

Draft Summary Record of the 2020 GREEN Action Task Force Annual Meeting

12-13 October 2021, virtual conference

For comment and endorsement.

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Draft Summary Record of the 2020 GREEN Action Task Force Annual Meeting

Background, meeting objectives and participants

1. The present document summarises the discussion and decisions taken during the 2020 Annual Meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force. The event took place virtually on 13 October 2020 and gathered about 100 participants from the Ministries of the Environment and of Economy from the region of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and from OECD countries. Representatives of development finance institutions, international and non-governmental organisations also took part.
2. The main objectives of the meeting were to:
 - exchange experiences on the environmental aspects of response policies and measures to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic;
 - discuss and endorse the 2021-2022 Programme of Work and Budget; and
 - fill the two vacancies on the GREEN Action Task Force's Bureau.
3. All meeting documents are available on the meeting's website: <https://www.oecd.org/fr/environnement/ouverture/gatf-2020-annual-meeting.htm>

Summary record

Item 1: Welcome, remarks and adoption of the agenda

Opening remarks by the GREEN Action Task Force Co-Chairs

- Ms. Ekaterine MIKABADZE, First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Georgia and Co-Chair of the GREEN Action Task Force
4. Ms. Mikabadze welcomed the participants, expressing regret that the 2020 Annual Meeting could not take place as originally planned in Tashkent. She thanked Uzbekistan, particularly the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection, for offering to host the 2020 Annual Meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force in Tashkent before the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a move to an online platform.
 5. Ms. Mikabadze reminded participants that the 2019 Annual Meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force was held on 30 September and 1 October 2019 at the OECD Headquarters. The outcomes of the

meeting, as presented in its draft Summary Record [[ENV/EPOC/EAP/M\(2019\)2](#)], were endorsed by the members of the GREEN Action Task Force.

6. Ms. Mikabadze presented the 2020 Annual Meeting's objectives and submitted the draft agenda [[ENV/EPOC/EAP/A\(2020\)2/REV1](#)], which was adopted by the Task Force members.

Item 2: Environmental Implications of the Policy Responses to the COVID-19 Outbreak

Presentation by the Secretariat

- Mr. Krzysztof MICHALAK, Senior Programme Manager, Green Growth and Global Relations Division, Environment Directorate, OECD
- Ms. Julia Ashikbayeva, Consultant, Green Growth and Global Relations Division, Environment Directorate, OECD

Open discussion with lead discussants:

- Ms. Ekaterine MIKABADZE, First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Georgia
- Ms. Iryna STAVCHUK, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Ukraine
- Ms. Lilia PALII, General Secretary, Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, Moldova
- Mr. Akzan SHIRANOV, Head of the Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development Department, Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources, Kazakhstan
- Mr. Jakhongir TALIPOV, Head of the International Cooperation and Projects Department, State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection, Uzbekistan
- Mr. Norbert KURILLA, Advisor to the President, Presidential Administration, Slovak Republic
- Ms. Olga PONIZOVA, Executive Director, Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development "ECO-Accord"

7. The Secretariat presented the results of their discussion paper "Post COVID-19 economic recovery plans and their potential impacts on greening the economies of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia" [[ENV/EPOC/EAP\(2020\)5](#)]. They underlined the importance of maintaining effective environmental regulations, even in times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, and pointed to emerging measures in EECCA countries that have been adopted as part of economic recovery packages. Their PowerPoint presentation is available [here](#).

8. The introduction by the Secretariat was followed by interventions from the Task Force members.

9. Ms. Mikabadze underlined how government actions in Georgia are key to help counter the economic negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. She outlined several measures that have been undertaken by the Government of Georgia:

- In the banking sector, the National Bank of Georgia issued structural loans for SMEs and relaxed compliance supervision. Loans were restructured for legal entities and households.
- Special support was provided for the tourism sector.
- In the agriculture sector, grants, subsidised loans and co-financing of interest rate payments on loans were offered.
- For vulnerable individuals, there was government support for utility bill payments.
- Planned green reforms are continuing with implementation. Technical regulations on extended producer responsibility for used tires, batteries and electrical equipment have been adopted. Amendments to the Law on Ambient Air bringing it in line with EU Directives have been submitted

to the government for discussion. Other legislative reforms during the pandemic have been the new forest code which strengthens protection of biological diversity and the adoption of new laws on energy labelling and energy efficiency in buildings.

10. Ms. Stavchuk noted that, at the policy level, green policy planning in Ukraine has not been affected by the pandemic because of ongoing obligations (e.g. secession agreements), but on the implementation side challenges are emerging (e.g. reduced investments in renewables). Overall, there is a lack of ideas for good green recovery measures, and the time, resources and evidence base required to translate ideas into concrete actions are scarce, particularly during a pandemic. Implementation can be very lengthy: for instance, the Ukrainian Energy Efficiency Fund took five years to develop before the pandemic, but it is now fully functioning. Firms just want to get back to business as quickly as possible; any green measures will need to help support these firms maintain profitability in the difficult circumstances of the recovery. An important aspect of any green recovery will be identifying the sectors where the greatest potential for green recovery lies, for which support by think tanks and policy fora like the OECD are necessary. The OECD and the GREEN Action Task Force's added value for EECCA countries' recovery efforts will be in building narratives and support in the form of solid economic arguments for green recovery measures. The GREEN Action Task Force could also support Ukraine in scaling up successful pilot programmes.

11. Ms. Palii stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet over and its impacts on Moldova's economy will be severe. For the pandemic's immediate effects, Moldova has postponed income tax collection and provided subsidies to businesses for their payrolls as well as to commercial banks to prolong their lending terms. A recovery plan for businesses is currently under development. The adoption of the National Development Strategy Moldova 2030 by the government in June of 2020 marked a positive change for the promotion of environmental priorities in the country. It ensures the fundamental rights to a healthy and safe environment. The OECD and the GREEN Action Task Force already help through the streamlining of the National Ecological Fund, and Moldova looks forward to the OECD's continued support.

12. Mr. Shiranov noted that the President has signalled that Kazakhstan will accelerate the adoption of its new Environmental Code (including the adoption of BAT principles, strategic environmental assessment and the polluter pays principle). The OECD contributed with analyses such as the 2019 publication [Addressing Industrial Air Pollution in Kazakhstan: Reforming Environmental Payments Policy Guidelines](#), mobilisation of reference databases (such as the [OECD Policy Instruments for the Environment Database](#)) and access to experts groups (such as the OECD Expert Group on BAT). Mr. Shiranov also laid out the steps taken by the Government of Kazakhstan to support its citizens and the economy during the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased support for healthcare, social services and economic relief, including the implementation of a National Action Plan for the Low-carbon Development of Kazakhstan up to 2050. The National Action Plan will include measures such as planting 2 billion trees, improving the environmental education of young people, developing ecotourism and launching green bonds with the first issuance in August supported by UNDP and DAMU Entrepreneurship Fund.

13. Mr. Talipov highlighted the measures taken to support the economic recovery of Uzbekistan, including UZS 3 billion provided to support businesses. The lockdown imposed in the cities of Uzbekistan had a major positive impact on curbing emissions and improving air quality. In this regard, the government is now even more motivated to support low-emission transport in Tashkent. Proposed changes include the introduction of electric buses and construction of cycle lanes in Tashkent. Other major focus areas for Uzbekistan are improving water supply and sanitation as well as increasing the capacity to process medical waste (including a UZS 1.5 billion medical waste processing plant in Samarkand).

14. Mr. Kurilla highlighted the development of a national reform plan as a major milestone in Slovakia's green economy reforms and recovery from the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will address the green recovery in line with EU mobilisation, focusing on the integration of renewables into the energy system as well as the greening of other infrastructure services and buildings. An investment of EUR 100 million is projected to result in EUR 140 million in benefits and 300 000 jobs. Slovakia is also

reforming its forest management and plant more trees in urban areas, notably in Bratislava (10 000 new trees by 2022). Bratislava aims to be climate neutral by 2030 and is drawing up plans for zero waste and green energy systems.

15. Ms. Ponizova, from an NGO perspective, identified the steep increases in medical waste as a major challenge. She stressed that countries must avoid backsliding on progress made on the green economy agenda. NGOs throughout the EECCA region, the EU, Russia and other countries are reporting detention of environmental activists and the emergence of policy amendments that are bad for the environment, including policies that backslide on illegal logging regulations. A report based on European and EECCA NGO discussions by the Czech NGO ARNIKA has provided evidence from European countries including EECCA countries showing that government authorities took advantage of the difficult situation to promote anti-environmental laws and projects. (The report is [available here](#).) The OECD and the GREEN Action Task force can support countries adopt a green approach in their economic recovery plans by continuing to review the experience of countries and identifying policies and measures that are effective.

16. In the open discussion, several participants took the floor.

17. Ms. Tatsiana Kananchuk (Head of the General Directorate for Environmental Policy, International Cooperation and Sciences, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus) presented Belarus's afforestation efforts as part of its recovery, resulting in 300 000 newly planted trees and 150 000 bushes. She highlighted the importance of ongoing methodological and financial support aimed at greening communities and countries.

18. Mr. Andrzej Januszewski (Policy Officer, DG Environment, European Commission) reported that the EU has responded to the crisis by shifting resources to focus on the need for helping countries recover.

19. Ms. Marianne Gjørnv (Senior Advisor, Norwegian Environment Agency, Norway) pointed out the negative behaviour trends emerging in the pandemic, such as the shift away from public transportation towards the use of private vehicles (although Norway has an exceptionally high rate of electric vehicle ownership). These trends are not, however, unambiguously negative, since widespread working-from-home policies have resulted in lower traffic for commuting and increased use of bicycles for short distances. Ms. Gjørnv agreed that waste management is emerging as a challenge. After concerted efforts by countries to begin phasing out single-use plastics, COVID-19 has forced them back into our lives in an unexpected way. Norway plans to launch a national strategy for circular economy development by the end of 2020.

20. Ms. Martine Rohn-Brossard (Head of Delegation, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland) stressed the continued importance of sustainable infrastructure investment in the EECCA region. She requested that the next Annual Meeting focus more on infrastructure and defining more clearly what is needed in the region, especially in the context of the projects associated with China's Belt and Road Initiative.

21. Mr. Fulai Sheng (Head of the Economic and Trade Policy Unit, UNEP) drew participants' attention to a UNEP partnership with Oxford-Smith School on a green recovery observatory which tracks stimulus packages at the global level.

22. Mr. Nicholas Bonvoisin (Chief of Operational Activities & Review Section, Environment Division, UNECE) noted that the UN system in the region is coordinating its advice to UN country teams in their plans for post-pandemic recovery. Eighteen UN agencies, funds and programmes are together developing a set of "green" measures to be issued in November 2020, having earlier issued summary recommendations on COVID-19 recovery. More information is available at <https://www.unece.org/runwelcome/un-cooperation-in-the-unece-region.html>

23. The Co-Chair thanked the Task Force members for sharing their views on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the economy and the environment. The Co-Chair pointed out to a wide array of policy

and practical responses applied by the countries in the region for a resilient, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery. The Co-Chair also highlighted an interest from the Task Force members to share further their experience and innovative approaches and to provide targeted support to countries in order to promote green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the EECCA region. She underlined the supportive role that the Task Force can play in this regard, and requested that updated information or corrections be provided to the Secretariat by 30 October, with a view to finalising and releasing the paper by the end of November.

Item 3: 2021-2022 Programme of Work

Presentation by the Secretariat

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

24. Ms. Kitamori presented highlights from the implementation of the 2019-2020 Programme of Work and Budget. Her presentation is available [here](#). She recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated travel restrictions have had an impact on the implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget over the past year, but noted that the Secretariat was able to adapt quickly to the circumstances and new modes of work. For the GREEN Action Task Force Programme of Work 2021-2022 [ENV/EPOC/EAP(2020)6], the ongoing COVID-19 situation and the need for support for a green recovery were taken into account. In particular, work on measures for greening COVID-19 responses has been added to the work programme on economy-wide cross-sectoral policies for green growth and sustainable development. She invited participants to study the document's Annex, which describes each proposed activity in detail.

25. Ms. Kitamori stressed that there remains a significant funding gap to fully implement the proposed Programme of Work for 2021-2022. She thanked the GREEN Action Task Force Members who have already pledged financial support, and called for support by additional countries for the implementation of the activities proposed in the Programme of Work, notable those marked as “C” (not yet funded) as well as for activities “A” (continuation of funded work) and “B” (new work with secured funding) to expand scope and country coverage.

26. During the open discussion, the following interventions were made:

27. Mr. Alisher Mamadzhonov (Environmental Affairs Officer, UNECE) noted that UNECE highly values its strategic cooperation with the OECD on the National Policy Dialogues in the water sector and looks forward to continued cooperation over the next biennium.

28. Ms. Katrin Zimmer (Environmental Economist, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, Sweden) asked if small-scale hydroelectric plants would be taken into account in the GREEN Action Task Force's work on water management. Ms. Kitamori noted that the future programme on the energy-water-land nexus is currently being developed and its exact scope has not been defined. The Task Force would be willing to explore this issue further, funding permitting.

29. Ms. Martine Rohn-Brossard (Head of Delegation, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland) highlighted the importance of infrastructure and mining and committed to continue financing these work streams. She recommended aligning closely with the UNEA meetings and their resolutions on both mining and infrastructure and welcomed the ongoing collaboration between OECD and UNECE in strengthening regional water security.

30. Ms. Marianne Gjörv (Senior Advisor, Norwegian Environment Agency, Norway) expressed support for the proposed areas of work and welcomed the inclusion of circular economy, biodiversity and climate change adaptation in the new biennium's work plan. Norway is unable to commit to further funding at this time.

31. Mr. Zahar Makhmudov (Executive Director, Central Asian Regional Environment Centre – CAREC) asked if there were any plans to cooperate with any other donor-funded programmes, like those supported by USAID or the EU's New Green Deal for Central Asia. Ms. Kitamori reminded that many of the activities under the GREEN Action Task Force are implemented in cooperation with partner organisations, which may not be fully reflected in the Programme of Work document, and that new partnerships are always welcome to maximise synergies.

32. Mr. Keinhorst, the Co-Chair, highlighted the nexus work as a priority for the region of Central Asia and pointed out that, if the 2021 Annual Meeting takes place in Tashkent as originally planned for 2020, there will be an excellent opportunity to talk about the new nexus programme. Mr. Keinhorst is actively supporting the development of this programme, notably through meetings with ambassadors to establish links before the official preparation phase of the programme begins.

33. Mr. Keinhorst congratulated the OECD on developing an ambitious work programme. The Co-Chair proposed to the Task Force members to endorse the Programme of Work and Budget, which was supported by the Task Force unanimously.

Item 4: Selection of new Bureau members

34. Ms. Kitamori reminded participants that the Bureau of the GREEN Action Task Force consists of two Co-Chairs and 6 Vice Chairs, half from EECCA countries and half from OECD countries. There are currently two vacancies on the Bureau, following the departure of Ms Aliya Shalabekova (Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan) and Mr. Dzmitry Matusevich (Ministry of Economy of Belarus), who stepped down in 2020. The Secretariat received two candidates to fill the vacancies: Ms. Tatsiana Kananchuk, Head of the General Directorate for Environmental Policy, International Cooperation and Sciences, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus and Mr. Akzan Shiranov, Head of the Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development Department, Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan. Room Document 3 with their CVs ([available here](#)) was presented to the Task Force members.

35. Ms. Kitamori submitted the candidates for inclusion on the Bureau. With no objections, Mr. Shiranov and Ms. Kananchuk were officially elected to the Bureau. Ms. Kananchuk and Mr. Shiranov thanked the Task Force for their support.

36. Ms. Kitamori reminded all Bureau members and participants that the next annual Bureau Meeting of the GREEN Action Task Force would take place in spring 2021, likely in April.

Item 5: Closing remarks

37. Mr. Keinhorst reminded participants about the upcoming 3rd Eastern Partnership (EaP) ministerial meeting on Environment and Climate Change on 22 October 2020, to be held in person in Luxembourg under Germany's presidency. The meeting would include participation from the EU Environment Commissioner, Ministers from EU member states and also EaP countries. It would address infrastructure-related policies in the regions as well as the sustainability and resilience of economic development strategies. It would also cover how to finance the transition, which is a challenge shared by countries across the region, especially in view of COVID-19. A similar conference in Central Asia was originally planned but it was cancelled due to COVID-19.

38. Mr. Keinhorst thanked the Task Force members for participating and their active engagement in the discussion and closed the meeting.

**Participants List for [VIRTUAL] 2020 Annual Meeting of the GREEN
Action Task Force**

**Liste des Participants pour [VIRTUELLE] 2020 Réunion du groupe
d'action GREEN**

13/10/2020 - 13/10/2020

All Sessions

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Economics
E-Control Ltd.

Mr. Georg REBERNIG *Environment Agency Austria*

Czech Republic/République tchèque

Ms. Jitka PILBAUEROVÁ *Officer*
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Estonia/Estonie

Ms. Hanna SOE *Adviser*
EU and International Co-operation Department
Ministry of the Environment

Finland/Finlande

Ms. Suvi TUOMINEN *First* *Secretary*
Permanent Delegation of Finland to the OECD

France

Ms. Nolwenn DAVID-NOZAY *Counsellor
Environment, Sustainable Development and
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l'OCDE*

Germany/Allemagne

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Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea*

Latvia/Lettonie

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Norway/Norvège

Ms. Marianne GJØRV *Senior Adviser
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Portugal

Ms. Elisabete QUINTAS DA SILVA *DA Adviser Office for International Relations,
Ministry of Environment and Sustainable
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Slovak Republic/République slovaque

Mr. Norbert KURILLA *Advisor to the President of the Slovak Republic*

Ms. Kristína RUSIKOVA **GENDOVA** *First Secretary
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Mr. Andrej FERCEJ *Minister Plenipotentiary
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Ms. Katrin ZIMMER *Senior Advisor
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- Mr. Andrzej JANUSZEWSKI** *Directorate General for Environment/E1
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- Ms. Farida MAMMADOVA** *Senior state tax inspector of the International
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European ECO Forum / Eco-Accord

UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)/Commission économique des Nations Unies pour l'Europe (CEE-ONU)

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Mr. Alexandre MARTOUSSEVITCH	<i>Policy ENV/GGGR</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>Advice</i>
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Ms. Isabella NEUWEG	<i>Policy Analyst, ENV/GGGR</i>	<i>climate</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>energy</i>
Ms. Olga OLSON	<i>Policy ENV/GGGR</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>Advice</i>
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Mr. Antti RAUHALA	<i>Junior SGE/GRS/EURASIA</i>	<i>Policy</i>		<i>Analyst</i>
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Ms. Talisa ZUR HAUSEN *Junior Policy Analyst*
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Other/Autre

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