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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Committee on Environmental Policy

#### Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022

## Report of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

### I. Introduction

1. The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference was held from 5 to 7 October 2022, in Nicosia.

#### A. Attendance

2. The Conference was attended by delegates from 42 member States of the United Economic Commission for Europe (ECE): Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine, United States of America and Uzbekistan.

3. The Conference was attended by delegates from 10 non-member States of the United Economic Commission for Europe (ECE): Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates. The Conference was also attended by delegates from the State of Palestine.

4. From the United Nations system, representatives of ECE, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) attended.

5. Representatives of the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe, the Council of Europe, the Global Education Network Europe, the League of Arab States, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the Scientific Information Centre of the Inter-State Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia and the Union for the Mediterranean were present.

6. Representatives of the European Union, including the European Commission, and the European Environment Agency (EEA), also attended.

7. Representatives of the Regional Environmental Centres for the Caucasus and Central Asia took part in the meeting.
8. Representatives of financial institutions, including the European Investment Bank and the World Bank, participated.
9. Many other organizations and major groups, including academia, business, local authorities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), were also represented.
10. ECE provided the Conference secretariat.

## **B. Organizational matters<sup>1</sup>**

11. The Conference was a paperless event. Documents of the Conference were posted on the Conference's website.<sup>2</sup>
12. The European ECO-Forum organized and coordinated the participation of NGO representatives. The Environment for Europe partners organized some 40 side events on issues related to the themes of the Conference. An exhibition space housing the stands of several organizations and partners was also organized.
13. The opening ceremony included a sketch that blended the old with the new, reflected the cycle of the renewal of nature as celebrated in ancient customs and legends, and showed the importance of water and ceremonies of the peoples of the Earth.
14. The Conference was opened by the President of the Republic of Cyprus Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, who, in his welcoming address, emphasized the importance of the Conference for sustainable development in Europe and noted that the Conference was the first event of such magnitude to take place in the Mediterranean region. The selected themes of the Conference addressed major challenges. It was emphasized that infrastructure development should go hand-in-hand with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The second theme of the Conference was circular economy in the tourism sector – a sector that should be developed with as little impact as possible on the environment, reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions and waste. The Conference also dealt with another topic of paramount importance – education for sustainable development. All shared a common responsibility to work to achieve sustainable development in order to meet the needs of the younger generation, namely, to live on a planet that would offer them prosperity and the chance to live in harmony with nature. The speaker expressed the hope that the deliberations during, and the declaration adopted as a result of, the Conference would guide policies and actions at the national, regional and international levels.
15. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) noted the importance of the Environment for Europe process in providing a forum for closer regional cooperation on environmental issues that delivered important products and outcomes, such as the ECE Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme, the Environment Performance Review Programme, the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, several regional multilateral environment agreements, the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air and the Batumi Initiative on Greening the Economy. Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine had put regional cooperation mechanisms such as the Environment for Europe process to the test, posing the challenging question of whether the region would be able to pursue its common goals, be they global or regional, sectoral or cross-cutting. The Nicosia Conference and the Environment for Europe process could address these questions by bringing people and countries together.

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<sup>1</sup> The Conference discussions and their results are detailed in a Co-Chairs' summary (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.3) and a Co-Chairs' summary of the High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.4). To avoid duplication, the present report gives only a brief outline of the Conference sessions.

<sup>2</sup> Including a list of participants, presentations, keynote addresses and interventions. See <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Committee-on-Environmental-Policy/events/368999>.

16. The Acting Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in her welcoming speech, referred to the Stoic school of philosophy, which had been founded on a belief in the importance of nature, and, among other things, of living a simpler and more virtuous life. The pan-European region had undergone profound socioeconomic and political changes that had put immense pressure on the environment. That had resulted in overfishing, deforestation and increased levels of pollution and waste, putting at risk the health and well-being of the region's inhabitants. The speaker concluded that the application of circular economy principles and nature-based solutions could transform the sectors that were responsible for most of the harm, including infrastructure and tourism.

17. A representative of youth spoke about a life-changing accident that had forced her to use a wheelchair for the past three years. Simple things that she had previously taken for granted were currently beyond her reach. However, the accident had changed her perspective and the way she perceived life and what was truly important. Modern lifestyles and the related burden on the environment were leading to the devastation of the planet, with everyone bearing witness on a daily basis to the changes caused by climate change, for example. The speaker stated that individuals should take personal responsibility for saving the planet and that it was imperative to move forward more decisively and bravely.

18. Participants adopted the Conference agenda (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/1).

## **II. From Dobris to Nicosia: 30 years of environmental cooperation in the pan-European region**

### **A. Establishment of a pan-European Shared Environmental Information System**

19. The Chair of the session invited participants to refer to the Final review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/8).

20. The Acting Director of the UNEP Europe Office, in her moderating role, highlighted the longstanding successful cooperation of ECE, the European Environment Agency (EEA) and UNEP and countries in establishing, during the past decade, the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia to inform environmental policymaking. She then invited the Chair of the ECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to present the achievement of establishing a Shared Environmental Information System and a representative of EEA to speak about future directions, building upon the establishment of the System.

21. The Chair of the Working Group summarized the history of the Shared Environmental Information System, its principles and pillars, as well as key findings of the Final review report on the establishment of the System in Europe and Central Asia. She highlighted that, out of 22 data flows included in the reporting, 85 per cent of data flows were published regularly by reporting countries and 72 per cent were readily available and accessible online for users on national platforms. The speaker stated that, overall, a Shared Environmental Information System had been successfully established in Europe and Central Asia and that all member States had, to varying degrees, made progress regarding the establishment of a national system over the past decade, and in making environmental information available and accessible. She also emphasized that national systems varied in form and regularity regarding their updates and content and that gaps remained that needed to be addressed, including those revealed by the Seventh Pan-European Environmental Assessment related to the measurement of progress towards policy targets,<sup>3</sup> such as those for emerging themes such as circular economy and sustainable infrastructure.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Europe's Environment: The Seventh Pan-European Environmental Assessment* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.22.II.E.15).

22. The representative of EEA emphasized the importance of a consistent baseline and environmental assessment of the whole European region. He spoke about the five pan-European assessment reports developed under the lead of EEA in the past.<sup>4</sup> He emphasized that open, easy and structured access to data was one of the main drivers determining the use and impact of environmental information, the quality of indicators and assessments and the reliability of decisions at all levels. The speaker also underlined the close cooperation and synergies that were ensured with various international partners, primarily with ECE and UNEP, and that the joint work contributed to the implementation of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and reporting obligations of pan-European region countries.

23. Regarding future needs and directions, the speaker spoke about the ambitious objective of implementing the European Green Deal with its underpinning initiatives and the Digital Agenda for Europe, both supported by a comprehensive European Union data strategy. He then noted that the growing volume and diversity of data required the development and use of new methods and technologies, such as big data and artificial intelligence, supported by a modernized information technology infrastructure based on cloud and edge computing. The goal was the management and sharing of environmental information in an open and accessible manner. The European Union Copernicus Programme was given as an example. Furthermore, the current EEA strategy for the period up to 2030 involved adopting a systemic approach whereby thematic priorities, digitalization and access to environment and related information and cooperation closely interacted and complemented each other throughout all the key strategic objectives. The speaker emphasized the EEA strategic objectives of making full use of the potential of data technology and digitalization, which represented a confirmation of the principles of the Shared Environmental Information System and the work carried out in the past by EEA jointly with ECE and UNEP.

## **B. Relay from Dobris to Nicosia of all hosts of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conferences**

24. The Minister for the Environment of Czechia noted that the Environment for Europe process was marking its thirtieth anniversary. Organized in times of abrupt geopolitical change, the First Environment for Europe Conference (Dobris Castle, then-Czechoslovakia, 21–23 June 1991) had set the ambitious goal of bringing East and West together and had focused on three components: institutional; programmatic; and ethical. Thirty years on, the process had brought very good results, spanning from various initiatives and strategies to assessments and binding agreements. The speaker noted that the Environment for Europe process was also adapting to emerging challenges.

25. The representative of the European ECO-Forum expressed concern that current economic development aspirations in Europe in the form of economic integration, free trade, and the establishment of the Single Market and the European Economic Space (later renamed the European Economic Area) might further deteriorate the environment. Countries of Europe should demonstrate their real intention by moving beyond mere statements. Access to information and decision-making in environmental matters for the public remained insufficient, particularly in countries of Eastern and Central Europe. European countries should also: ban exports of hazardous waste to non-European Union countries; improve energy efficiency; introduce a moratorium on the use of nuclear power plants; and reassess the value of nature and change education systems.

26. The State Secretary of the Ministry of Environment of Slovakia stated that the Dobris Conference had prompted the creation of EEA, which, in turn, had introduced new monitoring mechanisms, such as a European information and monitoring system, and regularly produced comprehensive environmental assessments for the pan-European region. However, European nature continued to deteriorate owing to poorly thought-out policies related to motorway construction, power plants, extraction industries and commercial

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<sup>4</sup> See [https://unece.org/pan-european-environmental-assessment#accordion\\_1](https://unece.org/pan-european-environmental-assessment#accordion_1).

tourism, among other things. Despite the efforts of the European Union, the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem degradation continued.

27. The State Secretary for the Environment of Switzerland said that Switzerland had always strongly supported the “Environment for Europe” process, hosting the Second Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Lucerne, Switzerland, 28–30 April 1993), which had endorsed the Elements for a Long-Term Environmental Programme for Europe that identified policies for common high standards. That had led to the establishment of programmes and legal instruments – including national environmental performance reviews, pan-European environmental assessment reports – and public participation. In addition, the Lucerne Conference had endorsed the Environmental Action Programme for Central and Eastern Europe, which had progressively evolved to include the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

28. The Co-Chair of the GREEN Action Task Force, OECD, stated that the Task Force was a unique cooperation platform for OECD countries, development cooperation partners and the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It provided a venue to develop and implement policies that improved environmental quality and social well-being, while creating opportunities for strong economic growth and decent jobs in the region. The Task Force generated a large number of very tangible results on the ground, including: the development of ambitious environmental and green economy strategies and policies; and the modernization of regulatory and economic instruments for more efficient and effective environmental management. The Task Force also helped to build capacities of institutions in the region for reducing environmental risks and mobilizing finance for green investment.

29. The Minister for Environment and Water of Bulgaria stated that, at the Third Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Sofia, 23–25 October 1995), ministers had underlined the urgent need for the further integration of environmental considerations into all sectoral policies, so that economic growth took place in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

30. The Deputy Minister for Environment of Lithuania, speaking on behalf of the Bureau of the Aarhus Convention, stressed the importance of the adoption of the Aarhus Convention at the Fourth Environment for Europe Conference (Aarhus, Denmark, 23–35 June 1998). The Aarhus Convention linked environmental rights and human rights, government accountability and environmental protection, and acknowledged that sustainable development could be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders.

31. The Minister for Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine highlighted that the Fifth Environment for Europe Conference (Kyiv, 21–23 May 2003) had adopted and opened for signature three multilateral environment agreements: the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers to the Aarhus Convention; the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention); and the Protocol on Civil Liability and Compensation for Damage Caused by the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on Transboundary Waters to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention). The speaker highlighted that the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine had caused significant damage to the infrastructure and ecosystems of the country. Despite those calamities, Ukraine continued to implement its commitments under the environmental agreements, and to develop and approve national laws, including a law on the national pollutant release and transfer register.

32. The Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment of Estonia spoke about the importance of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Espoo Convention. The Protocol had proved to be a valuable international treaty in ensuring the early integration of environmental, including health, considerations into the development of plans and programmes. Consequently, a high level of protection of the environment was provided also in terms of developing sustainable infrastructure.

33. The State Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia emphasized that the Environment for Europe process was a major environmental process in the region

that had resulted in the adoption of several environmental instruments. It also served as an environmental pillar for sustainable development in the region, as well as providing a platform for identifying and addressing emerging environmental challenges. The speaker urged countries to integrate environmental issues into all sectoral policies to ensure economic growth based on sustainable development principles.

34. The Deputy Minister for Ecology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan stated that Kazakhstan had hosted the Seventh Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21–23 September 2011) with two themes in focus: green economy; and preservation of water-related ecosystems. She also stated that green economy remained a key tool for building back better and greener. Kazakhstan had launched the Green Bridge Partnership Programme, which aimed to join the efforts of countries in transition to green growth through mutual exchange and partnership.

35. The Deputy Minister for Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia acknowledged that all the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conferences were remarkable in their unique directions. That was also true for the Eighth Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016), which had focused on two themes: greening the economy in the pan-European region: and, improving air quality for a better environment and human health. The Conference had also launched two initiatives: the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air; and the Batumi Initiative on Greening the Economy. Six years into the successful implementation of both initiatives, member States had demonstrated a serious commitment to addressing air quality challenges and promoting the green agenda.

### **III. Environment in the pan-European region: visions of 2030 and beyond**

#### **A. Pan-European Environmental Assessment: key messages to guide environmental action until 2030 and beyond**

36. The Chair of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy launched the Seventh Pan-European Environmental assessment and presented key findings, including the current state of affairs and trends in the region. She summarized recommendations and urgent measures to be taken by member States to strengthen environmental governance. The assessment report, which was indicator-based, provided an environmental assessment of the pan-European region and offered a foundation for improving environmental policy, identifying emerging issues and enhancing the science-policy dialogue.

37. The Chair then summarized key findings, including that greenhouse gas emissions and waste generation were still rising in the region and that the status of ecosystems remained a concern that needed to be urgently addressed. She also provided a brief overview of suggestions and recommendations provided by the assessment, including the specific call to: use nature-based solutions; foster participation in multilateral environmental agreements; develop coherent policies, including on sustainable infrastructure and tourism and shifting to a circular economy across the whole value chain of the economy. The crucial role of reliable, timely and comparable data and indicators applied across the region and the need to improve the knowledge base, including for emerging policy themes, was highlighted.

38. The assessment launch was followed by a panel discussion on the outcomes of the pan-European regional assessment, during which representatives of the Netherlands (video intervention), Cyprus, Georgia and Uzbekistan presented actions and initiatives their countries were taking in waste management and circular economy, sustainable tourism and circular economy, decarbonization and addressing climate change and in reversing or reducing biodiversity loss, respectively.

39. The Minister for the Environment of the Netherlands (video intervention) emphasized in her response on the findings of the pan-European environmental assessment that waste generation was still rising in the region and that circular economy was not a “nice to have”

but a “must have”. She referred to tools such as the Single-Use Plastics Directive<sup>5</sup> and the introduction of extended producer responsibility in the textile industry in the Netherlands in support of a transition to a circular economy.

40. The Deputy Minister for Tourism of Cyprus echoed the findings of the assessment and the importance of preventing marine pollution through effective and sound marine spatial planning. He referred to initiatives such as the “Plastic Free Beach Project” or the “Zero Waste Beach” project in Cyprus, which served as good practice examples that could be replicated in other countries.

41. The Deputy Minister for Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia presented the vision of and actions taken by her country to decarbonize the economy. She highlighted the importance of transforming the energy sector and significantly increasing the share of renewable energy as key strategic directions for the country. Tax exemptions for electric and hybrid vehicles and the adoption of a national energy efficiency action plan were actions taken by the country to support decarbonization and the Sustainable Development Goals.

42. The Deputy Chair of the State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection of Uzbekistan presented national actions and ambitious targets to reverse and reduce biodiversity loss and to ensure environmental protection overall – one of the areas highlighted in the assessment that required urgent action in the region. Measures on afforestation were among the actions referred to in that regard.

43. The Chair of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy then summarized the panel discussion and reminded participants that if all were truly concerned, aware and ambitious, then the region would be successful in reversing environmental loss and protecting nature and the future of humankind.

44. She expressed the need to keep the environment in the region under regular review and expressed the hope that the next pan-European environmental assessment would be developed with the support of additional organizations and partners, including EEA.

## **B. Advancing environmental performance in the region and beyond and launching the fourth cycle of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe environmental performance reviews**

45. In their Declaration, the ministers commended the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme for its work in producing effective and practical policy tools with a proven track record stretching back over more than a quarter of a century, and recognized the role that the Programme played in supporting the achievement and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals in the pan-European region.

46. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Environmental Performance Review Programme: fourth cycle of reviews (ECE/CEP/2020/6) had been adopted by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-sixth session (Geneva, 9–11 November 2020)<sup>6</sup> and launched in Nicosia where ministers at the Conference endorsed the fourth cycle as outlined in document ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/12, invited ECE to conduct it, encouraged countries to undertake further reviews and to consider elaborating road maps to implement recommendations. The Governments of Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan had requested ECE to undertake a fourth review of the environmental performance of their countries.

47. The segment on environmental performance reviews during the Conference started with a video showing tangible results of implementation of EPR recommendations by the

<sup>5</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 155 (2019), pp. 1–19.

<sup>6</sup> ECE/CEP/2020/2, para. 50 (b).

reviewed countries.<sup>7</sup> It was followed by interventions from: the Chair of the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of Tajikistan and the State Secretary for the Environment of the Republic of Moldova on the value of EPRs for their countries; and the State Secretary for the Environment of Switzerland emphasizing that sharing of international expertise and experience was a key feature of the EPR Programme.

48. The Chair of the EPR Expert Group (Estonia) invited delegates of reviewed countries, those eligible for an EPR, donor countries (financial and in-kind support) and international organizations, in addition to the Government of Cyprus as the host of the Conference, to sign a poster reflecting their achievements.<sup>8</sup>

#### **IV. Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries<sup>9</sup>**

49. The Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries, co-chaired by the Minister for Education, Sport and Youth and the Minister for Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment of Cyprus, was held within the framework of the Nicosia Conference with a view to adopting a new framework for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development up to 2030, focusing on the special role that education had to play in addressing the unprecedented challenges currently faced by humankind.

50. At the conclusion of the Meeting, ministers and heads of delegation adopted the Framework for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030 (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/10) and the Draft Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/11) providing a way forward for the implementation of the Strategy in the region up to 2030.

#### **V. Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure**

51. A session on “Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure”, chaired by the Deputy Minister for Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, was organized in the form of a plenary meeting followed by two parallel round table discussions. A thematic document prepared by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy with support from ECE and UNEP was submitted to the Conference to facilitate discussions (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/4).

52. Keynote addresses were given by the State Secretary of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection of Germany, and by the Acting Deputy Executive Director of UNEP. Statements from the floor were made by representatives of Czechia (on behalf of the European Union and its member States), the European Commission, Ukraine, Cyprus, North Macedonia, Finland, Lithuania, Greece, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, the OECD Environment Directorate, Azerbaijan, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and the United States of America.<sup>10</sup>

53. Participants in the parallel round tables discussed the same agreed issues related to greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure. The first round table discussion was co-moderated by the Deputy Minister for Ecology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan and the Deputy Director of the OECD Environment

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<sup>7</sup> ECE, “EPR Recommendations in action”, 28 September 2022, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptxm-3dnLzo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptxm-3dnLzo).

<sup>8</sup> For interventions and photographs of launch of fourth cycle, see <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/events/368999>.

<sup>9</sup> For more details on the High-level Meeting, see the Co-Chairs’ summary (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.4).

<sup>10</sup> Representatives are listed in the order in which they took the floor.



Directorate. The second round table discussion was co-moderated by the State Secretary for the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia and the Head of the Infrastructure and Finance for Resilience Unit at the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

54. The key messages and aspects considered as essential for enabling and implementing sustainable tourism, which were presented by the Chair during the Conference, were included in the Co-Chairs' Summary of the Conference.

## **VI. Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism**

55. A session on applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism, chaired by the Minister for Tourism and Environment of Albania, was organized in the form of a plenary meeting followed by two parallel round table discussions. A thematic document, prepared by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy with support from ECE and UNEP, was submitted to the Conference to facilitate discussions (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/5).

56. Keynote addresses were given by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Croatia, and by the Secretary-General of UNWTO (by pre-recorded video). Statements from the floor were made by representatives of Switzerland, Sweden, Czechia (speaking on behalf of the European Union), Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ukraine, Germany, Greece, Armenia and the European ECO-Forum.<sup>10</sup>

57. Participants in the parallel round tables discussed the same agreed issues related to applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism. The first round table discussion was co-moderated by the Director of the One Planet Network and member of the 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, UNEP, and the Director of Sustainable Development of Tourism, UNWTO. The second round table discussion was co-moderated by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Action of Portugal and the Chief of the Operational Activities and Review Section, Environment Division, ECE.

58. The key messages and aspects considered as essential for enabling and implementing sustainable tourism, which were presented by the Chair during the Conference, were included in the Co-Chairs' Summary of the Conference.

59. The Principal Adviser to the Executive Secretary of ECE and Chief of the Sustainable Development and Gender Unit of ECE, presented the main achievements in implementing the commitments made under the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air initiative. The Final report on the implementation of the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (2016–2021) had been prepared by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy and by the Bureau of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long range Transboundary Air Pollution (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/7).

60. The Chair of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy presented the progress in implementing the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy, including new commitments submitted before the Nicosia Ministerial Conference. The Initiative remained open for additional commitments until 2030. The Progress report on the implementation of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (2016–2021) had been prepared by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/6). Information documents submitted to the Conference included: List of possible green economy actions (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/INF/4); Batumi Initiative on Green Economy: list of commitments by country and organization (Nicosia update) (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/INF/5); and Implementing the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy: Compilation of responses to the Survey on the implementation of BIG-E commitments (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/INF/6).

61. The session then split into two parallel round tables to discuss issues related to applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism, with a focus on: (a) promoting circular tourism at the intergovernmental level; (b) promoting circular tourism at the national and subnational levels; and (c) promoting circular tourism among the business community. The first round table discussion was co-moderated by the Director of the One Planet Network and member of the 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, UNEP, and the Director of Sustainable Development of Tourism,

UNWTO. The second round table discussion was co-moderated by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Action of Portugal and the Chief of the Operational Activities and Review Section of ECE.

62. On the last day of the Conference, the Chairs of the two thematic sessions reported the main findings of the discussions to the plenary.

## **VII. Adoption of the Conference outcomes**

63. The Co-Chairs of the Conference presented the draft Ministerial Declaration submitted to the Conference by the Committee on Environmental Policy. The Ministerial Declaration was adopted by acclamation (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.1). Statements from the floor were made by representatives of: the European Commission (on behalf of the European Union and its member States), Georgia, Ukraine, the European ECO-Forum, Women Engage for a Common Future, Hungary, the World Organization of the Scout Movement (speaking on behalf of the youth participants in the Conference), the United States of America, the State of Palestine, Greece, Egypt and Cyprus.<sup>10</sup>

## **VIII. Closure of the Conference**

64. The ECE Executive Secretary made closing remarks. The Co-Chairs thanked delegates for their fruitful and constructive work and expressed confidence that the commitments made would contribute to improving the environment and to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Co-Chairs thanked the interpreters for their work and closed the Conference.

65. The Conference thanked the Committee on Environmental Policy for its excellent preparation of the event. It also thanked the ECE secretariat for a successful and smooth organization of the Conference. In particular, the Conference expressed its gratitude to the Government of Cyprus for having hosted the event, and for the warm hospitality extended to all.

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