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COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE ENERGY
Eleventh session, 21-22 November 2001
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION OF
THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

Note by the secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. The fifty-sixth session of the Economic Commission for Europe took place 8-11 May 2001. The following substantive topics and issues were examined and debated at the session: business enterprise and economic growth in the Central Asian and Caucasian countries; ECE Ministerial Conference on Aging to be held in Berlin in September 2002; environment, energy and transport, strengthening links within the ECE region, including other intersectoral linkages that could be further developed; challenges to ECE arising from the UN Millennium Declaration adopted by Heads of State in September 2000 in New York; and future ECE strategic directions.

**PROVISIONS OF INTEREST TO THE
COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE ENERGY**

Intersectoral Cooperation

2. The discussion on ECE intersectoral activities was led by members of a Round Table comprising the Executive Secretary, ECE Directors, the Chairpersons of ECE Principal Subsidiary Bodies and the Vice-President, Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

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3. The Commission underlined the important role of the ECE, and its specialized intergovernmental bodies, in promoting regional cooperation on intersectoral issues. The quality of work carried out by all the Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) within their sectoral areas of expertise was commended and full support expressed for the work already developed on intersectoral issues. In particular, the Commission voiced its interest for:

- S the initiative jointly agreed by the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Committee on Sustainable Energy to create a Task Force on guidelines for energy pricing which could greatly contribute to addressing the issues of energy market liberalization and harmonization of energy taxes;
- S the “Blue corridor” project as a way to promote environmentally friendly transport of goods in a major East-West pan-European corridor and because of its potential replication for other main arteries in Europe; and the Commission went on to request the Committee on Sustainable Energy and the Inland Transport Committee to consider the feasibility of the project and report back to the Commission.

4. In addition, the Commission:

- (a) invited the Committee on Sustainable Energy to develop intersectoral linkages on energy and transport, in particular environmental performance reviews and ECE environmental conventions as they pertain to the energy and transport sectors;
- (b) requested PSBs to examine the most efficient, flexible and cost-effective modalities to address intersectoral issues, including joint meetings of the PSBs or their bureaux, creation of a joint group of experts or task force under their auspices, delegation of one member of a PSB to a meeting of another PSB, specific projects jointly implemented and monitored, and the establishment of a web page to facilitate the sharing of information on developments in intersectoral cooperation;
- (c) requested PSBs to review annually the intersectoral cooperation already ongoing and to consider potential new issues for such cooperation to be subsequently brought to the attention of other concerned PSBs, with decisions thereon to be taken by the Commission;
- (d) encouraged PSBs to find new ways to secure the means for implementing intersectoral activities, including setting aside regular resources and seeking extrabudgetary funding for these activities.

5. In considering the Commission’s conclusions on intersectoral activities, delegates should note that at its tenth session, in October/November 2000, the Committee agreed to establish a Task Force on Environment and Energy together with the Committee on Environmental Policy to develop guidelines for decision-makers on reforming energy prices to promote sustainable energy development. The Committee also requested the ECE secretariat to propose terms of reference and a programme of work for this Task Force. Under provisional agenda item 5, delegates will have the opportunity to discuss the secretariat’s proposals on this activity.

6. At its last session in 2000, delegates to the Committee also agreed to six new initiatives to be implemented by the Committee and its subsidiary bodies over the next five years, within the limits of available resources. One of these initiatives called for an assessment of the feasibility of developing an international programme to establish a transboundary corridor in the ECE region for freight traffic by natural gas vehicles (NGVs).

7. Hence, given the expressed interests of the Commission, the Committee on Sustainable Energy and the Inland Transport Committee to, at least, investigate the feasibility of pan-European transport corridors for natural gas freight vehicles, the Working Party on Gas will consider the issue at its forthcoming annual session in January 2002 with a view to incorporating this activity in its programme of work and developing modalities for carrying it out.

The Millennium Declaration: Challenges for Europe

8. The Commission held a Round Table discussion on the key policy concerns, relevant to the ECE region, emanating from the Millennium Declaration adopted by Heads of State on: (i) Peace, Security and Disarmament; (ii) Development and Poverty Eradication; (iii) Protecting our Common Environment; (iv) Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance; and (v) Protecting the Vulnerable.

9. On the basis of this discussion, the Chairman of the Commission made a number of proposals to assist ECE member countries in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration objectives and in monitoring progress. These included:

- S inviting PSBs to consider what contribution they could make to the implementation process, and how to integrate the Millennium Declaration concerns and objectives into their programmes of work;
- S organizing a dialogue with stakeholders, i.e. non-governmental organizations, representatives of academia, business community, to raise awareness and promote public-private partnerships in support of the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration;
- S promoting information sharing and better communication regarding policies undertaken at the national and regional levels for implementing the Millennium Declaration, using available tools and technologies, with a view to stimulating the effectiveness of peer dialogue and public awareness.

ECE Strategic Directions

10. In order to strengthen overall policy coherence and communication in the ECE, the Chairman of the Commission, with the concurrence of member States, established a Steering Group consisting of ECE Bureau members, PSB chairpersons, and the Executive Secretary, in which interested member countries could also participate. The Steering Group would meet in the context of the annual session of the Commission to discuss and articulate overall policy and strategic directions for the ECE. The results of these discussions would then be considered by the

Commission. The Chairman of the Committee on Sustainable Energy is a member of the Steering Group.

11. The Commission also decided to request the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work to continue its discussions on strategic directions for the ECE.

Other Issues Discussed

12. A number of economies in transition of the ECE eastern region, namely Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine, jointly emphasized the importance of active involvement of ECE in supporting the transition process to a market economy. To this end, they urged the Commission to strengthen its operational activities addressing the issues of economies in transition. These countries considered it to be necessary to strengthen fundraising activities in order to provide new extrabudgetary resources for operational activities and to improve the strategy planning and implementation of such activities accordingly.

13. In response to the discussions on the economic theme “Business enterprise and economic growth in the Central Asian and Caucasian countries; creating a supportive and secure environment”, the Commission underlined the priority needs of these regions. It encouraged the Executive Secretary to strengthen assistance to these countries through regional and subregional cooperation, and in cooperation with other international institutions and organizations, in particular through the work of special programmes and projects for the South Caucasus and Central Asia. It was understood that appropriate resources should be made available. Furthermore, support was expressed for the continuation of activities in relation to the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECAs).

14. The Commission's attention was drawn to four Conference Room papers that had been prepared for the session, including one on Sustainable Energy Production and Use. The paper on energy reflected the discussions that took place at the Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Sustainable Energy in a Competitive Market, Forging Partnerships which was held in conjunction with last year's annual session of the Committee. Furthermore, the Committee's Contribution to CSD-9 on Sustainable Energy Development, A Regional Perspective, *One More Step on the Path to a Sustainable Energy Future*, was also distributed to delegates at the Commission session.
