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Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Environmental performance reviews

Extension of the mandate of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews

Note by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews

Summary

The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its twenty-fourth session (Geneva, 29–31 January 2019), expressed sincere appreciation for the work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews and adopted the mandate and terms of reference of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews for 2019–2022 (ECE/CEP/2019/12, annex).^a

The present document contains a review of the Expert Group's achievements for the mandated period, and presents, in annex, a draft decision on the renewal of the Group's mandate and terms of reference for a further four-year period, for the consideration of the Committee on Environmental Policy at its special session.

^a ECE/CEP/2019/2, paras. 57 and 59.



Achievements of the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews in 2019–2022

1. To implement its mandate and terms of reference for the period 2019–2022 (ECE/CEP/2019/12, annex), the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews undertook a series of activities focusing on improving environmental performance in the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and in Morocco, a member State of the Economic Commission for Africa, in accordance with the approved document “Environmental performance reviews beyond the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region” (ECE/CEP/2019/15, annex). The Expert Group reported annually to the Committee on Environmental Policy on the progress made on those activities. The main results are presented below.
2. At its twenty-ninth meeting (Geneva, 29–31 January 2019), the Expert Group examined the report of the third review of Kazakhstan, comprising 13 chapters, and agreed with the delegation of Kazakhstan on 84 recommendations.¹ It also considered the report of the third review of North Macedonia, comprising 11 chapters, and agreed with the delegation of North Macedonia on 72 recommendations.
3. At its thirtieth meeting (Geneva, 31 October–1 November 2019), the Expert Group examined the report of the third review of Uzbekistan, comprising 17 chapters, and agreed with the delegation of Uzbekistan on 99 recommendations.
4. At its thirty-first meeting (Geneva (online), 20–23 October 2020), the Expert Group examined the third review of Romania, comprising 11 chapters, and agreed with the delegation of Romania on 61 recommendations.
5. At its thirty-second meeting (Geneva (hybrid), 27–29 September 2021), the Expert Group examined the report of the second review of Morocco (forthcoming), comprising 16 chapters, and agreed with the delegation of Morocco on 105 recommendations.
6. At its thirty-third meeting (Tbilisi, 12–16 September 2022), the Expert Group will review the reports of the second review of Armenia, the third review of Azerbaijan and the third review of Kyrgyzstan.
7. At its twenty-fourth session (Geneva, 29–31 January 2019), the Committee on Environmental Policy requested the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews to begin work, in cooperation with the reviewed countries, on proposals for the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews.² The Expert Group prepared a proposal for the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews (ECE/CEP/2020/6), which was adopted by the Committee at its twenty-sixth session (Geneva, 9–10 November 2020), and submitted for endorsement to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022).³

Future work

8. The fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews will be launched in Nicosia following ministerial endorsement through the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration. Formal requests for an environmental performance review have been received from Mauritania and Tajikistan.
9. As the current mandate of the Expert Group expires at the end of 2022, the secretariat, in consultation with the Expert Group, prepared the revised mandate and terms of reference for the Group, which are annexed to the present note. The Committee on Environmental Policy is invited to adopt the mandate and terms of reference and to transmit them to the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for approval.

¹ All completed environmental performance reviews referred to in the present document are available at <https://unece.org/epr-reviewed-countries>.

² ECE/CEP/2019/2, para. 31 (f).

³ ECE/CEP/2020/2, para. 50 (b).

Annex

Mandate and terms of reference for the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews for 2023–2026

1. The Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews is mandated until the end of 2026 to support the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Environmental Performance Review Programme in accordance with the terms of reference set out below.

Membership

2. The membership of the Expert Group for 2023–2026 shall consist of 10–14 participants, with due consideration given to a balanced geographical representation of the countries of the region. When new members are chosen, due regard shall be given to experts from countries that have recently been reviewed and from countries that have undergone or will soon undergo reviews.

3. Members of and observers to the Committee on Environmental Policy may participate in the meetings of the Expert Group as observers and act as advisers to review a given report and its recommendations.

4. In addition, experts nominated by members of the Committee on Environmental Policy, and agreed by the members of the Expert Group in consultation with the secretariat, may participate in the meetings of the Expert Group on any country under review.

Terms of reference

5. The mandate of the members of the Expert Group is renewed for a period of four years for the purposes of:

(a) Carrying out the expert review process, prior to the peer review to be undertaken by the Committee on Environmental Policy;

(b) Providing guidance to the Committee on Environmental Policy and the ECE secretariat on all substantive and organizational matters arising from the implementation of the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme;

(c) Assisting the ECE secretariat in coordinating the Environmental Performance Review Programme with processes that have a bearing on it and that are under way in other international institutions, including: the European Environment Agency, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization.

6. The guidance of the Expert Group to the Committee on Environmental Policy and the ECE secretariat may include:

(a) Identification of opportunities and requirements for improving the conduct of reviews, including in response to existing and emerging environmental challenges and global processes such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(b) Assessment of environmental trends relevant to the environmental performance review process in countries reviewed or under review, including through the organization of joint meetings, seminars and workshops at the regional and subregional levels, where these are demand-driven;

(c) Further activities agreed by the Committee on Environmental Policy to strengthen environmental performance of countries, including at the subregional level, in the framework of the Environmental Performance Review Programme.

7. The members of the Expert Group are nominated by the ECE member States. The secretariat may invite international institutions pursuing related work to participate in the work of the Expert Group.

8. While taking decisions on an environmental performance review report under review and its recommendations, the Expert Group shall take into consideration the inputs by the countries under review, the members of the Committee on Environmental Policy and experts delegated by the Committee who participate in the meeting.

9. The Expert Group shall elect its chair and up to two vice-chairs.

10. The Expert Group shall report annually on its activities to the Committee on Environmental Policy and may raise any issues with the Committee that it deems necessary for the implementation of its mandate.

Timetable

11. The mandate of the Expert Group shall cover a four-year period, from the beginning of 2023 to the end of 2026.
