefed EXCOM on the preparations for the eighty third session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC), including the theme of its high-level segment, the ministerial resolution expected to be adopted, and the side events.

38. Recalling the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in progress towards the SDGs, the representative of Turkmenistan highlighted the importance of a reliable, modern, extensive transport and transit infrastructure for sustainable development. Turkmenistan would organize a side event at the ITC session dedicated to the 2021 International Year of Peace and Trust, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of Turkmenistan, and the transport and communication potential of the Caspian Sea region. He invited member States and international organizations to participate and exchange views on the development of transport and communications on a global scale given the realities and challenges of the present time.

39. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the update on the preparations for the 83<sup>rd</sup> session of the Inland Transport Committee.

#### Item 9 - Resource Mobilization Plans of the Economic Commission for Europe, 2021–2022

40. Pursuant to the approval of the revised UNECE Resource Mobilizations Strategy by EXCOM in May 2020, the Executive Secretary presented UNECE's Resource Mobilization Action Plans for 2021-2022 to EXCOM for its information. She pointed out that these plans allowed UNECE to close the first recommendation of the audit of the management of trust funds at the UNECE (OIOS 2018/084). Recalling that all activities presented were subject to donor interest and EXCOM approval in line established funding processes, she encouraged member States to continue providing funds, and to do so in advance of or early in the workplan periods for the multilateral environmental agreements, in order to provide stability and predictability.

41. The representative of the European Union and its member States appreciated the transparency provided by these plans.

42. The Chair concluded that EXCOM takes note of the Resource Mobilization Plans of UNECE for 2021-2022.

#### Item 10 - Important new developments: Briefing by the Executive Secretary

43. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that, in the context of the ongoing reform of the UN Development System, UNECE had received a request from the Deputy-Secretary-General to carry out consultations on the Issue-Based Coalitions (IBCs) with member States by March 2021. To comply with this request, the secretariat planned to organize an informal one-hour consultation immediately after the next meeting of EXCOM on 12 February. The secretariat would present to member States the major current activities of the IBCs and seek their comments and guidance. A background note would be provided ahead of the consultation with an overall update on the implementation of the regional review and the IBCs workplans and recent outputs.

44. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that on 30 December 2020, the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly had approved the UN Secretariat programme budget for 2021. For UNECE, this included the establishment of the new Programme Management and Support Services Division, which would consolidate the functions of strategy, programme management, oversight, evaluation, enterprise risk management, programme support and coordination of the UNECE technical cooperation programme, including support to the resident coordinator countries. Pursuant to the concurrence of the ACABQ and to the approval of the new division through Fifth Committee draft resolution A/C.5/75/L.14, this Division would be headed by a D-1 funded from extrabudgetary resources. The UNECE staffing table would remain the same at 188 positions funded from Section 20 of the regular budget. The initial appropriation for UNECE in 2021 would be \$36,248,500. However, the secretariat expected that the liquidity challenges related to the programme budget would continue in 2021, and that UNECE's allotment was likely to be less than the final approved appropriation. UNECE would work closely with the UN Controller's office to minimize to the extent possible any impact on its programme of work.

#### Item 11 – Any other business

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