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#### INFORMATION NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE):  
Twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP 25)  
(Geneva, 13-15 November 2019)  
- Statements by the EU and its Members States

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Delegations will find in the [Annex](#), for information, a compilation of the abovementioned agreed statements on the main CEP 25 agenda items, as delivered during the meeting.

**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE):  
Twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP 25)  
(Geneva, 13-15 November 2019)**

**- Statements by the EU and its Members States -**

**Agenda item 2: Outcomes of the work of the Bureau**

The EU and its Member States thank the Bureau for its work. Regarding the preparations of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, we appreciate the survey as an inclusive process to define the themes. We are fully prepared to work here with the Parties to find a joint solution together.

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**Agenda item 4: The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference**

a) Selection of the themes for the Conference

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Secretariat and the Bureau for a comprehensive and inclusive process to define the themes of the Conference. Generally, all themes proposed by the bureau (Information paper No. 20) provide a good basis for discussion.

We thank Cyprus for their offer to host the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. We highly appreciate this offer and express our readiness to cooperate with Cyprus and our partners to achieve a successful and productive Ministerial Conference.

The root cause of many of the environmental challenges that we are facing is overuse of resources. Therefore, we would like to see themes which build on elements such as sustainable consumption and production and green economy. This would frame the discussions to the means of achieving sustainability.

We would like the Ministers;

- to discuss topical political themes, taking into account their relevance for the pan-European region, as well as the global challenges we have;
- to discuss concrete solutions that respond to major environmental issues that are of concern for the whole society, like climate change, loss of biodiversity, environmental degradation, waste and plastics;
- to focus their discussions on sharing solutions to environmental challenges, boosting further mobilization and action, and showcasing relevant innovations;
- to link their discussions to support the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and achieving global environmental goals, including the Paris Agreement.

With regard to the themes of the Conference, we would like to express the following views:

The EU and its Member States support the Bureau's recommendation on Theme 1: Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure.

Infrastructure lifecycle have significant environmental impacts, including carbon, water and ecological footprints. It is a sector with huge future challenges, not least because of climate change and urbanization. On the other hand, it is also a sector where significant improvements can be achieved and sustainable alternatives and new solutions are rapidly developing. The UNEA-4 resolution on sustainable infrastructure reflects the importance of infrastructure for all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG9 encompasses infrastructure, industrialization and innovation. In addition, infrastructure also underpins all other economic, social and environmental SDGs. The resolution encourages Member States to develop and strengthen national and regional systems-level strategic approaches to infrastructure planning, to share and apply relevant national and international best practice, to build further on existing public-private partnerships and develop innovative approaches and mutual exchange of expertise with regard to sustainable infrastructure. This gives a solid basis for Ministerial discussions.

When it comes to Theme 2, we would like to propose the following:

We highly appreciate Cyprus' offer to host the meeting, and would like to find a theme that is relevant for the host country. Therefore, we support the theme "sustainable tourism". Sustainable tourism approaches benefit the society and provide tools to address the environmental impacts of tourism, which are currently a challenge in many countries. The tourism sector currently represents 10% of global GDP and 10% of global employment and is one of the fastest growing economic sectors. It is expected that by 2030, 1.8 billion international tourists will cross borders (from 1.3 in 2017) and over 13 billion domestic tourists will travel within their home countries. This forecasted growth comes with an increase of the environmental impacts related to the sector, as tourism operations not only rely heavily on natural resources such as water, food or healthy landscapes but are also powered by energy sources and generate waste and CO2 emissions.

Therefore, one of the biggest challenges of the tourism sector is to decouple its growth from the related environmental impacts in order to ensure an effective contribution of the sector to the implementation of the Agenda 2030. The concept of a circular economy aims for a smarter design, as well as longer and better use of products, their reparability and remanufacturing in end-of-service life in order to bring landfill waste close to zero. It is a concept rooted in a fundamental change in the way we produce and consume and which promotes enhanced resource efficiency along the entire value chain.

Given the extensive and transversal value chain of the tourism sector and its capacity to enable direct interaction between consumers and producers, the integration of circular economy principles in tourism appears as an opportunity to reduce emissions from the sector and to mitigate its environmental impacts. And it should help to limit the amount of waste generated by tourism. Waste is the most visible environmental problem in any place of mass tourism.

Moreover, there is a link between tourism and sustainable education, since environmental education targeted to tourists is a very efficient tool to enhance environmental awareness. This was also raised by the host country here today. The EU and its Member States propose that the second theme be sustainable tourism, which integrates elements of circular economy and zero waste approaches.

The EU and its Member States are looking forward to hearing the proposals and views of other Parties and organizations and to work together to find a joint solution.

b) Organizational issues

The EU and its Member States support the proposal by the bureau to organize the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Autumn 2021. However, due to the possibility that many high-level international environmental meetings may take place at the end of the year we would like to propose to explore the possibilities to organize the Conference in October. We understand that this might not be possible.

The EU and its Member States have recognized the heavy burden of hosting the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conferences, which might have led to the situation that finding hosts for EfE meetings has been challenging. We would like to propose to make a reduction of 20 % of the quotas. For the majority of the Member States this reduction would correspond to the size of delegations they sent to Batumi.

With regard to the Conference outcomes, we would like to ask the Secretariat to consider the document on Organizational issues to reflect the outcome of the discussions under agenda item 5, as appropriate.

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**Agenda item 5: Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting**

The EU and its Member States thank UNECE for taking the lead on the Pan-European Assessment process.

Our key message is to strive for achieving stronger synergies between the various information and reporting systems. This includes harmonizing the data flows across the region, reusing the data we are reporting to the multilateral environmental conventions and on implementing the SDGs, as well as avoiding duplication of reporting to EU and UN organizations. In improving the information and reporting systems, more emphasis should be placed on deploying modern ICT solutions and reducing administrative burden.

In this regard, we would like to note that the extensive data and information gathered by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and international partners is available for the Pan-European Assessment, even though the Assessment itself is still to be produced by UNECE and UNEP.

Earlier this year, the Sixth Global Environment Outlook report was launched during the 4<sup>th</sup> UN Environment Assembly. The EEA is in the process of producing the SOER 2020, European Environment – State and Outlook 2020, report. Taking into account the proximity in time of the publication of these comprehensive reports, the EU and its Member States would request that their findings are, as far as appropriate, reflected in the proposed 2021 assessment, noting that the timeframe for producing the Assessment is relatively short and resources are limited.

In view of the above, we support Option 3\* as presented in the Draft concept for the next Pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2019/6), which is *a light indicator-based and thematic assessment to the review of progress in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System with additional elements to address the two conference themes*. We would like to achieve a deeper understanding of the drivers and trends in relation to them. It is increasingly important to understand the cumulative impacts and interlinkages of different sectors and global developments but also to assess the efficiency of the specific UNECE indicators, by evaluating their added value as compared to their cost in overall design and in workload in the countries.

The proposal in the UNECE Concept Note for reviewing progress made in establishing the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in the pan-European region is very important. We need information to the next EfE Conference about the establishment of SEIS, and analysis of the efficiency of structures and systems to provide reliable and comparable environmental information across the pan-European region, as well as the cost of the implemented measures and tools that are developed to answer requirements from SEIS. We would like to highlight the importance of strengthening the efficiency and quality of the processes and administrative capacity through which we produce and share environmental data, including enhancing transparency of the information and improving accessibility and user-friendliness.

In addition, we would propose that any assessment should include a short summary of commitments made at the previous two Environment for Europe (EfE) Conferences and progress made in implementing those.

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## **Agenda item 6: Environmental Performance Reviews**

The EU and its Member States welcome the information prepared by the Expert Group on Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs).

The EPRs Programme is a process, which we highly appreciate as an effective and practical policy tool for dialogue to achieve environmental improvements at national level and to share good practices. The EPRs are very important in facilitating progress in achieving national and international environmental policy commitments. We are committed to continue working with our partners in the framework of the EPRs.

We welcome the report and recommendations of the Third EPR of Uzbekistan, and we hope that further activities will allow for a full implementation of the adopted recommendations.

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\* [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/europe/monitoring/21th\\_Meeting/1903021E.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/europe/monitoring/21th_Meeting/1903021E.pdf)

We encourage UNECE Member States, which have not yet done so, to express their interest to be reviewed to the Secretariat during the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of the EPRs.

With regard to Information paper No. 25, the EU and its Member States would like to propose the following amendments (*bolded*):

- "3. **Subject to availability of resources**, the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy will consider and decide **on a case-by-case basis** on any requests to carry out EPRs in non-ECE member States, **taking also into consideration the aim of ratification and/or implementation of relevant UNECE MEAs.**"

In paragraph 6 we propose to check the possible typo on the second sentence. Instead of "member State" it should say "non-Member State".

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### **Agenda item 7: Cross-sectoral activities**

EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat for the update on cross-sectoral activities.

- Education for Sustainable Development is an important channel to promote sustainable development, as well as environmental education and awareness. We would like to highlight the strong linkages to UNESCO and to note the synergies and cooperation between the global and regional level. The focus is to enhance the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and SDGs and raise awareness about sustainable development. In addition, needs and challenges to respond to climate change are increasing.
- We took note of the information on the plans to arrange the Third High-level Meeting of Environment and Education Ministries of the UNECE region in the framework of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Meeting. We welcome close cooperation with the Steering Committee in this regard.
- The EU and its Member States welcome the information on the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme. We would like to highlight the importance of the transport sector in implementing the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. Transport sector is rapidly taking important steps towards a carbon neutral and low emission pathway and it is important to boost this development all around the pan-European region.
- We thank Austria for their proposal to host the Fifth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment in 2020. We encourage concrete actions and close cooperation between the transport and environment Ministries to reduce emissions and other negative impacts on environment.

- We thank the WHO for its important work and good cooperation within the Environment and Health Process, and we are committed to strengthen such cooperation, on the basis of still too high exposure to diseases caused by environmental risks in the region. We call for strengthening the synergies with the UNECE conventions on issues related to environment and health.
- We welcome the information by the Environment and Security Initiative about the progress in achieving the new memorandum of understanding. We hope it will soon be operative, and work can continue in full swing to support the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Focusing the work on increasing pressure on natural resources, the impact of climate change and environmental degradation is crucial to respond to multifaceted security challenges within and across national borders. The European Union reaffirms its engagement in the Kura River basin through the Union Water Initiative Plus for the Eastern Partnership programme.
- Finally, the EU and its Member States welcome the information on mainstreaming the gender perspective in environmental activities. We strongly encourage the Secretariat to continue this work and to bring gender perspective into the daily operations and activities all over the Environment Division. We noted the challenge with regard to the lack of national policies addressing gender and the environment, as well as to the absence of gender disaggregated data on environmental issues.

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**Agenda item 8: Criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events**

The EU and its Member States support the proposal as described in the information paper No 21.

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**Agenda item 9: Review of subprogramme performance and programme planning**

The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat for presenting the draft annual program of work of the Environment Subprogramme for 2020. Since this is now the first time to draft annual programmes instead of biannual programmes, we would like to make some suggestions regarding the outline of the document for the future:

- it would be very useful to highlight the high-level events during a calendar year, as well as to have a calendar of main meetings planned for 2020.
- we would like this document to serve more as an communication tool to inform about the UNECE Environment activities and impacts. Some improvements could be made to make it more user friendly. While understanding that impact is challenging to measure, we would welcome more efforts to do so.
- we would also welcome some insights on results achieved during the past year. What have been the key achievements since CEP-24 in the Environment sub-programme?

- we did not quite understand the reasoning behind highlighting only one planned result for 2020. We would like to see highlights from all of the Conventions. We would like to see the Conventions discussed on a regular basis in the CEP meetings.

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#### **Agenda item 10: UNEA-4**

UNEA-4 achieved ambitious and forward looking results and can be seen as a success. Its outcomes reflect the world leaders' increasing environmental awareness of the ever-growing array of environmental challenges that need to be tackled at a global scale. UNEA confirmed and reinforced its role as the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment.

The Ministerial Declaration was the most prominent achievement of UNEA-4. It recognizes the importance to advance sustainable consumption and production patterns, including through circular economy and other sustainable economic models. It also consists of various commitments, including a significant reduction of manufacturing and use of single-use plastic products by 2030 and developing a global environmental data strategy by 2025. UNEA-4 also agreed on a set of relevant approaches, commitments and solutions that guide us in our work on issues such as sustainable consumption and production, sound management of chemicals and waste, resource efficiency and circularity.

We would also like to stress the conclusions of the 6th Global Environment Outlook, which was launched during UNEA-4. The findings show that the current state of the environment calls for bold, transformative actions and commitments. In order to pursue the implementation process of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, it is necessary to create tangible strategic changes in consumption and production systems, technological and institutional innovation and design of environmental policies. We are not on track to meet the environmental dimension of the Agenda 2030, and the recent scientific reports on the state of environment have very clearly demonstrated that we cannot continue with business as usual if we care about a healthy planet for future generations.

The EU and its Member States would like to highlight the importance of disseminating UNEA's outcomes and key messages to all relevant international fora, including at the regional level. Therefore, we welcome the opportunity to discuss the outcomes of UNEA-4 and express our full support to the inclusion of this topic in the agenda of CEP and would welcome discussions on UNEA-5 preparations at the next CEP meeting in 2020.

We would also like to note that we see UNEP's engagement in the ongoing UN Development System reform to provide a good opportunity to mainstream environment within all UN operations. The EU and its Member States remain committed to the multilateral cooperation and the 2030 Agenda, and will continue engaging in future sessions of UNEA to make sure that the threats to our environment are fully addressed.

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## **Agenda item 11: Calendar of meetings**

We would like to highlight that Autumn meetings might not be ideal due to the important number of high-level environmental meetings. We would like to propose to the bureau to discuss this issue in connection with the long term planning of the meetings of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

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