



Economic and Social Council

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Economic Commission for Europe

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Other issues calling for decision by the Commission

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Note by the secretariat

I. Digital and green transformations in support of the sustainable development in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe

The Economic Commission for Europe,

1. *Recalling and reaffirming* the commitments, *inter alia*, to protect our planet and to improve digital cooperation in the Declaration on the Commemoration of the seventy-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations,
2. *Taking note* of the aspects relevant to digital and green transformations of the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda”, welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolution 76/6 of 15 November 2021 as a basis for further consideration by Member States,
3. *Underlining* the urgent need to address, in a comprehensive and synergetic manner, climate change and the biodiversity loss in a broader context of achieving the sustainable development goals, as well as the importance of protecting, conserving, restoring and sustainably using nature and ecosystems for effective and sustainable climate action,
4. *Noting* the importance of transition to sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production for efforts to address climate change,
5. *Emphasizing* that enhanced effective climate action should be implemented in a manner that is just and inclusive while minimizing negative social and economic impacts that may arise from climate action,
6. *Noting* the outcomes of the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh Conferences of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in particular the decisions relevant to the mandate of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE),
7. *Acknowledging* the accelerated pace of digitalization, which is radically transforming many aspects of our lives and opening new possibilities for economic development, policy design and the implementation and management of public services,
8. *Noting* the multiple contributions that digitalization and related advanced technologies can make to the green transformation, including through efficiency gains, better monitoring



of the use of natural resources and connectivity, enhanced systems optimization, and new channels of communication and collaboration among different stakeholders,

9. *Further noting*, in particular, the role of digital technologies in advancing circularity and sustainable use of natural resources, notably tracing materials across value chains in a precise way that enables informed decision-making by both producers and consumers, as appropriate,

10. *Acknowledging* the need to mitigate the potential negative environmental implications of digital technologies, including those related to energy and material consumption and the generation of related e-waste, by advancing decarbonization and applying circular principles more broadly in support of the green transformation,

11. *Noting* that the green and digital transformations call for determined efforts, including appropriate financing, *inter alia*, climate finance and innovative sources of finance, to realize their full potential to bring about enhanced cooperation, increased inclusiveness and to avoid new divides within and across countries as well as to address the existing ones,

12. *Recognizing* that digital divides persist across income groups, age groups, geography and gender and reiterating the need for initiatives on digital cooperation to bridge these divides in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

13. *Recognizing* the strengths of ECE in developing norms and standards, and providing policy guidance and technical assistance in its mandated areas of activity,

14. *Emphasizes* the need to further strengthen the work of the Commission in support of digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the ECE region within its existing mandate as appropriate and subject to available resources;

15. *Requests* the relevant Sectoral Committees and bodies reporting directly to the Executive Committee, and their subsidiaries, to consider how to enhance the impact of relevant existing ECE instruments, in order to foster digital and green transformations, including by proposing ways to identify, assess and fill gaps in governance and good practices;

16. *Invites* these subsidiary bodies to replicate and scale up existing approaches that facilitate broad and effective use of the appropriate instruments, including through capacity-building and knowledge-sharing activities;

17. *Further invites* these subsidiary bodies, as appropriate, to consider developing proposals in their respective programmes of work, including possible collaboration across subprogrammes, for impactful and measurable solutions that promote digital and green transformations and that can facilitate attaining the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

18. *Requests* the secretariat to further promote partnerships related to digital and green transformations, including within the United Nations system, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector, to explore opportunities for synergies to broaden the use of relevant ECE instruments;

19. *Requests* the secretariat to develop and scale new capacities, as suggested in UN 2.0 Quintet of Change and subject to availability of resources, to assist the digital and green transformations in the ECE region;

20. *Requests* the secretariat to contribute to the development of the Common Blueprint for Digital Transformations, led by the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy for Technology, in areas relevant to the ECE mandate, in order to support the coordinated action within the United Nations system on digital and green transformations;

21. *Requests* the secretariat to present a progress report on the work of the Commission on the digital and green transformations towards sustainable development in the region of the ECE, as outlined in the above decision, for consideration at its seventy-first session.

II. Promotion of Circular Economy and the sustainable use of natural resources

The Economic Commission for Europe,

22. *Recalling* the deliberations at its sixty-ninth session, including the commitment made by its member States to step up their efforts to promote circular economy approaches and the sustainable use of natural resources, namely by mainstreaming circularity and the sustainable use of natural resources in the existing relevant ECE sectoral work programmes – as appropriate, and through the voluntary initiatives and capacity building cooperation opportunities that have been submitted to that session of the ECE, and other voluntary commitments that were made earlier in the Environment for Europe process,

23. *Welcomes* the progress report on the work of the Commission on the promotion of a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources, as contained in document E/ECE/1507;

24. *Recognizes* with appreciation the efforts made by relevant sectoral committees and bodies reporting directly to the Executive Committee, and by the secretariat of the Commission, to further strengthen its work in this field in line with the provisions of decision A (69) I, to enhance the impact of relevant existing ECE instruments, replicate and scale up existing approaches, and develop proposals in their respective programmes of work, including possible collaboration across subprogrammes, for impactful and measurable solutions that promote a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources, that support measuring progress towards policy targets regarding circular economy in the ECE region, and that can facilitate attaining the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

25. *Acknowledges* that the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy may serve as a framework for voluntary initiatives on circular economy, resource efficiency and sustainable infrastructure development, including through promoting nature-based solutions, towards a just transition;

26. *Further recognizes* the voluntary initiatives undertaken by member States to further accelerate and scale up the transition to a circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources;

27. *Invites* relevant subsidiary bodies, the secretariat and member States to continue their efforts in this regard and explore synergies also with the Commission's future work, especially initiatives related to digital and green transformations for sustainable development in the region of ECE;

28. *Notes* that the early designation of a high-level theme has effectively facilitated closer collaboration across the secretariat, the intergovernmental architecture and the broad expert community of the Commission and made their collective expertise available to the deliberations at the session of the Commission, and thus requests the Executive Committee, in line with its responsibilities to prepare the session of the Commission, to designate a future cross-cutting theme for the high-level segment of the upcoming session of the Commission at the end of a given Commission year.

III. Extension of the mandate of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

The Economic Commission for Europe,

29. *Recalling* its decisions B (67) to establish the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and B (68) and C (69) to extend its mandate,

30. *Reaffirming* the provisions contained therein on the role, objectives and format of the Regional Forum,

31. *Noting with appreciation* the successful organization of the previous sessions of the Regional Forum as a platform for peer learning and the exchange of policy experiences and good practices in the implementation of the sustainable development goals,
32. *Taking note* of the evaluation of the added value of the Regional Forums held in 2021 and 2022 prepared by the secretariat (document E/ECE/1510),
33. *Decides* to continue to convene annual sessions of the Regional Forum to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in close cooperation with the entities of the regional United Nations system and with the active engagement of other relevant stakeholders;
34. *Requests* the secretariat to develop the agenda of each session of the Regional Forum in close consultation with member States, and to align it with the respective themes and programme of work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, with a focus on those aspects that are particularly relevant to the ECE region;
35. *Also requests* the secretariat to continue to publish a yearly report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the ECE region to support the discussions at the sessions of the Regional Forum, with a focus on the sustainable development goals under review by the high-level political forum for sustainable development that year, using existing data sets and statistics;
36. *Decides* to keep the Regional Forum aligned with the overall follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, taking into account General Assembly resolution A/RES/75/290 B entitled “Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 67/290 on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level” and future decisions on the theme and focus of the high-level political forum on sustainable development;
37. *Also decides* to submit the reports of the annual sessions of the Regional Forum, including the Chair’s summary of the discussions with key messages, to the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, as part of the regional contributions to the global follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

IV. Building resilient energy systems

The Economic Commission for Europe,

38. *Noting* the urgent need to address the increasing vulnerability of the energy systems in the ECE region; noting the sovereign right of states to determine national energy policy, conditions for exploiting their energy resources, their choice between different energy sources, and the general structure of their energy supply, and the pace and ways of the energy transformations; and further noting that the efforts that are being currently undertaken on the global scale need to be scaled-up to meet the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in general and of the 2°C target of the Paris Agreement in particular, and that current climate goals should not be compromised by a focus upon short-term energy challenges,
39. *Recognizes* that the Committee and its six subsidiary bodies are in a unique position to support the building of resilient energy systems in the ECE region;
40. *Welcomes* the prioritization and implementation of special resiliency-related activities by the Committee;
41. *Takes note* of the ECE Platform on Resilient Energy Systems to coordinate and promote efforts related to energy resilience across the ECE region, providing for inclusive dialogue;

42. *Further notes* that the Committee added building resilient energy systems to the programme of work beginning in 2024 as a new focus area with no regular budgetary implications, but recognizes the urgent need to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to support this critical area of work.

V. Decision to study finance for energy-related climate change activities in the region of the Economic Commission for Europe, particularly related to critical raw materials

The Economic Commission for Europe,

43. *Noting* that, to deliver on climate change and sustainable development, the ECE region must optimize the management of endowments of natural resources, including critical raw materials (CRMs), that a significant increase in sustainability-focused investments for sourcing and development of CRMs is crucial to ensuring the security of supply, and that there is currently a lack of financing available for CRMs-related projects in the ECE region,

44. *Requests* that the Committee study how best to address the current barriers to climate finance in the ECE region, such as a lack of socially, environmentally and economically referenced standardized and harmonized data on projects, and develop, within existing resources, products that address these barriers.

VI. Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation

The Economic Commission for Europe,

45. *Recalling* its decision 4 of E/ECE/1462 Annual Report (1 April 2009 to 31 March 2011),

46. *Noting* the value of capturing and using recovered methane to increase energy supply and support energy system resilience in the short term and the value of increasing the capture and reduction of methane to achieve climate objectives in the long term,

47. *Endorses* the “Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation” (ECE/ENERGY/139), developed under the Committee’s Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition;

48. *Recommends* that the Guidance be disseminated widely, inviting Member States of the United Nations, international organizations and the regional commissions to consider the possibility of taking appropriate measures to ensure the application of “Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation” worldwide;

49. *Decides* to propose to the Economic and Social Council to consider inviting Member States of the United Nations, international organizations and the regional commissions to apply the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level and to transmit to the Council at its next session a draft decision on the issue for consideration and possible adoption.

Draft ECOSOC Decision on the Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting that at its seventieth session (1819 April 2023), the Economic Commission for Europe endorsed the “Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation”

(ECE/ENERGY/139), of December 2021, recommended that the “Best Practices Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation” be disseminated widely, and invited Member States of the United Nations, international organizations and the regional commissions to consider the possibility of taking appropriate measures to ensure the application of “Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation” in countries worldwide, and proposed to the Economic and Social Council that it recommend the application of the “Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation” worldwide, and noting that this proposal does not have financial implications,

Decides to invite Member States of the United Nations, international organizations and the regional commissions to consider the possibility of taking appropriate measures to ensure the application of the “Best Practice Guidance for Effective Management of Coal Mine Methane at National Level: Monitoring, Reporting, Verification and Mitigation” worldwide.

VII. United Nations Resource Management System Principles and Requirements

The Economic Commission for Europe,

50. *Recalling* its decision E (69) paragraph 2 of E/ECE/1494 Annual Report (9 April 2019 to 20 April 2021),

51. *Noting* that sustainable management of natural resources is fundamental to attainment of the 2030 Agenda, attainment of the Paris Agreement and progress towards a more circular economy,

52. *Endorses*, subject to the procedure outlined in the report of the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its thirty-first session (ECE/ENERGY/143, paragraph 34), the United Nations Resource Management System (UNRMS) Principles and Requirements (ECE/ENERGY/GE.3/2022/6) developed by the Committee’s Expert Group on Resource Management;

53. *Recommends* that the UNRMS Principles and Requirements be disseminated widely, inviting Member States of the United Nations, international organizations and the regional commissions to consider the possibility of taking appropriate measures to ensure the application of the UNRMS Principles and Requirements worldwide;

54. *Decides* to propose to the Economic and Social Council to consider inviting Member States of the United Nations, international organizations and the regional commissions to apply the UNRMS Principles and Requirements and to transmit to the Council at its next session a draft decision on the issue for consideration and possible adoption.

Draft ECOSOC Decision on the UNRMS Principles and Requirements

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting that at its seventieth session (1819 April 2023), the Economic Commission for Europe endorsed the UNRMS Principles and Requirements of 14 April 2022 as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/GE.3/2022/6, recommended that the UNRMS Principles and Requirements be disseminated widely, and invited Member States of the United Nations, international organizations and the regional commissions to consider the possibility of taking appropriate measures to ensure the application of the UNRMS Principles and Requirements in countries worldwide, and proposed to the Economic and Social Council that it recommend the application of the UNRMS Principles and Requirements worldwide, and noting that this proposal does not have financial implications,

Decides to invite Member States of the United Nations, international organizations and the regional commissions to consider the possibility of taking appropriate measures to ensure the application of the UNRMS Principles and Requirements worldwide.

VIII. Request to strengthen the role of the secretariat of the Economic Commission of Europe in supporting member States in building resilient energy systems and modernizing resource management systems

The Economic Commission for Europe,

55. *Considering* a number of decisions of the Economic and Social Council concerning the sustainable energy subprogramme (United Nations International Framework Classification for Energy Reserves/Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities (1997/226), United Nations Framework Classification for Fossil Energy and Mineral Resources (2004/233), Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Use in Coal Mines (2011/222), Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Recovery and Use from Abandoned Coal Mines (2021/249), Updated United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (2021/250)),

56. *Noting* at its seventieth session the critical importance of building resilient energy systems in the ECE region, including sustainable resource management of critical raw materials (CRMs) and the development of sustainable value chains of CRMs, and progress toward a more circular economy in realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement targets,

57. *Further noting* that ECE member States are starting to prioritize building resilient energy systems and implementation of sustainable resource management tools, including the implementation of the United Nations Framework Classification (UNFC) and the United Nations Resource Management System (UNRMS) for social, environmental and economic performance improvements in natural resource management, including through the International Centres of Excellence on Sustainable Resource Management and the International Centres of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane and supporting proper management of coal mine methane and abandoned mine methane,

58. *Recalling* that the regular budget support for the subprogramme, including staffing, has remained minimal and unchanged for the past many years,

59. *Decides* to request the Secretary-General to strengthen the role of the ECE secretariat in supporting member States in building resilient energy systems and modernizing resource management systems;

60. *Decides* to transmit to the Economic and Social Council at its session of 2023 a draft resolution on this issue for consideration and possible adoption.

Draft resolution of the Economic and Social Council to strengthen the role of the secretariat of the Economic Commission of Europe in supporting member States in building resilient energy systems and modernizing resource management systems

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting the adoption by the seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva, 18–19 April 2023) of decision xx (70), by which the Economic Commission for Europe recommended to the Economic and Social Council endorsing the said decision,

Endorses decision xx (70) of the Economic Commission for Europe and requests the Secretary-General to strengthen the role of the ECE secretariat in supporting member States in building resilient energy systems and modernizing resource management systems.

IX. Implementation of the rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)

The Economic Commission for Europe,

61. *Acknowledging* the essential role of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) in furthering effective and inclusive public access to information, access to justice and public participation in environmental matters across different sectors and processes,

62. *Also acknowledging* that the Aarhus Convention is thereby playing an important role in the achievement of all sustainable development goals, in particular goal 16, by empowering the public with the right to access to information and to justice, and participate effectively in decision-making on a wide range of issues addressed by the goals,

63. *Recognizing* that the implementation of the Convention also supports countries efforts in implementing many other international commitments, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); and a number of Human Rights Council resolutions and processes with direct relevance to environmental matters,¹

64. *Welcoming* the tangible positive changes across the ECE region and beyond in promoting access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, stimulated by the Aarhus Convention since its adoption in 1998,

65. *Noting* that the number of the Parties to the Convention was progressively growing,

66. *Also noting* the adoption, at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties, of [Decision VII/9](#) establishing a rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders,

67. *Recognizing* the importance of adequate financing for the implementation of the rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders in order to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as other relevant global and regional commitments,

68. *Requests* the Secretary-General to increase the support by ECE, in order to strengthen the secretariat's capacity to facilitate the implementation of the rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention;

69. *Decides* to transmit to the Economic and Social Council at its session of 2023 a draft resolution on this issue for consideration and possible adoption.

Draft resolution of the Economic and Social Council on the implementation of the rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting the adoption by the seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva, 18–19 April 2023) of decision xx (70) on the implementation of the

¹ In particular resolutions 37/8 on human rights and the environment (A/HRC/RES.37/8), 40/11 on recognizing the contribution of environmental human rights defenders to the enjoyment of human rights, environmental protection and sustainable development (A/HRC/RES/40/11), 42/21 on the protection of the rights of workers exposed to hazardous substances and wastes (A/HRC/RES/42/21), and processes such as universal periodic reviews and special procedures.

rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention by which the Economic Commission for Europe recommended to the Economic and Social Council endorsing the said decision,

Endorses decision xx (70) of the Economic Commission for Europe and requests the Secretary-General to increase the support by ECE, in order to strengthen the secretariat's capacity to facilitate the implementation of the rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention.
