

**ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE
ENVIRONMENT POLICY COMMITTEE**

GREEN Action Task Force

Draft Summary Record: The Third Annual Meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force

22-23 October 2018, Bratislava, the Slovak Republic

Agenda item 1

This meeting was chaired by

- Mr Mykola KUZYO, Deputy Minister of Ecology of Ukraine and
- Mr Jürgen KEINHORST, Head of Cooperation with Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety, Germany

All the meeting documents and presentation slides are available on the event webpage (<https://oe.cd/2nq>).

Contact: Kumi Kitamori, Head, Green Growth and Global Relations Division, Environment Directorate, Email: kumi.kitamori@oecd.org

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DAY 1: Monday 22 October 2018

Item 1. Opening session

Opening remarks

- Mr Norbert KURILLA, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Slovak Republic
- Mr Rodolfo LACY, Environment Director, OECD
- Ms Olga ALGAYEROVA, Executive Secretary, UNECE

Secretariat statement

- Ms Kumi KITAMORI, Head, Green Growth and Global Relations Division, Environment Directorate, OECD

1. The Task Force Co-chairs, Mr Mykola KUZYO (Ukraine) and Mr Jürgen KEINHORST (Germany) welcomed participants and highlighted the importance of the Task Force meeting as a platform for exchanging experiences among participants in various aspects of greening the economy, including green finance, “just” transition towards a low-carbon energy system, and water-energy-food nexus in the region of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asian (EECCA). The Co-Chairs also emphasised the role of the meeting to discuss the concrete activities that the Task Force should undertake to accelerate the greening the economies of the region. They encouraged the Task Force members to actively participate in discussion on the proposed draft Programme of Work and Budget of the Task Force for 2019 and 2020.

2. Mr Norbert KURILLA (Slovak Republic), Mr Rodolfo LACY (OECD) and Ms Olga ALGAYEROVA (UNECE) also welcomed the participants. Mr Lacy reiterated the role of the Task Force as a unique platform for OECD and EECCA countries and development partners to support policy reforms for green growth. Mr Kurilla acknowledged the occasion to celebrate in Bratislava a quarter century of the Task Force’s work, and expressed his expectation for discussion not only on exchange of knowledge and good practices, but also launching initiatives with added-values to greening the economies in the EECCA region. Ms Algayerova also underscores the fruitful co-operation that the UNECE, the OECD and the Task Force members have had.

3. Ms Kumi KITAMORI (OECD) highlighted the key results of the Task Force work since the last annual meeting in October 2017. These included, among others:

- the completion of EU-funded EaP GREEN project that brought together environment and economy ministries to align environmental and economic policies in the EU Eastern Neighbourhood. It is estimated that the EaP GREEN benefits for businesses were at least double the amount of the EUR 10 million EU’s financial contribution for this project.
- organisation of high-level Green Economy Policy Dialogues in Georgia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: the Georgia meeting discussed the first country-level analytical study of policy frameworks for green finance mobilisation prepared by

the OECD; the meeting in Kazakhstan contributed to the recent announcement of a comprehensive reform of the 2007 Environmental Code to align it with the OECD standards in Kazakhstan, and the meeting in Kyrgyzstan presented the Sustainable Finance Roadmap which fed into the Kyrgyzstan's Green Economy Programme

- continued use of National Policy Dialogues on Water Management as a platform for developing policy packages both in the EaP region under the EU funded EUWI+ project and in Central Asia.

Ms. Kitamori also highlighted strong continued co-operation with UN partners, for example under the EaP GREEN and the EUWI+ projects.

4. She thanked the European Union, Finland, Germany, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland for their financial support and other OECD countries such as, Israel, Japan and the Slovak Republic for their in-kind support to the implementation of the Task Force work programme.

5. The Task Force members adopted the summary record of the 2017 annual meeting [ENV/EPOC/EAP/M(2017)2] and the meeting agenda [ENV/EPOC/EAP/A(2018)2] without any changes.

Item 2: High-Level Panel Discussion 1 - Energy transition: Implications for jobs and social inclusion

Keynote speaker

- Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ, Vice President of the European Commission for the Energy Union

Panellists

- Ms Olga ALGAYEROVA, Executive Secretary, UNECE
- Ms Irina GHAPLANYAN, First Deputy Minister of Nature Protection, Armenia
- Mr Sabit NURLYBAY, Vice Minister of Energy of Kazakhstan
- Mr Adrian ERMURACHI, Deputy Secretary General of the Government, State Chancellery of Moldova
- Mr Georg REBERNIG, Managing Director, Umweltbundesamt (UBA): Environment Agency Austria)

Discussion note

- Energy transition - Implications for jobs and social inclusion [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2018)4]

6. Outlining the European Union's ambitious objectives under the 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy and the European Energy Security Strategy, Mr Šefčovič (European Commission) stressed that implications of the energy transition related to a wider range of sectors, including agriculture, transport, industry and construction. He underscored a strong need for learning from the past, and working on synergies - but not only looking at individual pieces of legislation piecemeal. He also recognised that the energy transition would be more challenging for economies and communities highly reliant

on fossil fuel industries such as coal mining, and that better solutions should be developed to reinvent in cleaner development paths of these sectors, re-shape their economies and re-skill a major part of their labour forces.

7. In the panel discussion, Ms Algayerova (UNECE) echoed this point and posed a question on what all this would mean for jobs and social inclusion, as well as gender equality. At the same time, she also reiterated the fundamental importance of removing subsidies for production and consumption of fossil fuels and putting a real price on carbon emissions.

8. Armenia, Kazakhstan and Moldova provided examples from the region that show country commitments and challenges in the transition to a low-carbon economy. Mr Ermurachi (Moldova) presented the country's plans for reform of value added tax on energy sources, stressing that this attempt would require a strong political will and intensive communication activities. Ms Ghaplanyan (Armenia) presented Armenia's strategies on development of economically viable renewable energy, further integration with the EU, linking with the Georgian and Iranian energy markets, energy efficiency improvement, and safe operation of nuclear capacity, as critical elements for the energy security and environmental protection in the country. Mr Nurlybay (Kazakhstan) presented the country's ambitious plan to green the power sector and adopt cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence.

9. Mr Rebernic (UBA, Austria) shared Austria's experiences to emphasise what should be included as ingredients for energy sector transition, such as clear short- and long-term goals, full implementation of polluter pays principle, eco-social tax reforms to avoid social disruptions, and stable investment conditions.

10. During the discussion the participants underscored the power of competitive and open markets to deliver better technological solutions for energy efficiency and renewable energy. They also highlighted the importance of further engagement of finance ministries, claiming that line ministries often felt that activities towards green economy did not gain enough attention, sufficient allocation of budgets, or access to further lending from external sources.

Item 3. High-level Panel Discussion 2 - Mobilising private finance for green growth: Roles of governments, financial institutions and development partners

Keynote speaker

- Mr Vazil HUDÁK, Vice President, European Investment Bank (EIB)

Panellists

- Mr Dzmitry MATUSEVICH, Deputy Minister of Economy of Belarus
- Ms Catharina DYVIK, Programme Director of Blended Finance Task Force, SYSTEMIQ
- Ms Gayane MINASYAN, Lead Environment Specialist, Environment & Natural Resources Global Practice, Central Asia Regional Office, World Bank

Discussion note

- Mobilising private finance for green growth - Role of governments, financial institutions and development partners [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2018)2]

11. The moderator of the session, Mr Jürgen Keinhorst (Germany), kicked off the session by posing a question as to whether and how EECCA countries with less developed banking sectors can develop or access more sophisticated green financing or blended finance from the private and public sectors.

12. Mr Hudák (EIB) highlighted various initiatives and financial solutions for green finance by the EIB and the EU inside and outside the EECCA region, while also pointing out that there was still a large financing gap that could not be met by public funding alone. He reiterated the need to leverage or use public finance to catalyse private financing into a green economy transition, and avoid EECCA countries from becoming too dependent on concessional financing.

13. Ms Dyvik (SYSTEMIQ) argued that the banking sector holds a predominant share of financial assets in the EECCA region, thus should be a key player in providing green finance. She underlined that the banking sector needs to be on the path to meet sustainability objectives in the EECCA countries and across the world. She suggested that emerging new approaches to assess and disclose climate risks, such as those of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), could incentivise banks in the region to change their ways of credit risk analyses towards lending for climate actions.

14. Mr Matusевич (Belarus) said that the Ministry of Economy of Belarus started exploring opportunities of using green bonds in the country, and consulted with the Ministry of Finance. To promote green bonds, Ms Minasyan (World Bank) stressed the need for proactive commitment by governments, collaboration and buy-in from key governmental agencies, and establishing sound legal and regulatory frameworks, based on the Bank's experience in green bonds in other regions.

15. Discussion demonstrated a great level of interest in developing new approaches to financing green investment – including green bonds, which have been issued in significant amounts across the world but very little in the EECCA region to date. In the open discussion, some participants also argued that development banks and financial institutions should ensure that eligibility criteria, information needed and reporting requirements were intelligible and in line with private sector norms, in order to encourage private-sector involvement in blended finance for sustainable development.

Item 4. The 2019-2020 Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) of the GREEN Action Task Force (Presentation)

16. Ms Kumi KITAMORI (OECD) presented the main elements of the proposed Programme of Work and Budget for 2019-20 [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2018)1/REV]. She highlighted that the discussion during the previous sessions provided an important contribution to the programme implementation. In presenting the new Programme of Work, she indicated that it proposes to be based on four mutually supportive themes as in 2016-2018:

- Programme Area 1 - National green economy dialogues and strategies
- Programme Area 2 - Green finance and investment

- Programme Area 3 - Integrating environmental, economic and sectoral policies for green growth, and
- Programme Area 4 - Strengthening water management outlined the following key elements.

17. She also stressed that these four areas all aim to contribute to the greening of the economy in the region, in particular mobilising market incentives, improving the design and implementation of environmental and other framework policies, in collaboration with UN agencies and other bilateral and multilateral development co-operation partners.

18. The Task Force members were invited to provide feedback on the proposed Programme of Work during Item 8 on Day 2.

DAY 2: Tuesday 23 October 2018

Item 5. Sustainable infrastructure investment

Introduction

- Mr Rodolfo LACY, Environment Director, OECD

Panellists

- Mr. Nurlan KULBATYROV, Deputy Director-General, Center for Trade Policy Development under Ministry of National Economy, Kazakhstan
- Ms Aneta BABAYAN, Head of Strategic Planning Division, Ministry of Economic Development and Investments, Armenia
- Mr Andrii FROLOV, the State Agency for Energy Efficiency and Energy Saving of Ukraine

Reference

- [Financing Climate Futures: Rethinking Infrastructure](#) by the OECD, UN Environment and the World Bank Group.

19. The moderator, Mr Jürgen KEINHORST (Germany), set the scene by saying that continuing infrastructure development in the EECCA region appeared to be a positive sign, but would have to bring real benefit for green and inclusive growth. He urged the countries to re-consider their business models reflecting the long-term perspectives for sustainable infrastructure development and to work together to tackle challenges associated with the limited capacities of public administrations.

20. Presenting a latest report “[Financing Climate Futures](#)”, Mr Lacy (OECD) argued that the world would need to align trillions of USD every year with the goals under the Paris Agreement. Instead of minor adjustments, he proposed a profound “reset” of current activities and actions in order to shift infrastructure investment from “brown” to “green”. He also stressed that it was important to focus not only on low-emission infrastructure, but also on climate-resilient one.

21. Mr Kulbatyrov (Kazakhstan) shared his views on how to harmonise physical infrastructure investments with sustainability objectives of Kazakhstan, stressing that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) would play an especially important role in the country. He also touched on fiscal sustainability of infrastructure investment, arguing that a clear public debt management system should be put in place, given the accumulating external debts of the country.

22. Ms Babayan (Armenia) also said that since Armenia’s fiscal space was narrowing (albeit within the control), the country was preparing a draft law on Private-Public Partnership to attract finance not only from multilateral development banks but also from private-sector investors. She also shared the country’s experience in an intense process of

internalising the new Armenia National Development Strategy for 2030 into national development priorities, and drafting the country's Green Economy Concept.

23. Mr Frolov (Ukraine) showed his agency's plans to explore the potential of green bonds issuance for financing building-stock energy efficiency and renewable energy development. He emphasised that the focus would be to adopt primary and secondary legislations as well as guidelines on green bonds to ensure that the process would be in line with international standards.

24. Ms Nino TANDILASHVILI (Deputy Environment Minister, Georgia) and Mr Nicholas BONVOISIN (UNECE) argued that a good planning before implementing a project is critical for promoting sustainable infrastructure, and strategic environmental assessments (SEA) should play a key role in doing so. Ms. Tandilashvili mentioned Georgia's new environmental impact assessment (EIA) system put in place this year and the country's ongoing preparation of a legislation on SEA.

25. Referring to the BRI, some participants echoed the importance of the Espoo Convention on EIA and for countries to ensure the environmental and social safeguards and standards. Participants also emphasised the importance of further engagement of sub-national actors, drawing on the EU's 'Covenants of Mayors' initiative.

Item 6. Integrated water management for water security and sustainable infrastructure

Introduction

- Mr Georg REBERNIG, Managing Director, UBA (Environment Agency Austria)
- Mr Alisher MAMADZHANOV, Regional Coordinator, EUWI NPDs, Environment Division, UNECE

Panellists

- Mr Nazar ODINAZODA, Antimonopoly Service, Tajikistan, and
- Mr Abdullo QURBONZODA, Agency of land Reclamation and Irrigation, Tajikistan
- Ms. Maria NAGORNII, Head of policy pollution prevention and environmental assessment Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, Moldova

26. The moderator Mr Mykola KUZYO (Ukraine) opened the session and stated its intent to discuss the importance of managing water holistically and to argue that the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management offer a way to enhance water security and ensure sustainable infrastructure solutions. He recognised that the OECD was conducting a range of activities in the area of water resource management in the EECCA region for a number of years, a significant part of which had been delivered with the OECD's long-term strategic partner UNECE.

27. Mr Rebernig (UBA) presented the EU progress with regard to development of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and concluded with Austria's success with WFD implementation. Mr Rebernig also presented the EU's long-term commitment to improving water management for citizens in the EECCA region. Mr Mamadzhanov (UNECE)

described some of the key activities under the European Union Water Initiative Plus (EUWI+), including the use of National Policy Dialogues, development of river basin planning and capacity development activities. Mr Mamadzhanov also reported feedback from the recent Eighth Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water convention where countries from the EECCA region expressed considerable demand for follow-up work to drive water policy reform.

28. Mr Odinazoda and Mr Qurbonzoda (Tajikistan) presented key findings of a recent OECD project “The Economics of Water Security”. They shared the project’s conclusion that opportunities exist to review the current tariff structure for irrigation water in Tajikistan and in doing so, promote sector sustainability through considering the value of crops being irrigated and the embedded energy costs of pumped irrigation water. The project was implemented under the Fin Water WEI II programme with financial support from Finland.

29. Finally, Ms. Nagornii (Moldova) presented findings of work on revision of new norms for the design and construction of small-scale potable water supply systems in Moldova. She argued that this was a key activity towards securing access to safe and affordable drinking water for all. Ms Nagornii reported that the recently approved regulation on the new norms would save considerable capital and operational costs once implemented. The first project to trial the new norms has indicated 30% capital savings compared to conventional design standards. This project was implemented under the European Union Water Initiative in Moldova.

Item 7. Towards circular economy: Role of Extended Producers Responsibility

Introduction

- Mr Andrzej JANUSZEWSKI, DG ENV, European Commission (EC)
- Mr Mathieu HESTIN, Consultant to the OECD

Panellists

- Mr Mr Sabit NURLYBAY, Vice Minister of Energy of Kazakhstan
- Ms Svitlana KOROTENKO, CEO, EPR Operator Republic of Kazakhstan
- Mr Yuji YAMAGUCHI, First Secretary (Environment), Permanent Delegation of Japan to the OECD
- Mr Klaus TYRKKO, Division Chief, Environment Department, UNIDO

30. Mr Andrzej JANUSZEWSKI (EC) kicked off the session by underscoring that shifting from the linear concept of the economy (i.e. use and dispose) to the circular one would help save scarce resources, benefit society and the environment, boost economic growth, and create jobs. Outlining the ambitious EU’s targets, he claimed that the key for success of Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR) schemes was to ensure that producers cover the majority of costs, avoid cherry picking, and improve governance systems. He also presented the newly proposed EU-wide rules on single use plastics, which would include a plastic ban on certain products, targets on consumption reduction and collection, labelling requirements, and awareness raising measures, among other things.

31. Mr Mathieu HESTIN (Consultant to OECD) informed the meeting that there are now about 400 EPR schemes across the world, which he considered a notable success. He also mentioned a diversity of implementations models in terms of scope, responsibility, cost coverage, and implementation procedures. He argued that the central principle of EPR

was to internalise environmental externalities to provide an incentives for producers to take into account environmental considerations throughout a product's life.

32. Mr Sabit NURLYBAY (Kazakhstan) shared examples of the recent development of EPR in Kazakhstan, such as enhanced waste management, material recovery and waste recycling in line with environmental and sanitary standards. Kazakhstan introduced EPR for motor vehicles automobile parts in 2016, and for packaging with zero recycling fees. Ms Svitlana KOROTENKO (EPR Operator of Kazakhstan) also showcased their practices; for instance, incentives were provided to 50 business involved in waste recycling, and as a result tons of car parts have been recycled, waste recovery for cars is 98 %, only 2% of glass is not recovered, and 5% of plastic not recycled. She also mentioned several ways-forward, including: improving technical, legislative and financial aspects of the EPR system; supporting creation of EPR operators in EEU countries to consolidate efforts; and improving investment attractiveness of waste management sector.

33. Mr Yuji Yamaguchi (Japan) shared Japan's experience with implementing policies on circular economy since the 1950's. Based on the experience, he outlined some key policy questions related to EPR. These included: how the roles of stakeholders should evolve, considering changes in international trade and business models; what the main targets on recovery would be; how to take account of new technological development (e.g. electronic vehicles); how to increase public demand for reused material and parts; among other. He argued for approaches such as discount for cars and products that use environmentally friendly material to increase demand for recycle and reuse.

34. Drawing on UNIDO's experience with working resource management, Mr Klaus TYRKKO (UNIDO) stressed the urgent need to close the loop of material use in the circular economy, and the importance of resource efficient and cleaner production. He also outlined various UNIDO initiatives to promote circular economy such as mid-size industry programs on materials and energy efficiency, E-Waste management, and Eco-Industrial Parks.

35. In open discussion, a participant mentioned the need for improved approaches to life cycle assessment of products. Others also argued that successful EPR schemes would need to be refined to the specific situation in each country and they need to be monitored to ensure success.

Item 8. The 2019-2020 Programme of Work and Budget of the GREEN Action Task Force (Reporting, feedback, discussion)

36. The Task Force members noted the presentation by Mr Krzysztof MICHALAK and Mr Matthew GRIFFITHS (OECD) on the progress made in the implementation of the GREEN Action Task Force programme of work between November 2017 and October 2018 [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2018)3]. They highlighted a number of activities carried out since the last meeting to support the policy making and implementation in the region. They also referred to several publications that present the results of the work¹.

37. The Task Force members also welcomed the more detailed presentation on the proposed Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) for 2019 and 2020 by Ms Kumi KITAMORI (OECD) on Day 1 [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2018)1/REV]. She highlighted that the work programme contains continuing work from the previous PWB and new activities,

¹ See also <http://www.oecd.org/env/outreach/GATF%20pub%20cat%20web-3a.pdf>

such as work on compliance and enforcement. She also pointed out that the PWB was designed in co-operation with the EECCA countries and the donors, and that the budget for most of the work was secured.

38. During the discussion the Task Force members appreciated the proposed activities, highlighted their relevance, and welcomed the suggested scope. The Task Force members endorsed the proposed PWB 2019-2020 and expressed their interests in specific activities, as follows:

- Support for all of the programme areas from 1 to 4 under the PWB 2019-2020 (Armenia).
- Interest in support for energy subsidy reform (Azerbaijan)
- Support to work on green finance and investment (Belarus)
- Suggestion to carry a survey to be conducted by the Secretariat before the next annual meeting on on-going activities/initiatives/policy development related to green growth in the region (Belarus)
- Interest in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the national water strategy (Belarus)
- Continuation of work on sustainable water management (Georgia)
- Support for further engagement of municipalities in green growth agenda (Georgia)
- Support for the SEA implementation (Georgia, Ukraine)
- Suggestion to develop work on “just” transition (Germany)
- Further engagement with the countries of Central Asia on, for instance, the energy-food-water-climate nexus (Germany)
- Greater level of co-operation with development financial institutions (Germany)
- Readiness to further exchange and share experiences from the transformation of its economy and on-going development of environmental policies (Slovak Republic)
- Readiness to contribute to discussion on greening of extractive industry (Switzerland)
- Need to take into consideration “greening” the Belt and Road Initiative (Switzerland)

39. Ms Kitamori (OECD) thanked the Task Force members for their overall support to the PWB 2019-2020 and encouraged the members to further engage in programming of the individual activities.

Item 9. Progress report on GREEN Action Task Force to the Committee on Environment Policy of the UNECE

40. Mr Nicholas BONVOISIN (UNECE) provided background information that the GREEN Action Task Force was invited to contribute a progress report to the Committee on Environment Policy of the UNECE.

41. The Task Force Members noted that they were invited to provide comments on the draft progress report on the GREEN Action Task Force to UNECE’s Committee on Environment Policy by 15 November 2018 [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2018)6].

Item 10. Bureau election

42. Based on the Criteria for Election of Co-chairs and Bureau Members for 2019-2020 [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2018)5] and the expressed interests by the members, the Task Force members elected the Co-Chairs and Bureau members for 2019-2020 as follows:

- OECD Member countries (four members)
 - Mr. Jürgen KEINHORST, Germany (Co-chair)
 - Mr. Norbert KURILLA, Slovak Republic (Vice chair)
 - Ms. Martine ROHN-BROSSARD, Switzerland (Vice chair)
 - Ms. Katrin ZIMMER, Sweden (Vice chair)
- Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (four members)
 - Mr. Mykola KUZYO, Ukraine (Co-chair)
 - Ms. Irma KAVTARADZE, Georgia (Vice chair)
 - Ms. Maria NAGORNII, Moldova (Vice chair)
 - Mr. Sabit NURLYBAI, Kazakhstan (Vice chair)
- Three members with special status from the partner organisations
 - European Commission
 - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
 - United Nations Environment Programme

43. Ms Kitamori (OECD) also announced that the next Bureau Meeting is scheduled for Thursday the 18th of April 2019 at the OECD Conference Centre in Paris.

44. Co-chair Mr KUZYO (Ukraine) announced that Ukraine would host the fourth annual meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force in Kyiv at the beginning of October 2019.

Item 11. Closing Remarks and Other Business

45. Co-chairs Mr KEINHORST (Germany) and Mr KUZYO (Ukraine) presented the Co-chairs' statement that summarised discussion during the annual meeting. They shared their views on the direction to which the work of the Task Force should move on (See ANNEX 1 to this summary record). The Task Force members welcomed the Statement.

46. Mr Norbert KURILLA (Slovak Republic) confirmed the intention of the Slovak Republic to continue to share its experience and knowhow from its transition period, and the country's ambition to feature the work of the GREEN Action Task Force to a higher level, especially in the context of Slovakia's Presidency for the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting in 2019.

47. The Co-chairs closed the meeting by thanking all the participants for their active participation and contribution to the discussion. They also thanked the Slovak Republic for being the excellent host of this annual meeting.

ANNEX 1. Statement of the Co-chairs

Third Annual Meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force (Bratislava, 22-23 October 2018)

Chaired by

*Mykola KUZYO, Deputy Minister of Ecology of Ukraine and
Jürgen KEINHORST, Head of Cooperation with Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Africa and the Middle
East, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety, Germany*

We thank the Slovak Republic for hosting this year's Annual Meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force in Bratislava on the 22nd and 23rd of October 2018. The engagement by the Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic as an active Vice Chair has been a great asset to the Task Force. The Ministry has been the warm and generous host of this meeting, including organising the wonderful meal at the historic castle with spectacular views of the city, which all Task Force members appreciated. This year, in its capacity as President of the Visegrád 4+2 Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovak Republic + Bulgaria and Romania), the Slovak Republic helped the Task Force to bring together a wider range of OECD countries, including those from the Visegrád 4+2, with the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA).

The Bratislava meeting in particular, provides a special opportunity to celebrate a quarter century of the Task Force's contribution to environmental policy reforms in the countries of EECCA. It is also very symbolic that this Task Force is coming back to a country where the process of Environment for Europe was initiated in 1991, that time known as Czechoslovakia. We note that work of the GREEN Action Task Force, and the EAP Task Force as it was known before, has supported policy reforms and implementation on the ground, and contributed to improving environmental quality and social welfare while creating opportunities for sustainable economic growth and business development in the region.

We are also pleased to see the greater level of engagement of the Ministries of Economy in the work of the GREEN Action Task Force since its rebranding after the 2016 "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference, while maintaining the high-level of involvement by the Environment and Energy Ministries. We also recognise the involvement of public and private financial institutions, which are increasingly involved in the Task Force work as well as the representatives of the civil society organisations.

We welcome a range of regional-, national-, and city-level initiatives on green growth presented by the EECCA countries, which show their strong commitment to greening their economies. We recognise that good progress was made with the implementation of the GREEN Action Task Force Programme of Work for 2016-2018. We welcome, in particular, on-the-ground support to the EECCA countries in reform implementation in collaboration with the governments, local institutions and their development co-operation partners.

We recognise a range of examples including: the continuation of policy dialogues on green growth in Georgia and Kazakhstan; design of public investment programmes for cleaner urban transport in Kazakhstan, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan; country reviews of green finance mobilisation in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan; launching work on facilitating the development of national strategies for water resources management in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine; and finalising the work on the economics of water security in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This work in particular demonstrated the benefits of regional dialogue and exchange with a study tour from Tajikistan to Armenia to study the application of tariffs in

the irrigation sector, and another study tour for Kyrgyzstan to examine application of surface water use charges.

We also acknowledge the contribution of the GREEN Action Task Force work to the advancement of voluntary commitments under the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) made at the “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference in 2016. We note that the Task Force has enhanced strategic partnerships with international organisations, especially the UNECE and UN Environment, as well as other development co-operation partners including international financial institutions.

However, we cannot be complacent when we look at the environmental and energy performance of the EECCA countries. We call on the GREEN Action Task Force to work with the countries to encourage bolder, faster, and more coherent policy reforms and implementation. This is still much needed in order to translate the EECCA countries’ ambitious targets into actual “green” project pipelines and build confidence among the governments, partners, investors, businesses, and citizens.

In this context, we welcome the proposed Programme of Work and Budget for 2019-2020 and its endorsement by the members of the Task Force. We underline the importance of addressing new and emerging priorities of the Task Force members, such as: integrating sustainability aspects into financial-sector regulations; regional analysis of sustainable and resilient infrastructure development; environmental consideration in the extractive industry operations; and supporting countries in their development of robust national water strategies and long-term water security. We recognise the important financial support provided to the Task Force by the European Union, Finland, Germany, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland and in-kind support of several other countries.

We note that energy transition for a low-carbon economy is an enormous challenge, especially for certain communities and sectors. We encourage the Task Force members to further co-operate with various ministries, public bodies and development partners to promote “just” transition and to play a catalytic role in developing political commitment to accelerate policy reforms. We request the Secretariat to consider ways to address this in the Programme of Work for discussion at the next Bureau meeting to support the Task Force members with smoothing energy transition for communities whose employment largely relies on the fossil fuel industry.

The kind of green transition we want cannot be realised without massive further infrastructure investments in energy, transport, buildings in line with the low-carbon and climate resilience goals. Such infrastructure projects must comply with international standards (for investment, competition, environment, social etc.). We note that there is an enormous amount of interest in mobilising private finance for green investment, and using funding from governments and development financial institutions more wisely. Functioning, stable and deeper banking sector is a precondition for economic growth and investment promotion in general, and also an important basis for green finance mobilisation. We recognise that we need green finance to flow from various different sources – domestic and international, public and private - to meet EECCA countries’ massive investment needs to achieve their climate targets and SDGs.

We encourage the Task Force members to further engage with finance ministries, financial regulators and financial institutions. In this context, we welcome the new work which reflects multifaceted aspects of green finance mobilisation, including the development of domestic public expenditure programmes, review of public financial entities, subsidy reforms, financial-sector regulation, private sector finance and a better use of international development finance.

We reiterate the importance of continued efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental regulations. We welcome the Task Force work on “smart” environmental regulation that

can deliver policy goals in more efficient manners while also achieving equity and political acceptability. The OECD member countries have a wealth of experience with the development of environmental policies and their enforcement, which can be shared with EECCA countries. We urge the OECD to continue good cooperation with the UNECE, UN Environment, UNIDO, EEA and others, building on productive partnerships forged under the EaP GREEN project and the implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System.

We appreciate the OECD's leading role in the area of water resource management in the context of green growth, and long-standing collaboration with the UNECE. We look forward to seeing further progress made in the on-going activities under the European Union Water Initiative project (EUWI+) for the six EU Eastern Partnership countries in 2019 and 2020. We also welcome proposed new activities by the Task Force, such as on water-related SDGs, food-water-energy nexus, water security and capacity development, and the country-level water outlooks both in Eastern Partnership countries and in Central Asia.

We express our gratitude to all of the participants for the active discussion, information sharing and feedback on the proposed Programme of Work and Budget for 2019-2020. We believe that the Bratislava meeting will not only mark a successful quarter century milestone but also represent a starting point of another successful era of further collaboration under the GREEN Action Task Force.

ANNEX 2. List of Participants

2018 Annual Meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force Bratislava, 22-23 October 2018

Armenia	<p>Ms. Irina GHAPLANYAN <i>First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia 3ed GOVERNMENT BLDG, YEREVAN 0010</i></p>
	<p>Ms. Aneta BABAYAN <i>Head of Strategic Programming Division Ministry of Economic Development and Investments 5 M. Mkrтчyan street, Yerevan</i></p>
Austria	<p>Mr. Georg REBERNIG <i>Managing Director UMWELTBUNDESAMT GmbH Spittelauer Lände 5, 1090 Vienna</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Johannes MAYER <i>Head of International Relations Department Environment Agency Austria Spittelauer Lände 5, A-1090 Wien</i></p>
	<p>Ms. Maria KRASTEVA <i>Senior Waste Management Expert Environment Agency Austria Spittelauer Lände 5, A-1090 Wien</i></p>
	<p>Mr Michael SUTTER <i>Environment Agency Austria Spittelauer Lände 5, A-1090 Wien</i></p>
Azerbaijan	<p>Mr. Rauf GURBANOV <i>Head of Economy Department Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan H. Aliyev ave. 152, Chinar Plaza, AZ1029 Baku</i></p>
	<p>Ms. Nargis MURADOVA <i>Senior advisor of International Cooperation Division Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan</i></p>

	<i>100A B.Aghayev street, Baku</i>
Belarus	Mr. Dzmitry MATUSEVICH <i>Deputy Minister Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus 220030, Minsk, 14 Bersona str.</i>
	Ms Alena KHADARTSEVICH <i>Advisor of the Department of Cooperation with International Organizations Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus</i>
Belgium (Walloon Export Agency)	Mr. Patrick HEINRICHS <i>Export Finance Manager, Walloon Export Agency, Place Sainctelette 2 1080 Brussels Belgium</i>
	Mr. Hubert SIEMES <i>International Financial Advisor, Walloon Export Agency, Place Sainctelette 2, 1080 Brussels Belgium</i>
Bulgaria	Ms. Atanaska NIKOLOVA <i>Deputy Minister Ministry of Environment and Water</i>
	Ms Boryana KAMENOVA <i>Director, Climate Change Policy Directorate Ministry of Environment and Water</i>
	Mr. George MIHAILOV <i>Head of Unit, Air Protection and Pollution Prevention Directorate Ministry of Environment and Water</i>
Czech Republic	Ms. Soňa PERGLEROVÁ <i>Senior Officer Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic Vršovická 65, Prague 10</i>
	Mr Michal PASTVINSKY <i>Deputy Director General of the Environmental Policy and International Relations Section Ministry of Enviromnent of Czech Republic</i>
	Mr Pavel ZAMYSLICKY <i>Director of the Department of Energy and Climate Protection Ministry of Enviromnent of Czech Republic</i>

	<p>Ms Zuzana TICHA <i>Department of International Relations Ministry of Environment of Czech Republic</i></p>
Estonia	<p>Ms. Hanna SOE <i>Adviser EU and International Co-operation Department Ministry of the Environment of Estonia Narva mnt 7a, 15172 Tallinn</i></p>
Finland	<p>Ms. Saija VUOLA <i>Ministerial Adviser Unit for International and EU Affairs Ministry of the Environment of Finland Aleksanterinkatu 7, Helsinki PO Box 35, 00023 GOVERNMENT</i></p>
Georgia	<p>Ms. Nino TANDILASHVILI <i>Deputy Minister Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia 6. Marshal Gelovani ave. 0159, Tbilisi</i></p>
Germany	<p>Mr. Jürgen KEINHORST <i>Director Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Stresemannstraße 128 - 130, 10117 Berlin</i></p>
	<p>Ms Charlotte CUNTZ <i>Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Stresemannstraße 128 - 130, 10117 Berlin</i></p>
Hungary	<p>Mr. Tibor SCHAFFHAUSER <i>Deputy Head Department of Climate Policy Ministry of Environment</i></p>
	<p>Mr Zsolt SZABO <i>First Secretary Embassy of Hungary in Slovak Republic</i></p>
Japan	<p>Mr. Yuji YAMAGUCHI <i>First Secretary - Environment Permanent Delegation of Japan to the OECD 11 avenue Hoche 75008 Paris</i></p>
Kazakhstan	<p>Mr. Sabit NURLYBAI <i>Vice-Minister Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan Mangilik Yel 8, Astana</i></p>

	<p>Ms. Aliya SHALABEKOVA <i>Director, Green Economy Department</i> <i>Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan</i> <i>Mangilik Yel 8, Astana</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Nurlan KULBATYROV <i>Deputy Director-General</i> <i>JSC “Center for Trade Policy Development” under the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan</i> <i>Mangilik Yel 4, Astana, Kazakhstan</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Aday NYGMANOV <i>Expert</i> <i>JSC “Center for Trade Policy Development” under the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan</i> <i>Mangilik Yel 4, Astana</i></p>
Kyrgyzstan	<p>Mr. Ermek ASHYROV <i>Senior Expert, Strategic Planning Division</i> <i>Ministry of Economy</i> <i>Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek city, Chui avenue 106</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Arsen RYSPEKOV <i>Deputy Director</i> <i>The State Agency on Environment Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek</i> <i>Kyrgyz Republic</i></p>
Moldova	<p>Mr. Adrian ERMURACHI <i>Deputy Secretary General of the Government</i> <i>State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova</i> <i>Piata Marii Adunări Naționale, 1</i> <i>MD-2033, Chișinău</i></p>
	<p>Ms. Maria NAGORNII <i>Head of policy pollution prevention and environmental assessment Division</i> <i>Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment</i> <i>Constantin Tanase str. 9, Chisinau</i></p>
Romania	<p>Mr. Ion CIMPEANU <i>State Secretary,</i> <i>Ministry of Environment, Romania</i> <i>Bd. Libertatii no. 12, Bucharest</i></p>
	<p>Ms Denise Mihaela MUSAT <i>European Affairs Adviser</i> <i>Bd. Libertatii no. 12, Bucharest</i></p>
Slovak Republic	<p>Mr. László SÓLYMOS <i>Minister</i></p>

	<p><i>Ministry of Environment Nam. L. Stura 1 Bratislava</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Norbert KURILLA <i>State Secretary Ministry of Environment Nam. L. Stura 1 Bratislava</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Milan CHRENKO <i>Director General Ministry of Environment Nam. L. Stura 1 Bratislava</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Lukas KUČTA <i>Director, International Affairs Department Ministry of Environment Nam. L. Stura 1 Bratislava</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Martin GERGELY <i>International Relations Department Ministry of Environment NAMESTIE LUDOVITA STURA 1 812 35 Bratislava</i></p>
	<p>Ms Lucia HOJDOVA <i>Office of the State Secretary I Ministry of Environment Nam. L. Stura 1 812 35 Bratislava</i></p>
	<p>Ms. Zuzana FEJDIOVA <i>International Affairs Department Ministry of Environment NAMESTIE LUDOVITA STURA 1 812 35 Bratislava</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Jozef SKULTETY <i>Director, Climate Change Policy Department Ministry of Environment</i></p>
	<p>Mr Milos GRAJCAR <i>Director, Emission Trading Quotas Department Ministry of Environment</i></p>
	<p>Ms. Barbora BONDOROVA <i>Director, Environmental Policy Department, Ministry of Environment</i></p>
	<p>Ms. Liliana RASTOCKA <i>Crosscutting Issues Department, Ministry of Environment</i></p>
	<p>Ms. Mariana PAZINKOVA <i>Third Secretary Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to the OECD</i></p>

	<p>28 avenue d Eylau 75016 Paris, France</p>
	<p>Mr. Richard MULLER Director General Slovak Environment Agency</p>
	<p>Mr. Tomas ORFANUS Director, Directorate for environmentalism and projects leading Slovak Environment Agency</p>
	<p>Ms. Sylvia BASLAROVA Slovak Environment Agency Tajovského 28, 975 90 Banská Bystrica</p>
	<p>Ms. Zuzana LIESKOVSKA Slovak Environment Agency Tajovského 28, 975 90 Banská Bystrica</p>
	<p>Ms. Katarina KOSKOVA Head of Department for International Cooperation</p>
	<p>Ms. Dorota HERICOVA Assessment and Landscape Protection Department Environmental Analysis and Assessment Unit</p>
	<p>Ms. Tatiana GUSTAFIKOVA Assessment and Landscape Protection Department Environmental Analysis and Assessment Unit</p>
Switzerland	<p>Ms. Xavier TSCHUMI CANOSA Senior Policy Advisor Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) 3003 Berne</p>
Tajikistan	<p>Mr. Nazar ODINAZODA First Deputy Head Antimonopoly Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan Shamsi street 5/1, Dushanbe, 734064, Republic of Tajikistan</p>
	<p>Mr. Abdullo QURBONZODA First Deputy Director Antimonopoly Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan Shamsi street 5/1, Dushanbe, 734064, Republic of Tajikistan</p>
Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (Turkmenistan)	<p>Dr. Batyr MAMMEDOV Head of Secretariat Interstate commission for sustainable development for Central Asia 15, Bitarap Turkmenistan str., 744000, Ashgabat</p>
Ukraine	<p>Mr. Mykola KUZYO Deputy Minister of European Integration</p>

	<p><i>Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine Kyiv, Mytropolyta V.Lypkivskoho str., 35</i></p> <p>Mr. Andrii FROLOV <i>Deputy Head of the Reforming Energy Efficiency and Energy Saving Department - Chief of the Normative and Methodological Support Office State Agency on Energy Efficiency and Energy Saving of Ukraine Muzeinyi lane, 12 Kyiv, 01001</i></p>
EPR Operator Republic of Kazakhstan	<p>Mr. Rustam TEMIRBEK <i>Managing director Mangilik el avenue 18, Astana</i></p> <p>Mr. Sergey YURCHA <i>Managing director Mangilik el avenue 18, Astana</i></p> <p>Ms. Svitlana KOROTENKO <i>CEO Mangilik el avenue 18, Astana</i></p>
SYSTEMIQ	Ms. Catharina DYVIK <i>Programme Director of the Blended Finance Taskforce 69 Carter Lane London EC4V 5EQ, United Kingdom</i>
Independent consultant	Mr. Mathieu HESTIN <i>Consultant to the OECD Circular Economy, Waste Prevention and Management Extended Producer Responsibility France</i>
Institute of market problems and economic-ecological researches of NAS Ukraine	Mr. Oleg RUBEL <i>Senior Researcher Fransuzskyyi boul., 29 Odessa, Ukraine</i>
Energy Construction Farming Services Member of SynCo Group	Ing. Samuel BABJAK <i>Racianska 30/A 831 02 Bratislava Slovak Republic</i>
European Investment Bank (EIB)	Mr. Vazil HUDÁK <i>Vice President 98-100 boulevard Konrad Adenauer L-2950 Luxembourg</i>
	Ms. Andrea FERJENCIKOVA <i>Advisor to Vice-President Vazil Hudak 98-100 boulevard Konrad Adenauer L-2950 Luxembourg</i>
World Bank (WB)	Ms. Gayane MINASYAN

	<i>Lead Environmental Specialist 41A Kazybek bi Street, 4th Floor, 050010 Almaty</i>
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)	Mr. Lukas KUZMIAK <i>Principal Banker European Business Centre Suche Myto 1 81103 Bratislava Slovak Republic</i>
EEA (European Environment Agency)	Ms. Galina GEORGIEVA HRISTOVA <i>Head of Group – European neighbourhood policy activities Kongens Nytorv 6 1050 Copenhagen K, Denmark</i>
	Mr. Jean-Nicolas POUSSART <i>Project Coordinator ENI SEIS II East Kongens Nytorv 6, 1050 Copenhagen, Denmark</i>
European Commission	Mr. Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ <i>Vice President for the Energy Union European Commission Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200 1049 Brussels, Belgium</i>
	Ms. Gabriela KEČKÉŠOVÁ <i>Member of Cabinet European Commission Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200 1049 Brussels, Belgium</i>
	Mr. Andrzej JANUSZEWSKI <i>Policy Officer DG Environment Avenue de Beaulieu 9, 1160 Brussels, Belgium</i>
	Ms. Angela BULARGA <i>Programme Manager DG NEAR Rue Joseph II 54, 1049 Brussels, Belgium</i>
UNECE	Ms. Olga ALGAYEROVA <i>Executive Secretary Palais des Nations, 8-14 avenue de la Paix, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland</i>
	Mr. Nicholas BONVOISIN <i>Chief of the Operational Activities & Review Section, Environment Division Palais des Nations, 8-14 avenue de la Paix, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland</i>

	<p>Mr. Alisher MAMADZHANOV <i>Environmental Affairs Officer</i> <i>Palais des Nations, 8-14 avenue de la Paix, CH-1211 Geneva 10,</i> <i>Switzerland</i></p>
UNIDO	<p>Ms. Tatiana CHERNYAVSKAYA <i>International Project Coordinator</i> <i>Wagramerstrasse, 5 Vienna, Austria</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Klaus TYRKKO <i>Division Chief, Environment Department, Wagramerstrasse, 5 Vienna,</i> <i>Austria Wagramer Strasse 5, P.O.Box 300 1400 Vienna Austria</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Arno BEHRENS <i>Advisor on Health and Pollution</i> <i>Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 300, 1400 Vienna</i></p>
OECD	<p>Mr. Rodolfo LACY <i>Environment Director</i> <i>2 rue André-Pascal</i> <i>75016 Paris, France</i></p>
	<p>Ms. Kumi KITAMORI <i>Head of Division</i> <i>ENV/GGGR</i> <i>2 rue André-Pascal</i> <i>75016 Paris, France</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Krzysztof MICHALAK <i>Senior Programme Manager</i> <i>ENV/GGGR</i> <i>2 rue André-Pascal</i> <i>75016 Paris, France</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Matthew GRIFFITHS <i>Senior Programme Manager</i> <i>ENV/GGGR</i> <i>2 rue André-Pascal</i> <i>75016 Paris, France</i></p>
	<p>Mr. Alexandre MARTOUSSEVITCH <i>Project Manager</i> <i>ENV/GGGR</i> <i>2 rue André-Pascal</i> <i>75016 Paris, France</i></p>
	<p>Ms. Tatiana EFIMOVA <i>Project Manager</i> <i>ENV/GGGR</i> <i>2 rue André-Pascal</i> <i>75016 Paris, France</i></p>

	<p>Mr. Takayoshi KATO <i>Policy Analyst</i> ENV/GGGR 2 rue André-Pascal 75016 Paris, France</p>
	<p>Mr. Guy HALPERN <i>Policy Analyst</i> ENV/GGGR 2 rue André-Pascal 75016 Paris, France</p>
	<p>Ms. Nelly PETKOVA <i>Economist/Policy Analyst</i> ENV/GGGR OECD Marshall Building 2099 2 rue André-Pascal 75016 Paris, France</p>
	<p>Mr. David SIMEK <i>Policy Analyst</i> ENV/GGGR 2 rue André-Pascal 75016 Paris, France</p>
	<p>Mr. Jean-François LENGELLE <i>Project manager</i> ENV/GGGR 2 rue André-Pascal 75016 Paris, France</p>
	<p>Ms. Lupita JOHANSON <i>Communications Coordinator</i> ENV/GGGR 2 rue André-Pascal 75016 Paris, France`</p>
	<p>Ms. Aleksandra BOGUSZ <i>Project Assistant</i> ENV/GGGR 2 rue André-Pascal 75016 Paris, France</p>