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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-eighth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP 28) (Geneva, 1-3 November 2023) - Statements by the EU and its Members States

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Delegations will find in the Annex, for information, a compilation of statements by the EU and its Member States delivered during CEP 28 (Geneva, 1-3 November 2023).

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**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE):  
Twenty-eight session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP 28)  
(Geneva, 1-3 November 2023)**

**- 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 welcome the provisional agenda and thank the Chair and the Bureau for their work.

The EU and its Member States welcome the opening statements of Executive Directors from UNEP, UNECE and WHO and are looking forward to this CEP meeting and are ready to engage in constructive discussion on the relevant topics as highlighted in the agenda. We will try our best for the meeting to be productive and successful.

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**Agenda item 4: Outcomes of seventieth session of the Economic Commission for Europe**

The EU and its Member States welcomes the information on the latest session of UNECE and highlights the importance environmental topics are acquiring within the overall work of the ECE. We also wish to stress the importance of multilateral work towards addressing the triple planetary crisis and highlight the need for stressing the links between the environment and the socio-economic aspects.

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**Agenda item 5: Follow-up to the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and preparation of the mid-term review of the Conference's main outcomes**

***Agenda point 5-1***

The EU and its Member States welcome the outcomes of the Nicosia EfE Ministerial Conference and, in particular, a balanced and meaningful Ministerial Declaration. We would like to thank the Cyprus authorities again for an excellent organisation of this event and hospitality.

The EU and its Member States are fully committed to greening the economy, and have adopted that approach in several recent policies, such as the European Green Deal, the EU Green Infrastructure Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

Sustainable infrastructure, based on sustainable principles, is a pre-requisite to address the challenges of climate change, economy, social needs and health. Financing of sustainable investments is the principal issue to be resolved, with clear sources of funds and the sources for maintaining investments once they are ready.

The EU and its Member States would like to kindly request the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to prepare a document proposing the scope, format and modalities for organizing the mid-term review of the Nicosia Ministerial Conference's main outcomes.

The topics discussed during the Conference – circular economy and sustainable infrastructure, and sustainable tourism – are at the core of European Commission's activities and thanks to this Conference they were brought to attention of the countries of UNECE region, and also to broader public as there were observers present from, inter alia, Mediterranean countries, as well.

### ***Agenda point 5-2***

“Thank you Chair, as Spain holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU, I have the honour to deliver the following statement.

*From the outset of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Russia has made numerous attempts to spread disinformation in international fora, while the facts speak for themselves. The EU demands that Russia stops its disinformation campaign.*

*The EU and its Member States, once more, reiterate our full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people and strongly condemn the unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation, which:*

- *violates international law, including the Charter of the United Nations,*
- *undermines international security and stability,*
- *and has had a devastating effect on human lives and the environment.*

*We reiterate our demand that Russia*

- *immediately stops its military aggression and*
- *immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraws all of its military forces from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.”*

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### **Agenda item 6: Environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting**

The EU and its Member States thank the secretariat for the information.

On the possibility to make the Joint Force a standing body, the EU and its Member States believe that such an institutional arrangement requires budgetary resources that are currently not secured. With this in mind, we would like to reserve our opinion until the situation is clarified.

In general terms, we believe that continuous assessment is a key tool for adaptive management and better policies and regulations, but we feel this could be achieved in many ways.

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#### **Agenda item 7: Environmental performance reviews**

The EU and its Member States thank the UNECE EPR Secretariat and the UNECE EPR Expert Group for the extensive work carried out so far, including the survey to investigate the different stakeholders' views on the structure of the EPRs.

We also welcome the documents drafted by the secretariat on the topic of the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews, and praise the efforts by Kyrgyzstan and Mauritania. We count on a smooth cooperation of the Kyrgyz and Mauritania's authorities in gathering necessary information to be sure that the EPRs are state-of-art publications which would contain relevant recommendations to follow.

We agree with the UNECE EPR Expert Group that the most suitable approach to address diverse contexts in the reviewed countries is the Flexible one (which is described in letter D in the ECE/CEP/2023/7 document. This approach aligns with the 2024 environment subprogramme (ECE/CEP/2023/5), where a country needs-based approach is recalled.

Moreover, we would like to stress the importance of improving the implementation rate of the recommendations. Therefore, we welcome the introduction of "innovative features" (letter E, if I am not mistaken, in the ECE/CEP/2023/7 document), which might spur countries to select priority areas and facilitate their implementation efforts.

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#### **Agenda item 9: Regional advisory services and collaboration activities**

The EU and its Member States thank the Regional Advisor for the information and encourages the continuation of advising services, which help develop and implement environmental policies.

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#### **Agenda item 10: Presentation and exchange of views on the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme**

The EU and its Member States welcome the information provided by UNEP on the preparation of the UNEA 6 and will continue to work towards a successful assembly in a key moment for environmental multilateralism.

We are of the view that UNEA6 provides a good opportunity to make a strong case for a global green transition and promoting the European Green Deal's objective "to transform the economy and society to put it on a more sustainable path".

Simultaneously, it gives the opportunity to interlink the ongoing global processes and their outcomes, in particular the follow-up to and implementation of the UNFCCC, UN CBD and UNCCD Conferences of the Parties, and their outcomes, in particular the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the BBNJ agreement, the UN Water Conference and the outcome of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-5), and upcoming plastics agreement with the work under UNEA and ensure adequate follow up within the UN system.

This would all be relevant inputs to address the triple planetary crisis we are facing as a global community.

Based on the UNEA-6 theme (“Effective, inclusive and sustainable multilateral actions to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution”), there is a number of important issues that could be addressed at its 6th session, in particular:

- enhancing circular economy (CE) in support of sustainable consumption and production (SCP);
- promoting action on the water ecosystems-food-energy (WEFE) nexus in the context of climate change;
- developing a global agenda for ocean protection, notably in view of the next UN Ocean Conference in 2025;
- promoting and setting the ground for further action at UNGA on the new framework on chemicals and waste based on the outcomes of ICCM-5; and
- halting deforestation and supporting forest landscape restoration.

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#### **Agenda item 11: Annual programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2024 and outline of key components of the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2025**

The EU and its Member States welcome the programme of work of the Environment subprogramme for 2024 and see no objection to adopt it. However, we would find it interesting to see a new figure on page 5, analysing the number of member states per UNECE MEA. We would like to see the information broken down between MEAs. This will help its understanding.

Regarding the programme for 2025, we will study it as soon as it becomes available and provide feedback if necessary.

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#### **Agenda item 12: Criteria for financial support for participation in meetings and events**

The EU and its Member States prefer the option of continuing to use the current criteria for another year, on the basis of the Bureau’s recommendation.

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