

10 November 2022

**Cover note by the Executive Body Bureau to the document ECE/EB.AIR/2022/9
“Resources for the secretariat to support the core functioning of the Convention.
Note by the Secretariat”**

Background

At the 41st session of the Executive Body its Bureau presented a note to support discussions on the overall financing of the Convention. The note explained the different sources of funding for the work of the Convention and pointed to the need for strengthening the financing on a long-term and stable basis, including for ensuring appropriate capacity in the secretariat to carry out core functions under the Convention. The Executive Body requested its Bureau to, in cooperation with the secretariat, assess the financial situation of the Convention in further detail, in particular the requirements for holding an additional meeting of the Working Group on Strategies and Review in 2023 and the financing of the secretariat core functions.

At the 60th meeting of the Working Group, the Bureau presented its assessment of the financial requirements for holding an additional meeting of the WGSR in 2023. The working group recommended that the Executive Body at its 42nd session invite Parties to make earmarked voluntary contributions to enable the organization of such an additional meeting.

The Executive Body Bureau and the secretariat have thereafter continued to assess the financial situation for the core secretariat functions, for presentation and discussion at the 42nd meeting of the Executive Body. The secretariat presents its review of the resources in document ECE/EB.AIR/2022/9 which includes the secretariat's assessment of different potential options for secretariat support and for mobilizing resources. Those proposals will still require further consideration in 2023. The present cover note accompanies the above-mentioned document and seeks to provide clarity on the situation and offers recommendations to Parties on options to temporarily take measures to change some activities to address this issue in 2023.

Temporary measures to restrict activities

The Executive Body Bureau notes that the current situation requires action by the Executive Body to either streamline or reduce the core activities of the secretariat or to commit additional resources, beyond the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) staff already offered by Germany. The Bureau is aware that a decision on increased funding takes time to prepare and secure agreement. Our assessment is therefore that it is not likely that permanent resource solutions will be available next year. The Executive Body Bureau therefore understands that the Secretariat's core activities will need to be temporarily streamlined during 2023, or until a long-term decision can be made. This proposed streamlining will only be in effect for 2023 and should be re-assessed at EB43.

The JPO that joined the secretariat in October 2022 for a two-year period, will enable the secretariat to partly absorb the increased workload related to

compliance/Implementation Committee, financing of centres and the Working Group on Strategies and Review.

But even with this additional capacity, further temporary reduction of core secretariat tasks are needed to align with the overall capacity available. The Executive Body Bureau therefore suggests that the following measures to temporarily restrict some activities in 2023 only be considered:

The Implementation Committee holds one instead of two formal meetings during 2023.

This option would mean that in 2023 exceptionally, the IC holds one formal meeting instead of two. Referrals to the Committee should continue according to the established procedure, including referrals not made in 2022.

The Committee could hold one informal, virtual meeting without secretariat support in spring focusing on work procedures and work planning for the formal session. A formal IC meeting takes place in autumn where referred cases are treated.

Reducing the number of official documents from Task Forces in 2023

Normally, reports from Task Forces should be published as official documents. To save resources from UNECE editing and translation, reports color marked in the annex to this note (List of official documents 2023) will exceptionally be published as informal documents only. Nevertheless, lead countries are encouraged to provide courtesy translations into Russian and French. For easy reference, the reports should be numbered and referenced in the annotated agenda and the deadlines for submission of documents and publication should be respected as for official documents.

The secretariat should minimize participation in meetings of other conventions and international fora

To the extent possible the secretariat will provide a list of meetings and events where it intends to participate in 2023 for consideration by Parties and will limit participation in conferences and meetings of other conventions and international bodies. Occasionally other groups under the convention may be asked to step in.

Timing and number of meetings of the Working Group on Strategies and Review in 2023

The Working Group on Strategies and Review recommended that the Executive Body at its 42nd session invite Parties to make earmarked voluntary contributions to enable the organization of a second Working Group meeting in autumn 2023. If enough other activities are restricted and contributions are provided by a Party or Parties for this purpose, a second meeting of the WGSR in 2023 could move forward. The preference would be for a second in-person meeting rather than hybrid to limit extra costs associated with virtual meetings.

Currently, the dates reserved for the regular WGSR meeting is 11-14 of April 2023, and the dates reserved for any additional meeting is 4-6 of September 2023. Should only one regular WGSR meeting be conducted in 2023, the Bureau believes that the dates of the meeting should ideally be moved to allow sufficient time for preparations on policy options and official documents. The secretariat has informed the Bureau that no

change of these dates in 2023 will be possible, other than to the 4-6 of September 2023 dates which are currently reserved for a potential second WGSR.

The main options are therefore: a regular meeting in April; a regular meeting in September; or two meetings in 2023, one regular and one additional using the two time slots. The views of the Parties are needed on the number and timing of WGSR meeting(s) in 2023 for decision at the EB42, including early indications of possibility of voluntary contributions to cover costs for an additional meeting.

The Executive Body Bureau recommends that the Executive Body at its 42nd session consider the three measures to temporarily restrict some activities in 2023 as outlined above, and that the Executive Body further discusses the options for WGSR meeting(s) in 2023 and their possible implications.

The EB Bureau will continue to assess the financial situation and develop a proposal for a long-term and stable solution including for the secretariat and regularly report its progress to Parties.