



## **INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION**

**Report of the Office of Internal Oversight  
services of the Evaluation of the United Nations  
Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)**

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## INSPECTION AND EVALUATION DIVISION

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**FUNCTION**      *“The Office shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the programmes and legislative mandates of the Organisation. It shall conduct programme evaluations with the purpose of establishing analytical and critical evaluations of the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, examining whether changes therein require review of the methods of delivery, the continued relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates as they may be reflected in the approved budgets and the medium-term plan of the Organisation;” (General Assembly [Resolution 48/218 B](#)).*

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## *Summary*

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was created in 1947 to confront the devastation in Europe left in the wake of World War II. With the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1990s, its membership expanded by one third and it currently serves an economically varied group of 56 member States from Europe, North America and Asia.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) examined the relevance and effectiveness of UNECE, and the extent to which it is fit for purpose to support member States with the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The evaluation was conducted using surveys, interviews, on-site visits, case studies, direct observation, document reviews and secondary data analyses.

UNECE has effectively facilitated the establishment of critical conventions, regulations, norms and standards that have had both regional and global impact, by providing a neutral space for experts from its member countries and beyond to negotiate, discuss and generate useful concrete products. These products have included legally binding conventions in the transport and environment sectors and hundreds of standards, classifications and recommendations in such diverse areas as statistics, public private partnerships, trade, housing, forestry and energy. UNECE provides a platform for decision-makers to discuss policy and a variety of UNECE processes provide policy advice.

In order to achieve these results, UNECE has effectively navigated extensive intergovernmental machinery, but has been challenged by demands placed on its secretariat role and faces the risk of losing its institutional memory in playing this role. Servicing such a large number of bodies in distinct and highly specialized areas has also affected the UNECE Secretariat's ability to be more flexible, particularly with regard to working across sectors and subprogrammes. UNECE has also faced competing and at times conflicting member State demands and priorities stemming in part from different economic needs and historical and geopolitical trends.

While many UNECE products have been adopted and have been useful in non-UNECE countries, UNECE lacks a common understanding and clear strategy on its global reach beyond its regional role.

Since the 1990s, UNECE has also assumed a larger role in providing technical assistance to countries with economies in transition in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It has adequately targeted the countries most in need in the region, however, its funding for and focus on technical cooperation has been low and dispersed.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development agenda provides a critical opportunity for UNECE to examine how its activities under existing norms, standards, conventions, and related review mechanisms and statistical work can contribute to attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNECE has already taken concrete steps to do this, including identifying and mapping relevant activities, surveying member States and holding discussions within sectoral committees. While it has the necessary expertise to support member States, particularly with regard to monitoring frameworks in the context of environmental conventions and in peer reviews as part of country assessments, UNECE faces several issues as it moves forward. These included weak inter-sectoral collaboration, expanded workloads and the need to enhance

partnerships, particularly with the private and civil society sectors.

OIOS makes five important recommendations to UNECE:

- Develop and operationalize a knowledge management strategy
- Conduct a mapping of inter-sectoral and inter-divisional initiatives and activities
- Develop a proposal for presentation to the EXCOM which explores the nature of its global focus
- Examine how its activities under existing norms, standards, conventions and related review mechanisms and statistical work can contribute to attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Undertake the mapping of existing partnerships and cooperation with non-state actors and develop specific proposals for expanding and strengthening such cooperation in support of the SDGs

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## I. Introduction and objective

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS-IED) identified the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) for evaluation on the basis of a risk assessment undertaken by OIOS to identify Secretariat programme evaluation priorities. The Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) selected the programme evaluation of UNECE for consideration at its 57th session, in June 2017<sup>1</sup>. The General Assembly endorsed the selection in its resolution A/RES/70/8.

2. The general frame of reference for OIOS is set out in General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B, 54/244 and 59/272, as well as ST/SGB/273, which authorizes OIOS to initiate, carry out and report on any action that it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. OIOS evaluation is provided for in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation<sup>2</sup>.

3. The overall evaluation objective was to determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance and effectiveness of UNECE's work, and the extent to which it is prepared to support member States in the post-2015 development agenda. The evaluation topic emerged from a programme level risk assessment described in detail in the evaluation inception paper.<sup>3</sup> The evaluation has been conducted in conformity with the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

4. The UNECE Secretariat management comments were sought on the draft report and taken into account in the preparation of the final report. The formal UNECE response is included in the annex.

## II. Background

### *Mandate, governance and organizational structure*

5. The Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was created on 28 March 1947 by resolution 36 (IV) of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to support post-war reconstruction and promote the integration and economic cooperation of European countries. At the outset, UNECE was composed of 18 member States from Europe plus the United States. In the next 30 years, Canada, Cyprus and 13 more European countries joined the organization, and between 1991 and 1995, membership increased by 21 more countries from Eastern Europe, the Caucus and Central Asia (EECCA). Two further additions in the last fifteen years have brought the final count to 56 member States. UNECE's membership is diverse, spanning countries with very high, high and medium human development.<sup>4</sup>

6. The main objective of UNECE is to pursue sustainable development and regional cooperation and integration through three interrelated functions:<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, Fifth-fifth session, A/70/16, June 2015.

<sup>2</sup> ST/SGB/2000/8; Regulation 7.1.

<sup>3</sup> IED-15-003, OIOS-IED Inception Paper: Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 26 June 2015.

<sup>4</sup> 2015 Human Development Index, UNDP. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>.

<sup>5</sup> A/69/6 (Sect 20), A/70/6 (Sect 20).

- a) **Policy dialogue** provides a neutral platform for dialogue on economic, social and environmental issues;
- b) **Normative work** facilitates the development and negotiation of new norms, standards and conventions; and
- c) **Technical cooperation** promotes the integration of member countries to the world economy.

7. UNECE is ruled by terms of reference and rules of procedure revised in 2009.<sup>6</sup> It is governed by the Economic Commission for Europe,<sup>7</sup> which meets on a biennial basis. Between these sessions, review and guidance of the intergovernmental sectoral committees and implementation of the UNECE's Secretariat programme of work is exercised on behalf of the Commission by the Executive Committee (EXCOM).

8. Eight sectoral committees act as governing bodies for UNECE's eight subprogrammes.<sup>8</sup> The UNECE secretariat services these committees as well as the committees' subsidiary bodies. The eight committees are:

- i. The Inland Transport Committee;
- ii. The Committee on Environmental Policy;
- iii. The Conference of European Statisticians;
- iv. The Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry;
- v. The Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public Private Partnerships;
- vi. The Committee on Sustainable Energy;
- vii. The Committee on Housing and Land Management; and
- viii. The Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards.

9. The UNECE Secretariat is located in Geneva, Switzerland. For the 2014-2015 biennium, it had a total of 313 staff members. It is comprised of an Office of the Executive Secretary and eight substantive subprogrammes implemented by six divisions shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Subprogrammes and Divisions in UNECE**

Subprogramme	Division
Environment	Environment
Transport	Sustainable Transport
Statistics	Statistical
Sustainable Energy	Sustainable Energy
Housing and Land Management	Forest, Land and Housing
Forestry and Timber	
Economic Cooperation and Integration	Economic Cooperation and Trade
Trade	

Source: UNECE website

### Resources

10. The UNECE's projected resources for the 2014-2015 biennium amounted to USD 81.6 million, with 92 per cent from the RB. This represents a decrease in total planned resources from the previous biennium, attributable to decreases of 20 per cent and 2.6 per cent in the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) and the Regular Programme of

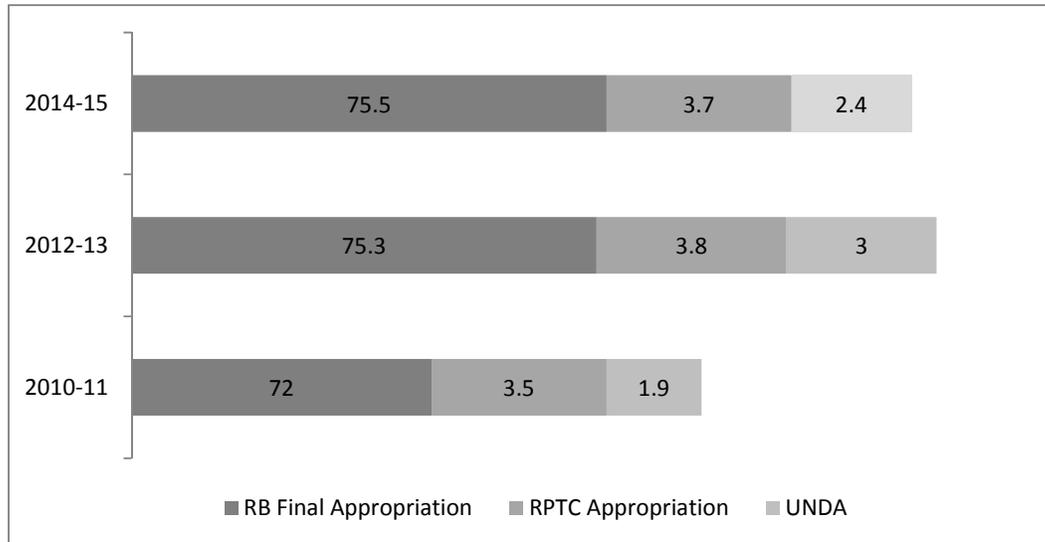
<sup>6</sup> E/ECE/778/Rev.5

<sup>7</sup> Otherwise known as "the Commission."

<sup>8</sup> Environmental and Transport Conventions have their own governing bodies.

Technical Cooperation (RPTC) respectively. Figure 1 shows planned resources for the last three biennia.

**Figure 1: UNECE biennium budgets, 2010-2015 (millions of United States dollars)**



Source: UNECE

### III. Methodology

11. The time frame for the evaluation was primarily 2012-2015. Selective data and information from earlier years were also reviewed to support the analysis of particular thematic issues.

12. The evaluation employed the following combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. All evaluation results are based on a triangulation of multiple data sources.

- i. **Document review:** review of a sample of key documents, including: strategic frameworks; budgets and programme documents; EXCOM minutes; sectoral committee meeting reports; technical cooperation project documents; audit and evaluation documents; and documents related to the sustainable development agenda.
- ii. **Interviews:** 87 semi-structured interviews with a non-random sample of UNECE management and staff; representatives of member States and partner organizations, including other United Nations entities; intergovernmental organizations; the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- iii. **Surveys:** three self-administered web-based surveys of sectoral committee members, member States and UNECE staff.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> OIOS conducted the surveys in September and October 2015. The staff survey was sent to all 313 P and G level staff, consultants and interns. A total of 176 staff responded, for a 56 per cent response rate. The sectoral

- iv. **Direct observation:** of two EXCOM meetings through videoconference, October and November 2015; an annual session of a sectoral Committee (Committee on Environmental Policy) in Geneva, October 2015; and the Economic Forum and Governing Council of the Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) in Tajikistan, November 2015;
  - v. **Case studies:** in-depth studies of nine UNECE areas of work.<sup>10</sup> OIOS based its selection on predefined criteria<sup>11</sup> and in consultation with the relevant UNECE Divisions. Each case study included a variety of data collection methods including interviews with government representatives; members of committees and/or working groups and other individuals from the private sector or civil society; short surveys of relevant stakeholders; focused email questionnaires and document reviews.
  - vi. **Missions:** to UNECE headquarters in Geneva; European Union headquarters in Brussels; OECD and other international organizations in Paris; and Dushanbe, Tajikistan.
13. The evaluation data collection was limited by the low response rate of the member State survey.
14. OIOS consulted the UNECE Secretariat during the conduct of the evaluation and expresses its gratitude for its cooperation and assistance.

## IV. Evaluation Results

### A. UNECE has effectively facilitated the establishment of critical conventions, norms and standards that have had a regional and global impact

*UNECE has effectively supported the negotiation of legally binding instruments and the development of standards*

15. Since its creation UNECE has played a key role in the negotiation of 74 legally binding international instruments<sup>12</sup> in the areas of transport (58) and the environment (16). It has facilitated the development of hundreds of voluntary standards, classifications, action plans and recommendations, as shown in Table 2.

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committee survey was sent to 464 current members of the eight sectoral committees based on lists provided by focal points from each Division. A total of 100 responded, for a 24 per cent response rate. The survey of member States was sent to the 56 Geneva based missions plus the European Union. Eight delegates responded, for a 14 per cent response rate.

<sup>10</sup> Each UNECE subprogramme includes “areas of work.” One from each subprogramme (and two from Transport) were selected as case studies. They were: Air pollution; Road safety; Inland water transport; Sustainable housing and real estate markets; Data, monitoring, and assessment to influence policy dialogue in forestry; Innovation and competitiveness; Gas; Trade facilitation and electronic business; and Social and demographic statistics. The case study analyses were integrated into the evaluation results as an additional source of evidence

<sup>11</sup> Case study selection criteria included: coverage of all subprogrammes; resources; substantial work to date); global vs. regional focus and possibility of observing meetings.

<sup>12</sup> These include Conventions, Protocols and Agreements but does not consider the 136 legally binding vehicle regulations annexed to the Agreement concerning the Adoption of Uniform Technical Prescriptions for Wheeled Vehicles.

**Table 2: UNECE outputs, by subprogramme, 1948-2016**

<b>Legally binding conventions, agreements and protocols</b>			
<b>Subprogramme</b>	<b>Output</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>#</b>
Environment	Convention	Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution	5
Environment	Protocol	Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	11
Transport	Convention	Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets. (TIR Convention)	58
Transport	Agreement	Agreement concerning the Adoption of Uniform Technical Prescriptions for Wheeled Vehicles	
<b>Non legally binding standards, classifications, action plans and recommendations</b>			
Statistics	Standard	Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics	<30
Trade		Standard concerning the marketing and quality control of apples	<100
Economic Cooperation and Integration		UNECE PPP Standard for Healthcare Policy <sup>13</sup>	9
Transport	Classification	Globally harmonized system of classification and labelling of chemicals (GHS)	1
Sustainable Energy		UN Framework Classification for Fossil Energy and Mineral Reserves (UNFC)	1
Forestry and Timber	Action Plan	Rovaniemi Action Plan for the Forest Sector	1
Housing		Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing	1
Sustainable Energy	Recommendation	Carbon Structure and Storage (CCS) and CCS for Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) in a Post-Kyoto Agreement	15
Trade	Recommendation	No. 3 - Code for the Representation of Names of Countries	40
Sustainable Energy	Best Practice	Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Use in Coal Mines	

Source: *Compendium of Legal Instrument, Norms and Standards, UNECE, 2015.*

16. UNECE is positively recognized in playing this important role. In surveys, 82 per cent of sectoral committee members and 88 per cent of staff rated UNECE as effective in helping to develop standards and technical recommendations. Similarly, 72 per cent of sectoral committee members and 81 per cent of staff rated UNECE as effective in the development of legally binding regulations, standards and technical recommendations. All eight member State representatives who responded to the survey concurred that UNECE was successful in helping to negotiate legally binding instruments.

*UNECE has also been effective in servicing conventions*

17. UNECE has significant experience in the servicing and administration of legally binding conventions. At a practical level, this requires: sustaining a network of convention bodies, such as implementation committees and working groups; organizing meetings and sessions; preparing documents, agendas and reports; and collecting and disseminating information between participants. Servicing conventions has meant ensuring that legal

<sup>13</sup> In the public review phase.

instruments evolve and stay up-to-date and seeking further ratifications when appropriate, which is crucial to maintain their continued relevance.

18. The need to ensure that legal instruments stay up-to-date is particularly important in the environment and transport, two spheres where scientific and technical advances compelled adjustments to agreements negotiated years or decades earlier. In the environment, this has taken the form of protocols to conventions, or “soft-law” voluntary recommendations and resolutions based on new developments and good practices. For example, the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution was originally signed in 1979, but since then UNECE has facilitated the negotiation of additional protocols addressing the emissions of eight specific air pollutants. In transport, for example, UNECE’s Working Party on Road Traffic Safety and the World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations has continued to update conventions negotiated many decades ago. In vehicle regulations, there have been 136 new regulations since the agreement was reached in 1959. These regulations have addressed issues that evolve through time, such as automotive brakes or safety belts.

19. Keeping Conventions relevant also involves obtaining new ratifications, which has been challenging. In 2014-2015, UNECE achieved its target of new ratifications for two out of six conventions or protocols.<sup>14</sup> In the environment, for example, UNECE’s multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) reached a peak of new ratifications in 2009, but the trend has been on the decline in subsequent years.<sup>15</sup>

*UNECE’s conventions have contributed to positive impacts in global public health and safety, democracy and cross-border trade*

20. Table 3 shows examples of UNECE Conventions that have resulted in positive global outcomes.

**Table 3: Examples of positive global outcomes resulting from UNECE conventions**

Convention	Positive outcome
Agreement concerning the adoption of uniform technical prescriptions for wheeled vehicles, equipment and parts, 1958	Enhanced safety for car occupants and pedestrians; reduced emission and fuel consumption from vehicles
TIR Convention, 1975	More efficient cross-border trade
Aarhus Convention, 2001	Enhanced public access to environmental information
CLRTAP, 1979 <sup>16</sup>	Reductions of airborne emissions in the UNECE region

Source: varied<sup>17</sup>

14 OIOS analysis based on targets in UNECE/CEP/2014/4 and updated list of ratifications in treaties.un.org.

15 UNECE/CEP/2014/16, p.17.

16 In recent data, the UNECE region has seen decreasing emissions in the range of 70 per cent to 18 per cent.

17 Slechten and Veradi (2014), Measuring the impact of multiple air-pollution agreements on global CO2 emissions. El Beyrouty and Tessler (2014). Economic Competitiveness gains from the adoption of best practices in intermodal maritime and road transport in the Americas. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. A/HRC/31/53.

21. In the wider scheme of international legal frameworks, UNECE's conventions and agreements have influenced other regional and global instruments such as European Union Directives. In environment, the Water Convention influenced the EU Water Framework Directive.<sup>18</sup> In transport, the Agreements on the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) and by Inland Waterway (ADN) were integrated into the EU Directive on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, and the rules set out by the ADR and the ADN were extended to national transport operations in all EU countries.<sup>19</sup> Environmental conventions have inspired the normative content of international instruments such as the UNECE 1998 Aarhus Protocol on Heavy Metals, which influenced the Minamata Convention.

22. With the exception of environmental conventions, UNECE does not systematically monitor and report on the use and impacts of its conventions, norms and standards. It adopts an informal approach for communicating to the general public how its work affects the daily life of citizens in its web section on 'how we impact your daily life'.

*The use of UNECE non-legally binding products was generally high*

23. UNECE's voluntary products, such as standards, classifications, action plans, charters and recommendations, are public goods that member States and non-state actors can use if they find them valuable. Overall, 73 per cent of sectoral committee member survey respondents indicated that in the past five years their country had used one of these UNECE products. The case studies provided examples of products used, these included: The Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide; the Rovaniemi Action Plan and the Consolidated Resolution on Road Traffic. In the context of the statistics case study, all seven national officials from National Statistics Offices (NSO) confirmed that their country had used the Recommendations for the Census of Population and Housing.

**B. UNECE's technical cooperation projects support normative work and for the most part appropriately targeted countries in need; however, they are concentrated in one subprogramme**

*Overall technical cooperation supports UNECE's normative work but project budgets are concentrated in the environment*

24. UNECE's technical cooperation activities aim to improve governments' capacity to implement UNECE legal instruments, norms, standards and regulations as in the UNECE Technical Cooperation Strategy.<sup>20</sup> An OIOS review of 56 technical cooperation projects in the period from 2006 to 2015<sup>21</sup> confirmed that a majority (38 of 56) of projects broadly supported the development or implementation of UNECE's normative framework. A portion of these projects (21) directly made the link with a specific UNECE convention, norm or standard. This is particularly the case in environment where out of 17 projects, 13 were supporting the implementation of one of UNECE's environmental conventions or protocols.

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18 Blundell, *The Influence of Aarhus on Domestic and EU Law: Access to Information*. 2013.

19 Directive 2008/68/ (5).

20 E/ECE/1447/Add.2.

21 All projects with a start or end date within 2010-2015 in UNECE's Project Monitoring Tool were included in the analysis. The review comprised all extra-budgetary projects appearing in UNECE's Project Monitoring Tool (PMT) with a Technical Cooperation Project Form.

25. The environment subprogramme commanded a majority of technical cooperation extrabudgetary expenditures (69 per cent), while other subprogrammes such as housing and energy accounted for approximately 2 per cent each. The variety of thematic areas covered by UNECE, and its limited technical cooperation budget, has implied a wide dispersal of funds and many smaller budget projects. Of the 56 projects reviewed, 41 per cent had a budget of 100,000 or less. For example, agricultural quality standards, which number more than 100, had one technical cooperation project in support of their implementation. A review of data from the Integrated Management and Document Information System (IMDIS) showed that only seven per cent of UNECE outputs and 16 per cent of UNECE staff work months were devoted to technical cooperation in 2014-2015.

*UNECE's technical cooperation had, for the most part, appropriately targeted the less developed transition economies in its region*

26. UNECE's target countries for technical cooperation are "transition economies."<sup>22</sup> Within transition economies, there is a wide range of economic development.<sup>23</sup> The review of information on projects and activities funded from extra-budgetary resources and activities funded from extra-budgetary resources and provided on PMT revealed the majority have focused on the group of transition, non-EU countries.<sup>24</sup> As shown in Table 4, the four less developed countries of the UNECE region<sup>25</sup> were among the most often serviced by UNECE's technical cooperation activities. UNECE states that its technical cooperation is demand driven,<sup>26</sup> which might explain why Belarus and Kazakhstan, which are not among the poorest, were those most often targeted. Comparatively, other countries in the low to middle-income bracket, such as Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, were less represented in UNECE technical cooperation projects. Most committee members and staff surveyed (78 per cent and 84 per cent respectively) indicated that UNECE had targeted the countries most in need in the region.

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22 A/68/6 (Sect 20), A/70/6 (Sect. 20), E/ECE/1447/Add.2. Transition economies are moving from a central planning to a market economy. Twenty-five UNECE member States fall under this category.

23 Of the 26 transition economies, 11 have joined the European Union.

24 There was one support project to a non-transition country.

25 Based on UNDP and World Bank rankings.

26 E/ECE/1447/Add.2.

**Table 4: From 2006 to 2017, out of 56 technical cooperation projects, the four less developed transition economies had among the highest number of projects<sup>27</sup>**

Country	Involvement in a TC Project	UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) <sup>28</sup>	World Bank Income ranking <sup>29</sup>
Belarus	12	High Human Development Index	Upper Middle Income
Kazakhstan	11	High Human Development Index	Upper Middle Income
Kyrgyzstan	11	<b>Medium Human Development Index</b>	<b>Low Middle Income</b>
Tajikistan	10	<b>Medium Human Development Index</b>	<b>Low Middle Income</b>
Turkmenistan	9	Medium Human Development Index	Upper Middle Income
Uzbekistan	8	<b>Medium Human Development Index</b>	<b>Low Middle Income</b>
Moldova	8	<b>Medium Human Development Index</b>	<b>Low Middle Income</b>
Azerbaijan	8	High Human Development Index	Upper Middle Income
Georgia	6	High Human Development Index	Low Middle Income
Armenia	5	High Human Development Index	Low Middle Income
Ukraine	4	High Human Development Index	Low Middle Income
Russia	5	High Human Development Index	Upper Middle Income

Source: UNECE's Project Monitoring Tool (PMT).

27. UNECE contributes to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in all 17 countries in the UNECE region.

**C. UNECE has been effective in convening technical experts for its intergovernmental platforms, but is challenged by demands placed on its secretariat role and the risk of losing institutional memory**

*UNECE has successfully summoned relevant technical expertise to develop its key outputs, effectively navigating extensive secretariat machinery in the process*

28. As discussed in Result A, UNECE has effectively facilitated critical norms, standards and conventions, which it has done through its ability to convene and guide the discussions and decisions of global experts on the sectors it works in. Some of the expert committees it services in this regard have been in existence for more than 50 years, and UNECE has acquired a rich history of institutional knowledge and expertise in their work. Servicing of committees is one of the major activities of UNECE, and it generally does this very effectively. In the 2014-2015 biennium, it produced 1,224 parliamentary documents and serviced 1,772 meetings. This is the second largest volume of secretariat services in the United Nations Secretariat.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, as noted in the JIU report (JIU/REP/2015/3), for 2010-2014, a large majority (81 per cent) of UNECE outputs consisted of documents and servicing meetings.

29. Overall, members of sectoral committees rated UNECE high in performing its secretariat role. A large majority of respondents to the sectoral committee survey (89 per cent) rated the secretariat support provided by UNECE as excellent or good. More specifically, a majority (80 per cent or more) rated that support excellent or good on the quality and timeliness of information provided, the responsiveness of staff and the servicing of meetings.

<sup>27</sup> A country was included if it was mentioned specifically in the project form.

<sup>28</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>.

<sup>29</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/news/new-country-classifications-2015>.

<sup>30</sup> The Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) is the first. JIU/REP/2015/3.

30. OIOS also observed efficient servicing of meetings of the Committee on Environmental Policy and the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) as just two examples of UNECE's secretariat work. During these meetings, UNECE Secretariat staff presented papers to facilitate discussion, responded to questions, and neutrally guided some points in the discussion. This was also observed during two meetings of the Executive Committee, in which UNECE staff were responsive to the needs of Committee members.

31. More in-depth case study analyses of UNECE's work with a sample of experts revealed a positive level of satisfaction among committee members. For the Conference of European Statisticians, all eight stakeholders interviewed rated UNECE effectiveness high in serving this role. Similarly, all eight noted that a relatively small team from the Statistics Division managed the work of the committee and its working groups and task forces in a timely and high quality manner. For Working Party 1 of the Inland Transport Committee, two-thirds of working group members interviewed commended the relevance of UNECE's work in supporting this expert group, noting that it was the only permanent inter-governmental body dealing with this important issue. Members of the Committee on Sustainable Energy also noted that, on gas, UNECE does an excellent job in facilitating Member State access to pools of expert knowledge on the topic.

32. UNECE risks losing its strong capacity to service these expert committees if the institutional knowledge and lessons for doing so is not captured and shared within the organization. UNECE staff members tend to stay with the organization for a relatively long period of time – on average more than 10 years - thus accumulating significant experience. Thirteen per cent of UNECE staff are expected to retire within the next five years, including nearly all of its senior leadership.<sup>31</sup> OIOS could not identify any systematic knowledge management mechanism for capturing, storing, sharing and integrating knowledge and lessons into how UNECE does its work. Less than half of UNECE staff survey respondents (40 per cent) stated that UNECE is effective in integrating lessons learned into programme planning.

*UNECE's need to service numerous thematic committees has placed heavy demands on its staff and hindered cross-sectoral collaboration*

33. The significant demands placed on UNECE staff by servicing committees, combined with the need to work in these distinct and highly specialized bodies, has been perceived by staff in interviews and surveys as negatively affecting their ability to be more innovative and flexible, as well as their ability to work across sectors and subprogrammes. As shown in Table 5, UNECE supports 218 bodies, including 31 convention bodies, 50 subsidiary bodies and 137 expert bodies.

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31 Including five of current six Division heads.

**Table 5: Intergovernmental bodies supported by UNECE**

Subprogramme	Committee/ Convention Governing Body	Subsidiary Bodies/ Working Party	Group of Experts/Team of Specialists/Task Force
Environment	11	23	27
Transport	13	22	55
Statistics	1	0	11
Sustainable Energy	1	0	6
Housing and Land Management	1	2	1
Forestry and Timber	1	1	8
Economic Cooperation and Integration	1	0	3
Trade	2	2	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>137</b>

Source: UNECE

34. There are some examples of intersectoral work such as the long standing Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) and the UNECE Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings. In technical cooperation, the review of 56 projects revealed only two that referred to intersectoral work.<sup>32</sup> A review of annual reports covering 2010 to 2015 from three committees – Inland Transport, Environment and Statistics - and the observation of the CEP revealed limited reference to cross-sectoral activities, except for the Joint Task Force on environmental indicators.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, less than half of UNECE staff survey respondents (34 per cent) rated UNECE as effective in promoting linkages between subprogrammes, and nearly half (46 per cent) volunteered that better coordination and cohesion between divisions was needed for UNECE to increase its effectiveness. In interviews, some staff also stated that divisions operated as silos, with limited interaction and synergies between them. Staff also identified weak inter-sectoral collaboration as the principal challenge UNECE will face in supporting member States in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

#### **D. UNECE has effectively provided a neutral platform for dialogue and decision-making, but it faces competing and at times conflicting member State demands and priorities**

*UNECE has provided a neutral platform for dialogue between member countries with different economic systems and development levels*

35. During its first decades of existence, UNECE provided a space where member countries from two opposite economic and political systems met, engaged in dialogue and produced concrete technical outputs. This convening function endures, and today UNECE offers a neutral platform for member States with different levels of economic development to discuss and reach decisions on common issues. In interviews, member States, partners and staff overwhelmingly highlighted UNECE's ability to span such a wide range of geographical and developmental differences among its member countries as one of the main comparative advantage of the organization. Representatives from three multilateral organizations interviewed considered UNECE as particularly strong in its knowledge of the context and challenges of the countries in EECCA.

32 The For Future Inland Transport Systems (ForFITS) is an effort of sustainable transport, environment and statistics divisions for supporting more informed decisions about CO2 emissions in the transport sector.

33 Environment and statistics.

*While UNECE's general work programme is steered by member States, the diversity in its membership has resulted in perspectives and priorities that were at times competing*

36. Member States define the general direction of the organization as well as its specific work programme. OIOS observation of proceedings from SPECA, the CEP and EXCOM showed that member States are invested in the discussions and their presence is strong and vocal. However, within this context, member States have had differing perspectives on UNECE's main focus, and UNECE has been faced with responding to divergent member State interests that stem in part from different economic needs, as well as historical and geopolitical trends. Following the UNECE review process and in the context of 2011-2012 budget cuts, countries attempted to protect and promote the work areas they considered most important, determined largely by their levels of economic development and/or their membership in other subregional entities. For the 28 member countries that are European Union members, UNECE's value has primarily been viewed as being its work in the environment, transport and statistics sectors. For non-European Union member countries, particularly those not yet a part of the World Trade Organization (WTO), UNECE's work has been considered to be most critical in economic cooperation, innovation and trade. Furthermore, in interviews with member State representatives, some believed that UNECE should limit its focus to the facilitation of norms and standards, while others encouraged UNECE to work beyond that into the policy realm. Some staff interviewed also noted the challenge in effectively working within political tensions that occasionally pervaded intergovernmental deliberations. These competing demands have at times resulted in a lack of clarity and direction on where to focus UNECE's resources.

37. A review of EXCOM minutes<sup>34</sup> also showed an increasing trend in the past five years in extensive member State involvement in project approval, including allocation of resources and procedural matters. A very detailed level of engagement of member States in project review and approval was also observed during the two EXCOM sessions attended by the OIOS team. In interviews with a limited number of eight member States, representatives reported that this high level of member State engagement was useful for ensuring implementation of member State decisions and supervision of financial management. In contrast, other member State representatives, and several partners and staff interviewed perceived this high degree of member State involvement to be overly demanding, particularly in view of a heavy secretariat workload.

#### **E. UNECE lacks a common understanding and clear strategy on its global reach beyond its regional role**

*Numerous UNECE conventions, norms and standards are global*<sup>35</sup>

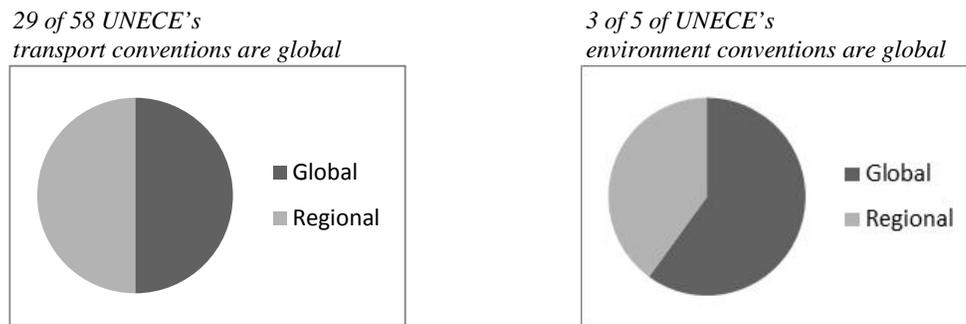
38. As shown in Figure 2, more than half of UNECE conventions in transport and the environment extend beyond the UNECE region. The Water Convention was opened to ratifications to non-UNECE countries in 2015 and four countries have started national processes toward accession.

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34 OIOS conducted a review of 46 EXCOM Chairman's Conclusions from 2010 to 2015.

35 OIOS deemed conventions global if they were acceded to or used by at least one non-UNECE country.

**Figure 2: UNECE's transport and environment conventions**



Source: *Compendium of Legal Instrument, Norms and Standards, UNECE (2015)*

39. Similarly, many of UNECE's non-legally binding outputs were also global. Some recommendations, initially developed in the context of the UNECE region, have been subsequently adopted worldwide, such as the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Furthermore, there were forty UNECE trade recommendations, which aim to facilitate international transactions and were relevant beyond the UNECE region. UNECE also recently began facilitating the process of developing standards on public private partnerships, meant to be practical to any country exploring different modalities of financing for public services.

*Non-UNECE member States also participated in UNECE committees and subsidiary bodies*

40. Table 6 shows that in 2015, five out of eight sectoral committees had the participation of countries outside the UNECE region. This participation also extended to subsidiary bodies of the sectoral committees. For example, of the six expert groups of the Committee on Sustainable Energy, four had participation from non-UNECE countries and in trade, its two working parties had participation from non-member countries in 2015.

41. In statistics, the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), despite its name, has had active participation from a number of countries outside the UNECE region, including two non-UNECE countries on its bureau.<sup>36</sup> In Transport, the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations has active participation from more than 20 countries outside the UNECE region. A representative interviewed from an active non-UNECE country, voicing a common view, stated that participation in the conference was an opportunity to be exposed to innovative thinking, tools and methodologies on statistics.

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<sup>36</sup> Mexico and New Zealand.

**Table 6: Attendance by non-UNECE member States in Committee sessions in 2015<sup>37</sup>**

Name of sectoral committee	Attendance by a non-UNECE country?	How many?
Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (CICPPP)	Yes	17
Inland Transport Committee (ITC)	Yes	13 <sup>38</sup>
Conference of European Statisticians (CES)	Yes	9
Committee on Sustainable Energy (CSE)	Yes	3
Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP)	Yes	1
Committee on Housing and Land Management (CHLM)	No	0
Committee on Forests and Forest Industry (COFFI)	No	0
Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards	No	0

Source: Attendance reports of sectoral committee sessions, UNECE

*UNECE also engaged in some capacity building and technical cooperation in non-UNECE countries*

42. The global nature of many of its legal instruments has also resulted in some UNECE technical cooperation and capacity building activities outside of the UNECE region. In 2014, five of the eight subprogrammes reported such an activity. These were limited, for the most part, to advisory missions or workshops. However, they also included a more substantial endeavour with the first Environmental Performance Review (EPR) outside of UNECE in Morocco.<sup>39</sup>

*The extent and nature of UNECE's global work has not been deliberate*

43. There is no formal document discussing in which areas and to what degree UNECE should pursue the globalization of its work. As described above, non-UNECE countries have used UNECE standards, acceded to its Conventions, participated in its committees and working groups, and benefitted from its technical cooperation. This is testimony to the value ascribed to UNECE's work by non-UNECE countries. As such, more than half of member States representatives, partners and staff interviewed (34 out of 59)<sup>40</sup> believed UNECE should actively pursue the globalization of its work. Some of the reasons offered were that in many cases the nature of UNECE's work was already global, and that all countries, not only those in UNECE, could benefit from UNECE products.

44. Another 20 interviewees also expressed overall support for the globalization of UNECE's products, but cautioned that this had implications such as expanding activities and services without having the appropriate resources or capacity to support a more global clientele. For example, staff expressed how a global reach of norms, standards and conventions had produced a rise in requests from non-UNECE countries for technical support, which UNECE, for the most part, could not cover. Finally, a small number of interviewees (5 of 59) indicated that UNECE should not pursue global work, as this would risk undermining its identity as a regional organization.

<sup>37</sup> The UN/CEFACT which also reports to EXCOM, has attendance by non-UNECE countries.

<sup>38</sup> In its February 2016 session, ITC had 23 non-UNECE participating countries.

<sup>39</sup> UNECE Technical Cooperation Activities 2014 Annual Report. Observation of CEP proceedings.

<sup>40</sup> Of 87 individual interviews, 59 offered an opinion on the subject.

**F. UNECE has been proactive in seeking to support its member States in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but faces challenges in fully optimizing its role**

*UNECE has taken concrete steps to move forward with its support to member States within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

45. During its Commission session in April 2015, and in the run-up to the September 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, UNECE discussed the opportunity presented by the upcoming agenda and reflected on how its strengths could potentially be harnessed to support the new global goals.<sup>41</sup> This culminated with the endorsement by member countries of a high-level statement, succinctly identifying UNECE work in each of the sectoral areas that could be useful in supporting the sustainable development goals (SDGs).<sup>42</sup>

46. As shown in Table 7, in 2015, six sectoral committees, with the support of the UNECE secretariat, addressed the agenda on the upcoming sustainable development goals in their discussions at their 2015 annual meetings. The UNECE secretariat facilitated informative sessions for some of these committees, while in others it produced presentations and papers to elicit debate on the future engagement of their committee with the SDGs.

**Table 7: Initiatives and discussions on the SDGs in sectoral committees, 2015**

Sectoral committee	Initiatives and discussions on the SDGs
Inland Transport Committee (ITC), February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informative session on transport within the SDG framework.</li> <li>• Request by Committee to monitor inclusion of transport priorities in the SDG framework.</li> <li>• Informal document: Transport for Sustainable Development: The Case of Inland Transport (2015) Document jointly prepared by five Regional Commissions.</li> </ul>
Conference of European Statisticians (CES), June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Session on monitoring SDGs at national level.</li> <li>• Session on cooperation in monitoring SDGs.</li> <li>• Adopted the Declaration on the role of National Statistics Offices (NSOs) in SDG monitoring.<sup>43</sup></li> <li>• Future development of a Road Map for the development of official statistics for monitoring SDGs.</li> </ul>
Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (CICPPP), September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-level substantive segment on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) – their essential role in the SDGs.</li> <li>• Presentation from task Force of the Business Advisory Board on PPPs and ways of contributing to the SDGs.</li> </ul>
Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP), October 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation by the Secretariat on role of environmental conventions in achievement of the SDGs.</li> <li>• Information paper on environmental agreements and global goals.</li> </ul>
Committee on Sustainable Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on pathways to sustainable energy</li> </ul>
Committee on Forests and Forest Industry (COFFI), November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized two workshops and expert meetings on forest related SDGs</li> </ul>
Committee on Housing and Land Management, December 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informative session on general aspects of the 2030 agenda and SDG indicators.</li> <li>• Decision to develop a system for monitoring SDG 11.</li> </ul>

*Source: OIOS review of the sectoral committee session reports*

41 E/ECE/1473, E/ECE/1474.

42 E/ECE/1475.

43 ECE/CES/89/Add.1.

47. After the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, UNECE continued to be proactive in defining its place within the SDG architecture. This included a mapping exercise which indicated that it was involved 16 of the 17 SDGs, and the launching, together with the Regional United Nations Development Group, of a survey of member States<sup>44</sup> to seek feedback on their plans for integration of the SDGs into their national strategies and reporting mechanisms. The draft UNECE 2018-2019 Strategic Framework integrated the 2030 agenda as its overarching objective.

48. Furthermore, at the time of drafting this report, UNECE is consulting with member States on the possible creation of a regional forum for review and follow-up on SDGs. Regional forums, envisaged in the General Assembly resolution creating the high-level political forum (HLPF)<sup>45</sup>, would straddle national and global review mechanisms and include other relevant regional entities. In the 2030 agenda follow-up and review architecture currently being discussed, the regional commissions are considered to be well placed for collecting and consolidating follow-up information from member States as well as entities outside the United Nations systems, including other regional public and private institutions.<sup>46</sup>

*UNECE has the necessary expertise to support member States in specific elements of the 2030 agenda*

49. At the end of 2015, UNECE identified how to best utilize its expertise to contribute to implementation of the 2030 agenda. The first comprised adjusting indicators and improving the statistical capacity of selected member States; the second involved supporting member countries with review and follow-up using existing tools and mechanisms; and the third included helping member countries translating goals to specific standards and legal instruments.

50. A majority of member States, partners and staff interviewed who discussed this topic (44 of 76) also noted how UNECE was well placed to assist member States with implementing the SDGs. Some stated that UNECE's strength would be in helping countries with the review and follow-up of the SDGs, in particular using already existing tools such as country assessments that integrated peer review mechanisms.<sup>47</sup> Some also stressed the importance of strengthening member countries' statistical capacity and suggested UNECE should help with regionalizing indicators. Still others stated that conventions and standards were useful tools to help countries implement specific thematic areas of the 2030 agenda.

*UNECE faces three issues as it moves to support the 2030 agenda*

51. To best support member States in implementing and monitoring the 2030 agenda, UNECE must address three key issues. The first entails the need to strengthen coordination among its different sectoral areas and subprogrammes, as well the linkages between its functions, as discussed in para 34 above. In interviews with partners, member States and

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44 Survey results are expected in March 2016.

45 A/RES/67/290.

46 Report of the Secretary-General on critical milestones toward coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level. Advanced copy.

47 The Environmental Performance Reviews (EPR), one of UNECE's country assessments, was mentioned in the Secretary-General's 2014 Synthesis Report on the post 2015 sustainable development agenda. A/69/700. Other country assessments are the Innovation Performance Reviews (IPRs) and the Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management.

staff, this was the most frequently cited issue that UNECE needed to address in order to best support member States with the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The second issue, noted primarily by UNECE staff surveyed and interviewed, was the inevitable expanded workload from UNECE's involvement in the SDGs. Even if support is provided primarily through already existing instruments, structures and tools, one-third of staff interviewed volunteered that this would burden an already overstretched staff.

52. The final issue identified by partners and staff was the need to further improve engagement with partners, particularly those outside the United Nations system such as the private sector. UNECE was generally perceived positively by partners interviewed: 22 of 29 characterized UNECE and their working relationship favorably, highlighting UNECE's capacity to access and engage national authorities due to the links forged through intergovernmental bodies as well as its linguistic and geographical knowledge of EECCA countries. However, despite this overall positive assessment, staff surveyed identified the private sector as the main group with whom UNECE needed to improve its engagement in order to support member States with the SDGs. Similarly, in interviews the private sector was identified as the stakeholder group with whom UNECE had insufficient engagement. On the SDGs in particular, some initial steps have been taken, such as the creation of a Task Force of UNECE's Board on Public Private Partnerships,<sup>48</sup> which is exploring ways to mobilize the private sector behind the SDGs.

## **V. Conclusion**

53. Since its creation almost seven decades ago, UNECE has provided a neutral space for policy dialogue and decision-making among its member countries, and has effectively convened technical experts and facilitated consensus on a large and varied body of normative products. UNECE has also withstood changes in the geopolitical landscape, including the arrival of other pan-regional entities such as the European Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and the rapid enlargement of its membership base in the 1990s, which subsequently increased its activities in the technical cooperation realm.

54. Within a constrained resource environment, UNECE will need to reflect on how it can most efficiently and effectively balance its three interrelated core functions - policy dialogue, normative work and technical cooperation - in order to add the most value to the member countries it supports. In doing this, it will need to address certain critical issues regarding its future direction. While UNECE has been recognized for its capacity to effectively facilitate the development of legally binding regulations, norms and standards, its policy role has been less prominent, and it will need to strengthen its support to implementation of these regulations, norms and standards to further enhance its impact. UNECE will also need to reflect on how it can best balance its regional focus with the further globalization of its activities and services, including the recent global opening of some of its conventions. UNECE must be strategic in leveraging its partnerships, both within and beyond the United Nations system, to complement its own capacity and expertise.

55. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development comes at a critical juncture for UNECE. It is both an opportunity to undergo a process of reflection on the issues posed above, as well as an occasion to demonstrate how the work it has produced in these past

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<sup>48</sup> They have set up a Task Force to explore ways of contributing to the SDGs.

seven decades has had a bearing on sustainable development and can be further leveraged to help implement and monitor a broad and complex global development agenda.

## VI. Recommendations

56. OIOS makes five important recommendations to UNECE.

### *Recommendation 1 (Result C)*

57. **The UNECE secretariat should develop and operationalize a knowledge management strategy that addresses how institutional knowledge and expertise will be captured, stored, shared and integrated into its work programme and activities.** In particular, the strategy should address the risk of losing institutional knowledge anticipated with staff departures as discussed in this report and build upon existing organizational guidelines for knowledge sharing.

**Indicator of achievement:** Knowledge management strategy with target dates for implementation of each subprogramme.

### *Recommendation 2 (Result C)*

58. **The UNECE secretariat should conduct a mapping of inter-sectoral and inter-divisional initiatives and activities in order to identify opportunities to strengthen the linkages and collaboration between its main functions and subprogrammes.** This exercise could include an assessment of the main challenges and opportunities in enhancing the cross-cutting nature of its work.

**Indicator of achievement:** Options for strengthening inter-sectoral and inter-divisional initiatives and activities presented and endorsed by EXCOM

### *Recommendation 3 (Result E)*

59. **The UNECE secretariat should develop a proposal for presentation to the EXCOM which explores the nature of its global focus, including both possible advantages and disadvantages to extending its worldwide reach.** Given that a large proportion of UNECE's products are currently being used by a global audience, this proposal will facilitate discussion among member States regarding a strategic long-term vision for UNECE's regional and global role. The proposal should explore resource mobilization and partnership alternatives that will allow UNECE to adequately respond in the future to global demands.

**Indicator of achievement:** Proposal discussed at EXCOM with clear strategic vision outlined for UNECE's global focus.

### *Recommendation 4 (Result F)*

60. **The UNECE secretariat should examine how its activities under existing norms, standards, conventions, and related review mechanisms and statistical work can contribute to attainment of the SDGs.** In particular, methodologies for the country assessments will need to be adjusted. The tools identified by UNECE should be incorporated

into its overall strategy and work plan for its work in supporting the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

**Indicator of achievement:** Within each subprogramme, review mechanisms and methodologies adjusted in line with UNECE's overall strategy and work plan for the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

*Recommendation 5 (Result F)*

61. **The UNECE secretariat should undertake a mapping of existing partnerships and cooperation with non-state actors and develop specific proposals for expanding and strengthening such cooperation in support of the SDGs.** The UNECE has established various partnerships within its sectors of work and has been lauded as a strong partner. In seeking to support the ambitious targets of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, UNECE will need to draw on current partnerships and forge new ones including more non-state actors.

**Indicator of achievement:** Current and prospective partnerships are mapped with proposals for strengthening cooperation in support of SDGs presented for consideration at EXCOM.

## Annex 1

In this Annex, OIOS presents below the full text of comments received from UNECE on the report of the Office of internal Oversight services on the Evaluation of the Office of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. This practice has been instituted in line with general Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

### **UNECE comments on the evaluation of the Office of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)**

1. I wish to thank you for giving UNECE an opportunity to review and comment on the draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the Programme Evaluation the United Nations Commission for Europe (UNECE).
2. This evaluation represents an important opportunity for UNECE to improve its operations. We therefore appreciate the commitment of OIOS to organizational learning and performance improvement.
3. UNECE also thanks the OIOS for the opportunity to provide comments to the previous draft reports. UNECE has studied the final draft carefully and welcomes its findings and recommendations. To implement the recommendations within a reasonable timeframe, UNECE has agreed on an Action Plan (see attachment), outlining actions to be taken by the end of 2016.
4. UNECE concurs with the recommendations in the report and would like to share its overall perspective on them.

**Recommendation 1:** The nature of the work of UNECE, supporting several intergovernmental bodies covering different thematic areas as well as a high number of related subsidiary bodies, has facilitated the development and sharing of knowledge within the region and beyond. UNECE concurs with OIOS that the technical expertise generated by UNECE risks to be lost if no knowledge management mechanisms are created. In line with previous JIU recommendations addressed to Regional Commissions, UNECE has already started to develop knowledge management mechanisms to capture and store technical knowledge generated by the organization over the years.

**Recommendation 2:** In light of the intersectoral and interdisciplinary nature of the work for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UNECE Secretariat has already emphasized the importance of working across thematic boundaries and has started the mapping of its interdivisional and intersectoral activities, in order to identify further opportunities to strengthen the linkages and collaboration between its main functions and subprogrammes. Moreover, as part of its 2016-17 Evaluation Work Plan, the UNECE Secretariat has planned to undertake a “review of UNECE efforts to promote cross-sectoral collaboration and an integrated approach to sustainable development work”.

**Recommendation 3:** The evaluation recognises that a large proportion of UNECE’s products are currently being used worldwide and that this has been subject of discussion within UNECE and beyond. UNECE recognizes the need for this issue to be addressed, to explore alternatives to allow UNECE to respond to demands beyond its region. It should

however be noted that this discussion cannot be undertaken by UNECE alone; it needs to be further discussed with other organisations and most notably with the other Regional Commissions, and with the full involvement of their membership. It is ultimately not up to UNECE to decide which of its products/mandates should be formally recognised as being global. This should be decided by ECOSOC as well as by treaty and convention bodies. In this context, and with the aim to foster a dialogue on this issue, the UNECE Secretariat will map activities and results which have worldwide dissemination. On the basis of this mapping, UNECE will seek the advice of EXCOM and/or the Commission on how to proceed further.

**Recommendation 4:** As noted in the evaluation report, on several occasions UNECE has discussed the opportunities presented by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, given that its work covers many of the areas addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, sectoral bodies have contributed and are contributing with initiatives and different activities to the development of the SDGs and their implementation. As a consequence, and in line with this recommendation, several sub-programmes and conventions have already started to examine how their work can be further aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNECE will continue to pay due attention to this work.

**Recommendation 5:** As noted in the evaluation report, UNECE has already established various partnerships within its sectoral work and has been lauded as a strong partner. UNECE concurs with the recommendation that to strengthen its contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UNECE Secretariat should map existing partnerships and cooperation with non-state actors and develop specific proposals for expanding and strengthening such cooperation.

Let me again emphasize that we appreciate the analysis and recommendations in the evaluation and the opportunity it provides to further improve the work of UNECE.

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