Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Twenty-fifth session, Geneva and online, 2-3 May 2023

Agenda Item 4: Implementing the mandate and terms of reference

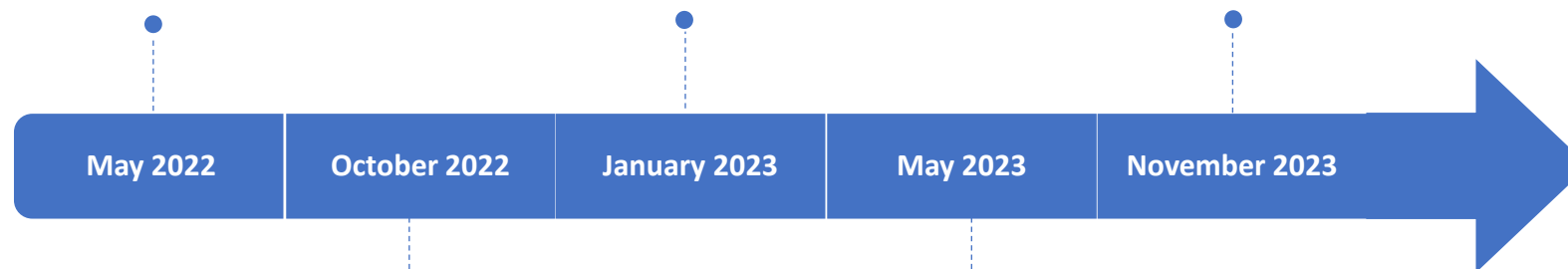**Draft mandate and terms of reference for the period 2024–2028**

Context

24th session of WGEMA – Survey and discussion of first elements of new ToR for the Working Group for the period 2024-2028

126th session of UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) approved extension of current mandate & ToR until end of 2023

Forwarding final mandate and ToR for approval to CEP and UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM)

Renewed Mandate and Terms of Reference of the Working Group 2024-2028

| May 2022 | October 2022 | January 2023 | May 2023 | November 2023 |

Special session CEP (October 2022) approved extension of current mandate & ToR (2017–2021) of the Working Group until end of 2023

Draft mandate & ToR (completed based on comments received) be discussed at 25th session of the Working Group and WG be invited to approve

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New mandate and ToR of WGEMA take into account:

- Recommendations made during recent meetings of Working Group and CEP

- Current mandate and terms of reference & a survey conducted during the 24th session of the Working Group on the newly proposed mandate and terms of reference

- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- Outcomes of Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

- Other relevant policies such as MEAs, including UNECE Conventions, Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework for DRR, and transition to a circular economy

- Digital agendas

- Common approach of UNECE-EEA-UNEP

- Questionnaire & publication *Sharing our vision for pan-European region: Setting strategic goals & objectives for the Working Group, up to 2030*

- Feedback received from UNECE member States and international partners in 2022

Continued and growing relevance of Working Group

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- Natural resources not used sustainably, and situation is projected to worsen in coming decades due to population growth, agriculture, enhanced energy production and consumption & due to climate change etc..

- Still significant data and knowledge gaps to measure progress towards policy targets (SDGs, MEAs, Sendai, Global Biodiversity Framework, etc.)

- UNEP publication *Measuring Progress: Environment and the SDGs* reports that

  > *"unfortunately … our comprehension of the environmental dimension of the SDGs is lagging. Our limited capacities to collect, disseminate and effectively use environmental data have hindered our holistic understanding of the environment and the effect on it of socioeconomic factors".*

- Also, the publication *Europe's Environment: The Seventh Pan-European Environmental Assessment* has identified various monitoring and data gaps

→ Environmental monitoring and assessment, including for emerging themes, are therefore critical for measuring and monitoring progress regarding policy targets and to derive needed actions & measures

New mandate & terms of reference

Mandate of Working Group:

- Serve as **environmental monitoring, knowledge and assessment network for whole UNECE region**

- **Serve as platform to exchange good practices & information**, develop action plans and strengthen initiatives on environmental monitoring- and assessment-related areas, to **aid informed decision-making in support of transition to sustainable development and a green and circular economy**

New mandate & terms of reference

Overall objectives of Working Group (in cooperation with partners):

- To enable informed environmental decision-making through regular monitoring, assessment and reporting

- To support the implementation of the outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, implementation of MEAs and global policy frameworks including the Sendai Framework for DRR and the Global Biodiversity Framework.

New mandate & terms of reference

Specific objectives of Working Group are to support:

- Development of environmental monitoring and information systems and their alignment with open data and SEIS principles & pillars
- Monitoring and measuring of emerging themes including sustainable infrastructure and tourism, circular and green economy, besides traditional environmental areas
- Development of regular pan-European environmental assessments and regular state-of-the-environment reporting to support policy with scientific evidence
- Provision of an inclusive platform for UNECE member States, partner organizations and other institutions and networks to discuss advances in the area of environmental monitoring and to share knowledge & exchange experiences
- Development of capacity to tackle specific challenges
- Strengthen partnerships including with UNEP, its network and other UN organizations and programmes, including WHO & UNITAR; the EU, including European Commission, EEA & EIONET; OECD; international financial institutions; the Group on Earth Observations; and the European Space Agency

Planned programme areas, activities and outputs

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Programme area 1: Support development of environmental monitoring and information systems:

- Support institutional strengthening and legislative improvement
- Promote use of new technologies and tools
- Regularly evaluate performance of environmental monitoring and information systems in line with SEIS principles and pillars & open data
- Contribute to implementing main environmental monitoring- and assessment-related outcomes of 9th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference
- Contribute to closure of monitoring gaps in Europe and Central Asia

Planned programme areas, activities and outputs

Programme area 2: Support the development of regular pan-European environmental assessments and regular state-of-the-environment reporting

- Bring together experts from partner organizations and other interested parties to discuss and oversee the 8th pan-European environmental assessment
- Discuss and support state-of-the-environment reporting and detail regional priorities concerning streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting
- Oversee implementation of proposed recommendations by the seventh pan-European environmental assessment
- Oversee the assessment, where possible, of overall achievement of commitments made in last three to five pan-European declarations.

Planned programme areas, activities and outputs

Programme area 3: Strengthening of Partnerships

Continue the process of consultation between UNECE member States, partner organizations and other institutions and networks

- Cooperate with the JTF and other relevant UNECE bodies under other sectoral subprogrammes to ensure that activities are synergetic and streamlined
- Engage with other communities and networks to discuss how data can be integrated and utilized in decision-making
- Publish outcomes from the Working Group's collaborative activities

Planned programme areas, activities and outputs

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Programme area 4: Engage in capacity-development assistance

- Detail regional and national capacity gaps
- Support countries, in collaboration with the Joint Task Force, in development, implementation and use of regional and national indicator frameworks
- Engage and liaise directly with other relevant knowledge-sharing actors working on capacity development in related areas of work
- Implement capacity-development activities at the regional, subregional or national level.
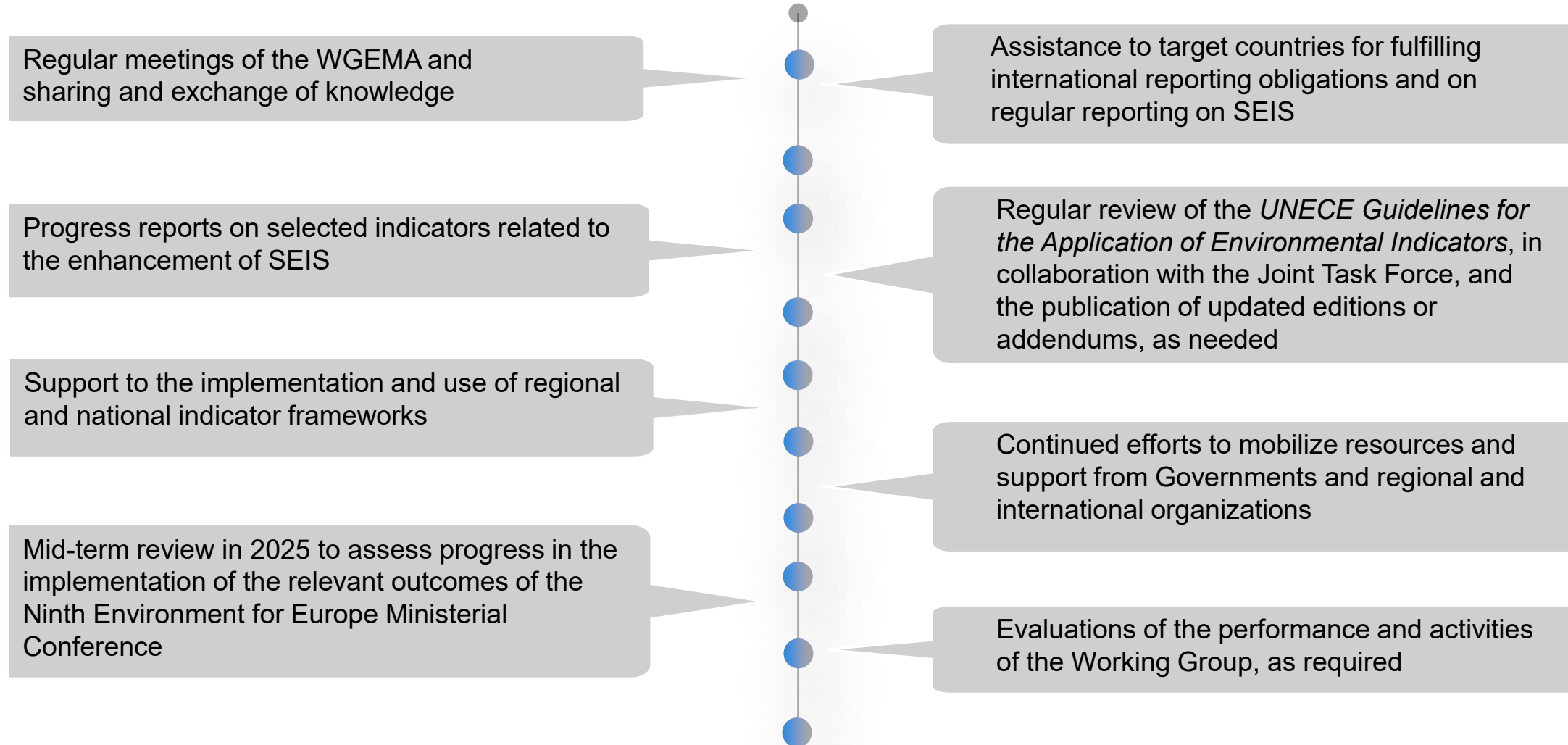
Planned programme areas, activities and outputs

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Cross-cutting activities:

- Holding of annual sessions of the Working Group, incl. capacity- development activities
- Mid-term review in 2025 to assess progress in implementation of outcomes of 9th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference
- Drafting of new mandate and ToR for the Working Group for 2029–2033
- Drafting of annual timetables of activities
- Support performance evaluations of the Working Group, as required
- Mainstreaming of gender and strengthening the collection and use of disaggregated data
- Mobilizing of resources to ensure the Working Group can implement all needed tasks
- Presenting outcomes and relevant documents (annual timetables, terms of reference, progress reports, etc.) of Working Group at CEP sessions

Planned outputs

Regular meetings of the WGEMA and sharing and exchange of knowledge

Assistance to target countries for fulfilling international reporting obligations and on regular reporting on SEIS

Progress reports on selected indicators related to the enhancement of SEIS

Regular review of the *UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators*, in collaboration with the Joint Task Force, and the publication of updated editions or addendums, as needed

Support to the implementation and use of regional and national indicator frameworks

Continued efforts to mobilize resources and support from Governments and regional and international organizations

Mid-term review in 2025 to assess progress in the implementation of the relevant outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

Evaluations of the performance and activities of the Working Group, as required

Planned outputs*

Review and update of the *Guidelines on Environmental Monitoring and Reporting* and development of other relevant guidance material (e.g., related to the use of both geospatial information and new technologies)

Support to the assessment of regional and national capacity gaps for producing environmental indicators

Recommendations to UNECE countries to improve their environmental monitoring and information systems, aligned with SEIS and open data principles

Support to implementation of the environmental monitoring- and assessment-related outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and, as appropriate, assessment of the state of implementation of commitments made in Ministerial Declarations from earlier Conferences

Assistance in the preparation of the regular pan-European environmental assessment and NSoERs

Thematic meetings, workshops and publications

Focused capacity-development activities

* Subject to the availability of additional resources.

Timetable and Methods of work

Timetable:

- Annual timetable of activities shall be prepared
- Committee on Environmental Policy shall be informed on the progress of work of WGEMA.
- Mandate of WGEMA will be reviewed and amended by CEP in its regular session in 2028.

Methods of work:

- WGEMA shall meet at least once annually (besides communicating through email and other electronic collaborative platforms in the period between meetings)
- Additional meetings, workshops and capacity-development activities will be organized subject to the availability of funding.

Membership & Secretariat support & resources

Membership:

- WGEMA shall be composed of members from all UNECE member States (representatives of national institutions dealing with environmental monitoring, knowledge and assessment).
- WGEMA shall also involve representatives of partner organizations, such as other international and regional organizations, programmes and policies & MEAs
- WGEMA shall elect a chair and two vice-chairs for a term of up to two years. The chair and vice-chairs shall be eligible for re-election for one additional term.

Secretariat support and resources:

- WGEMA to be serviced by UNECE secretariat, supported by UNEP & EEA. The UNECE secretariat will work closely with interested partners, such as the European Commission and OECD.
- Donors will be invited to provide support for the Working Group's activities.

Thank you!

Discussion on lead for activities & areas

- All members of the Working Group to engage actively in promoting the work of WGEMA to support the implementation of the new mandate and ToR and to raise funds for enhancing environmental monitoring and assessment in target countries.

- Working Group members are invited to serve as lead agency or lead countries (or co-lead) for specific programme areas or activities (common practice under other UNECE programmes and conventions)

- It is possible to team-up with another agency or country and co-lead an activity or area jointly

Leading or co-leading an activity or area in cooperation with the secretariat would comprise for example:

- Development of a detailed roadmap or workplan for each of the activities or areas, including the means of implementation
- Support to fundraising
- Provision of guidance during implementation of the activity
- Reporting on progress to WGEMA (or Committee on Environmental Policy).

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Discussion on lead / co-lead for activities and programme areas

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QUESTION: Are you, your institution, country interested in leading any of the following activities / programme areas?

Area / Activity	Proposed lead / co-lead
Programme area 1: Support development of environmental monitoring and information systems:	
Support institutional strengthening and legislative improvement	
Promote use of new technologies and tools	
Regularly evaluate performance of environmental monitoring and information systems in line with SEIS principles and pillars & open data	
Contribute to implementing main environmental monitoring- and assessment-related outcomes of 9th Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference	
Contribute to closure of monitoring gaps in Europe and Central Asia	

Discussion on lead / co-lead for activities and programme areas

QUESTION: Are you, your institution, country interested in leading any of the following activities / programme areas?

Area / Activity	Proposed lead / co-lead
Programme area 2: Support the development of regular pan-European environmental assessments and regular state-of-the-environment reporting	
Bring together experts from partner organizations and other interested parties to discuss and oversee the 8th pan-European environmental assessment	
Discuss and support state-of-the-environment reporting and detail regional priorities concerning the streamlining of regular state-of-the-environment reporting	
Oversee the implementation of proposed recommendations by the seventh pan-European environmental assessment	
Also oversee the assessment, where possible, of the overall achievement of commitments made in the last three to five pan-European declarations.	

Discussion on lead / co-lead for activities and programme areas

QUESTION: Are you, your institution, country interested in leading any of the following activities / programme areas?

Area / Activity	Proposed lead / co-lead
Programme area 3: Strengthening of Partnerships	
Continue the process of consultation between UNECE member States, partner organizations and other institutions and networks	
Cooperate with the JTF and other relevant UNECE bodies under other sectoral subprogrammes to ensure that activities are synergetic and streamlined	
Engage with other communities and networks to discuss how data can be integrated and utilized in decision-making	
Publish outcomes from the Working Group's collaborative activities	

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Discussion on lead / co-lead for activities and programme areas

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QUESTION: Are you, your institution, country interested in leading any of the following activity / programme area?

Area / Activity	Proposed lead / co-lead
Programme area 4: Engage in capacity-development assistance	
Detail regional and national capacity gaps	
Support countries, in collaboration with the Joint Task Force, in development, implementation and use of regional and national indicator frameworks	
Engage and liaise directly with other relevant knowledge-sharing actors working on capacity development in related areas of work	
Implement capacity-development activities at the regional, subregional or national level.	

Discussion on lead / co-lead for activities and programme areas

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QUESTION: Are you, your institution, country interested in leading any of the following activity / programme area?

Area / Activity	Proposed lead / co-lead
Cross-cutting activities	
Mid-term review in 2025 to assess progress in implementation of outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference	
Drafting of new mandate and terms of reference for the Working Group for 2029–2033	
Drafting of annual timetables of activities	
Mainstreaming of gender and strengthening the collection and use of disaggregated data	
Mobilizing of resources to ensure the Working Group can implement all needed tasks	

Discussion on lead / co-lead for activities and programme areas

Written submission of expression of interest for lead or co-lead:

- Members of the Working Group can submit further proposals regarding lead agencies or countries for specific areas and activities in writing to the secretariat at wgemasec@un.org until the end of the month (31 May 2023).

- This will allow agencies and countries to discuss the possible joint leading of activities or areas with other countries or agencies.

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Proposed decision:

The Working Group:

- Approves the new mandate and terms of reference for the Working Group 2024-2028

- Requests the secretariat to reflect suggested changes as amended during the session in the new mandate and terms of reference

- Requests the secretariat to forward the new mandate and terms of reference to the Committee on Environmental Policy for consideration

- Welcomes the expression of interest of xxx (country/agency) to lead the activity / area of xxx

- Invites other members of the Working Group to express their interest for leading / co-leading an activity or area in writing to the secretariat until 31 May 2023.