



Council of the  
European Union

Brussels, 5 February 2019  
(OR. en)

6009/19

ENV 103  
UNECE 2

### INFORMATION NOTE

---

From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): Twenty-fourth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP 24) (Geneva, 29-31 January 2019)  
- 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 24 agenda items, as delivered during the meeting.

**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE):  
Twenty-fourth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP 24)  
(Geneva, 29-31 January 2019)**

**- Statements by the European Union and its Members States -**

**Agenda item 4 (b): Developing the Shared Environmental Information System**

*Draft mid-term review on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System + Outline of activities leading up to 2021 of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment; Doc ECE/CEP/2019/7*

- On behalf of the EU and its Member States, we welcome the key findings of the draft on the mid-term-review of the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS), as well as the working group recommendations to the UNECE countries, prepared by the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment in close cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the European Environment Agency (EEA).
- We support even stronger synergies between the various information and reporting systems in the region. The European Environment Agency can provide valuable contributions in this regard.
- The European Union and its Member States appreciate the fact that all Member States with economies in transition submitted self-assessments, as a basis for the key findings.
- The EU and its Member States support the approach to address all three SEIS pillars – content, infrastructure and cooperation - as well as the criteria applied in line with SEIS principles (relevance; accuracy; timeliness and punctuality; accessibility; clarity; comparability; institutional and organizational arrangements). The EU and its Member States also welcome the selection and use for this analysis of the seven data flows, covering three of the ECE environmental indicators: air pollution & ozone depletion; water and biodiversity.
- The draft report shows also the need for further efforts to harmonize data flows across the region. Clear guidance is very important, especially when it comes to harmonizing and reusing of the data we are reporting to the multilateral environmental conventions, as well as for developing indicators to monitor the implementation of the sustainable development goals.
- The EU and its Member States took note of the concerns expressed by UNECE to motivate European Union Member States to participate more intensively in the SEIS self-assessment process implementing through dedicated questionnaires by UNECE and to ensure adequate human and financial resources to support this work on a regular basis. In this context, we also suggest that UNECE continues to co-operate closely with the European Environment Agency when collecting information from its Member States, also with the aim to reuse and share available information and avoid duplication of reporting to EU and UN organizations.

- The Member States of the EU encourage the improvement of the online reporting tool, developed by UNEP in consultation with the Working Group and supported by UNECE and EEA, in order to be operational for the next SEIS assessment review.
- The EU and its Member States thanks the group for the presentation of the annual timetable of activities for 2019, as well as for the revision and streamlining of the outline of its activities in the period leading up to 2021, by including measurable outcomes and giving priority to its core activities, in accordance with the financial resources available. The ranking in high, medium and low priority activities is a good way to focus on key aspects within the available resources.

-----

#### **Agenda item 4 (c): Environmental performance reviews**

##### *Environmental Performance Reviews; Doc ECE/CEP/2019/8*

- On behalf of the EU and its Member States, we express our satisfaction with the progress in the third cycle of environmental performance reviews conducted under the UNECE Environmental Performance Review Programme and we would like to underline the important role that this performance reviews can play in supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The EU and its Member States would like to emphasize our appreciation of the integration of relevant Sustainable Development Goals into the reviews, the launch of new area of activities to assist reviewed countries in the implementation of recommendations emerging from their reviews, as well as improved communication and outreach activities.
- The EU supports the efforts to include a larger number of chapters covering integration of environmental consideration into sectoral policies, taking into account priorities and concerns by reviewed countries.
- We fully agree with the third cycle reviews focus on the three blocks: a) Environmental governance and financing in the green economy context; b) Countries cooperation with the international community; c) Environmental mainstreaming in priority sectors; and since 2017 a fourth one (d) Environmental Performance in supporting the achievement and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals in the Pan-European region.

##### *As for the future activities:*

- The EU encourages the EPR team to concentrate on the biggest weaknesses identified in the report:
  - lack of legal and policy frameworks for green economic initiatives
  - insufficient institutional capacity for implementing green economy approaches
  - too low rates of environmental charges, fees and tariffs in order to create incentives for rational use of natural resources

- find solutions for the key challenges for integration of relevant SDG Goals into environmental performance reviews, namely the lack of data and information
- inability of some countries to participate regularly in international cooperation activities on the environment

-----

#### **Agenda item 4 (d): Multilateral Environmental Agreements**

*Draft mid-term review of the Implementation of the MEAs in supporting of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Doc ECE/CEP/2019/9*

- On behalf of the EU and its Member States, we welcome the key findings of the different Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs.) We would like to repeat the need to strengthen the participation of civil society and the private sector in the implementation of the UNECE/MEAs and the opportunities these agreements provide to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The EU and its Member States would like to refer to a paragraph on page 5, namely para 28. that reflects perfectly a future vision toward an environment integrated into other sectoral activities in a supportive way and most important aspect, directly into decision-making: “A goal is to move away from the vision of SEA’s and EIA’s as “legal” or “control” instruments, towards a more positive vision of them as “support” instruments, [...]”
- Thus, the EU and its Member States share the positive vision of both the instruments of SEA and EIA to be used as **supporting instruments**, which does not exclude their vision as “legal” instruments, and which calls for their full implementation. These legally based supportive instruments will continue to be of great benefit, not only for decision makers, but also for project owners and civil society. The common goal towards achieving the SDGs should be the common ground of our common effort.

-----

#### **Agenda item 12: Calendar of meetings / UNECE Information paper No. 8**

- Regarding the schedule of meetings we would like to highlight that autumn meetings might not be ideal due to the important number of high-level environmental meetings.

=====