



# Economic and Social Council

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## Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

### Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Twenty-fifth session

Geneva, 2 and 3 May 2023

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

**Adoption of the agenda**

## Annotated provisional agenda for the twenty-fifth session

**To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 9.30 a.m.  
on Tuesday, 2 May 2023**

### I. Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs.
3. Adoption of the report of the twenty-fourth session.
4. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference.
5. Resource requirements.
6. Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System to support a regular process of environmental assessment.
7. Regular pan-European environmental assessment and reporting supported by the Shared Environmental Information System and open data and streamlining reporting obligations in environmental policy.
8. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
9. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment, including institutional and regulatory mechanisms and infrastructure at the national level.
10. Other business.
11. Closure of the meeting.



## II. Annotations

According to its terms of reference, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment is open to all member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Members of the Working Group represent the national institutions responsible for environmental monitoring and assessment. The Working Group also involves representatives of programmes and policies and multilateral environmental agreements dealing with the collection of environmental data and information and the generation of environmental assessments – whether covering the environment as a whole, or only a specific theme – as well as expert teams.<sup>1</sup>

Also invited to participate are representatives of international and regional organizations, such as the European Commission, the European Environment Agency, the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, the European Space Agency, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Statistics Division, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Meteorological Organization and the World Health Organization European Centre for Environment and Health.

The twenty-fifth session of the Working Group is expected to be held on 2 and 3 May 2023 in a hybrid format.

### 1. Adoption of the agenda

The Chair, Ms. Maia Javakhishvili (Georgia), will open the twenty-fifth session. The Working Group will be invited to adopt the agenda for the session, as set out in the present document.<sup>2</sup>

### 2. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chairs

At its twenty-third session (Geneva (hybrid), 4–5 May 2021), the Working Group elected Ms. Javakhishvili (Georgia) as its Chair and Ms. Katerina Nikolovska (North Macedonia) and Mr. Johannes Mayer (Austria) as its Vice-Chairs.<sup>3</sup> Its terms of reference specify that: “The Working Group shall elect a chair and two vice-chairs for a term of up to two years, ensuring a regional balance in the nominations. The chair and vice-chairs shall be eligible for re-election for one additional term.”<sup>4</sup> Members of the Working Group will need to re-elect the current chair and vice-chairs or elect a new chair and vice-chairs at the twenty-fifth session. Members are invited to start consultations on possible candidates prior to the session.

### 3. Adoption of the report of the twenty-fourth session

The secretariat will summarize the outcomes of the twenty-fourth session of the Working Group (Geneva (hybrid), 11–12 April 2022) as contained in the report of that session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2022/2) and invite the Working Group to adopt the report.

The secretariat will inform the Working Group about the status of implementation of the decisions and recommendations made at the twenty-fourth session, including the consideration of the Working Group’s activities by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy.

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<sup>1</sup> ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, paras. 10–11.

<sup>2</sup> Documentation for the meeting and other relevant information will be posted on the web page for the meeting on the ECE website: <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Environmental-Monitoring-and-Assessment/events/375286>.

<sup>3</sup> ECE/CEP/AC.10/2021/2, para. 14.

<sup>4</sup> ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 12.

#### 4. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference

The secretariat will report on the decisions made by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its special session on 3–4 October 2022 in Nicosia and relevant outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022) regarding the activities, mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the related Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators, as set out in the report of the Committee's special session<sup>5</sup> and the Ministerial Declaration.<sup>6</sup>

During the twenty-fourth session, the Working Group conducted a survey to discuss relevant elements, programme areas and activities for the new terms of reference of the Working Group beyond 2023, and requested the secretariat to integrate the results from the survey and the discussion during the session and to present a draft version of the mandate and terms of reference at its next meeting.<sup>7</sup>

The secretariat will present an overview of the new mandate and terms of reference (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/3). The Working Group will be invited to approve the new mandate and terms of reference and to discuss and agree on lead agencies or countries for respective programme areas and activities.

The Working Group's terms of reference require that it prepare an annual timetable of activities and achievements.<sup>8</sup>

The secretariat will present the draft timetable of activities for 2024 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/4), which the Working Group will be invited to approve.

The Working Group will also be invited to discuss and approve a suggested review of the publication *Environmental Monitoring and Reporting: Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia*<sup>9</sup> in anticipation of an updated version thereof being issued in 2024.

In addition, representatives of international and regional organizations will be invited to report briefly on initiatives and projects that relate to the activities of the Working Group.

#### 5. Resource requirements

The secretariat will provide information on the financial resources available to support the Working Group's meetings and its other activities. The secretariat will also inform the Working Group about an external evaluation of the Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme that must be conducted in 2023 and its expected financial implications for the Programme.

#### 6. Reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System to support a regular process of environmental assessment

The terms of reference for the Working Group specify that it shall regularly evaluate the performance of ECE countries in establishing and implementing the Shared Environmental Information System against the Shared Environmental Information System targets and performance indicators adopted by the Committee.<sup>10</sup>

At the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, the final review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/8) was launched. Ministers commended the general establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System across the region to support

<sup>5</sup> ECE/CEP/S/2022/6, paras. 30–31.

<sup>6</sup> ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/L.1.

<sup>7</sup> ECE/CEP/AC.10/2022/2, paras. 20–26.

<sup>8</sup> ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 5.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03-II-E.33.

<sup>10</sup> ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 3 (a) (iii).

a regular process of environmental assessment and invited countries to continue their efforts to implement all pillars of the Shared Environmental Information System – content, infrastructure and cooperation – and to address any remaining gaps. Ministers also recommended that countries make environmental information publicly available, findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable, as well as encouraging collection of local and indigenous knowledge, citizen science and crowdsourced data. They also encouraged countries, when developing digitalization of environmental information systems relying on open data, big data and state-of-the-art digital technologies, to improve data availability, transparency and public involvement in decision-making.

At the twenty-fourth session of the Working Group, a survey was conducted on the future use of the Shared Environmental Information System. Survey participants suggested continuing its regular and continuous use, sharing data and exchanging good practice experience. They indicated that the Shared Environmental Information System should ideally be linked to all multilateral environmental agreements and should support regular environmental assessment. Participants also suggested regularly reviewing the implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System for specific environmental themes and developing the system further, including at the national level.

The majority of participants in the survey agreed to annually review a limited number of environmental themes and indicators based on the Shared Environmental Information System assessment framework and agreed that the ECE indicator guidelines currently being revised should be implemented and used starting from 2022.

Participants agreed that the environmental theme “air pollution and air quality” should be reviewed in 2023 by using the Shared Environmental Information System reporting tool.<sup>11</sup>

The secretariat will provide an overview of preparations of the annual review of the environmental theme “air”, together with an outline of the report on the review (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/5). Member States will be invited to discuss and approve the outline.

## **7. Regular pan-European environmental assessment and reporting supported by the Shared Environmental Information System and open data and streamlining reporting obligations in environmental policy**

The Working Group has been tasked with leading a process of consultation on the regular pan-European environmental assessment<sup>12</sup> for consideration by the Committee on Environmental Policy and leading up to the next Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, with the result that the seventh pan-European environmental assessment was successfully launched at the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

The secretariat will provide an overview of the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference related to the assessment, including possible next steps.

The Working Group will be invited to consider the information and discuss and decide on next steps in implementing the recommendations of the assessment and the outcomes of the Conference in view of future assessments.

The Working Group’s mandate and terms of reference envisage assistance regarding the streamlining of environmental reporting in support of environmental policymaking.

The secretariat of one or more ECE multilateral environmental agreements under which reporting is required in the coming 12 months will be invited to present the template for the upcoming reporting cycle and to provide any necessary guidance.

The secretariat and representatives of international and regional organizations will provide an overview of activities they are supporting related to environmental reporting at the national level.

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<sup>11</sup> ECE/CEP/AC.10/2022/2, paras. 32 and 33 (a)–(c).

<sup>12</sup> ECE/CEP/2017/2, annex II, para. 2 (b).

The Working Group will be invited to consider the information and to discuss relevant issues related to environmental reporting.

## **8. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

One objective of the Working Group is to discuss interlinkages between environmental, economic and social considerations regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the green economy and other related areas of work.

International organizations and the European Environment Agency will be invited to present global and regional environmental policy events in 2023 relevant for the work of the Working Group.

The ECE secretariat to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes will then present the publication *Updated Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters*<sup>13</sup> and the process to develop a new publication on good practices and lessons learned in transboundary data exchange.

International partners will be invited to present recent developments and key messages pertaining to environmental monitoring and reporting, in particular related to circular economy, sustainable infrastructure and sustainable tourism.

International organizations, the European Environment Agency and the European Space Agency will be invited to report briefly on developments related to new technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and Earth observation and how countries can make full use of the potential of data, technology and digitalization that will complement and potentially replace established monitoring practices and information sources for improved decision-making.

The Working Group will be invited to discuss the relevance of the work and examples presented and which other activities should be prioritized to ensure the sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to support the work of the Working Group.

## **9. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment, including institutional and regulatory mechanisms and infrastructure at the national level**

Members of the Working Group, and especially those representing countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, will be invited to make a short presentation on major actions taken since the previous meeting regarding, as appropriate:

(a) The production of environmental reports, analyses and assessments based on environmental information and indicators, including through the use of the Shared Environmental Information System;

(b) The modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks, in particular, those on air, water and soil;

(c) Improvements in data quality assurance and control, as well as in data management;

(d) Improvements in data policy and institutional and regulatory mechanisms and technical solutions for data exchange between various ministries and agencies (ministries of environment, environment agencies and ministries of agriculture, energy, health, industry, transport and water) and with other users, including the public;

<sup>13</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.23.II.E.1.

(e) The implementation of recommendations regarding environmental monitoring and assessment made in national environmental performance reviews;

(f) Developments related to the use of new technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and Earth observation for environmental monitoring;

(g) Cross-cutting developments such as integrating a gender perspective into environmental monitoring and assessment activities.

The secretariat will prepare and circulate a template to support oral presentations, as needed.

## **10. Other business**

The Working Group will be invited to discuss any other business that might be brought to its attention, including priority themes for the twenty-sixth session of the Working Group. Members of the Working Group wishing to propose items are invited to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

## **11. Closure of the meeting**

The Chair, with the assistance of the secretariat, will sum up the conclusions and decisions of the Working Group and close the meeting. The report of the meeting and the list of participants will be finalized by the secretariat for circulation to the Working Group after the meeting. These documents will be posted on the meeting web page.

## **III. Organization of work**

Detailed information on the organization of work will be released closer to the meeting date and will be posted on the meeting web page.

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