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United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development

Seventeenth meeting
Geneva, 30 and 31 May 2022

Report of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development on its seventeenth meeting

I. Introduction

1. The seventeenth meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was held in hybrid mode, on 30 and 31 May 2022, in Geneva.

A. Attendance

2. Delegations from the following 32 ECE member States attended the meeting: Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

3. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) participated in the meeting.

4. Representatives of the European Union, the Global Education Network Europe (GENE), the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Programme Office in Bishkek also participated in the meeting.

5. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational institutions attended the meeting: European ECO-forum, Regional Centre of Expertise "Ecodemia" (Belarus), Estudar Direito pelo Mundo (Brazil), Planet'ERE (France), Soldiers for Peace International Association (France), Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE) (Greece), Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development "ECO-Accord" (Russian Federation), Education Reform Initiative (Türkiye), Interdisciplinary Coordination Centre for Education for Sustainable Development of the State Ecological Academy of Postgraduate Education and Management (Ukraine), Aarhus Information Awareness Centre (Ukraine), Repertoire Internationale de Litterature Musicale (United States of America), Georgian Technical



University, Kyrgyz State University I. Arabaev, University of Geneva, University of Gloucestershire (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), University of Graz (Austria), International University of La Rioja (Spain), Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation of the University of Belgrade and General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Portugal (observer).

B. Adoption of the agenda

6. The Steering Committee adopted the agenda for its seventeenth meeting as set out in document ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/1.

II. Implementation of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

A. Progress in implementing the Strategy

7. The Chair recalled that to facilitate tracking progress in implementing the Strategy since the submission of the national implementation reports for the fourth mandatory reporting cycle carried out in 2018, a questionnaire (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/5)¹ had been sent to countries prior to the seventeenth meeting. The questionnaire had paid particular attention to the main priority strands of the Strategy's new implementation framework (2021–2030) (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/3), focusing on: quality education and ESD; whole institution approach/institutions as communities of transformational learning; digital education, information and communications technology (ICT) and ESD; entrepreneurship, employability, innovation and ESD; youth and ESD; and the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on ESD implementation.

8. The secretariat presented an overview of informal country reports on activities since 2021, submitted by 14 countries in response to the questionnaire (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/5).

9. As to priority action area (a) (Encouraging countries to embed ESD into quality standards, frameworks and resources associated with formal quality assessments and institutional reviews), 79 per cent of countries reported quality assessment/enhancement systems that addressed ESD or education in general, and 86 per cent of countries reported quality frameworks for integrating ESD into teachers' professional development. Those high percentages might be less accurate as most countries referred to the availability of frameworks or systems in general and not with regard to ESD.

10. Around 80 per cent of the countries had made good progress under priority action area (b) (Promoting the whole institution approach (WIA) (or whole school approach (WSA)) in every institution of formal, non-formal and informal education) in promoting the application of WSA/WIA to ESD in formal education. The same number of countries faced challenges and had particular needs in implementing WSA/WIA in formal and non-formal education. Over half of the countries lacked monitoring processes (e.g., self-assessments) supporting formal and non-formal institutions and organizations when assessing progress in applying WSA/WIA to ESD.

11. Regarding priority action area (c) (Supporting ESD within ICT and digital education), around 80 per cent of countries reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had significantly changed ICT and digital education used for teaching and learning on ESD and that there had been assistance for embedding ICT and digital education on ESD/SDGs. Around two thirds of countries reported programmes that supported educational actors (teachers, mentors, inspectors) in integrating ICT and digital education in ESD.

¹ The information papers for, and the presentations given at, the seventeenth session of the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development referred to in the present document are available at <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Education-for-Sustainable-Development/events/365529>.

12. Around 70 per cent of countries had made progress in priority action area (d) (Enhancing entrepreneurship and employment within ESD), confirming changes in curricula focused on developing skills linked to entrepreneurship and greening of economies in selected education programmes. Two thirds of countries reported existing mechanisms that strengthened student/youth entrepreneurship competences related to ESD, and around 70 per cent of countries reported incentives for ESD preparing students/youth for sustainable entrepreneurship and green jobs.

13. In all, 57 per cent of countries reported that COVID-19 pandemic had had an impact on implementation of the Strategy. Around 80 per cent confirmed that lessons had been learned that would strengthen the role of ESD as a vehicle for empowering youth and citizens to be more resilient in future emergencies.

14. Progress had been made in implementing ESD in educational systems across the four priority action areas. There were still areas requiring attention; for example, monitoring progress, and special needs, especially in implementing WIA. The pandemic had not significantly affected the ESD programmes and had provided new opportunities, including innovations in teaching and learning processes.

15. Representatives of Cyprus, Georgia, Hungary and Ukraine gave presentations on their activities and initiatives since the previous reporting period and pointed to the destructive impact of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and the threat to the sustainable development of Ukraine. The representatives of Cyprus (Chair), Monaco and the European Union made statements in support of that made by the representative of Ukraine. The representative of the European Union recalled the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union and its member States to the special session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, 9–12 May 2022) expressing solidarity with Ukraine and its people.²

16. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland proposed that the timeline for preparing national reports be extended, particularly in the case of countries with a federal structure, given that information had to be combined in a timely manner. There was also a proposal, backed by Greece, to provide a glossary of terms used in the questionnaire in order to improve comprehension and the quality of responses.

17. The representatives of Greece and MIO-ECSDE provided information about recent developments.

18. The Steering Committee took note of the above-mentioned presentations and thanked those countries that had submitted informal reports.

B. Regional framework of cooperation for sustainable development: participation in 2022 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and outcomes of peer learning round table on Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Quality Education, organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development in the framework of the Forum and in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme

19. The representative of UNEP briefed the Committee on the successful engagement of ECE, UNESCO, and UNEP at the 2022 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (Geneva, 6–7 April 2022) on building back better from coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the ECE region. ECE, UNESCO and UNEP had jointly organized a peer learning round

² Available at <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Committee-on-Environmental-Policy/events/364855>.

table entitled “Rebalancing people, planet and prosperity: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as key enabler for the 17 SDGs and Agenda 2030”.³

20. The round table had highlighted the new implementation framework (2021–2030) of the UNECE Strategy for ESD, to assist in scaling up the role of education and learning in tackling future crises, and contributing to a more prosperous, just, healthy and sustainable planet.

21. Participants urgently called for education systems that moved beyond literacy and numeracy, inculcating values, knowledge and skills that promoted peace, sustainable development, human rights and democracy. Sustainable development was achievable through a societal shift towards transformed behaviour, production and consumption patterns. The purpose, content and outcome of education must be rethought, thus creating a peaceful, inclusive and sustainable future. There could be no sustainable development and prosperity without peace and protection of nature.

22. The round table discussed the Third High-Level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Nicosia, 5 October 2022). ESD strategies could help to advance, amplify and scale up transformative ESD as a driver of change and cooperation at multiple levels, not only between education and environment, but with all other sectors to prepare learners for the future. There was a strong call to invest in both ESD, not in words, but in deeds, and in youth to design sustainable solutions.

23. The Committee highlighted the importance of involving the Steering Committee and its members in the round table, following a previous Steering Committee decision that participation in such events provided an opportunity to highlight the role of the UNECE Strategy for ESD in supporting countries to implement the 2030 Agenda, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4 and its target 4.7 related to ESD, by encouraging other countries to adopt good practices.⁴

C. Outcomes of survey on focus of capacity-building activities

24. The Chair highlighted that, following the decision taken at the sixteenth meeting of the Committee,⁵ the secretariat, in cooperation with the Chair and the Bureau, had initiated a survey⁶ to identify the focus, form(s) and funding sources of the capacity-building activities to be carried out under the UNECE Strategy framework for ESD in the next implementation phase (2021–2030).

25. Twelve countries (Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Romania and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and one NGO had submitted completed surveys. Information from an observer from academia had also been submitted.

26. The secretariat informed the Committee about the results of the survey carried out in order to identify needs and strategies of member States and donors in the design and implementation of future capacity-building activities.

27. The questionnaire had asked respondents to identify a thematic focus of the priority areas/strands and to choose a specific issue for capacity-building under each strand.

28. A large majority of countries had confirmed their interest in building capacity in all four strands, including a cross-cutting issue on youth. The types of capacity-building needed were: (a) good practices; (b) training; and (c) specific research. The kind of contribution (financial or in-kind) countries could offer for each chosen strand most mentioned was knowledge (expertise)/good practices and the least mentioned was funding. The potential for organizing national capacity-building activities related to strand one (quality education and

³ See <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Education-for-Sustainable-Development/events/367710>.

⁴ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2019/2, para. 16.

⁵ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2021/2, para. 44.

⁶ See <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2022/05/presentations/survey-focus-future-capacity-building-activities-2022>.

ESD) and the cross-cutting issue on youth participation was evident. A few countries expressed interest in hosting international events.

29. As for specific issues of interest under each strand, for strand one, interest had been expressed in a broad range of specific issues listed in the questionnaire:

(a) Strands two (WIA) and three (digital education, ICT and ESD) – countries had expressed a strong interest in all issues, except combatting electronic illiteracy for strand three;

(b) Strand four (entrepreneurship, employability, innovation and ESD) – interest had been expressed in mainstreaming ESD-innovation and entrepreneurship educational activities through school and university curricula;

(c) Cross-cutting issue on youth participation – countries had expressed significant interest, in particular in developing strategic partnerships with international organizations.

30. The Chair highlighted that the capacity-building activities under the Strategy formed an intrinsic part of activities that supported member States in its implementation. It was therefore important to provide the required funding for organizing those activities in the form of financial or in-kind contributions to the trust fund of the programme. The Chair opened the floor for discussion and proposals for supporting and/or organizing capacity-building activities as a part of the new implementation framework up to 2030.

31. The Chair, speaking in her role as the representative of Cyprus, spoke about her Government's intention to support capacity-building activities for implementing the second strand of the new implementation framework.

32. An expert from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (observer, academia) advised that, based on his involvement in two capacity-building activities organized in 2019/2021 in Georgia and Azerbaijan and funded by the Government of Switzerland, and research done on continuing professional development, it would be effective to provide sustained capacity-building to educators at the national level in the form of, for example, online professional development courses based on good ESD practices.

33. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, leading strand one, proposed that, based on the identified interest in organizing capacity-building activities, with the purpose of defining the lines of work for the four priority strands, the next Steering Committee meeting (May 2023) be extended by one day, and that a capacity-building workshop on strand one be organized, in order to define the potential capacity-building activities under the strand and to showcase work done by member States on quality education and ESD by sharing good practice examples. A key proposal was setting up a network of quality education professionals across the ECE region, who might therefore join the national focal points at the 2023 meeting.

34. The representative of the Netherlands informed the Committee that the country would continue to provide in-kind support to strand two capacity-building activities on WIA, which included developing toolboxes and two- or three-day training sessions for targeted audiences in the next three years. Another activity would be inviting four or five countries to participate next year in elaborating a proposal for a research project co-financed by the Netherlands under the European Union Erasmus+ subsidies.

35. The representative of CAREC confirmed the organization's commitment to be a subregional partner of ECE in organizing capacity-building activities in Central Asia with the priority interest in strand four and the cross-cutting issue on youth participation.

36. On strand four, CAREC wished to organize, in cooperation with ECE experts, subregional training, a workshop and/or national seminars on capacity-building and dissemination of best practices for the five Central Asian countries.

37. On the cross-cutting issue (youth participation), CAREC wished to organize, in cooperation and with the support of ECE experts, a workshop, seminar or training sessions in order to exchange expertise and good practices on youth participation in ESD and build the capacity of youth in ESD in the Central Asian region.

38. The representative of MIO-ECSDE reported on capacity-building activities in the Mediterranean region in the framework of the Erasmus and the European Union-funded Water and Environment Support projects, including WIA and water and marine litter. Other types of capacity-building activities included summer universities and other activities supported by donors and the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe.

39. The representative of Kyrgyzstan thanked the Steering Committee and the Government of Switzerland for funding and organizing a national capacity-building workshop in 2015. Her Government would welcome the continuation of the Steering Committee's support in implementing the priority areas of the Strategy's implementation framework with the help of those organizations and member States willing to provide expertise and support in implementing capacity-building activities.

40. The representative of Planet'ERE proposed mobilizing external players in funding implementation of strand four and called for greater creativity in developing capacity-building activities.

41. The representative of academia from Malta pointed to the survey results regarding the type of research that members were particularly interested in, highlighting the shift in demand from traditional research-informed practice to practice-informed research. The survey suggested that countries wished to move to action and to share the results of the changes implemented in their educational systems.

42. The Committee noted the secretariat's presentation on the survey results and asked it to investigate the possibility of organizing a workshop to identify needs for capacity-building activities in strand one back-to-back with the next Steering Committee meeting (2023).

43. The Committee noted that the Governments of Cyprus and the Netherlands planned to support the capacity-building activities related to the workplan activities aimed at implementing strand two in the form of an in-kind contribution by funding a series of said activities.

44. The Committee noted the proposals and suggestions made by the representatives of Kyrgyzstan, CAREC, Planet'ERE and academia, and asked its members to inform the secretariat about their potential proposals for supporting and/or organizing future capacity-building activities in the framework of the Strategy.

D. Building capacity in implementing priority action areas of the newly drafted implementation framework: outcomes of International Conference on the Whole School Approach (Lunteren, Netherlands, 28–30 March 2022)

45. The secretariat and the host country informed the Committee about the outcomes of the International Conference on the Whole School Approach (Lunteren, Netherlands, 28–30 March 2022).

46. The representative of the Netherlands updated participants on the International Conference on WSA – organized and funded by the Government of the Netherlands as an in-kind contribution to funding the activities organized by the Steering Committee.⁷ Planned future activities included: large-scale implementation of WSA; organizing a meeting of an expert/study group in cooperation with ECE, UNESCO and the European Union; elaborating a toolbox(es) for implementation; organizing training modules for teachers, schoolboards and staff; developing indicators; and monitoring and evaluating success.

47. Representatives of Germany and YoupaN (Germany) spoke about ongoing activities on implementing WIA in practice and thanked the Government of the Netherlands for the International Conference on WSA, which had provided an opportunity to share good practices and learn from each other's examples.

⁷ See <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Education-for-Sustainable-Development/events/368373>.

48. The Committee noted the information provided and thanked the Government of the Netherlands for its in-kind contribution and support in organizing the International Conference on WSA.

III. Update on preparations for United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Nicosia, 5 October 2022)

A. Organizational issues for Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022)

49. The Steering Committee was updated on the relevant existing and expected decisions of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP), including regarding organizational issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, the proposed framework for preparing the Conference, and the requirements for hosting that event (information paper No. 2).

50. CEP had held its twenty-seventh annual session in Geneva, on 3 to 5 November 2021 and its special session in Geneva, on 9 to 12 May 2022, where important decisions regarding the preparation and conduct of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference had been taken, including regarding the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries.

51. CEP had adopted the document entitled “Organizational Issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference” (ECE/CEP/2021/7), containing guidance on such practical matters as participation, registration, documents, side events, exhibitions and accommodation, and summarizing major deadlines for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

52. The Steering Committee took note of the secretariat’s update on the relevant CEP decisions, including regarding organizational issues for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and the proposed framework for preparing the Conference, and asked the secretariat to keep the Steering Committee informed about developments in the course of preparations for the Conference.

B. Decisions of the special session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva (hybrid), 9–12 May 2022) of relevance to the Steering Committee

53. The special session of CEP considered the draft annotated provisional agenda for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (ECE/CEP/2021/6) and invited its Bureau, with support from the secretariat, to submit the document as an official document of the Nicosia Conference.

54. Item four of the draft annotated provisional agenda referred to the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (Wednesday (3–6 p.m.), 5 October 2022). In particular:

- The Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries would open with introductory remarks by the Co-Chairs of the segment on ESD. Delegates would consider progress achieved in the field.
- Ministers of education and environment would decide on the next steps to be taken to advance ESD in the region. The segment would be organized in a plenary and interactive format.
- The segment would conclude with ministers of education and the environment being invited to adopt the Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development.

55. The same item of the draft annotated provisional agenda stipulated the list of documents to be presented for the adoption at the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, including: the Draft Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/L.2); the Framework for the future implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/10), and the information document entitled Fourth evaluation report of the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/INF/6).

56. The Committee took note of the information provided.

C. Host country preparations

57. The Committee was updated about host country preparations for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries.

58. The representative of Cyprus spoke about the preparations for the Conference, including the symbolism of the Conference motto and logo, the composition of delegations, information about the venue and its infrastructure, the Conference format, deadlines for registrations, accommodation, the value of participation and other relevant information.⁸

59. The representative of Cyprus and the secretariat provided clarifications regarding invitation letters, deadlines for registration, side events and the organization of other events to be held within the framework of the Conference, the composition of delegations and other organizational issues.

60. The Committee took note of the information provided.

D. Draft Ministerial Statement of the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries

61. The Chair updated the Steering Committee on the process of drafting the Ministerial Statement to be adopted at the High-level Meeting, including the work of the volunteer drafting group members. She thanked the coordinator of the drafting group and its members, pointing out that the main purpose of the Statement was to support and increase efforts to implement the UNECE Strategy for ESD until 2030 at the regional level in synergy with other organizations and processes within and beyond the United Nations system.

62. The drafting group coordinator briefed the Committee on the process of elaboration of the statement including the underlying rationale and the main messages highlighted, emphasizing that the group was guided by the newly finalized Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030 (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/3).

63. The Chair expressed her gratitude to those countries and organizations that had already provided comments on the document, as incorporated into the current draft outline of the Ministerial Statement (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/7) and submitted as one of the official documents for the current meeting.

64. After the Secretary had outlined the final deadlines for submission of the official documents to the Nicosia Ministerial Conference, the Chair invited the Committee to either approve the draft as a final document for further submission to the High-level Meeting, or, should more comments be forthcoming from members during the meeting, to ask the drafting group together with the secretariat to incorporate the received comments and prepare the final version of the document to be ready for submission to the High-level Meeting for adoption.

65. The Secretary spoke about the place of ESD in the Nicosia Ministerial Declaration, referring to the historical and traditional approach depending on the structure of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. Thus, when the Ministerial Conference

⁸ For additional information, see <https://nicosiaefe.gov.cy/>.

included the High-level Meeting on ESD, two separate declarations or statements were adopted – one on the environment and the other on ESD. The Steering Committee had to decide whether the reference to ESD in the main declaration on the environment should be emphasized more strongly.

66. The Committee asked the members to submit to the secretariat final comments to the draft Ministerial Statement, if any, by 20 June 2022.

67. The Committee asked the secretariat to incorporate the received comments, if any, and send the document to the drafting group for finalization prior to submission to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

E. Organization of side events

68. The Steering Committee was informed about the organizational issues for the side events to be organized in the framework of the Ministerial Conference, and the process for submitting an application for organizing a side event.⁹

69. The Chair informed the Committee that the host country secretariat had appointed MIO-ECSDE to coordinate submission of proposals for side events.

70. The Committee took note of the information provided by the host country about organization of the side events, exhibition and bilateral/multilateral meetings and asked interested stakeholders to submit their applications through the conference website by 30 June 2022.

F. Resource requirements

71. The Secretary informed the Committee about the resource requirements for the organization of the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (information paper No. 2) with reference to the decision of the twenty-seventh session of CEP concerning the scheme of financial support to delegates from countries eligible for financial support for participating in meetings and events related to the work of CEP, and adopted the list of eligible countries effective immediately.¹⁰ The same list would be applied to Steering Committee members.

72. The Chair, in her role as representative of the host country, informed the Committee that, in addition to the above-mentioned list of countries eligible for financial support from ECE, the Government of Cyprus had decided to provide additional financial assistance to those countries that needed support for attending the Conference and to organizations in need.¹¹

73. The Committee took note of the information provided.

IV. Update on outcomes of work of the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning:

A. Framework for implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030

74. The Committee was reminded that, at its sixteenth meeting, the Steering Committee had discussed a pre-final draft of the concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework (including the preamble and the four strands) and had asked the secretariat to

⁹ See Chair's presentation, available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Agenda_Item3c_Host_country_preparation.pdf.

¹⁰ See https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/CEP-27_EligibilityCriteria_IP.8.e.pdf.

¹¹ Requests for support should be filed at <https://nicosiaefe.gov.cy/request-for-funding-support/>. The national secretariat will contact the author of the request correspondingly.

collect all comments and send them to the Ad Hoc Group for Strategic Planning for elaboration of the final draft, with a view to submitting the final document to the current meeting of the Committee for approval.¹²

75. The Chair of the Steering Committee and the Chair of the Ad Hoc Group on Strategic Planning presented the development of the draft concept note for the post-2019 implementation framework, which had been finalized and included in the document entitled “Framework for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030” (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/3). The new Framework was to be presented to the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries as the main guidance policy document for the member States.

76. The Committee approved the proposed document ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/3 for its further submission to the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries for subsequent adoption.

77. The Chair thanked the members of the Ad Hoc Group and the leaders of the strands for the important work accomplished and confirmed that the new Framework would be presented to the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries as the main guidance policy document for the member States.

B. Draft workplan for implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2025

78. The Committee was informed that the finalized and approved new implementation Framework included section VIII entitled “Recommendations and proposed selected activities for the draft workplan for implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development for the period 2022–2024”, which had been used as a basis for elaborating the outline of the workplan for the next implementation phase set from 2022 to 2025.

79. The document established a road map of activities to be undertaken during the next implementation phase from 2022 to 2025 to further implementation of the Strategy at the national and international levels, in accordance with the new mandate to be articulated by education and environment ministries at the upcoming Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries.

80. The Chair clarified that the period included in the title of the workplan document referred to in the agenda for the meeting indicated the beginning of the period as “2021” because the agenda had been drafted in 2021, but the framework had been finalized in 2022, thus the workplan’s start period should be also from 2022.

81. The Chair invited the Committee to discuss the outline of the draft workplan for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2025 (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/4), with a view to adopting it as drafted, or, if agreed by the meeting, to make comments and update the content correspondingly.

82. The Chair invited the members to make pledges for financial or in-kind contributions for the implementation of the proposed activities outlined in the current workplan.

83. The representative of the Netherlands informed the Committee that the Government was willing to financially support the implementation of the workplan activities outlined for strand two to the same amount as proposed by Cyprus, and also for strand one focused on the development of the competences framework, to be developed, if possible, in cooperation with UNESCO and the European Union GreenComp project on a reference framework for sustainability competences aimed at elaborating the proposed existing framework into practical guidance for several levels of the education system (primary education, secondary education, technical and vocational education and training and higher education).

¹² ECE/CEP/AC.13/2021/2, paras. 63–66.

84. The coordinator of the UNECE Youth Platform on ESD stated that the proposed outline of the workplan activities did not include the action plan for the youth platform to be discussed further at the current meeting. He proposed deciding on the two possible options, i.e. to elaborate the action plan for youth according to the four strands and incorporate the additional activities for youth into the draft workplan for the implementation of the Strategy, or to add the action plan for youth to the main workplan as a whole.

85. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland reported that her Government was considering making a financial contribution to supporting activities implemented by the Steering Committee, with a final decision to be taken by the end of July 2022. She referred to fundraising efforts and pointed to the recent practice of shifting the funding for ESD from the member States' contributions to the private foundations and international funding arrangements and asked whether it would be possible to identify a protocol for strand leaders to approach foundations and other donors to enable support for activities for the implementation of the new framework.

86. The Secretary clarified that, traditionally, funds for ECE projects originated from the member States' contributions directly to the relevant ECE programme trust funds or as an in-kind contribution to the programme activities. Funding from external donors might be applied through the joint projects through the establishment of a memorandum of understanding outlining the obligations of the interested external organizations. Strand leaders might play a bridging role regarding the potential donor organization, but such agreements should be approved and guided by the Steering Committee.

87. Other Committee members shared their experience of seeking fundraising outside United Nations entities, commenting that the established protocols for cooperation depended on donors' priorities and that it might be more flexible to consider proposals on a case-by-case basis.

88. The Committee took note of the announcements by the representatives of Cyprus and the Netherlands about their intention to support the implementation of the workplan activities in the form of in-kind contributions for strand two (Cyprus and the Netherlands) and for strand one (the Netherlands).

89. The Committee agreed to discuss further possibilities for raising funds from private foundations and other donors and to inquire about the possible rules and limitations.

90. The Committee asked the secretariat to revise the proposed draft workplan taking into account the comments received from the members, including on incorporating horizontally the action plan for the Youth Platform into the draft workplan for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD 2021–2025, and to elaborate the final document for its official submission at the next Committee meeting in 2023.

V. Update on outcomes of work of the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators: the draft template for reporting on the future implementation of the Strategy (2021–2030)

91. The Chair of the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators briefly updated the Steering Committee on the outcomes of the work of the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators and on the status of the draft template for reporting "Format for reporting on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD (2021–2030)", which had been officially submitted for consideration at the fifteenth meeting of the Steering Committee (Geneva, 19–20 October 2020) (information paper No. 3).

92. The Ad Hoc Group on Indicators had not met for two years because of the pandemic. A draft template for reporting on the future implementation of the Strategy (2021–2030) currently existed and was the result of the first, second and third meetings of the Ad Hoc Group (respectively: Utrecht, Netherlands, 23–25 October 2019; Podgorica, 16–17 December 2019; and Brussels, 12–14 February 2020) and the discussion at the fifteenth meeting of the Steering Committee. Nevertheless, the 2020 version of the document could not be considered as final, given the outcomes of the debates held at the 2020 and 2021

meetings of the Committee,¹³ which pointed to a number of shortcomings still to be addressed.

93. The Committee had reported on the progress of the Strategy's implementation through the informal questionnaires in 2021¹⁴ and 2022,¹⁵ addressing the four strands of the Framework for 2021–2030, which had not yet been formally adopted, and the effects of the pandemic.

94. The main comments received on the draft template for reporting had been to: keep it short and simple; include specific indicators for the four strands as part of the template; focus on conducting the monitoring and evaluation exercise at the national level and to make it a multi-stakeholder commitment; also focus on research as part of the Strategy's implementation monitoring and evaluation process; and align the exercise with UNESCO monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Lastly, in education, qualitative indicators were mostly being used, as quantitative indicators were difficult to provide.

95. Online consultations of the Ad Hoc Group had been held, including with UNESCO, aimed at clarifying the pending issues.¹⁶

96. Based on the results of the consultations, the Chair of the Ad Hoc Group presented the two following proposals on follow-up steps to finalize the template for reporting:

(a) Proposal one (identical steps could be repeated for the mandatory reporting cycles in 2028, 2029 and 2030):

(i) Finalize the template for reporting in October 2022 in a small working group, taking into consideration the adopted framework for the implementation of the Strategy 2021–2030, the draft working plan 2021–2025, the timelines of other monitoring and evaluation exercises, and incorporate the questions from the informal questionnaires focused on the four strands of the newly adopted framework;

(ii) Submit the final document (format for reporting) for adoption at the next Steering Committee meeting;

(iii) Launch the next mandatory reporting cycle for data collection (national implementation reports) in 2023 after the Steering Committee meeting;

(iv) Carry out data collection in 2023–2024;

(v) Ensure that the analysis report was ready in 2025;

(b) Proposal two: rearrange the questionnaire around the different aspects of WIA/WSA.

97. The Chair thanked the Chair of the Ad hoc Group on Indicators for the update and invited the Committee to decide on further action regarding the deadlines for finalization of the document, based on the information provided.

98. The Committee took note of the update of the Chair of the Ad Hoc Group on Indicators on the outcomes of the Group's work and on the status of the draft template for reporting "Format for reporting on the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)" and agreed that the document (draft template for reporting) would be finalized in the course of 2022 – with the possibility of organizing a meeting of experts during the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference – and prepared for further submission as an official document for the eighteenth meeting of the Steering Committee in 2023.

¹³ See, respectively, ECE/CEP/AC.13/2020/2, paras. 70–71, and ECE/CEP/AC.13/2021/2, paras. 71–75.

¹⁴ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2021/2, paras. 10, 17 and 19.

¹⁵ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/5.

¹⁶ For details of the consultation, see https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Item5_State_of_the_art_indicators.pdf.

VI. Education for sustainable development and youth: update on activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Education for Sustainable Development Youth Platform held since the previous meeting

A. Activity plan for the Youth Platform in the region for the period 2021–2025

99. The coordinator of the UNECE ESD Youth Platform updated the participants on the activities implemented since the last meeting, current issues and future plans.

100. The major activities implemented were preparation of the publication on good practices on the engagement of youth in ESD in the ECE region, which was in its final stage of preparation, and development of the strategy for the Youth Platform, which was about young people shaping and implementing ESD initiatives in the region. The mission aimed to amplify the voice of young people and enable them to build a sustainable future, focusing on values such as equity, solidarity, diversity, respect, inclusion, freedom and activism. The following outcomes were envisaged:

(a) Outcome 1: Governments implemented policies that increases young people's decision-making power on ESD. The Youth Platform planned to build strategic partnerships, including with non-ECE organizations, to advocate ESD and youth-friendly policies, and engage decision-makers regarding young people's need for ESD;

(b) Outcome 2: young people were able to implement ESD-related actions. Achievable objectives included reaching an increasing number of young people through online methods with evidence-based information on ESD, and building the capacity of young people in the region to advocate and educate on ESD;

(c) Outcome 3: the UNECE ESD Youth Platform was an established, well-functioning, recognizable and inclusive youth network. Achievable objectives: increasing the number of partners in the network; strengthening the operational effectiveness and sustainability of the Platform; mainstreaming youth in the work of the UNECE Steering Committee on ESD; building the capacity of young people in the region to advocate for and educate on ESD;

(d) Outcome 4: fundraising, aimed at increasing operational effectiveness.

101. Based on the above-mentioned objectives, the activity plan for the Youth Platform in the region for the period 2022–2025 had been designed around the four following main axes: programmatic, fundraising, strengthening the youth network and external communication or advocacy.

102. The draft outline of activities for the activity plan included: (a) holding engagement initiatives and dissemination activities with decision-makers at different levels; (b) contributing to regional and global policy initiatives; (c) developing the funding strategy, including the needs assessment; (d) establishing strategic partnerships to jointly advocate for and implement ESD initiatives in the ECE region; and (e) strengthening the operational effectiveness of the network with clear roles and responsibilities.

103. With regard to the nomination process for membership of the UNECE ESD Youth Platform, those countries that had not yet nominated youth representatives would be asked to do so, whereas those countries that had already nominated their representatives would be asked to renominate existing Youth Platform focal points, in case the initial nominees had been changed for any reason.

104. Once the nomination process had been completed, the next steps would be establishing working groups on each of the four main axes outlined above and developing specific work plans, including assigning tasks and responsibilities. Another activity would be launching the publication, which might happen at the side event organized for youth at the upcoming Nicosia Ministerial Conference. That also provided an opportunity for discussions

with decision-makers. Also, it was necessary to clarify the legal aspects for the formal or informal registration of the Youth Platform, including its location, etc.

105. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland promoted the participation of the youth representative of the UNECE ESD Youth Platform at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, 6 November–18 November 2022). Another proposal was to circulate a summary outlining the role of member State youth representatives when launching the next nomination process for membership of the Youth Platform, thus outlining the value and benefits of joining the Platform and the roles and responsibilities, facilitating recruitment. Another proposal was to extend the duration of membership by two years. The Youth Platform coordinator proposed extending Steering Committee meetings from two to three days to have a separate meeting for Youth Platform members. In that case, the cost for participation might be borne by the member States. For other issues such as capacity-building, awareness-raising and dissemination activities, the Platform aimed to be self-sufficient.

106. The Committee: (a) took note of information about the proposed outline of the draft activity plan for the UNECE ESD Youth Platform for the period 2021–2025; (b) agreed to include the finalized document (draft activity plan) in the draft workplan for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2025; and (c) agreed to launch a 2022–2023 nomination process for the membership of the Youth Platform that would include refining terms of references for the youth focal points, and asked the secretariat to circulate a message to the Committee.

107. Also, the Committee took note of the proposal to extend the meeting of the Steering Committee from two to three days, in order to have a separate meeting for the Youth Platform members, which would require additional financial and in-kind contributions to the programme's trust fund.

B. Possible activities and side events on “Youth and Education for Sustainable Development” that could be organized during the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

108. The Youth Platform coordinator informed the Committee about the possible activities and side events on “Youth and Education for Sustainable Development” to be organized during the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (information paper No. 5).

109. With the upcoming Ministerial Conference, the Youth Platform aimed to take a central role, including contributing to the organizational/planning aspects, and ensuring meaningful youth participation through the organization of at least one side event focused on launching the publication entitled *Engaging Young People in the Implementation of ESD in the UNECE Region: Good Practices in the Engagement of Youth in Education for Sustainable Development*.¹⁷

110. The side event would serve as the publication's official launch and dissemination event and would include discussion of the importance of youth engagement and best practices in the implementation of ESD in the region. The aim was to mobilize other young people to promote and implement ESD-related activities and to encourage decision-makers to include youth in institutional processes.

111. The Youth Platform planned to advocate for a pre-conference meeting for young delegates to help them prepare the planned activities in the framework of the Ministerial Conference, and to bring a joint stance to the meeting, including a possible joint statement for endorsement alongside the official Ministerial Conference statement.

112. The Chair thanked the Youth Platform coordinator for the information provided and approved the Platform's intention to organize a side event during the Nicosia Ministerial Conference.

¹⁷ United Nations publication, ECE/CEP/197.

113. The Committee took note of the information provided and endorsed the organization of the side event on “Youth and ESD” by the UNECE ESD Youth Platform during the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

VII. Recent activities to promote education for sustainable development in other international forums

114. A representative of the UNESCO Section for Education for Sustainable Development emphasized the role of ESD in addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, disease outbreaks and pandemics and resource inequality. He gave an overview of actions implemented by UNESCO to address those challenges, including a review of national curriculum frameworks of 100 countries.¹⁸ The disappointing results of that review had been presented at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 31 October–13 November 2021): only half of the national curriculums had referred to climate change and only a quarter to biodiversity. A new review was being launched that covered 200 countries and would be presented at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC.

115. The representative of UNESCO presented highlights of the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (online, 17–19 May 2021) and its main outcome, the Berlin Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development,¹⁹ which called for environmental and climate action to be made a core curriculum component in every country and school system. That commitment had been further promoted at the pre-Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC (Milan, Italy, 30 September–2 October 2021) and the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC.

116. UNESCO had organized the One Ocean Summit (Brest, France, 9–11 February 2022), where countries had been called on to include ocean education in school curricula by 2025. In 2021, UNESCO had submitted its report to the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly (New York, 14–27 September 2021),²⁰ resulting in General Assembly resolution 76/209 on education for sustainable development in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,²¹ reaffirming that ESD was key to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and that countries should mainstream ESD into formal education programmes and encourage its integration into non-formal and informal education. In 2021, the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD for outstanding projects had been awarded to Ghana, Peru and the State of Palestine. ECE member States were strongly encouraged to present their candidates for the next cycle of nominations, to be held in 2023. In November 2021, UNESCO had held the Fifth UNESCO Forum on Transformative Education for Sustainable Development, Global Citizenship, Health and Well-being (Seoul (online), 29 November–1 December 2021), involving a discussion on how to measure, monitor and evaluate progress made in transformative education.

117. The results of the seventh consultation on the 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace, and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms²² (October 2020–March 2021) had been published in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Global Database²³ in July 2021. The main findings showed that: nearly all countries had reported that ESD and global citizenship education were reflected in national education laws and policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessment; ESD and global citizenship education were considerably less likely to be reflected in technical and vocational education and training or in adult education; climate change education and sustainable consumption and production

¹⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Getting Every School Climate-Ready: How Countries Are Integrating Climate Change Issues in Education* (Paris, 2021).

¹⁹ See <https://en.unesco.org/events/ESDfor2030>.

²⁰ A/76/228.

²¹ A/RES/76/209.

²² See <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379320?4=null&queryId=6dc4b92a-e367-4f0f-8f55-897115cc30ce>.

²³ See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>.

were less often reflected in curricula and teacher education than other themes; and government support for research on ESD and GCED was limited.

118. The speaker reported on the process launched to revise the 1974 Recommendation with the aim of strengthening the relevance and effectiveness of the instrument and the resolve of member States to take action, and to harness positive shifts and new understandings in education. The revision process comprised three steps: preparatory work (December 2021–February 2022); technical consultation (February–June 2022); and formal consultation with member States (September 2022–November 2023).

119. The representative of UNESCO informed the Committee about the forthcoming United Nations Transforming Education Summit (New York, 16–17 and 19 September 2022), which included the ESD-related “Thematic action track 2: Learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development”. The ECE secretariat had been invited to join the United Nations support team responsible for preparing the expected outputs of that thematic action track, the policy discussion paper and recommendations for action, the online catalogue of good practices and ideas for action or commitments at the September Summit. The key recommendations that had already emanated from the discussions and that were relevant to the UNECE Strategy for ESD were aimed at translating knowledge into policy and practice.

120. UNESCO was preparing for the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC by holding a series of webinars. The speaker talked about the ongoing ESD for 2030 country initiatives, which would bring together all country-level ESD activities. Fifty pilot countries around the world, including fifteen in the ECE region, were preparing country initiatives on ESD for 2030.

121. The representative of the European Commission gave an overview of the main implemented actions regarding “learning for the green transition” and “sustainability”, including the Council of the European Union Recommendation on learning for environmental sustainability, the European sustainability competence framework “GreenComp”, the Working Group on Schools: Learning for Sustainability, the Education for Climate Coalition and other ongoing programmes.²⁴

122. The representative of UNEP informed the Committee about the successful engagement of ECE, UNESCO and UNEP at the Eleventh World Environmental Education Congress “Building Bridges in Times of Climate Urgency” (Prague, 14–18 March 2022) involving the organization of a cross-cutting dialogue session entitled “Learn for our Planet, Act for the Climate: ESD and climate action through Regional ESD Strategies”. The aim had been to showcase how the new UNECE Strategy for ESD 2021–2030 could help to scale up the role of education and learning, with a focus on urgent action, in fighting climate change.

123. The representative of MIO-ECSDE briefed the Committee on recent activities organized in the framework of the Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development. The Mediterranean Committee on ESD aimed to guide and monitor the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy through its Action Plan at the regional level. It supported countries in integrating and adapting ECE principles and guidelines through consultations, technical support and training of trainers.

124. The representative of GENE updated the Committee on recent ESD activities and GENE–ECE Steering Committee synergies, highlighting the importance of joint collaboration with ECE, UNESCO, OECD, the Council of Europe and the European Commission on a new declaration towards global education to 2050. He invited the Steering Committee to join GENE for consultation meetings in September 2022 and for a congress (Dublin, 4 November 2022), which might link work done by the international organizations and the ECE Steering Committee, including the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries.

125. The representative of the ESD Expert Network within the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians briefed the Committee on the creation, structure, composition and objectives of the Expert Network, which served as a

²⁴ See <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/green-education/learning-for-environmental-sustainability>.

platform for cooperation, policy coordination and joint strategies for sustainable development, as well as a forum for dialogue between all stakeholders. The Network planned, through a research-based approach, to establish a regional ESD network and mechanism aimed at highlighting existing ESD activities and linking actors, using learning methods to strengthen the Framework Convention and educational channels for its promotion.

126. The Chair thanked the representatives of the above-mentioned partner organizations and invited them to participate in the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, including by organizing side events in the framework of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, which provided an opportunity to showcase important work done on ESD.

127. The Committee took note of the presentations given by the representatives of UNESCO, UNEP, the European Commission, MIO-ECSDE, GENE, the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians and other members, and agreed to work closely with the above-mentioned organizations, other regional and global partners on promoting the ESD agenda in the region.

VIII. Participation of the Steering Committee in upcoming regional and international forums

128. The Committee members were informed about upcoming regional and international forums in 2022 and 2023, starting with the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC.

129. The representative of CAREC invited the Steering Committee to participate in the Thirteenth Central Asian Leadership Programme on Environment for Sustainable Development (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 2022), devoted to climate change education and youth, and spoke about the organization's participation in the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC, aimed at linking climate change education and support to youth initiatives.

130. The representative of MIO-ECSDE reported on an invitation to participate in the Council of Europe Global Forum on Higher Education Leadership for Democracy, Sustainability and Social Justice (Dublin, 16–17 June 2022).

131. The Committee took note of the information regarding planned participation in upcoming regional and international forums.

IX. Strengthening synergies with other organizations and processes

132. The representative of Georgia reported that, as a part of the Environmental Democracy Programme implemented by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and funded and supported by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Environmental Information and Education Centre of the Georgian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture was raising environmental awareness among local government authorities.

133. The representative of CAREC reported on ongoing initiatives and achievements regarding participation in processes implemented in the Central Asian region in synergy with partner organizations, including the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters and UNFCCC, and the UNESCO, UNEP and UNECE initiatives and strategies on ESD and youth.

134. The Committee took note of and welcomed the information provided on synergies with other organizations and processes and called for such synergies to be further strengthened.

X. Publications on education for sustainable development from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

135. The Chair recalled that two publications were to be published in 2022 (postponed from 2021) – *Progress report on the implementation of the fourth mandatory reporting cycle of the Strategy* and *Good practices on the engagement of youth in education for sustainable development in the ECE region* – draft outlines of which had been presented at the fifteenth meeting of the Steering Committee.²⁵ An update was provided on the status of the two publications, which had to be finalized and submitted to the United Nations publications service before September 2022. The Government of Cyprus had made an in-kind contribution regarding the review and editing of the publications in English (€15,000 and €4,000 respectively). The Chair thanked all members and experts who had assisted in drafting and preparing the publications.

136. A representative of the secretariat stated that the publishing costs, including translations into French and English, for both hard and electronic copies would be covered by ECE.

137. The Committee took note of the information provided and asked the secretariat to assist with the submission of the final versions of the publications for translation and publishing, once they had been forwarded to the secretariat.

XI. Mainstreaming gender issues in education for sustainable development

138. The representative of CAREC briefed the Committee about the efforts of CAREC to integrate gender issues into ESD. CAREC had 20 years of experience in organizing and conducting capacity-building events (workshops, trainings, Central Asian Leadership Programme on Environment for Sustainable Development, etc.) with various thematic focuses (water, energy, climate change, nexus, etc.), where a gender balance had been successfully maintained. Since 2015, CAREC had cooperated with the OSCE secretariat on the issues of gender-sensitive water governance and water diplomacy.

139. The representatives of Germany, Monaco, UNESCO, MIO-ECSDE and YoupaN (Germany) shared information about work on mainstreaming gender issues in ESD. The Chair asked the speakers to send the reported materials (reports, website links or other relevant information) to the secretariat for reporting purposes and posting on the website to ensure wider accessibility.

140. Countries were invited to pay special attention to the issue and to present actions and measures taken at the national and regional levels at the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

141. The Committee took note of the presentation by the representative of CAREC and the information provided by the representatives of Germany, Monaco, UNESCO, MIO-ECSDE and YoupaN (Germany) about actions and measures taken by members on integrating gender issues in ESD, and highlighted the necessity of addressing gender issues, especially in the post-pandemic context.

²⁵ ECE/CEP/AC.13/2020/2, para. 122.

XII. Matters related to the trust fund

A. Status of the extrabudgetary technical cooperation project “Strengthening the capacity of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe member States in implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education on Sustainable Development”

142. The Secretary presented an assessment of the current status of the ESD trust fund and resource requirements for 2022–2023 (information paper No. 6.). He thanked countries that had made financial contributions or had made pledges yet to be transferred for the current year, which would provide secretariat support to the activities organized by the Steering Committee. The Secretary also referred to announced in-kind contributions of Cyprus and the Netherlands for funding the preparation of the two publications (Cyprus) and implementing the workplan activities for strands one and two (Cyprus and the Netherlands). A sound financial basis was required for the effective implementation of the future UNECE Strategy for ESD.

143. The Committee took note of the information from the secretariat that, given the present status of resources, the dedicated staff member contract would expire at the end of June 2022 and would be renewed depending on the availability of resources contributed by the member States (preferably by 1 September 2022, especially in view of preparations for the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries).

144. The Chair recalled that planning of activities according to the current and future Steering Committee workplans must include a realistic assessment of the situation, with financing of those activities, in order to avoid overambitious expectations. It was agreed that any plans for future must be based on such an approach.

145. The Chair underscored that since the funding situation of the Strategy for ESD was always very difficult, and regional activities were funded exclusively through contributions by member States to the trust fund, advance indications of pledges by States were vital.

146. The representatives of Austria, Cyprus and Slovenia announced that they were planning to provide financial contributions to the trust fund for the current year.

147. The Committee members were invited to consider the funding situation regarding the Strategy’s activities over previous years, with a view to examining alternative ways of addressing the issue, including providing in-kind contributions to programme activities.

148. The Chair thanked the Government of the Netherlands for providing in-kind contributions for funding and organizing the International Conference on the Whole School Approach.

149. The Committee took note of the information provided on the status of the trust fund and asked the secretariat to facilitate the issue (preferably in early autumn) of its regular formal letters to the member States’ education and environment authorities, inviting them to consider contributing to the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD for 2023 and beyond.

150. The Committee invited members to consider and inform the secretariat about the following alternative options for contributing to the Strategy’s activities through in-kind contributions:

- (a) Hosting a conference or expert group meeting for a specific task decided by the Committee (e.g., a youth conference);
- (b) Funding the outlined activities included in the workplan of the new Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy on ESD;
- (c) Funding and/or organizing capacity-building activities (workshops or other) at the national or subregional level;

(d) Publishing and printing a Committee publication (i.e. one not included in the ECE publications programme) and/or other.

B. Establishment of a successor project: matters for the decision of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Executive Committee

151. The Secretary updated the Committee on the status of extrabudgetary technical cooperation project E285 “Strengthening the capacity of UNECE member States in implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education on Sustainable Development” – originally scheduled to run to end 2021 but exceptionally extended until 30 June 2022.

152. The Committee took into account the fact that the Steering Committee’s mandate had been extended until 2030, and, aiming to ensure continuity of support for its work, requested the secretariat and the ECE Executive Office to facilitate the extension of project E285, or the establishment of a successor project with the same objectives.

C. Voluntary scheme of contributions

153. The Steering Committee was invited to discuss the possible revision of the voluntary scheme of contributions proposed in the 2005 Vilnius Framework for the Implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD with the aim of ensuring the availability of stable and predictable sources of funding for the effective implementation of the Strategy. The then-proposed scheme of contributions referred to the following indicative amounts of voluntary contributions: “big” donors – €20,000 or more; “medium” donors – €2,000 or more; and “small” donors – €200 or more.²⁶

154. A representative of the secretariat stated that, due to increased administrative costs for receiving member State contributions (i.e., charges for setting up the pledge; applying the cash received) it was preferable to keep the minimum amount of a contribution at €500 to avoid negative charges.

155. The Committee took note of the information provided.

XIII. Calendar of meetings

156. The Steering Committee:

(a) Agreed to hold its eighteenth meeting on 25 and 26 May 2023, in person in Geneva;

(b) Asked the secretariat to explore the possibility of extending the duration of the eighteenth Steering Committee meeting from two to three days to allow for the organization of a capacity-building workshop on the first strand;

(c) Agreed to organize a special session of the Steering Committee on ESD back-to-back with the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

(d) Also agreed to organize a high-level meeting of education ministers on 6 October 2022 in the framework of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference;

(e) Asked interested members of the Committee to actively participate in elaborating the detailed agenda of the above-mentioned meeting and asked the secretariat to follow up on that decision, as needed.

XIV. Other business

157. No additional items were proposed for discussion.

²⁶ CEP/AC.13/2005/4/Rev.1, para. 18.

158. The Steering Committee asked the secretariat to upload to the meeting website the presentations and other relevant materials discussed during the meeting.

XV. Closure of the meeting

159. The Chair provided concluding remarks and thanked the speakers and the Committee for their constructive and efficient work, the technical team who serviced the online platform and the interpreters, and officially closed the meeting.
