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Economic Commission for Europe

Committee on Environmental Policy

Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment

Twenty-sixth session

Geneva, 18 and 19 April 2024

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the twenty-sixth session

**To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 10 a.m.
on Thursday, 18 April 2024**

I. Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Adoption of the report of the twenty-fifth session.
3. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference.
4. Resource requirements.
5. Developments in environmental monitoring.
6. Developments relating to environmental information systems and reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System.
7. Regular pan-European environmental assessment and environmental reporting to strengthen environmental policy.
8. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data.
9. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment at the national level.
10. Other business.
11. Closure of the meeting.



II. Annotations

According to its terms of reference, the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment is open to all member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Members of the Working Group represent the national institutions responsible for environmental monitoring and assessment. The Working Group also involves representatives of programmes and policies and multilateral environmental agreements dealing with the collection of environmental data and information and the generation of environmental assessments – whether covering the environment as a whole, or only certain themes – as well as expert teams.¹

Also invited to participate are representatives of international and regional organizations, such as the European Commission, the European Environment Agency, the Group on Earth Observations, the European Space Agency, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Statistics Division, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Meteorological Organization and the World Health Organization European Centre for Environment and Health.

The twenty-sixth session of the Working Group is expected to be held on 18 and 19 April 2024.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Chair, Ms. Maia Javakhishvili (Georgia), will open the twenty-sixth session. The Working Group will be invited to adopt the agenda for the session, as set out in the present document.²

2. Adoption of the report of the twenty-fifth session

The secretariat will summarize the outcomes of the twenty-fifth session of the Working Group (Geneva, 2–3 May 2023) as contained in the report of that session (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2) and invite the Working Group to adopt the report.

The secretariat will inform the Working Group about the status of implementation of the decisions and recommendations made at the twenty-fifth session, including the consideration of the Working Group's activities by the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy.

3. Implementing the mandate and terms of reference

The secretariat will report on the decisions made by the Committee on Environmental Policy at its twenty-eighth session (Geneva, 1–3 November 2023) regarding the activities, mandate and terms of reference of the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the related Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators. The secretariat will also provide an overview on implemented activities to support the outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022) and the mandate and terms of reference. The secretariat will report to the Working Group on expressions of interest of members of the Working Group in leading or co-leading an activity or area of work.

¹ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1, paras. 18–19.

² Documentation for the meeting and other relevant information will be posted on the web page for the meeting on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe website:
<https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/twenty-sixth-session-working-group-environmental-monitoring-and>.

The Working Group's terms of reference require that it prepare an annual timetable of activities.³ A Bureau member will present the draft timetable of activities for 2025 (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/4), which the Working Group will be invited to approve.

The Working Group will also be invited to discuss and approve the outline (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/3) of the revised publication *Environmental Monitoring and Reporting: Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia*,⁴ in anticipation of an updated version thereof being issued in 2024 or early 2025.

The Working Group may also wish to discuss how to increase the visibility and outreach of its work.

In addition, representatives of international and regional organizations will be invited to report briefly on initiatives and projects that relate to the activities of the Working Group.

4. Resource requirements

The secretariat will provide information on the financial resources available to support the Working Group's meetings and its other activities.

5. Developments in environmental monitoring

The Working Group serves as a knowledge-sharing platform. During its twenty-fifth session (Geneva (hybrid), 2–3 May 2023), the members of the Working Group suggested sharing good practices, including on open data platforms, the collection of local and Indigenous knowledge, citizen science and the use of crowdsourced data, during regular sessions of the Working Group, and organizing training and guidance, subject to the availability of resources.⁵

The secretariat, representatives of international and regional organizations as well as member States will be invited to present the latest developments, good practices and initiatives related to environmental monitoring, including on the use of new technologies such as Earth observation and approaches mentioned above. Member States co-leading activities will be invited to present the latest developments in monitoring.

6. Developments relating to environmental information systems and reporting on the Shared Environmental Information System

The terms of reference for the Working Group specify that it shall regularly evaluate the performance of environmental information systems in line with the principles and pillars of open data and the Shared Environmental Information System, and provide recommendations on how environmental monitoring and information systems can be further strengthened.⁶

At the twenty-fourth session of the Working Group (Geneva (hybrid), 11–12 April 2022), members of the Working Group agreed to annually review a limited number of environmental themes and indicators based on the Shared Environmental Information System assessment framework and agreed that the revised ECE indicator guidelines should be used. Members of the Working Group also agreed to review the environmental theme “air pollution and air quality” in 2023.⁷

The secretariat launched a call for submission of national reports on the environmental theme “air” in September 2023. Members of the Committee on Environmental Policy were invited to send national reports to the secretariat by the end of September, a deadline which was then extended to the end of November 2023.

³ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1, para. 14.

⁴ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03-II-E.33.

⁵ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2, para. 51 (d).

⁶ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1, para. 11 (a) (iii).

⁷ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2022/2, para. 33 (b)–(c).

The secretariat will provide an overview of the report on the environmental theme “air” (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/5). The Working Group will be invited to discuss and approve the report.

Further to the decision of the Working Group at its twenty-fourth meeting, a review of the theme “waste and, as appropriate, circular economy” will be initiated, supported by a regional training event on the revised ECE waste indicators scheduled to take place in the first half of 2024. The Working Group will also be invited to decide on a theme for review in 2025 and to discuss other relevant activities for information-sharing.

Representatives of international and regional organizations, including the secretariat of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and the Group on Earth Observations, as well as member States, will be invited to present the latest developments and good practices related to environmental information systems.

7. Regular pan-European environmental assessment and environmental reporting to strengthen environmental policy

As per its mandate and terms of reference, the Working Group aims to help address the gaps identified in the seventh pan-European environmental assessment and the implementation of other relevant outcomes of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference.⁸

The secretariat will provide an overview of implemented and planned activities to support the follow-up of the reporting- and assessment-related outcomes of the Nicosia Ministerial Conference and in particular to close gaps identified in the seventh assessment.

The Working Group will be invited to consider the information and discuss and decide on next steps in view of future assessments.

The Working Group’s mandate and terms of reference foresee support to the development of regular pan-European environmental assessments.⁹ At its twenty-fifth session, the Working Group welcomed ideas and approaches for the planned eighth pan-European environmental assessment and requested the secretariat, together with the Working Group members, to develop a draft concept to be presented at the next session of the Working Group.¹⁰

The secretariat will provide an overview of the draft concept for the eighth pan-European environmental assessment (ECE/CEP/AC.10/2024/6). The Working Group will then be invited to consider the information and agree on next steps.

The Working Group’s mandate and terms of reference furthermore envisage assistance regarding the streamlining of environmental reporting in support of environmental policymaking.¹¹ The secretariat of one or more multilateral environmental agreements under which reporting is required in the coming 12 months will be invited to present the template for the upcoming reporting cycle and to provide any necessary guidance.

The secretariat and representatives of international and regional organizations will provide an overview of activities they are supporting related to environmental assessment and reporting at the national level.

The Working Group will be invited to consider the information and discuss issues related to environmental reporting.

⁸ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1, paras. 7 and 9 (b).

⁹ Ibid., para. 9 (b).

¹⁰ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2, para. 60 (a).

¹¹ ECE/CEP/AC.10/2023/2/Add.1, para. 11 (b) (ii)–(iii).

8. Sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data

One objective of the Working Group is to discuss interlinkages between environmental, economic and social considerations regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a circular and green economy and other related areas of work.¹²

International organizations and the European Environment Agency will be invited to present global and regional environmental policy events in 2024 relevant for the work of the Working Group.

International partners will also be invited to present recent developments and key messages pertaining to data integration, in particular related to the transition to a circular and green economy, sustainable infrastructure, chemicals and waste and biodiversity to support implementation, monitoring and reporting of Sustainable Development Goals.

International organizations, the European Environment Agency and the Group on Earth Observations will be invited to report briefly on developments related to new technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and Earth observation that can complement established monitoring practices and information sources.

The Working Group will be invited to discuss the relevance of the work and examples presented and which other activities should be prioritized to ensure the sharing and integration of economic, social and environmental data.

9. Progress in environmental monitoring and assessment at the national level

Members of the Working Group, including those representing countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, will each be invited to make a short presentation on major actions taken since the previous meeting regarding, as appropriate:

- (a) The production of environmental reports, analyses and assessments based on environmental information and indicators, including through the use of the Shared Environmental Information System;
- (b) The modernization and upgrading of national monitoring networks, in particular, those on air, water and soil;
- (c) Improvements in data quality assurance and control, as well as in data management;
- (d) Improvements in data policy and institutional and regulatory mechanisms and technical solutions for data exchange between various ministries and agencies (ministries of environment, environment agencies and ministries of agriculture, energy, health, industry, transport and water) and with other users, including the public;
- (e) The implementation of recommendations regarding environmental monitoring and assessment made in national environmental performance reviews;
- (f) Developments related to the use of new technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and Earth observation for environmental monitoring;
- (g) Cross-cutting developments such as integrating a gender perspective into environmental monitoring and assessment activities.

The secretariat will prepare and circulate a template to support oral presentations, as needed.

10. Other business

The Working Group will be invited to discuss any other business that might be brought to its attention, including priority themes for the twenty-seventh session of the Working Group.

¹² Ibid., para. 11 (c).

Members of the Working Group wishing to propose items are invited to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

11. Closure of the meeting

The Chair, with the assistance of the secretariat, will sum up the conclusions and decisions of the Working Group and close the meeting. The report of the meeting and the list of participants will be finalized by the secretariat for circulation to the Working Group after the meeting. Those documents will be posted on the meeting web page.

III. Organization of work

Detailed information on the organization of work will be released closer to the meeting date and will be posted on the meeting web page.
