



European Union – Central Asia Working Group on Environment and Climate Change

Meeting of the Coordination Committee

15 June 2020, WEBEX meeting

Minutes

Opening of the meeting

Meeting Co-Chairs – Mr Luca Perez, Deputy Head of Unit, Directorate-General for Environment, European Commission (DG ENV), and Mr Giovanni Brunelli, Director of Division, Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, Italy (IMELS) – opened the meeting, welcomed the participants and invited them to introduce themselves.

Mr Luca Perez (DG ENV) presented the recent developments to implement the EU Green Deal such as new Biodiversity Strategy and Farm to Fork Strategy. He also said that the online meeting is a sign of commitment to move forward with the Work Plan agreed in Brussels and that the COVID crisis has only reinforced the commitment to green transition and the need to switch from traditional unsustainable 'brown' economy.

Mr Giovanni Brunelli (IMELS) greeted the participants, acknowledging that, despite the pandemic and the ensuing hard times, our activities could go on through different means. He stressed the opportunity for the future steps of the Working Group on Environment and Climate Change to launch a positive message for a green recovery. He affirmed that the Agenda 2030 must be the framework for the evaluation of sustainable development options on the one hand, while on the other be the support for the establishment of new or renewed consumption and production patterns, more respectful for the environment, in the context of a changing climate.

Mr Johannes Stenbaek Madsen, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Kazakhstan (EU DEL), introduced the agenda of the meeting and highlighted two particular issues to be discussed:

- What was the impact of COVID-19 crisis on the Work Programme?
- Are there any changes to be introduced into the Work Programme?

He also noted that the last three months' events confirmed that both the EU DEL and WECOOP team had proven their ability to work remotely, and introduced the next item of the agenda:

Implementation of the Work Programme of the WGECC: Review of the work done since the 9th meeting of the WGECC and the work plan of WECOOP project until the end of 2020; impacts of the current crisis

Mr Valts Vilnītis, WECOOP Team Leader, presented WECOOP project progress and plans until the end of 2020ⁱ.

Open discussions and Q&A, moderated by Mr Johannes Stenbaek Madsen



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WECOOP

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Johannes Stenbaek Madsen (EU DEL) expressed his appreciation of WECOOP's cooperation with other programs and projects.

All countries informed about the challenges they came across during the COVID-19 crisis.

Kazakhstan (Mr Daulet Abilkairov, IGTC) expressed appreciation of WECOOP support in the field of Best Available Techniques and shared the information that the hearing of KazWaste at the Parliament had been postponed,

Kazakhstan (Ms Zulfiya Suleimenova, MEGNR) informed about the ongoing internal consultation process at the Ministry for making a decision on requesting support from WECOOP for the new UNECE project on developing a national action plan to prepare for ratification of protocols under the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution.

Kyrgyzstan (Ms Aizada Kiiazova, SAEPF) stated that Kyrgyzstan is interested in WECOOP support to the National Water Agency (drafting legislation, trainings).

Tajikistan (Mr Mahmad Safarov, CEP) stated that Tajikistan is interested in WECOOP support in air quality management (including information system and database).

Turkmenistan (Mr Magtymguly Akmyradov, MFA) informed that the main issues that require support from WECOOP had been defined and the next steps / activities agreed.

Uzbekistan (Mr Tolegen Abdulgaziev, SCEEP) stated that Uzbekistan is interested in WECOOP support in air quality management, including accession to the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution. He also informed that Uzbekistan actively cooperates with Kazakhstan on water quality issues along the Syr Darya River. Uzbekistan proposed to arrange an online meeting with the WECOOP team to discuss and agree on the next steps related to water management issues and long-term internships of local experts in the EU countries.

The 10th meeting of the WGECC (Spring 2021, Almaty): possible focus. Open discussions, moderated by Ms Alessandra Fidanza, Senior Expert – Sogesid spa Technical Assistance Unit, Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, Italy

IMELS (Ms Alessandra Fidanza) recalled the priority areas defined in the conclusions of the Sixth EU–Central Asia High Level Conference on Environment and Water: environmental governance, circular economy, sustainable consumption and production, climate change (adaptation and mitigation), integrated and water resources management and cross-cutting issues.

In February 2020, the WGECC focused on Circular Economy. Therefore, provided the current worldwide emergency, she suggested that the Coordination Committee considers as a possible focus for the next WG meeting the addressing of multiple issues, being the pandemic a cross-cutting theme among environment, economy, and societal challenges. She then requested the Countries to represent their proposals for priorities.

Tajikistan (Mr Mahmad Safarov) informed on adoption of three policy documents (Environmental Programme for 2020-2030, Complex Programme for Environmental Education of the Population for 2021-2025 and Climate Adaptation Strategy). **Environmental governance** was identified as a priority.

Kyrgyzstan (Ms Aizada Kiiazova) informed about the establishment of the Working Group for Green Economy Modelling and mentioned that many activities, especially in the field of climate, are being delayed due to the COVID-19 crisis. **Green recovery** was identified as a priority. Rethinking environmental governance, air quality management and circular economy are important as well.

Turkmenistan (Mr Magtymguly Akmyradov) appreciated cooperation with WECOOP and its support, and identified green economy as priority. Moreover, preparation for UNFCCC COP26 (postponed until November 2021) was stressed.

Kazakhstan (Ms Zulfiya Suleimenova) identified several priorities: **climate change** related issues (new INDC, emission trading, adaptation, but also **social aspects of climate change**), green/low carbon economy, green financing, introduction of BAT, waste-to-energy solutions. In reply to the question raised by EU DEL, she informed that the new Environmental Code is being developed as planned and no considerable delays are expected.

Kazakhstan (Mr Daulet Abilkairov) stressed the importance of **facilitating green financing** procedures.

Uzbekistan (Mr Tolegen Abdulgaziev) identified the following priorities: circular economy, introduction of BAT, green financing, **attraction of foreign investments in environmental sector**. He also pointed out the importance of introducing **high-tech solutions for environmental protection**.

DG ENV (Mr Andrzej Januszewski) stated that DG ENV considers green recovery as an overarching topic for the next WGECC meeting. Moreover, environmental governance and financing, the need to integrate environmental governance into state policies, public participation in the policy development were stressed as well as preparations for the forthcoming COP meetings (UN FCCC, UN CBD).

IMELS (Ms Alessandra Fidanza) thanked the participants for the very fruitful discussion, summarized the ideas presented by the participants and suggested the following draft topic for the next WGECC meeting – “Addressing green recovery after pandemic” with sub-topics to be addressed in the various sessions of the WGECC:

- Economic, social and environmental recovery
- Economic and social impacts of climate Change
- Green financing and investments
- Environmental governance
- BAT and technology for environmental protection

Turkmenistan (Mr Magtymguly Akmyradov) proposed to adopt a more flexible topic without mentioning the pandemic explicitly.

Kyrgyzstan (Ms Aizada Kiiazova) agreed with Turkmenistan’s colleagues and proposed to the WECOOP team as the Secretariat to reflect on all the proposed ideas and come up with the suitable topic and then agree it with members of the Coordination Committee. It was also suggested to send a positive message by including circular economy aspects, impact of the pandemic on the biodiversity, and recovery strategy for developing concrete options on how to go forward working together as the sub-topics for the next WG meeting.

IMELS (Ms Alessandra Fidanza) then proposed to consider the title opportunities for a green recovery, bearing in mind that all the relevant sub-topics agreed would be addressed in specific sessions of the meeting. She also reported that Mr Cozzone, former WGECC Chair and now Secretary of the WHO Environment and Health Process, presented his regards to the Coordination Committee, and that he wished a future collaboration between the WGECC and the WHO Environment and Health Process could be envisaged in the future. The audience expressed their potential interest.

WECOOP Project (Mr Valts Vilnītis) assured that WECOOP would negotiate the topic with all the countries to come up with a suitable wording in both English and Russian.

Summary of the outcomes

IMELS (Ms Alessandra Fianza, Mr Giovanni Brunelli)

Paradoxically, COVID-19 crisis has opened certain opportunities for developing new approaches while taking into account “green issues”.

DG ENV (Mr Andrzej Januszewski)

The results achieved by WECOOP project are highly appreciated. DG ENV will continue support joint activities on bilateral level with the CA countries and support regional cooperation.

Mr Giovanni Brunelli, Director of Division, Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, Italy (IMELS) in his ***closing remarks*** thanked the participants, interpreters, organisers, and expressed a hope that the next Coordination Committee meeting could be organized face-to-face.

ⁱ <https://wecoop.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/1WGCC-Valts-Vilnitis-F150620.pdf>