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Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2025

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 17

Economic development in Europe

1 At its 9th meeting, on 17 May 2024, the Committee considered programme 17, Economic development in Europe, of the proposed programme plan for 2025 and programme performance in 2023 ([A/79/6 \(Sect. 20\)](#)). The Committee also had before it a note by the Secretariat on the review of the proposed programme plan by sectoral, functional and regional bodies ([E/AC.51/2024/6](#)).

Discussion

2. Delegations expressed appreciation for the work of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), as well as for the presentation of the proposed programme plan for 2025 and programme performance information for 2023, and reiterated their support to the work of ECE.

3. A delegation indicated that it placed high value on the role that the Commission had been playing in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by countries in the ECE region, while assisting them with its expertise and offering a very useful platform for dialogue for all interested parties and stakeholders. The delegation also commended the Commission for its engagement in bringing forward the legal framework for norms and standards and in facilitating economic integration and cooperation among the Commission's member States.

4. A delegation expressed the belief that ECE had to work in a specific environment that, in recent years, had been marked by conflicts, which had seriously affected most of the countries of the region and all aspects of the Commission's work.



The delegation indicated that that environment, as well as insufficient funding, had presented challenges for ECE and congratulated the Commission for being able to find the appropriate policy niches on which to focus its promotion of regional cooperation, as well as for the excellent work it had done.

5. A delegation indicated that it valued its own dynamic and outcome driven collaboration with ECE and commended the Commission for having demonstrated its reliability as a valued partner in assisting the delegation's Government in accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals over the past few decades. The delegation indicated that it attached great importance to effective collaboration with ECE, which was aimed at supporting the delegation's Government on its transformative journey towards inclusive and sustainable development, noting that its cooperation with ECE spanned across various aspects of sustainable development, including the promotion of the green economy and environment management, the advancement of innovation and the facilitation of digital transformation. The delegation expressed recognition for the crucial role of ECE in facilitating economic integration and cooperation among its member States, as well as in promoting regional cooperation and integration as a means of achieving sustainable development in the region. It expressed its overall satisfaction with the proposed programme for 2025, in which all the main dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were outlined. Bearing in mind the multiple challenges in terms of environmental degradation and climate change, the delegation noted with satisfaction the results-oriented efforts in subprogramme 1, Environment, and subprogramme 7, Forests and the forest industry, and expressed the wish to engage constructively in the consultations to highlight the existing challenges and seek solutions. Lastly, the delegation stressed the crucial importance of the Commission's resilience against attempts to misuse that platform with the aim of undermining the sustainable development of States.

6. A delegation raised questions with regard to the level of the Commission's cooperation with the resident coordinator system, how important cooperation was for ECE and how ECE viewed cooperation in its everyday work.

7. A delegation welcomed the discussion at ECE on: upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations; strengthening the regional response to the war against Ukraine and its continued support for Ukraine; holding a delegation that did not uphold those values and principles accountable; and the importance for ECE leadership to reflect those values and priorities. The delegation expressed its country's commitment to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and its wish to continue its close partnership with ECE and other member States in order to accelerate the achievement of the Goals, in particular in Ukraine, and to promote regional cooperation, peace, security and prosperity in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

8. The same delegation expressed its appreciation for the Commission's efforts to help member State Governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and subnational governments to convene and cooperate in support of economic growth and the Sustainable Development Goals and applauded the Commission's Forum of Mayors, which facilitated knowledge-sharing and collaboration by cities around the region. The delegation also expressed its support for discussions on transport within the Commission's Inland Transport Committee, which had a positive impact well beyond Europe. Given its global impact, the delegation urged the Inland Transport Committee to remain vigilant, to ensure that it did not promote one set of regional regulations and agreements over other United Nations agreements. It was noted by the delegation that a truly global forum must look beyond any one region for creative ideas, listen to the needs of parties from

various regions of the world and promote advanced technologies and innovation, regardless of geography, to meet the long-standing goals of road and vehicle safety, environmental protection and sustainability.

9. A delegation expressed its country's commitment to help in getting the Sustainable Development Goals "back on track" and in ensuring that the United Nations development system was better able to deliver in line with the priorities of the global South. It also welcomed the programme's ambitions towards the 2030 Agenda and the Goals. The delegation acknowledged that the Commission's norms, standards and conventions had a direct and positive impact on the lives of the region's citizens and, in many cases, had been adopted around the globe as "best practices". The delegation indicated that it placed high value on the Commission's standing as a well-tested and reliable platform for technical experts to regularly cooperate and develop innovative approaches to pressing economic challenges.

10. The same delegation noted that, in 2023, the Committee had been unable to reach consensus on the conclusions and recommendations for the ECE programme, as another delegation had declined to withdraw language requesting that the references to the ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, held in Nicosia in 2022, and the Nicosia ministerial statement on education for sustainable development (ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2.Add.1 and ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2.Add.2) be deleted. The delegation expressed recognition for and acknowledged that there were portions of the Commission's programme that did not align with a delegation's national position but noted that the Committee needed to remain within its technical remit. The delegation expressed its commitment to working constructively with every delegation to fulfil the joint and several obligations involved in upholding the values of the Charter and was optimistic that others would do the same. The delegation stated that it would be regrettable for the voice of the Committee to be muted on such an important topic and added that it warmly anticipated a constructive approach at the present session. The delegation affirmed its country's commitment to working collaboratively with the Organization and its Member States to advance international cooperation aimed at economic, social and environmental development.

11. Another delegation emphasized that it was categorically opposed to the inclusion of the ministerial declaration of the ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference and the Nicosia ministerial statement on education for sustainable development among the legislative mandates, as the delegation had not been allowed to participate in that conference and had not had the opportunity to take part in the development and approval of its final documents, which it cited as a violation of the rules. The delegation stated that the ministerial declaration contained politicized statements that were unacceptable. The delegation also did not agree with the inclusion in the list of mandates of Economic and Social Council resolution [2023/21](#), on the implementation of the rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention). The delegation stated that the resolution did not create a new mandate, but only contained a request to the Secretary-General to allocate additional funding from the regular budget in support of the rapid response mechanism. The delegation added that it had repeatedly noted that it considered such requests unreasonable due to the sufficiency of the current number of staff servicing the Aarhus Convention. The delegation also noted that the Aarhus Convention was a separate international legal instrument and that most of its participants were developed countries. The delegation expressed the belief that it was unfair to shift the financial burden associated with the operation of the instrument that those countries had created to all Member States. Furthermore, the delegation indicated that ECE decision A (70)

entitled “Economic and social effects of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine” should not be considered a mandate of the Commission, as that resolution had been adopted by a vote, was openly against one State in nature and contradicted the historical mandate of the Commission to promote concerted actions by member States in the interests of the economic development and integration of the pan-European region. The delegation noted separately that, according to paragraph 1 of the terms of reference of the ECE, as well as rule 40 of its rules and procedures, the Commission may not take any action against any country without the consent and agreement of the Government of that country; it would therefore insist on the removal of the mention of those documents from the programme.

12. A delegation expressed the belief that ECE played a crucial role in facilitating economic integration and cooperation in the ECE region by supporting member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

13. A delegation commended ECE on its developing remarkable practices in many areas, such as in relation to the sustainable economy, including in the areas of transport and energy, economic cooperation and integration, and noted that these were matters at the very heart of cooperation in the Benelux Union, which the delegation’s country was chairing in 2024. As an encouragement, the delegation indicated that certain concrete results that had been achieved by ECE could inspire the programme of work of the Benelux Union for 2025, or even the multi-annual programme for the period 2025–2029.

14. A delegation acknowledged the crucial role played by ECE in the establishment of international norms for trade, as well as technological innovation and bioenvironmental issues, and confirmed its continued support for the various initiatives of the Commission. The delegation stressed the fact that the programme, which was important, had not been adopted in 2023, hoped that that would not be the case in 2024 and confirmed its readiness to be involved constructively in the upcoming discussions, to ensure so that the programme would be adopted.

15. Several delegations asked how important hybrid and virtual conferencing was to the Commission’s work with member States and other political actors and how effective it was in assuring the Commission’s mandated service delivery.

16. With regard to subprogramme 2, Transport, the delegation of a landlocked developing country welcomed in particular the ambitious plans outlined in the subprogramme and expressed its readiness to closely cooperate with the Commission on the implementation of its deliverables.

17. With regard to subprogramme 5, Sustainable energy, a delegation highlighted the special attention it paid to the subprogramme, given that the delegation considered access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy, as stipulated in paragraph 20.71, to be an indispensable precondition for sustainable development. In that context, the delegation sought elaboration on the efforts of ECE to assist the countries of the region when it came to the energy transition, bearing in mind the concept of “just transition”.

18. With regard to subprogramme 8, Housing, land management and population, a delegation reiterated its strong support for a broad area of activities under the subprogramme. The delegation expressed its particular interest in the actions of ECE on smart sustainable cities, as mentioned in paragraphs 20.123 and 20.124, and sought additional information on the matter of smart sustainable cities. The delegation further inquired about how the division of labour was conducted and about cooperation with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). Another delegation commended the work done by ECE and highlighted and welcomed in particular the subprogramme's lessons learned and planned change

relating to population ageing, noting that population ageing was a global phenomenon and that enhanced information-sharing on ageing-related policies was very important for Member States in mainstreaming ageing while adjusting to demographic change.

Conclusions and recommendations

19. **The Committee recommended that the plenary or the relevant Main Committee or Main Committees of the General Assembly, in line with Assembly resolution [78/244](#), consider the programme plan for programme 17, Economic development in Europe, of the proposed programme budget for 2025 under the agenda item entitled “Programme planning” at the seventy-ninth session of the Assembly.**
