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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): Twenty-second session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP 22) (Geneva, 25–27 January 2017)
- Statements by the European Union and its Member States

Delegations will find in the Annex for information a compilation of the abovementioned agreed statements on the main CEP 22 agenda items, as delivered during the meeting.

**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE):
Twenty-second session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP 22)
(Geneva, 25–27 January 2017)**

- Statements by the European Union and its Members States -

Agenda item 3) Sustainable development in the region

- The EU and its Member States welcome the information regarding the main developments at the regional level in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- We understand that the Committee will contribute to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, notably through Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the Environmental Performance Reviews programme, as well as the prospected Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE Region. Nevertheless, we would be interested to receive guidance from the UNECE on how the CEP could contribute to promoting the consistent implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals with regard to their environmental dimension. The EU and its Member States are open to consider this issue, including through a possible revision of the Committee's Terms of Reference, even though we believe that the current Terms of Reference are still relevant to a large extent.
- Moreover, we would like to underline the importance of making full use of existing processes and/or mechanisms, focusing on added-value, minimising the need for additional resources and avoiding any duplication of efforts, whilst integrating and promoting cooperation among the relevant actors in the region. In this regard, the EU and its Member States will continue to support the CEP and the Environment for Europe process, as effective platforms to further stimulate dialogue on these themes in the pan-European region and offer tools to help ECE Member States to achieve the SDGs.

Agenda item 4) Multilateral environmental agreements

- The EU and its Member States welcome and appreciate the documents prepared by the Secretariat, which reflect well the outcome of the Batumi Conference on this matter. We thank very much the representatives of the UNECE Convention and Protocols for their very informative presentations this morning.
- MEAs constitute the core of the UNECE work and continue to play a fundamental role to enhance environmental cooperation and awareness in the pan-European region, to strengthen national engagement and coordination among different authorities as well as to contribute to better levels of environmental protection and health. We believe that MEAs will also be key in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular of the SDGs and related targets, as we just heard, and that further work is needed, particularly at national level, in order to enhance the full implementation of these agreements. Hence, ratification and/or accession to existing legal instruments (Conventions and Protocols) should also be further encouraged.

- Furthermore, we fully support the proposal to consider effective approaches to enhance cooperation between relevant sectors (e.g. a nexus approach), including the effective engagement of stakeholders and inter-agency mechanisms, which is also of paramount importance to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- We appreciate the good work undertaken by the informal network of the Chairs of the compliance/implementation bodies under the Multilateral Environmental Agreements since 2013. In this regard, we would appreciate a closer coordination between the Committees, especially when recommendations may affect the scope of application of one or the other Convention ¹.
- We also appreciate the opportunity to have an open exchange of views on these issues in the Committee, with the participation of the MEA chairs and all CEP delegates.

Agenda item 5) Follow –up to the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and preparation of the mid-term review of the Conference’s main outcomes ²

- The EU and its Member States welcome the positive feedback which the Secretariat has received from several delegations on the organization of this Conference and look forward to contributing and analysing the draft survey to assess lessons learned from the preparation, organization and running of the Batumi Conference. We believe it is a good tool to guarantee the continuation of the fruitful initiatives which were agreed upon during this Conference last June.
- We also welcome the Ministerial Declaration whereby the Committee on Environmental Policy was invited to convene in 2018 a mid-term review to assess progress in the implementation of the main outcomes of the Batumi Conference. We look forward to contributing to that process and we support the idea that such mid-term review be patterned out and organized in the same manner to the 2013 mid-term review of the Astana Conference. An evaluation is an important step that should contribute to a vision on the development of the EfE process after 2021.
- We welcome the work done so far and are committed, together with the other partners in the pan-European region, to continue building up on the initiatives on the green economy taken during the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. Many of us from the EU participated in the Batumi Initiative for Greening the Economy (BIG -E) and others might still be joining. We look forward to sharing our initial experiences in implementing the voluntary commitments undertaken and to hearing from others on their own experiences at this meeting.
- We believe that the BIG-E initiative could usefully complement efforts made at different levels to implement the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. Furthermore, the regular monitoring of progress in the implementation of these actions, as proposed by the Committee, is a good way forward to see improvements in this specific and innovative sector.

¹ See [ACCC/C/2013/92](#).

² A shortened version of this statement was delivered.

- The EU and its MS have made considerable and continuous efforts in the transition to a green economy which is key to ensure a smart, inclusive and sustainable growth in the European Union. Further initiatives in this direction are envisaged, such as the promotion of environmental technologies. Economic growth cannot be separated from a healthy environment and good management of our natural and human capital: that is why we supported the goals of the Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy and we all endorsed it last June in Batumi. Reduced environmental risk and ecological scarcity, enhanced economic progress and improved human well-being and social equity are also key in the recent actions taken in the EU to shift from a linear to a circular economy model, including the review of current EU legislation on waste.
- This transition can be seen as an opportunity to overcome the current economic and financial crises and to channel investments into sustainable sectors and modern, low-carbon infrastructure that enables sustainable lifestyles within planetary boundaries. Furthermore, the active involvement of the private sector and of other stakeholders across Europe and at global level is key to achieve these changes.
- We look forward to a discussion with our partners on all these points.

Agenda item 6) Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting

- The EU and its Member States welcome the proposed mandate of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment to review progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS). We also see positively the future focus of the group, building *inter alia* on the outcomes of the Batumi conference
- Furthermore, we consider that the proposed mandate rightly encourages further collaboration between the European Environmental Agency (EEA) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), in particular to improve the link between the UNEP's Global Environment Outlook process and the EEA's State of the Environment Report.
- Further work is needed to refine the mandate of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA); in particular we seek greater clarity on the role of the Working Group in supporting the process of implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the SDGs within UNECE and how information can be best shared between UNECE and the Working Group in that respect.
- Furthermore, the EU and its Member States recommend that the revised WGEMA mandate should also reflect on concrete ways to effectively contribute to the mid-term review process on the implementation of the main outcomes of the Batumi Conference that will take place in 2018.
- We welcome the idea of organising a foresight-oriented workshop in mid-2017 with the participation of as many relevant actors as possible from the region, in order to clarify all these aspects. We look forward to a discussion with our partners on the proposed mandate of the Working Group at this CEP meeting.

- The EU and its Member States consider the revisions made to the proposed mandate positively and thank the UNECE Secretariat for taking on board our earlier comments. We would recommend that more time is given, possibly until the next meeting of the CEP in November 2017 in order to allow for the further improvement of the Terms of Reference and to make sure that these respond to the ambitious long-term vision of work that needs to be carried out to 2021 as agreed in Batumi.
- Furthermore as expressed previously, the EU and its Member States consider the proposed workshop in mid-2017 a very good vehicle to gather all relevant stakeholder and consult widely on the new WGMA mandate.

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Subsequent amendment proposed to the mandate and ToR of the WGEMA:

- "To ensure that the 2021 commitments taken in Batumi can be met, this new mandate of the WGEMA will be reviewed and amended by the CEP following the mid-term review of the Batumi Conference".

Agenda item 7) Environmental performance reviews ³

- The EU and its Member States take note of the document prepared by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs) and welcome discussions on how the EPR can support the achievement and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Furthermore, we recognise the important contribution of the Economic Commission for Europe Environment Performance Reviews (ECE EPRs) as an effective and practical policy tool to assist the country under review to organise the monitoring of SDGs, as well as provide recommendations to address any challenges with their implementation. This is particularly relevant, considering that EPRs provide independent reviews of countries on their progress in achieving domestic and international environmental policy commitments.
- We note the proposed options on how EPR-relevant goals and/or targets can be incorporated into the contents of the EPR report. We consider that, as has been the practice with the current EPR process, countries should maintain a certain flexibility in how they incorporate SDGs in the EPRs and avoid a one-size fits all approach.
- With regard to the need for additional expertise on SDGs, the EU and its Member States wish to understand better which additional expertise would be required. We are of the opinion that the UNECE/EPR process should also be better aligned and coordinated with that led by the OECD, especially in the overall context of supporting the monitoring and implementation process of the SDGs.

³ This statement could not be delivered because of the dynamics and timing of the panel discussion on this item.

- More specifically, let me also say that we would appreciate that a greater acknowledgement be made of the significant contribution from the EU, including the EEA, and the EU Member States, to this process over the years, ranging from systematic financial and expert support, to sharing of information and knowledge: the SOER process, the SEIS principles that are being promoted and implemented at various levels and the Eionet are some concrete examples in that respect.
- We look forward to a discussion with our partners on this draft, and also of other related documents such as the drafts of the peer reviews of the environmental performance of Bulgaria and Tajikistan, at this CEP meeting.

Agenda item 9) Programme of work of the Environment subprogramme:

a) Mainstreaming a gender perspective into environmental activities

- The EU and its Member States recognise the importance of gender mainstreaming in environmental activities, particularly in the light of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. We emphasise that gender equality is both a goal in itself and a means to contribute to achieving sustainable development.
- We remain committed to supporting international initiatives to promote gender equality and we call for continued cooperation and coordination with UN bodies and other relevant international fora and actors.

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