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**Economic Commission for Europe****Committee on Sustainable Energy****Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition****Eighteenth session**

Geneva, 20-21 March 2023

**Report of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition****I. Introduction**

1. The eighteenth session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane (CMM) and Just Transition was held on 20-21 March 2023 in Geneva.
2. This report summarizes the discussions on the work of the Group of Experts at its eighteenth session. All the documents and presentations of the session are available on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) website.<sup>1</sup>

**II. Attendance**

3. The meeting was attended by experts from the following ECE member States: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.
4. Experts from Australia, China and Colombia participated under Article 11 of the ECE's Terms of Reference.
5. The International Energy Agency (IEA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) were represented. Representatives from the European Union also participated.
6. The following international associations were represented: Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Global Methane Hub (GMH), Global Methane Initiative (GMI), International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), and UNEP's International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO).

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<sup>1</sup> Official documents of the session are available at <http://documents.un.org/>. Unofficial room documents and presentations delivered at the meeting are available on the ECE website at: <https://unece.org/sustainable-energy/events/18th-session-group-experts-coal-mine-methane-and-just-transition>.

7. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations participated: Ember, Face Intergenerational Justice, Research Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane in ShanXi, and Youth and Environment Europe.

8. The private sector was represented by experts from twenty-six companies. Academia was also represented by experts from eleven universities and scientific institutes.

### **III. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2023/1

9. The provisional agenda as contained in document ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2023/1 was adopted without amendment.

### **IV. Election of officers (agenda item 2)**

10. The Group of Experts elected a Bureau for two years to take over from the end of the eighteenth session until the end of the twentieth session. The elected members are: Mr Raymond Pilcher (Raven Ridge Resources, Inc.) as Chair, and Ms. Aida Haracic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Mr. Jacek Skiba (Poland), Mr. Özgen Karacan (United States of America), Ms. Volha Roshchanka (United States of America), Mr. Yuriy Bobrov (Association of Donbass Mining Towns), Mr. Neil Butler (Independent expert), Mr. David Creedy (Sindicatum Sustainable Resources), Mr. Lukasz Kroplewski (Independent expert), Mr. Julien Moulin (Française de l'Énergie), Ms. Felicia Ruiz (Clean Air Task Force), Mr. Clark Talkington (Advanced Resources International), and Mr. Zhixin JIN (International Centre of Excellence on CMM China) as Vice-Chairs. The Chairs of the Group's task forces, i.e., Ms. Bobbie Foot (BHP) and Ms. Alicja Krzemien (Central Mining Institute of Poland) will also serve as Vice-Chairs of the Bureau *ex-officio*.

### **V. Opening remarks (agenda item 3)**

11. In his opening remarks, the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECE noted that global atmospheric concentrations of methane have grown nearly 150% from pre-industrial levels and are not only far above the range of the last 650,000 years but also are projected to increase another 20% by 2030. He also observed that reducing methane emissions offers significant climate change benefits, especially in the near term, as there is a large reduction potential and cost-effective mitigation technologies are readily available. The Deputy Executive Secretary stressed that action on methane requires a solid understanding of emission sources at all levels and that only with reliable emissions data can policymakers design effective greenhouse gas (GHG) policies, evaluate mitigation opportunities, and comply with their international climate commitments. In that context, he congratulated the Group of Experts for recently developing the best practice document providing guidance on those matters. Speaking about transformation of the coal sector, the Deputy Executive Secretary recognized that it is the duty of governments, but also of organizations such as the United Nations, to make sure that no one is left behind and the transition is just for all. He referred to the newly expanded mandate of the Group of Experts and requested the Group to lead ECE's work on just transition and to work to ensure that the future post-war reconstruction of Ukraine is driven by the concept to "rebuild better", taking into account the social aspect of the process, as well as the requirements of the green economy. The Deputy Executive Secretary supported the Group's plans to become more engaged in the Committee on Sustainable Energy's work on hydrogen and to explore the job-creation potential of the hydrogen-based economy. Referring to the tragic methane-related coal mining accidents that happened in the ECE region within the last twelve months, he urged the Group of Experts to continue providing member States with advice and guidance on best practices in methane measurement and drainage. At the conclusion of his speech, the Deputy Executive Secretary praised the Group of Experts for its flexibility and swift adjustment to the difficult working conditions imposed over the last three years by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, welcomed the Group's new organization based on three task forces, congratulated the Group for its increasing outreach and

engagement with the new stakeholders, including the youth, and wished all the participants a successful session.

12. In his opening remarks, the Chair of the Group of Experts welcomed the participants to the session and noted that over the very short period the world had witnessed the consequences of a viral pandemic, devastating weather events tied to global climate change, geological upheaval in the form of unusually powerful volcanic eruptions, and devastating earthquakes. Referring to the ongoing war, the Chair also lamented that the ECE region had been forced to endure the destructive nature of man. The Chair observed that in times of crises it was often left to multilateral organizations to lend expertise, finance, and goodwill to those who suffer, and stressed that the Group's expertise was now required more than ever. The Chair noted that even by focusing on relatively narrow fields of action, the Group still was the only expert body in the UN system that undertakes the difficult and challenging work associated with the rapid changes in the coal industry. He said that as the name of the Group implied, it was charged with dealing with the emissions from coal mining, as well as with the transition which takes place as societies transform their energy economies. The Chair stated that the Group had to recognize that the global coal industry is undergoing tremendous and rapid change that impacts, among other things, also financial investments. He reminded that many banks hold sizable investments in the coal sector worldwide and that numerous large and powerful companies were built around the extraction, transportation, and use of coal. In this context, the Chair observed that: (i) financial institutions provided capital to companies which serve the needs of society, whether by providing heat and electricity, chemical feedstock, or coke for steel making, and as such are essential to our way of life; (ii) the enormous wealth that has been invested in coal extraction, transport, and use is likely to push those who hold those assets to do everything possible to preserve the status quo even as transitions take place, and therefore alternate and attractive investments must be created to propel former coal communities into the 21st Century, where energy is clean, abundant, affordable, and sustainable; (iii) coal provides the mainstay of many communities worldwide, and that fact must be taken into consideration while planning and executing transformation of the global energy. The Chair stressed that the transformation of the energy sector needs to be not only directed towards a sustainable future, but also be just and equitable for all people involved. Turning to organizational matters, the Chair reminded that at the seventeenth session, the Group agreed to form three Task Forces on (i) Methane Emissions Reduction, (ii) Just Transition, and (iii) Safe Operations and Closure of Coal Mines. He announced that the Bureau of the Group had chosen respectively, Ms Volha Roshchanka, Ms Alicja Krzemien, and Ms Boobie Foot to Chair the Task Forces. The Chair invited members of the Group to join the Task Forces and concluded by stating that he had faith in the Group's collective ability to make contributions which will bring progress in solving the challenges that the Group is mandated to address.

13. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the work of the Bureau and the secretariat and their efforts to manage and direct the Group's work plan between annual sessions despite human and financial resources' constraints and the challenging situation caused by the multiple ongoing global crises.

## **VI. Activities and priorities of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and matters for consideration by the Group of Experts (agenda item 4)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/143 - Report of the Committee on Sustainable Energy on its thirty first session

14. Having been informed about the special focus that the Committee gives to building resilient energy systems in the ECE region, the Group of Experts agreed to contribute to that work from its own experience and within the scope of its mandate and expertise. In particular, the Group committed to lead the work on the social aspects of the process of building resiliency, noting that any changes to the existing energy systems should occur in compliance with the principles of just transition.

## VII. Report on implementation of the work plan for 2022-2023 (agenda item 5)

- Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2021/3 - Work plan for the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition for 2022-2023
- ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2023/4 - Assessment of coal demand in Tajikistan to 2050 and the alternative options for replacing coal in the country's energy mix
- ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2023/5 - Coal mine closure in Albania and Serbia
- ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2023/6 - Energy sector in Ukraine: challenges, current situation, perspectives for the future - Identifying opportunities for the involvement of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition
- ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2023/7 - Just Transition - the check list
- CMMJT-18/2023/INF.2 - Unofficial room document: The use of high-resolution satellite imagery to identify methane emissions from underground mines: A CMM case study of a mine within the Karaganda Coal Basin.

15. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the progress in the implementation of its work plan for 2022-2023. The Chair and the secretariat thanked the members of the Group for their contributions to deliver on the mandated activities and asked for their continued engagement to complete the remaining tasks.

16. The Group of Experts thanked the International Centres of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane (ICE-CMM) in Poland and in China for their efforts and initiatives supporting the Group's work on disseminating and promoting best practices in methane detection, monitoring, capture, and use, approved their annual reports for 2022, and approved their work plans for 2023.

17. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the development of the five thematic studies:

(a) The local geological and mining conditions in Albania and Serbia; principle-based guidelines for designing and implementing a programme for an efficient, safe, and environmentally conscious mine closure;

(b) The assessment of coal demand in Tajikistan to 2050 and alternative options for replacing coal in the country's energy mix;

(c) Energy sector in Ukraine: current situation and perspectives for the future, including the assessment of the expected socio-economic impacts of the upcoming transition;

(d) Just Transition – the check list; and

(e) The use of high-resolution satellite imagery to identify methane emissions from underground mines: a CMM case study of a mine in the Karaganda Coal Basin.

18. The Group of Experts thanked the Regional Advisor on Sustainable Energy for his help in developing the first three of the above-mentioned studies, and GHGSat for its authorship of the last document.

## VIII. Just transition of the coal mining sector (agenda item 6)

19. The Group of Experts was presented with UNDP's plans for work on just transition and requested the secretariat to explore opportunities for collaboration with UNDP in that field.

20. The Group of Experts expressed its interest in engaging, in cooperation with other Groups of Experts reporting to the Committee on Sustainable Energy, in the work on

greening Kazakhstan's energy sector through the development of a local hydrogen economy. The Group of Experts noted that it stands ready to contribute to that work drawing on its expertise on methane, coal mining, mine closure, and just transition.

21. Following an update on a potential project to map the transition efforts across the ECE region, the Group of Experts endorsed the initiative and requested the secretariat to develop, in cooperation with the Bureau, a more detailed project proposal that could be presented to potential donors. The Group further requested the secretariat to identify entities that might be ready to provide funds to implement such a project.

## **IX. Work Plan for 2024-2025 (agenda item 7)**

*Documentation:* ECE/ENERGY/GE.4/2023/3 - Draft work plan for the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and Just Transition for 2024-2025

22. The Group of Experts approved its draft work plan for 2024-2025. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to submit the draft work plan for 2024-2025 to the Committee on Sustainable Energy at its thirty second session.

23. The Chair of the Group of Experts encouraged all members to actively engage in the work of the Group to assure timely and effective delivery of the tasks indicated in the 2024-2025 Work Plan.

## **X. Future work of the Group of Experts (agenda item 8)**

24. The Group of Experts established three ad hoc Task Forces on (i) Methane Emissions Reduction, (ii) Just Transition, and (iii) Safe Operations and Closure of Coal Mines to manage better the knowledge and skills of its members and thus improve efficiency of the Group's work in those subject areas, which constitute the core of the Group's mandate and activities.

25. The Chairs of the Task Forces are nominated by the Chair of the Group of Experts, in cooperation with the Bureau, to serve for a period of two years, with the possibility of extension, starting at the end of the session at which they were selected until the end of the session two years later.

26. The Group of Experts noted with appreciation the three nominations and agreed to them serving until the end of the twentieth session: Ms. Volha Roshchanka (U.S. EPA) as the Chair of the Task Force on Methane Emissions Reduction; Ms. Bobbie Foot (BHP) as the Chair of the Task Force on Just Transition; and Ms. Alicja Krzemien (Central Mining Institute) as the Chair of the Task Force on Safe Operations and Closure of Coal Mines.

27. The Group of Experts agreed that the Chairs of the Task Forces will report to the Group on the activities and accomplishments of the Task Forces at the Group's annual meeting and to the Bureau between annual sessions.

28. The Group of Experts agreed that the Chairs of the Task Forces will join the Bureau as Vice-Chairs *ex officio*.

29. The Chair of the Group of Experts requested interested members of the Group to indicate to the Chair of the relevant Task Force and to the secretariat, to which stream of work they would like to contribute to. The secretariat was requested to facilitate and manage the process of identifying members for each Task Force, including by reaching out to representatives of affected communities, such as gender equality and women's rights organizations, indigenous people's groups, youth and health organizations.

## **XI. Partnerships (agenda item 9)**

30. The Group of Experts thanked EMBER for the successful cooperation in delivering events within the framework of the Methane Mondays series. The Group requested the secretariat to continue the partnership.

31. The Group of Experts decided to contribute, within the scope of its mandate and expertise, to the UNEP's International Methane Emissions Observatory's (IMEO) work on the Metcoal Methane Partnership (MMP). The Group requested the secretariat to coordinate with UNEP's IMEO to facilitate the Group's engagement in MMP. The Group also encouraged the ICE-CMMs in Poland and China to support MMP and undertake actions to promote the initiative among coking coal producers operating in their regions.

32. The Group of Experts requested the secretariat to explore opportunities for cooperation on monitoring and mitigation of methane emissions from coal mines with IEA. The Group further requested the secretariat to develop, in cooperation with the Bureau, CMM-related project proposals and undertake efforts to secure funds for their implementation.

## **XII. Thirteenth joint meeting of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane and the Global Methane Initiative Coal Subcommittee (agenda item 10)**

33. The Group of Experts thanked the secretariat of the Coal Subcommittee of the Global Methane Initiative (GMI) and its members for their continued support and collaboration.

34. The Group of Experts expressed its interest to continue to develop and implement joint projects with GMI and requested the secretariat to facilitate and coordinate continued cooperation between the two entities.

## **XIII. Preparations for the nineteenth session of the Group of Experts (agenda item 11)**

35. The nineteenth session is to be held in March 2024 in Geneva.

36. The Group of Experts supported the proposal to hold the 2024 Global Methane Forum in Geneva at the time of the nineteenth session. The Group requested the secretariat to coordinate with GMI and the Group of Experts on Gas thereon. The Group further requested the secretariat to keep the Bureau updated on progress to organize the Forum, and to seek the Bureau's advice on the content of the Forum to ensure that topics related to the work of the Group are featured in the event's agenda to the extent possible.

## **XIV. Any other business (agenda item 12)**

37. The Group of Experts noted that the delivery of a number of activities in the 2024-2025 Work Plan is dependent on the availability of extrabudgetary resources and deemed securing such resources critical for attainment of the Group's objectives. The Group was invited to propose potential sources of funding for the secretariat to explore.

## **XV. Adoption of conclusions and recommendations (agenda item 13)**

*Documentation:* CMMJT-18/2023/INF.1 - Unofficial room document: Draft Conclusions and Recommendations arising from the Eighteenth Session of the Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane dated 9 March 2023.

38. The conclusions and recommendations were adopted and are included under the relevant agenda items highlighted in this report.

**XVI. Adoption of the report and close of the meeting  
(agenda item 14)**

39. The report of the meeting was adopted, including the conclusions and recommendations, subject to any necessary editing and formatting.

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