**Economic Commission for Europe**

Committee on Sustainable Energy

Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane

**Sixteenth session**

Geneva, 21-22 March 2022

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

**Adoption of Conclusions and Recommendations**

DRAFT Conclusions and Recommendations arising from the Seventeenth Session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition

Agenda Item 2: Opening remarks

1. 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 difficult situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Agenda Item 3: Activities and priorities of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and matters for consideration by the Group of Experts**

(a) Key messages and policy recommendations resulting from the thirtieth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy

2. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation that the Committee had adopted the Group of Experts’ work plan for 2022-2023.

3. The Group of Experts was informed about and supported the Committee’s endorsement of the revised strategic review of the ECE sustainable energy subprogramme (ECE/ENERGY/2021/4). The Group of Experts is committed to reflect the strategic review in its future work. The Group of Experts once again called on ECE member States to provide resources needed to accomplish activities that cannot be delivered through the regular budget.

4. The Group of Experts was informed about the growing interest from member States to accelerate action to mitigate methane emissions. The Group of Experts is committed to support these activities throughout the coal value chain. The Group of Experts expressed its support for the Global Methane Pledge[[1]](#footnote-1), congratulated member States that have joined the pledge and urged others to do so. In support of the Global Methane Pledge, the Group of Experts recommended to member States to support a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly declaring an International Decade for Methane Management. The Group of Experts also recommended to continue hosting, co-hosting, and coordinating events that foster dialogue and information exchange about best practices in methane emissions’ monitoring and mitigation.

(b) Revision of the Group’s name, mandate, and terms of reference

5. The Group of Experts was informed that the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its thirtieth session approved the requested change of the name of the Group to the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition. The Committee also approved the change of the mandate and terms of reference of the Group pending requested clarifications on both.[[2]](#footnote-2)

6. Subsequently, the Executive Committee of ECE endorsed the Committee’s decisions at its meeting on 26 January 2022 (ECE/EX/2022/L3 para 3. (d)).

7. The Committee on Sustainable Energy requested the Group of Experts to consider the suggested clarifications in its mandate and terms of reference at its seventeenth session. The Group of Experts discussed the Committee’s suggested clarifications to its mandate and terms of reference proposed changes and made a number of amendments to the text of its mandate and terms of reference, which will be presented to the Committee at its thirty-first session.

[Final agreed text of amendments to be included]

**Agenda Item 4: Report on implementation of the work plan for 2020-2021**

8. The Group of Experts noted that its work plan for 2020-2021 was fully implemented. The Chair and the secretariat thanked the members of the Group for their contributions to delivering on the mandated activities.

9. The Group of Experts thanked the International Centres of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane (ICE-CMM) in Poland and in China for their efforts and initiatives supporting the Group’s work on disseminating and promoting best practices in methane detection, monitoring, capture, and use, approved their annual reports for 2021, and approved their work plans for 2022. The Group of Experts further noted the encouragement from the Committee to establish additional centres and requested the secretariat to seek additional partners and extrabudgetary resources to this end.

**Agenda Item 5: Work Plan for 2022-2023**

10. The Chair of the Group of Experts encouraged all its members to engage actively in the work of the Group to assure timely and effective delivery of deliverables.

11. In view of the broadened mandate of the Group to address just transition issues, the Group discussed the need to expand its membership to include relevant stakeholder groups. The Group requested the Bureau in cooperation with the secretariat to develop an outreach plan for those groups. The Group discussed the value of establishing task forces or working groups to deliver on specific activities under the work plan and tasked the Bureau to implement this approach.

**Agenda Item 6: Methane emissions from coal mines**

12. The Group of Experts discussed proposed methane legislation presented by the European Commission in December 2021. Following the debate, the Group of Experts identified certain provisions of concern and requested the Chair and the secretariat to submit agreed feedback to the European Commission through the consultation procedure established for that purpose.

13. The Group of Experts was presented with the newly published *Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation* (ECE/ENERGY/139 and ECE Energy Series No. 71). It congratulated the Task Force that developed the document for its work. The Group of Experts observed that reliable emissions data are necessary for designing effective policies on control and reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and for accurate evaluation of available mitigation opportunities. It also highlighted the immediate need for national emissions monitoring and reporting schemes based on comparable methodologies, called upon member States to develop such schemes and proposed to assess the comparability and merits of the various methodologies that are being used.

14. In the context of efforts to reduce global methane emissions, the Group of Experts highlighted the need to incorporate in all methane emissions reduction initiatives an understanding that any such actions could have implications that, if not properly addressed, might harm communities and the global flow of strategic resources.

**Agenda Item 7: Transition of the coal mining sector**

15. The Group of Experts discussed best strategies for incorporating into its work the challenges related to just transitions in coal mining regions. It observed that the transition of the coal sector is a complex process that is proceeding at an uneven pace across the ECE region.

16. The Group of Experts noted that infrastructure modernization and reorientation in coal mining regions towards a less mono-sectoral economy will have a big impact on the social strata of affected localities and called upon member States to develop practical solutions and mechanisms aimed at alleviating shocks to vulnerable populations.

17. The Group of Experts considered the impacts that transformation of coal mining regions might have on inhabitants who do not have a direct economic link to the coal mining industry. The consequences for and impacts on women in particular were highlighted. The Group of Experts called on policymakers to give due attention to the problem and to take it into account when developing strategies for targeted regions to ensure that support is provided not only to directly affected groups such as laid-off mine workers, but also to other individuals affected by the transition.

**Agenda Item 8: Explosion risk reduction**

18. The Group of Experts held a discussion on explosion risk reduction, analysing the most recent methane-related accidents in coal mines and identifying best practices helping to prevent such tragedies in the future. The Group of Experts noted that the environmental challenges of methane emissions from the coal sector and the safety and social implications of unsafe working conditions in underground coal mines around the world are both important and interconnected and called upon member States to not underestimate the issue.

**Agenda Item 9: Future work of the Group of Experts**

19. Taking into account the continued public health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the resulting growing popularity and effectiveness of modern modes of communication, the secretariat reported to the Group of Experts on its online activities and presented suggestions on how such solutions could benefit the future work of the Group. The Group of Experts thanked the secretariat for its work and initiative in organizing online events and requested that it cooperate with the Bureau on identifying and developing instruments that could enhance delivery on the Group’s mandated tasks. However, the Group of Experts also recognized that conducting meetings, workshops, conferences and other events in person are of enormous benefit to the members and their respective states and institutions. Therefore, to the extent possible and consistent with global public health standards, the Group of Experts expressed its wish to continue engaging at in-person events.

20. The Group of Experts discussed the potential for cooperation with the other groups of experts operating under the umbrella of the Committee on Sustainable Energy. It was presented with the document United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) – Draft Guidance for Application to Coal Bed Methane (CBM) (ECE/ENERGY/GE.3/2022/8) developed by the Expert Group on Resource Management. Members of the Group of Experts were thanked for comments they provided on the draft document and were asked for further feedback as the work on the document proceeds. The Group of Experts expressed its willingness to continue contributing to that work and requested the secretariat to ensure effective communication between the Groups.

21. The Group of Experts was informed about the UN Working Group on Extractive Industries of the Secretary-General. The Group of Experts expressed its interest to contribute to the work of the Working Group once established and requested the secretariat to explore whether it would be possible to join and support the initiative, and if so, to undertake, in coordination with the Bureau, the necessary steps to make that happen.

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

22. The Group of Experts thanked the secretariat of the Coal Subcommittee of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) and its members for their continued support and collaboration. Making reference to the most recent joint project, the Group of Experts thanked the GMI Coal Subcommittee for its support in developing *the* *Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation* (ECE/ENERGY/139 and ECE Energy Series No. 71).

23. 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.

24. 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 eighteenth session of the Group of Experts**

25. The eighteenth session will be held on 20-21 March 2023 in Geneva.

**Agenda Item 12: Any other business**

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

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1. https://www.globalmethanepledge.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ECE/ENERGY/137, para 79 https://unece.org/sed/documents/2021/09/reports/report-committee-sustainable-energy-its-thirtieth-session [↑](#footnote-ref-2)