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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE):
Twenty-seventh session of the Committee on Environmental Policy
(CEP 27) (Geneva (hybrid), 3-5 November 2021)
- Statements by the EU and its Members States

Delegations will find in the [Annex](#), for information, a compilation of statements by the EU and its Member States delivered during the 27th meeting of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP 27, hybrid).

**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE):
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- Statements by the EU and its Members States -

Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the Agenda

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for all preparatory work they have done for the 27th meeting of CEP including the compilation of the agenda. We appreciate that the provisional agenda covers relevant items of ongoing and future activities in the area of ECE environmental policy - especially important due to specific nature of this meeting where decision need to be taken for the organisation of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

The Agenda as suggested can be adopted.

Agenda Item 2: Outcomes of the work of the Bureau

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for their work and take note of the report which provides good insight into their work.

We acknowledge the challenges posed to this work due to COVID-19 pandemic which are evident from the report.

Regardless these challenges we especially appreciate the way the Bureau has organised the substantial preparations for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference – mainly the preparation of two thematic background documents on sustainable infrastructure and sustainable tourism.

Looking into the future we would like to invite the Bureau with the support of the Secretariat to continue monitoring and providing input to further development of the Environment subprogramme in the UNECE region – especially towards mainstreaming environmental and climate objectives into relevant UN ECE policies and programmes.

Agenda Item 4: Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference

Agenda item 4/a: Draft agenda of the Conference

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for their efforts in compiling the provisional agenda for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. With regard to suggested agenda we appreciate the sequence of items starting with historical insight into the development of Environment for Europe process, proceeding with sharing the vision on the environment in the pan-European region to be followed by the Third High-Level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministers and two chosen thematic sessions. Furthermore we support that according to provisional agenda full day is envisaged for the thematic sessions on sustainable infrastructure and sustainable tourism.

Specifically on item 3 of the draft agenda (Environment in the pan-European region: visions of 2030 and beyond) we:

- a) welcome the envisaged discussion on the environmental vision in the pan-European region,
- b) invite the Bureau and the Secretariat to supplement the document by presenting in the annotated agenda more information on the aim and goal of the discussion and how will the results be applied. This will also facilitate preparation of ministers for the discussion.

Agenda item 4/b: Background thematic documents

The EU and its Member States provide initial comments to drafts of both thematic documents since the time was too short for an in-depth review. In this regard we appreciate that comments on the drafts of thematic documents can be send after the meeting.

On the draft sustainable infrastructure thematic document:

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for guiding the preparation of the draft thematic document.

First, we would like to express appreciation on the overall drafting approach in terms of information it contains and in terms of providing an overview of the state of play in relation to actions supporting sustainable infrastructure transitions. This, we think, is vital for the conduct and outcome of the discussions at the conference.

We would also like to suggest that - while acknowledging the social and economic component of sustainable development – the document maintains its focus on environmental aspects of transitions to sustainable infrastructure and on the need of mainstreaming climate and environmental targets in infrastructure planning and financing processes.

We suggest that in the document the undergoing activities under the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents relating to sustainable infrastructure – concretely activities on tailing management facilities and on resilience of facilities to so-called Na-tech accidents – be acknowledged.

The document lacks reference to the Aarhus convention and the PRTR protocol and we would like to see that these be included through incorporation of explicit references to how the Aarhus principle can contribute to sustainable infrastructure.

We furthermore suggest a reference to the newly adopted “Geneva Declaration on Environmental Democracy for Sustainable Inclusive and Resilient Development” as it is seen relevant for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

Furthermore we have following suggestions for the development of the document:

- a) that it more prominently presents that sustainable infrastructure brings benefits to all three components of sustainable development: environmental, social and economic,
- b) that it conveys a message that while recognising the impact of COVID pandemics on sustainable infrastructure the driving forces of sustainable transitions are their environmental, social and economic impacts as such and that COVID recovery instruments are ideal instruments for mainstreaming sustainable infrastructure in overall development endeavours,
- c) to present more visibly in the document the challenge of lock-ins due to the intrinsic characteristics of infrastructure: long-term lifecycle and high investment costs,
- d) to ensure that when presenting “pressures of infrastructure developments” their mutual interconnections be more clearly presented (state of environment affecting the infrastructure and vice versa state of infrastructure affecting the environment),
- e) that the document’s structure covers the following topics:
 - reasons why the transition to sustainable infrastructure is needed – focused on climate and environmental aspects, including biodiversity, and on development megatrends,
 - sectors of infrastructure with highest environmental and climate impacts (energy, food, housing, mobility, construction),
 - state of play in terms of undertaken activities at different levels, with broader presentation of EU initiatives related to recovery and resilience mechanism including taxonomy methodology and just transition mechanism,
 - challenges at technical and policy level (here we welcome to focus on suggested key factors: brown infrastructures, lifecycle, financing, criteria and indicators, risk and resilience),
 - required future developments.

Finally and in relation to indicating possible future actions in the document the EU and its Member States i) support the promotion of UNEP’s International Good Practices for Sustainable Infrastructure, ii) support the call for synergistical cooperation of relevant international organisations and programmes and strengthened mechanisms supporting exchange of knowledge and practice and iii) suggest to add an invitation to UNECE MEAs to include sustainable infrastructure in their work, where relevant, and to inform CEP on the progress in this regard.

On the sustainable tourism thematic document

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for guiding the preparation of this thematic document.

We would first like to express appreciation on the overall drafting approach – especially in presenting the complexity of the subject due to many and interlinked supply and value chains and in touching upon the consumption pattern as an important element shaping the tourism development. Then we would - while acknowledging that the tourism is realised at local level - like to suggest that in the document more prominently the need is outlined for green and sustainable national tourism strategies as they play an important role in ensuring that only sustainable tourism developments are eligible for private and public financing.

We would also like to see that the document more prominently underlines that tourism development in sustainable way is paramount for the long-term operation of this sector due to its high dependence on the state of climate and environment.

We think that adding more information on examples of sustainable tourism initiatives in the region would give more practical flavour to the document and we invite the Bureau and the Secretariat to consider this in further development of this thematic document.

Finally we support the suggested next steps of EfE process – especially building circularity criteria in tourism financing and investments, regulating tourism circular principles, providing targeted support to destinations and investing in research on consumption, production and demands in pan-European countries.

Agenda item 4/c: Pan-European Environmental Assessment

The EU and its Member States take note of the information provided on progress in the preparation of a limited indicator-based and thematic pan-European environmental assessment.

In relation to the following steps towards the finalisation of the assessment, the EU and its Member States express the following views:

- a) ensure that the assessment on the state of environment is focusing on common and key challenges and concerns of relevance for the entire Pan-European region,
- b) strive to ensure consistency between different parts, cross-fertilisation and cross-referencing of messages, hence avoiding a fragmented approach,
- c) strive towards a geographically balanced assessment to ensure that its findings remain relevant for all countries in the region,
- d) make all efforts to identify information sources across the region to ensure a balanced approach and to allow for the identification of concrete policy actions based on the findings of the assessment,
- e) reflect all the key messages in a Summary for policy makers to serve as a common and relevant basis for discussion during the ninth “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference.

To ensure this development, the EU and its Member States invite all countries to actively support the preparation of the assessment by ensuring relevant information and by providing inputs and comments to the draft chapters as well as to the assessment as a whole.

Furthermore, in order to monitor the practical usefulness and relevance of the report, the EU and its Member States recommend to the Bureau and the Secretariat to consider inviting ministers to provide feedback on how the pan-European assessment is being used in planning environmental measures or in developing environmental policies.

Agenda item 4/e: Organisational issues

The EU and its Member States would like in relation to organisational issues express appreciation of good structure and clarity of the session document.

In terms of participation arrangements we support the envisaged number of participants of specific groups: a) up to 8 per country representing government, b) up to 8 per intergovernmental organisations, c) up to 75 representatives of NGOs, d) up to 40 representative of business and representatives of other civil society representatives in line with UN practice.

We also support the envisaged registration process.

In relation to selection and nomination criteria for the participation of Non-governmental organisations we suggest that criteria “active involvement in the EfE process” (second part of para 10/c of the document) be deleted. We find this criteria too restrictive and would like to see that NGOs that in the past have not been involved in the EfE process are eligible for participation too.

Agenda item 4/g: Host country preparations

The EU and its Member States would first like to thank Cyprus for hosting The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. We recognise the scope of financial and human resources that are required to be a host of such conference.

We see with pleasure that that an EU Member State is for the third time a host country of the Ministerial Conference in the Environment for Europe process. But then we also recognise and see the heavy burden Cyprus is facing in the conference planning process due to uncertain health situation and appreciate its flexibility in relation to postponement of the conference and to all inconveniences this has generated.

Agenda Item 5: Environmental Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting

The EU and its Member States see environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting as an important element of environmental policy and crucial for planning its development.

While recognising the importance of the activities and processes carried out in the framework of the Working group on Environment Monitoring and Assessment (WGEMA) and Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators (JTFESI), in the future, we invite countries of the UNECE region to contribute also to the work of these expert groups and to engage actively in the implementation of initiatives related to environment monitoring and assessment in the region.

We welcome the realisation of activities supporting the development of Shared Environmental Information System and thank the Secretariat for an overview on its implementation status. We appreciate that this overview pointed out also some key aspects that need strengthening, activities requiring prioritisation and/or support as well as the need for regular monitoring and assessment of the progress.

We would like to invite and encourage countries to take participation in the Shared Environmental Information System as an internal and regular environment monitoring process which will not only contribute to national environmental policy but will also guide regional developments and support quantitative progress monitoring.

We support the extension of WGEMA mandate until after The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference as we believe this is good to ensure continuity of the work. We also ensure our availability for the discussion on the future mandate of this expert group which should take into account the outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference as well as outcomes of other global and regional meetings and processes on climate and environmental matters.

Having said that, we would like to suggest a more structured and focused approach to the future work of WGEMA and JTFESI. This is due to latest policy developments in the EU which require substantial engagement of EU institutions in the implementation of the European Green Deal and Digital agenda. For the future work, we would also like to suggest that it be realised in a more streamlined way in relation to initiatives of participating organisations – namely EEA/Eionet activities, UNEP initiatives and initiatives under the SDGs process. This will certainly lead to the reduction of reporting burden and effective use human and financial resources.

The EU and its Member States will remain engaged in environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting activities in the UNECE region and we wish to encourage all Member States to do the same. This will add value and promote the importance of regional platforms for environmental and climate exchange and will in turn support dialogue on any other critical challenges in the UNECE region.

Agenda Item 6: Environment Performance Review Programme

The EU and its Member States express appreciation to the Environment Performance Review Programme (EPR) and recognise its contribution in supporting countries in achieving national and environmental policy commitments.

The EU and its Member States confirm the readiness to continue working with other partners in this programme.

The EU and its Member States reiterate the view that EPRs remain an effective and practical tool for helping countries achieving/monitoring progress on environmental policies and identifying priorities for future action, cooperation or international assistance.

The EU and its Member States reiterate the view that EPRs shall be developed in a dynamic way as to allow the implementation to take into account recent developments in environmental policy area, especially those related to the mainstreaming climate and environmental targets and encouraging, whenever feasible and welcomed by reviewed countries, possible follow-ups with a regional approach.

While the EU and its Member States support broadening the geographical scope of EPRs outside UNECE region, provided that necessary resources are available, the main focus of EPRs should be directed at non-OECD and non-EU UNECE countries who wish to take up this exercise.

Agenda Item 7: Cross-Sectoral Activities

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

We would like to express our support to the enhancement of actions in the cross-sectoral programmes of the ECE region thus supporting the implementation of SDGs and contributing to the achievement of climate and environmental goals in the region. Furthermore we appreciate the developments and achievements in all cross-sectoral activities and especially the thorough planning of future activities. Integration of environmental concerns into other sectors is the most efficient way of tackling environmental challenges

In relation to the Education for sustainable development programme we:

- thank the Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development for their dedicated work,
- take note of recent developments including the work on the post-2019 implementation framework, on the reporting on the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021-2030, on awareness raising and capacity building activities, on Youth Platform and on the preparations for the Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries to be held in the framework of Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference,
- take note of presented goals and challenges and planned activities,

- follow the invitation from the session document and encourage CEP members from countries participating in the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development to remain informed of the process,
- support continued cooperation with Steering Committee on EDS in the preparations for 9th EfE.

In relation to Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme we:

- thank the Steering Committee of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Program (THE PEP) for their dedicated work,
- underline the importance of looking at nexus of these policies since transport is among sectors with highest environmental and climate and consequently health pressure,
- express appreciation of planned actions to be realised based on the Vienna Declaration adopted at the Fifth High-Level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment in areas of promoting cycling and other forms of active mobility and sustainable tourism mobility,
- encourage participation of experts in the working groups to be established,
- support continued cooperation with Steering Committee on EDS in the preparations for 9th EfE.

In relation to European Environment and Health Process we:

- take note of the developments,
- support planned presentation of European Environment and Health Process Task Force climate and health related thematic document in the 26th session of the Conference on the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on the Climate Change,
- support commitment that CEP contributes to the European Environment and Health Process.

In relation to mainstreaming the gender perspective in environmental activities we:

- welcome the information provided in the session document,
- welcome that gender perspective mainstreaming seems to gain more and more importance in any work undertaken in Environment Divisions,
- inform that the EU has also recognised gender perspective mainstreaming as an important enabler supporting the implementing of SDGs and climate and environment targets and that this is reflected in climate and environment related EU documents,
- support international initiatives and continued cooperation within UN and with other international organisations and programmes,
- invite the Bureau and the Secretariat to continue mainstreaming the gender perspective in their activities.

Agenda Item 8: Criteria for Financial Support for Participation in Meetings and Events

The EU and its Member States support the recommendations of the Bureau in relation to criteria for continued financial support for participation in meetings and events.

Agenda Item 9: Annual Programme of Work of the Environment sub-programme for 2022 and outline of the key components of the Programme of Work of the Environment sub-programme for 2023

The EU and its Member States thank the Secretariat for presenting the draft annual programme of work of the Environment Subprogramme for 2022.

We support its adoption and recommend that it is approved by the Executive Committee.

Agenda Item 10: Presentation and Exchange of Views on the fifth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

The EU and its Member States remain committed to ensure a substantive resumed session of UNEA-5 (UNEA-5.2) which will deliver tangible, positive and ambitious outcomes.

The EU and its Member States considers the adoption of a ministerial declaration, with a strong focus on the UNEA-5 theme and that reflects upon important milestones from the past year, a key priority for the resumed session of UNEA-5.

On the outcome of the ad hoc expert group on marine litter and microplastics, as mandated by UNEA resolution 4/6, the EU and its Member States welcome and co-sponsor the draft resolution by Peru and Rwanda to launch an Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee (INC) for a Global Agreement on Plastics at the resumed session of UNEA-5. It is imperative to initiate negotiations on an international legally binding instrument to combat the acute crisis of plastic pollution.

In that sense, the EU and its Member States find it crucial to address the entire plastics life-cycle with a circular approach to plastic as a material as well as a waste. Therefore, the approach must not be only limited to marine litter, one has to also address both the Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns of plastics as well as the leakage of plastic litter and micro plastics into the environment.

The EU and its Member States see the need to ensure the most efficient preparations and negotiations of resolutions and decisions to be adopted at the resumed session, while we maintain openness to discuss proposals submitted by other Member States on issues related to the UNEA-5 theme “Strengthening Actions for Nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”, provided they are streamlined and can generate support, and the number of resolutions remains manageable, keeping in mind that the resumed session of UNEA-5 will be a three-day meeting.

The EU and its Member States would like to recall its intention to table two resolutions:

- a) One on Nature based Solutions, aiming for a common understanding on the concept of “Nature based Solutions” and to step up their implementation as a vital component that has significant potential for climate change adaptation and mitigation, multiple co-benefits for biodiversity, water and people, as well as food security and
- b) One on accelerating climate adaptation for water quality and aquatic ecosystems also in cross-border cooperation in river basin areas and regional sea areas shared by different countries.

The EU and its Member States would also like to recall the General Assembly resolution 75/280, inviting UNEA and other United Nations bodies to provide input to Stockholm+50. The EU and its Member States consider the ministerial declaration from the resumed session of UNEA-5 to be a good opportunity for UNEA to contribute to Stockholm+50.

Moreover, the EU and its Member States remain convinced that UNEP@50 constitutes a way of raising awareness on UNEP's capability to drive the international environmental agenda and environmental and sustainability governance and take note of the proposal by the Secretariat and look forward to further discuss this issue under agenda item 5.

The EU and its Member States would like to recall the Decision 5/3 of UNEA-5.1 inviting General Assembly of United Nations (UNGA) to consider the appropriate event "in the context of the commemoration of the creation of the United Environment Programme by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment" for the adoption of the Political Declaration negotiated in the follow-up of the UNGA 73/333 process. Considering the synergies between the objectives of UNEP@50 outlines in the document and those of the political declaration to be prepared in follow-up to UNGA resolution 73/333 we underline our belief that such political declaration would constitute the most adequate outcome for UNEP@50, as a way to strengthening international environmental law and governance and the role of UNEP.

Agenda Item 11: Calendar of Meetings

The EU and its Member States take note of the scheduled meetings of the Committee and its Bureau and wish the Bureau and the Secretariat all success in further preparatory work for the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.

Agenda Item 12: Election of Officers

The EU and its Member States would first like to thank Ms Elisabete Quintas Da Silva for her contributions to the progress achieved in the areas of CEP's activities in her role of the chair of the Bureau and support her re-election for this position.

We would like to thank outgoing members of the Bureau and support election of candidates for the Bureau as outlined in the Information Paper.
