

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Eighty-eighth Meeting
Geneva, 16 December 2016

EXCOM/CONCLU/88

CHAIR'S CONCLUSIONS

FORMAL SEGMENT

Item 1 – Adoption of the agenda

1. The provisional draft agenda for the 88th meeting was adopted.

Item 2 – Chair’s conclusions from the last meeting

2. The conclusions from the 87th meeting of EXCOM (EXCOM/CONCLU/87) were adopted.

INFORMAL SEGMENT

Item 3 - ECE proposed programme budget for 2018-2019

3. The Chair gave the floor to the Executive Secretary to provide an update for EXCOM’s information on the proposed programme budget for 2018-2019, recalling that the proposed programme budget preparation was in progress and that the matter would be discussed at the 5th Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) at New York.

4. The Executive Secretary explained that the budget levels were set by the Secretary-General and that the 2018-2019 budget for ECE had been reduced by US\$ 528,200 to US\$64.26 million. This reflected a reduction of the programme support component requested by headquarters to contribute to the benefits realized from Umoja, and is planned to be achieved in ECE through the abolishment of a General Service post in the Information Systems Unit (ISU) which will become vacant following the retirement of the incumbent in 2017, and the reduction of non-post resources (travel and consultancies) across the board. ECE would also merge the Programme Management Unit (PMU), Executive Office (EO) and ISU and place the new entity in the budget section entitled “Executive Direction and Management”. This was intended to create greater efficiency and coherence between the management of programme implementation and administrative support functions, supported by strong ICT solutions. It will help streamline internal administrative procedures and ensure consistency with other Regional Commissions where these services are consolidated in the Programme Planning Division. The Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation had not been affected by any budget cuts for 2018-2019 but past reductions would continue to affect ECE as the number of Regional Advisors would decrease from 6 to 5. The Executive Secretary also informed EXCOM that he was in discussions with UNOG’s Information Communication and Technology Services (ICTS) to see whether the provision of basic IT services to ECE could be carried out by the latter. He concluded by recalling that the final programme budget proposal would be submitted to New York in mid-January 2017.

5. The representative of Belarus said that internal reforms at the secretariat should be discussed at EXCOM. He said that resources should not be diverted to gender equality issues, especially if these resources were not spent for programmes to be carried out within the secretariat. He expressed his preference for technical support, assistance and capacity-building as priorities for ECE.

6. The representative of the Russian Federation inquired which additional three sectoral committees would strengthen their gender component. He expressed uncertainty about whether ECE had a mandate to focus on gender issues and recalled that he had brought this up during the review of the 2005 reform of ECE. He did not agree with plans to further specialize ECE’s mandate on non-economic issues, especially given the reduction of the budget. He further wondered whether the merging of the PMU, EO and ISU might not open grounds for another budget cut by the ACABQ and

the 5th Committee. He noted that the PMU was very useful and effective. He asked whether consolidating ISU's functions with UNOG ICTS would not have a negative effect on areas of work that require specialized IT support, such as the TIR secretariat or CEFACT. He requested further information on these proposals to be considered at a future meeting.

7. The representative of Switzerland asked whether it was appropriate, from a governance perspective, for the leader of the merged entity to be responsible for budget, evaluation and IT together. He said the independence of the evaluation function should take precedence, without undermining coordination between planning and budget. He wished to have more information about this merger to be discussed at a future meeting. He also requested a written explanation regarding the proposed consolidation of IT services with UNOG ICTS for the next meeting of EXCOM.

8. The representative of the European Union and its member States said he had the same question as Switzerland regarding the merged entity and supported the request for further clarification on that topic. Regarding the "Development and maintenance of the vehicle type-approval data base (DETA) including its online accessibility" mentioned in informal document 2016/59, he asked for an update on the secretariat's efforts to secure relevant funding. He also inquired why the 2018-2019 budget estimate for subprogramme 4 was given as zero in informal document 2016/61 despite the presence of activities. Regarding the issue of gender, he viewed it as a mainstream, cross-cutting issue and did not support the views expressed by the representatives of Belarus and the Russian Federation.

9. The representative of Latvia supported the point made by the representative of the European Union and its member States regarding gender activities. She said gender issues should be a natural part of any UN activity.

10. The representative of the United States did not find any inconsistencies between the 2005 reform of ECE, its 2013 review, and the budget documents under discussion on the topic of gender. He supported ECE's gender work, hoped all member States would continue to support the recently-adopted ECE policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and remain consistent with previous EXCOM decisions.

11. The representative of the Russian Federation clarified that he did not oppose any gender activities undertaken on the basis of the 2005 reform of ECE and its 2013 review, i.e. in the framework of existing mandates. He noted however that any expansion of mandates for new gender activities would require a specific decision by member States.

12. The Executive Secretary clarified that the mentions of gender in the proposed budget were based on the Strategic Framework, the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender and the ECE gender policy recently approved by EXCOM. He added that there were no new mandates but merely an attempt to incorporate a gender dimension into existing activities. He emphasized that there even in technical aspects there was a gender dimension, for example the ECE standards on seatbelts which should account for the fact that women are typically smaller in height. With regard to IT, he clarified that ECE products requiring specialized IT expertise, such as CEFACT and TIR, would still be serviced by the ISU even after the proposed consolidation of basic IT services with UNOG. With regard to DETA, he explained that, though the relevant subsidiary body had approved the activity, no indication had been made regarding a Programme Budget Implication (PBI) to ask for the necessary additional Regular Budget resources, making it difficult to implement the activities in a zero growth environment. He hoped member States would contribute extrabudgetary funds.

13. The Director of the PMU, Ms. Eshmambetova, recalled that the Strategic Framework listed ECE's legislative mandates, including ECOSOC resolution 2015/12 mandating the UN to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes. Every ECE sectoral committee also had to include a separate item on gender mainstreaming in its agenda. Ms. Eshmambetova noted that ECE has not yet met this target. On the topic of the ISU, she clarified that the unit would not be eliminated and would remain on ECE's staffing table and as part of the regular budget. On the topic of

evaluation, she said that ECE had decided to use outside consultants rather than secretariat staff to carry out evaluations in order to further strengthen independence. A dedicated P5 post had been established in PMU to deal with evaluations and should ideally report directly to the Executive Secretary. In response to the question by the representative of the European Union and its member States on the budget of subprogramme 4, she explained that this section of the budget referred to SPECA: SPECA was supported by funds from the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation, part of a separate budget, leading to the figure of zero in the programme budget under subprogramme 4. With regard to DETA, she understood the Working Party would be seeking additional resources and said the item would be deleted from the regular budget.

14. With respect to the topic of gender, the representative of the Russian Federation asked when the afore-mentioned ECOSOC resolution had been adopted and whether a specific budget had been set aside for the implementation of this resolution, adding that the funds for any new gender activities should come from this specific budget. He did not wish to see funds being spent on issues not directly related to ECE's mandates. With respect to the PMU/EO/ISU merger, he noted that it was a complex topic. Given that the secretariat had experienced many budget cuts in the recent years, he did not wish to see this issue solely dealt with in New York. He wished to be informed in more detail about the secretariat's plans so that he could advise his counterpart in New York accordingly. With respect to the proposed consolidation of IT services with UNOG ICTS, he expressed interest in the plans for ISU as it worked directly with member States in the framework of IT-intensive programmes like CEFACT. He wished to have more information before a final decision was taken in New York to ensure that his counterpart was properly advised.

15. The Executive Secretary recalled that the General Assembly had requested the global Secretariat to further consolidate IT services. He noted that the current system of each entity based in UNOG having its own IT systems had led to a dispersed, fragmented and ultimately inefficient model. He intended to proceed with the arrangements as soon as an agreement could be reached with UNOG, which would allow basic IT services to be outsourced to UNOG while retaining ECE's existing ISU to service specialized products. He noted that this would be on the basis of a service contract with an option to terminate in six months in case of dissatisfaction, and that there would be an MoU with clear delivery targets.

16. The representative of Switzerland maintained his request for written explanations on the consolidation of basic IT services with UNOG ICTS.

17. The representative of the Russian Federation seconded the request of Switzerland. He inquired whether any other Geneva-based entities had entered into a similar arrangement with UNOG.

18. The Executive Secretary replied that the Division of Conference Management and OCHA had entered into similar arrangements, whereas UNCTAD and OHCHR have not wished to proceed. The IT consolidation had been extensively discussed in the Geneva ICT Committee. The Executive Secretary reiterated his intention to proceed with the arrangements provided they were cost effective and operationally prudent as this was part of the managerial and administrative responsibilities entrusted to him in his role as Executive Secretary.

19. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat and takes note of the information provided on the proposed programme budget for 2018-2019. It requests that the Executive Secretary provide further written information on the proposed arrangements between ECE and UNOG on ICT services for consideration during its next meeting before a decision on this matter is taken.

Item 4 – Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management

20. The Executive Secretary presented informal document 2016/62 and hoped that EXCOM would approve the draft decision therein for consideration at the upcoming Commission session, noting that not doing so could delay any relevant work by over two years.

21. The representative of the United States said he could not currently support the draft decision but would not oppose further discussion on the topic. He asked why it was necessary to have the Commission pronounce on the issue, given the presence of an ECOSOC mandate which would justify engagement by ECE on geospatial information work.

22. The representative of the Russian Federation said that the draft decision should first be approved by the Conference of European Statisticians and then EXCOM before submission to the Commission. He further noted the resource implications for the Statistics division and thought it would be better to postpone collaboration with GGIM: Europe until a sustainable source of financing could be secured.

23. The representative of the European Union and its member States recalled that, at the 86th meeting of EXCOM, he had requested from the secretariat a proposal, prepared in coordination with GGIM:Europe, on how the two entities could concretely collaborate, the benefits to be derived and the budgetary aspects of such a collaboration. He said that informal document 2016/62 showed that further work was needed to that end. In line with his original request, he said the EU and its member States supported ECE's engagement in geospatial activities in close consultation with GGIM:Europe as long as such engagement served the purposes of capacity building in ECE on geospatial information management and preparing the above-mentioned proposal, and did not prejudice any final decision regarding the possible collaboration between the two entities based on the proposal. He wondered whether a decision on this matter at the upcoming Commission session was necessary. If such a decision must indeed be taken to avoid delays in the work, he suggested it could be worded as follows: "...Decides to request ECE to continue its exchanges with GGIM:Europe within existing resources in order to gain a better understanding of geospatial information management and deliver a proposal for collaboration between the two bodies to the ECE Executive Committee before December 2017."

24. Regarding the need for a Commission decision on the topic, the Executive Secretary recalled that the issue had already been discussed during the preparations for the last Commission Session. A decision was necessary in order to establish the work and to draft a PBI and obtain the required resources. He suggested convening an informal consultation so that delegates could further discuss the draft decision.

25. The representative of the Russian Federation suggested that these discussions could take place during the informal consultations already scheduled for the preparations for the Commission session.

26. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the update on geospatial information management related to the implementation of ECOSOC resolution 2016/27. EXCOM decides to keep the matter under review and, further to its decision on the matter taken at its 86th meeting, looks forward to receiving further clarification and a proposal on geospatial information work for its consideration as soon as feasible and during informal consultations of its member States on the preparation of the 2017 Commission session.

Item 5 – Preparation for the seventieth anniversary of the Inland Transport Committee

27. The Executive Secretary introduced informal document 2016/63/Rev.1, containing a consolidated draft Ministerial resolution intended for adoption by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) at its session of February 2017. He explained that the Bureau of the ITC would appreciate

EXCOM's views on decision 1 of the draft resolution, namely on the ITC reporting to ECOSOC in addition to the Commission. He also informed EXCOM that the ITC Bureau was still deliberating on whether the ITC would adopt the resolution via signature of attending ministers or consensus, and said that this matter should not influence the language of the draft resolution.

28. The representative of the Russian Federation noted the constructive work done by the ITC Bureau on the draft resolution. He inquired why the latter included a language proposal from Pakistan. He also said that on previous occasions, resolutions had been signed by attending ministers in a symbolic gesture. He hoped ITC would continue this tradition for the adoption of the resolution under discussion.

29. The representative of the European Union and its member States supported the alternative wording provided for decision 1, insofar as it defined that the reporting to ECOSOC by the ITC would be "for information purposes" and "on an annual basis". However, regarding the scope of such reporting, he supported the original wording provided for decision 1, which stated the reporting would be "in the interest of enabling the Committee to cater even more efficiently to the needs of global inland transport as demonstrated by the Contracting Parties to the UN transport Conventions." He thought that this wording provided more complete coverage of the activities of the Committee including the needs of the UN transport Conventions.

30. The representative of the United States said he was not ready to support either wording and requested an informal consultation to further discuss the issue. He wished to learn more about the benefits, disadvantages and budget implications of ITC reporting to ECOSOC.

31. The representative of Switzerland said it was important for all activities carried out by the ITC to be visible in the draft resolution and therefore agreed with the point made earlier by the representative of the European Union and its member States regarding the scope of the reporting. He also said that it was important to avoid duplication in the reporting process and that he had not been able to obtain sufficient information on that topic. He agreed that an informal consultation would be helpful before proceeding.

32. The representative of the Russian Federation also wished to have an informal consultation on the topic.

33. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the update on the preparations for the 70th anniversary of the Inland Transport Committee, and requests the secretariat to conduct further informal consultations on decision 1 as soon as feasible.

Item 6 - Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

34. The Executive Secretary introduced informal document 2016/64, containing a draft decision for consideration by the Commission on the establishment of a Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD). He said the secretariat would be ready to hold an informal consultation on the draft decision if necessary on 10 January 2017.

35. The representative of the Russian Federation noted he had submitted a language proposal to highlight the intergovernmental nature of the RFSD. He agreed with the structure of the draft decision but requested clarification on the regional peer review mechanisms mentioned therein.

36. The representative of the United States suggested to delete the second paragraph in the preamble section, noting that it was superfluous as other paragraphs provided the same justifications.

37. The representative of the European Union and its member States said he could only provide concrete comments at a later date.

38. Replying to the Russian Federation, the Executive Secretary said that the peer review mechanisms referred to existing mechanisms for instance those hosted at ECE such as the Environmental Performance Reviews, studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, assessments of national statistical systems etc. and hoped that these could be captured at the RFSD meetings in accordance with the agreed agenda. He said the secretariat would be happy to host an informal consultation as requested by the member States and hoped that EXCOM could provide a final opinion on the draft at its next meeting.

39. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the proposed draft decision, and requests the secretariat to convene informal consultations on the issue with a view to endorsing the draft decision at the 89th meeting of EXCOM.

Item 7 - Preparations for the 2017 Commission session

40. The secretary of the Commission briefed EXCOM about the outcomes of the two informal consultations that had been held regarding the preparations for the 2017 Commission session. She noted that the title of the session and its high-level dialogue had been changed to “UNECE at 70: “Economic integration and cooperation towards 2030”. It had also been decided to not include the renaming of ECE to UNECE at the session. Member States had agreed to proceed with a draft outcome document on the basis of a zero draft circulated by the secretariat. This draft would be further revised in December and January with a view to submitting it for EXCOM’s consideration at its February meeting.

41. The representative of Belarus welcomed the change in the name of the session and its high-level dialogue. He noted that the 60th anniversary session of the Commission had discussed integration processes in the ECE region, and that this topic should again be addressed at the upcoming session given that it remains timely and relevant. He hoped the session would also address the outcomes of the ECE conference held in Minsk in October 2016, including as part of the official documentation. Regarding the zero draft of the outcome document, he hoped it could include specific figures on the number of ECE conventions, norms and standards which are in effect. He noted that the provisional agenda of the session indicated that member States should work to develop their vision of the future and inquired as to what form this could take.

42. The representative of the European Union and its member States opposed the inclusion of the outcomes of the Minsk Conference in the official documentation for the Commission session.

43. The representative of the Russian Federation supported the comments by Belarus. Regarding the outcomes of the Minsk Conference, he suggested that their possible inclusion in the session could be further discussed at the ongoing informal consultations for the preparation of the session.

44. The Chair noted that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for convening the informal consultations on the preparations for the 2017 Commission session, and looks forward to continuing this process to advance the planning further.

Item 8 - Important new developments: briefing by the Executive Secretary

45. The Executive Secretary summarized the outcomes of the 5-6 December meeting of the regional UN system, noting that it was the first fully integrated meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the Regional UNDG. He said that the regional UN system would be ECE’s primary partner in organizing the 2017 RFSD, contributing to the background documentation, the policy segment and the regional round tables.

46. The representative of the Russian Federation hoped that the closer coordination between the RCM and the Regional UNDG would lead to an improvement in the preparation of the RFSD, including in the context of achieving the SDGs, and noted a need for increased coordination within

the UN system on the latter topic. He said that the UN system in the ECE region exhibited very good cooperation within the unique structure of the RCM and Regional R-UNDG, which would meet jointly going forward. He noted that the Regional Commissions played an important role for the achievement of the SDGs by providing technical assistance.

47. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about cooperation with other entities:
 - i. MoU with SE4All on the preparations of the Energy Ministerial to take place in June 2017 in Astana
 - ii. MoU with Shanxi Coking Coal Group Ltd towards the establishment of an International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane
 - iii. MoU with the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan to frame activities carried out by the Water Convention under the EU Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues
48. The representative of the United States noted a number of recent MoUs signed with stakeholders from outside the ECE region and said it would be useful to have more background information on the reasoning behind such MoUs.
49. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the secretariat was preparing a paper to implement an OIOS recommendation regarding the reach of ECE products beyond the region, and that suggested that the issue raised by the United States could be further discussed in an upcoming EXCOM meeting when the paper would be tabled.
50. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following recent missions and meetings:
 - i. 22-23 November, Ganja: 2016 SPECA Economic Forum and 11th session of the SPECA Governing Council
 - ii. 26-27 November, Ashgabat: Global Sustainable Transport Conference
 - iii. 28-29 November, Ljubljana: 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention
 - iv. 28-29 November, Budapest: Budapest Water Summit
 - v. 5-6 December, Vienna: Meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and Regional UNDG
 - vi. 15-16 December, Geneva: 36th session of the Executive Body of the Air Convention
51. Regarding the Conference of Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention, the Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that Parties had not reached an agreement on the adoption of the proposed amendments to the Convention, including the amendment that would pave the way for its global opening. The matter had been deferred to the next Conference of the Parties, to take place in 2018. Regarding the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, he informed EXCOM that ECE had circulated to meeting participants its proposal for the establishment of the UN Road Safety Fund for comments.
52. The representative of Slovenia regretted that the above-mentioned amendment had not been adopted and said Slovenia would continue its efforts to that end. She recognized the value of the Convention as a platform to cooperate and exchange views.
53. The representative of Germany asked for more details on the next steps regarding the establishment of the UN Road Safety Fund.
54. The representative of the Russian Federation recalled the General Assembly resolution requesting the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of establishing a UN Road Safety Fund, and that ECE had subsequently been tasked by the Secretary-General to lead the preparation of a proposal for such a fund. He requested more details on the division of labor between ECE and the General Assembly concerning the establishment and administration of the Fund. He also asked when the report of the Secretary-General containing the proposal to establish the Fund would be presented to the General Assembly.

55. The Executive Secretary clarified that ECE was hosting the consultation process for the fund proposal on behalf of the Secretary-General, with a view to forwarding the consolidated proposal to New York for the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly given the fund's global nature. He noted that the fund could be established by the Secretary-General himself, or via a General Assembly resolution. Any decisions to be taken by member States would be considered at the General Assembly with the participation of all countries. Regarding timing, he said that the proposal contained a chapter on the next steps but did not foresee specific dates, as it was important to first generate substantial support for the creation of the fund before proceeding. He invited member States to promote the discussions on the fund among all UN Member States and perhaps host consultations to explore the topic further.

56. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM about the following upcoming events:

- i. 19 January: 25th session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy (preparations for the Astana Energy Ministerial)

57. The Chair concluded that EXCOM thanks the secretariat for the information and looks forward to future updates on new developments.

Item 9 – Other business

58. The Executive Secretary informed EXCOM that the Director of the Programme Management Unit, Ms. Zamira Eshmambetova, and the Director of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, Ms. Virginia Cram-Martos, would be retiring in early 2017, and appreciated their achievements in ECE.

59. The Chair informed that the next EXCOM meeting would be held on 1 February 2017 at 3 pm.
