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United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Background Guide 2025

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce to you our committee, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Maddie Weimer and Assistant Director Roberto Israel Terán Duchicela (Conference A), and Director Aemin Becker and Assistant Director Kaylan Guvernator (Conference B). Maddie holds a B.A. in International Relations from Austin College and currently works in the government relations field. Roberto studies Law at Universidad San Francisco de Quito and is passionate about human rights. Aemin received a Masters in International Security from Sciences Po Paris and bachelors degrees in Political Science and National Security from the University of New Haven. She currently works in consulting at Booz Allen Hamilton. Kaylan studied psychology at Austin College and currently works for a private financial firm in Chicago. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Gamaliel Perez (Conference A) and Courtney Indart (Conference B) with contributions by Under-Secretaries-General for Conference Management Joshua Andersen (Conference A) and Kenny Nguyen (Conference B).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Sustainable Forest Management to Achieve SDG 15
2. Improving Sustainable Energy Development and Transition

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. ET on 1 March 2025 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsg.ny@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Maddie Weimer, Director
Roberto Israel Terán Duchicela, Assistant Director
Conference A

Aemin Becker, Director
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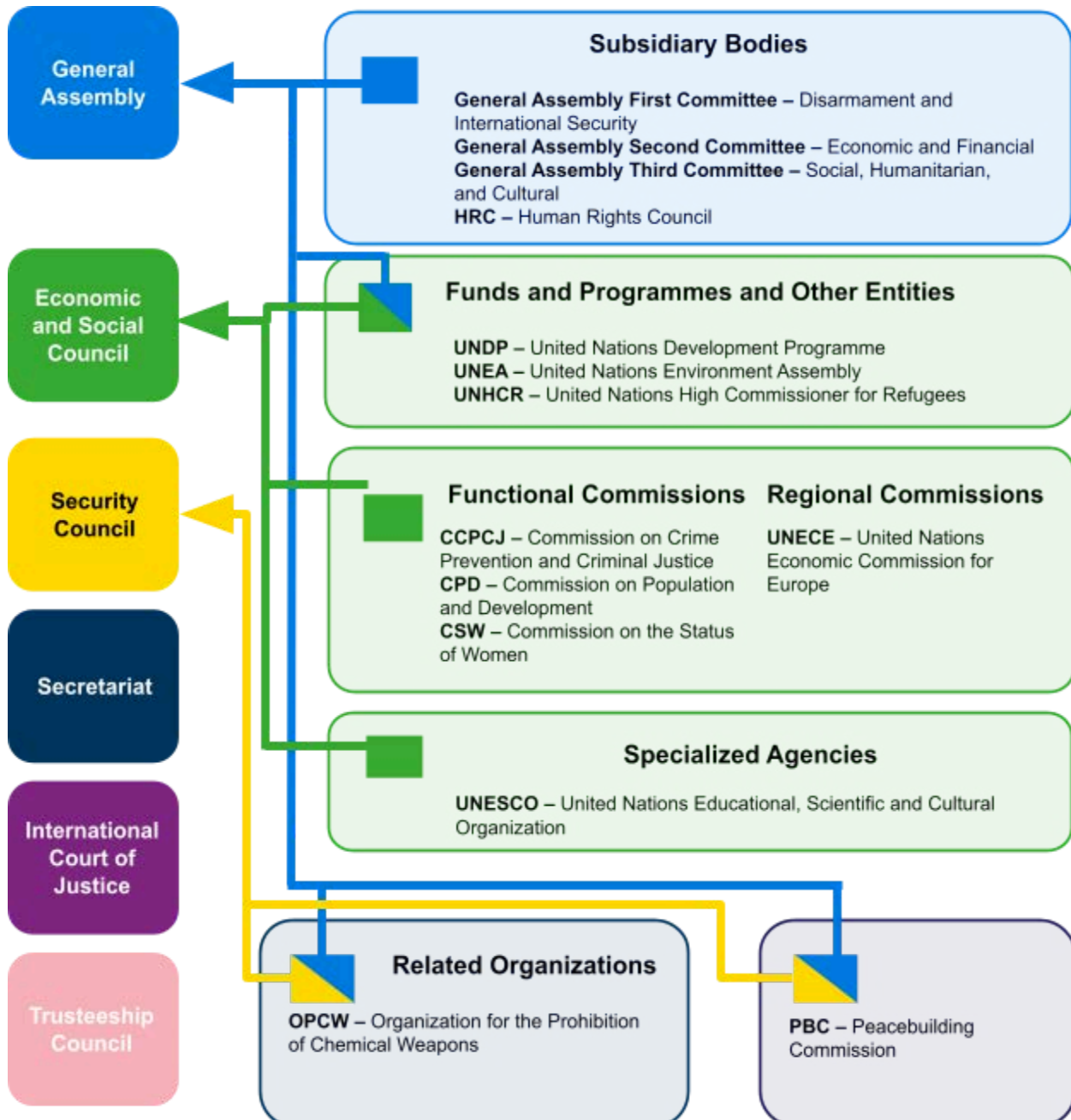
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United Nations System at NMUN·NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN·NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

As part of its goal to promote interregional cooperation, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established five regional commissions according to Article 68 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945).¹ Hence, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) was founded by ECOSOC in 1946 to help rebuild Europe after World War II.² Until 1951, UNECE functioned as a provisional commission, while ECOSOC reviewed whether the commission was to be reformed or discontinued at the end of its fourth year.³ With the beginning of the Cold War, the role of UNECE changed fundamentally from supporting the reconstruction of Europe to fostering economic dialogue and cooperation between the capitalist and the socialist states.⁴ UNECE helped achieve common standards for transportation, customs regulations, and trade regulations, among others.⁵ Since the end of the Cold War, UNECE has focused on aiding economies in transition and adjusting the organization to the new geopolitical landscape.⁶

After the Cold War, UNECE was reformed twice in order to adapt to increased membership and a shift in its tasks.⁷ Today, the mission of UNECE is to strengthen economic cooperation and sustainable development amongst its Member States.⁸ UNECE fosters the exchange of policies and best practices, negotiations of legal questions, and supports states in transition.⁹ Together with the other regional commissions of ECOSOC, UNECE promotes the work of international United Nations bodies and standards, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁰ UNECE also partners with many other United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations to connect Member States and relevant actors in its projects.¹¹

Mandates, Functions and Powers

The mandate of UNECE is based on a recommendation made by the Temporary Sub-Commission on the Economic Reconstruction of Devastated Areas to ECOSOC in 1946.¹² Its main task is to bring states in the region together to foster cooperation on common economic challenges.¹³ UNECE is further mandated to initiate and sponsor studies on technological issues and developments within Member States or the region generally, collect and evaluate statistics on the economic development of the region, make recommendations to Member States and specialized agencies, and create subsidiary bodies.¹⁴ One of its

¹ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. Ch. X.

² United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *History*. 2024.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE and the SDGs*. 2024.

⁹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *History*. 2024.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Objectives and Mandate*. 2024.

¹⁴ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Europe (E/ECE/778/Rev.5)*. 2009. p. 1.



key goals is to promote sustainable economic development and prosperity through joint debates on policy, negotiating international legal instruments, setting norms, standards and regulations; exchanging best practices and technical expertise; and fostering cooperation between industrial states and economies in transition.¹⁵ UNECE also implements the outcomes of international United Nations summits and conferences, and it cooperates with other United Nations entities within the United Nations network.¹⁶

- UNECE **generally**: makes recommendations directly to governments in the region, aid in actions related to the economic reconstruction of Europe and helping improve European economic activity, and for maintaining and strengthening the economic relations of the European countries, both among themselves and with other countries of the world.¹⁷
- UNECE **does not generally**: direct Member States, NGOs, regional institutions, and other United Nations bodies to implement specific actions, as the commission serves primarily in an advisory and research capacity.

Governance, Funding, and Structure

UNECE has 56 Member States that not only include states in the European continent, but also the United States of America, Canada, and several Member States from Central and Western Asia.¹⁸ As the founding members of UNECE included all the participating states in the reconstruction of Europe, membership continues to be diverse to this day.¹⁹ UNECE is a regional commission that reports to ECOSOC biennially.²⁰ UNECE is governed by an Executive Committee that prepares the biennial meetings of the commission, supervises its activities, and maintains relations with other international organizations.²¹ The Executive Committee leads eight sub-committees: the Committee on Environmental Policy, the Inland Transportation Committee, the Conference of European Statisticians; the Committee on Innovation, the Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships; the Committee on Sustainable Energy, the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards, the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry, and the Committee on Housing and Land Management.²² These sub-committees further lead various working groups such as the Working Group on Ageing.²³ The working groups are subsidiary bodies of the Executive Committee and connect Member States, NGOs and academia to work on transboundary challenges.²⁴

UNECE receives funding through section 20 of the United Nations regular budget.²⁵ Additionally, UNECE receives voluntary contributions, otherwise known as extrabudgetary contributions.²⁶ To further increase

¹⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Objectives and Mandate*. 2024.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *History*. 2024

¹⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Geographical scope*. 2024.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Europe (E/ECE/778/Rev.5)*. 2009.

²¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Executive Committee (EXCOM)*. 2024.

²² United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE*. 2013.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Resource Mobilization*. 2024.

²⁶ *ibid.*



the amount of voluntary contributions, UNECE developed the Resource Mobilization Strategy in order to increase funds for the implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*.²⁷ Funds for UNECE projects, advisory services, and other forms of cooperation are distributed in the form of grants.²⁸ These grants are based on recommendations made by the Grants Committee, established in 2000, to the Executive Secretary.²⁹ Funds for grants are drawn from the regular and the voluntary budget of UNECE. In recent years, most grants were invested in environmental projects.³⁰

²⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Resource Mobilization*. 2024.

²⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE Grants Committee Annual Report*. 2020.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*



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United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Executive Committee (EXCOM)*. 2024. Retrieved 17 October 2024 from: <https://unece.org/executive-committee-excom-0>

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United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Resource Mobilization*. 2024. Retrieved 17 October 2024 from: <https://unece.org/technical-cooperation/resource-mobilization>

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE and the SDGs*. 2024. Retrieved 17 October 2024 from: <https://unece.org/unece-and-sdgs-2>



1. Sustainable Forest Management to Achieve SDG 15

Introduction

Sustainable forest management (SFM), defined as the sustainable use and conservation of forests while contributing to sustainable community development, aids in combating climate change, protecting the environment, and supporting the livelihoods of more than one billion people who depend on forests.³¹ The United Nations General Assembly recognizes forest resources, biodiversity, health, productive, protective, socio-economic functions, underlying legal, policy, and institutional frameworks as elements of SFM.³² According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), forests reduce the odds of experiencing natural disasters and combat climate change.³³ They do this, by storing carbon, balancing the atmosphere by producing healthy oxygen, carbon dioxide, humidity levels, and protecting watersheds.³⁴ UN DESA reports that 1.6 billion people globally depend on forests for their welfare, including shelter, food, and employment.³⁵ The United Nations Global Forest Goals Report 2021: An Overview of Progress (2021) states that 40% of the extreme rural poor live in forests or savannah environments and 20% of the global population is reliant on forests.³⁶ Unsustainable forest management practices include excessively replacing forests with agricultural or infrastructural developments, overgrazing livestock, introducing invasive species, human-caused forest fires, and pollution.³⁷ These practices directly impact the lives of those who depend on forests for their welfare and exert a disproportionate impact on a more vulnerable population.³⁸

Progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 (life on land), including SFM, is mixed globally and within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region.³⁹ SDG 15 (life on land) focuses on the preservation, restoration, and promotion of sustainable ecosystem usage.⁴⁰ As per the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Report, global forest coverage decreased from 31.9% in 2000 to 31.2% in 2020, with agricultural expansion accounting for up to 90% of its loss.⁴¹ Globally, 10 million hectares of forest are removed and 70 million hectares are impacted by fires annually.⁴² Within the UNECE region, Member States demonstrated slight or no improvement in the

³¹ Forest Europe. *Sustainable Forest Management*. 2024; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Sustainable Forest Management*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Goal 15*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Forests*. 2024.; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Global Forest Goals Report 2021: An Overview of Progress*. 2021.

³² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Sustainable Forest Management*. 2024.

³³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Forests*. 2024.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Global Forest Goals Report 2021: An Overview of Progress*. 2021.

³⁷ Convention on Biological Diversity. *Forest Biodiversity: What's the Problem?*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Global Forest Goals Report 2021: An Overview of Progress*. 2021.

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report: Special Edition*. 2023.

⁴⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Goal 15*. 2024.

⁴¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report: Special Edition*. 2023.

⁴² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Forests and Innovation*. 2024.



proportion of forest area compared to total land area; and experienced deterioration in forest area.⁴³ However, overall forest area in the UNECE region has increased by 33.5 million hectares since 1994, showing mixed regional progress towards SFM.⁴⁴

UNECE promotes SFM and the achievement of SDG 15 (life on land) within its region through capacity building and advocating for sustainable resource usage, yet faces difficulties in measuring SFM and promoting gender equality within SFM.⁴⁵ UNECE alleviates environmental issues and promotes sustainable resource usage across the region and globally by working with Member States to address deforestation, build capacity for forest restoration, create SFM criteria and indicators.⁴⁶ Measuring SFM refers to how forests are used and conserved, and SDG target 15.2, indicator 15.2.1 (Progress towards SFM) uses five sub-indicators to measure SFM.⁴⁷ The inability to measure SFM leads to the inability to measure progress towards achieving SDG 15 (life on land).⁴⁸ Gender equality in forestry is vital for achieving SFM, SDG 15 (life on land), and sustainable development overall.⁴⁹ Insufficient data collection practices, limited policy development participation, and culturally restricted land ownership rights all restrict women's ability to equally contribute to SFM.⁵⁰

International and Regional Framework

Initial conversations in 1992 by the United Nations around SFM focused on how it contributes to sustainable development and combating climate change.⁵¹ The first conference to address SFM and how it helps combat climate change was the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, which produced Agenda 21.⁵² Agenda 21 highlights ways to combat pollution, increasing socio-economic development, and include all individuals in sustainable development.⁵³ The conference also initiated the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation, and Sustainable Development of all Types of Forest (Forest Principles), which emphasize how SFM contributes to sustainable development.⁵⁴ This was further emphasized in the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (1992), which highlighted the need for sustainable management specifically in forests.⁵⁵ In 2016, the General Assembly adopted resolution

⁴³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report: Special Edition*. 2023.

⁴⁴ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *INForest*. 2024.

⁴⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Forests and Innovation*. 2024; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE and the SDGs*. 2024; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *INForest*. 2024; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe et al. *Time for Action - Changing the Gender Situation in Forestry*. 2006.

⁴⁶ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE and the SDGs*. 2024.

⁴⁷ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. *SDG Indicators Data Portal*. 2024.

⁴⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *INForest*. 2024.

⁴⁹ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. *Time for Action - Changing the Gender Situation in Forestry*. 2006.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *Agenda 21*. 1992.

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of all Types of Forests*. 1992.

⁵⁵ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. 1992.



70/199 on “United Nations forest instrument.”⁵⁶ This resolution recommends international and domestic policies for strengthening Member States commitment to SFM, streamlines global forest objectives into a single document, and embodies a foundation for action and cooperation on SFM.⁵⁷ The resolution’s objectives seek to reverse forest loss, acknowledge and enhance forest-derived benefits to society, increase protected forest area and sustainable forest product management, and mobilize new financial resources for SFM.⁵⁸

SFM significantly contributes to achieving the SDGs, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* (2022).⁵⁹ SDGs are established goals for the well-being and prosperity of the planet and all its people and are defined in the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015).⁶⁰ According to the United Nations, SFM works towards the achievement of multiple SDGs because it plays a significant role in reducing natural disasters, combating climate change by storing carbon dioxide, and providing resources and livelihoods for around 1.6 billion people globally.⁶¹ SDG 15 (life on land) is the most pertinent to SFM and contains five sub-indicators to measure it such as: above-ground forest biomass, annual forest area change rate, certified forest area, proportion of forest area under a long-term management plan, and proportion of forest area within legally established protection areas.⁶² In 2011, the conference of the parties to the *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity* created the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, an overarching framework for the conservation of biodiversity that includes the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.⁶³ Target 14 of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets emphasizes the need for gender equality in sustainability measures and highlights how SFM promotes SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (reduced inequalities).⁶⁴ Target 15 states that SFM is necessary for the conservation of biodiversity within ecosystems and the intake and storage of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses responsible for climate change, achieving SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 15 (life on land).⁶⁵ In 2022, the *United Nations Convention on Biodiversity* extended the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*, which established 23 new Targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.⁶⁶ The 23 Targets include conservation of land (Target 3), sustainable forestry (Target 10), and integrating gender equality and diversity (Targets 22 and 23).⁶⁷

⁵⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *UN Forest Instrument*. 2024.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *UNFI: United Nations Forest Instrument*. 2018.

⁵⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Sustainable Forest Management*. 2024; Convention on Biological Diversity. *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020*. 2011; Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022.

⁶⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *SDG Indicators Data Portal - Indicator 15.2.1*. 2024.

⁶¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Forests*. 2024.

⁶² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *SDG Indicators Data Portal - Indicator 15.2.1*. 2024.

⁶³ Convention on Biological Diversity. *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020*. 2011.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. 2022.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*



The European Union (EU) plays an important role in achieving SDG 15 (life on land) and SFM within the UNECE region by implementing plans of action that guide Member State integration of sustainability into domestic policies.⁶⁸ The European Economic Committee established the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) through the *Treaty of Rome* (1962) to support farmers by implementing sustainable management in natural resource harvesting.⁶⁹ EU Member States can draft CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) that are approved by the European Commission (EC) to fund SFM initiatives such as afforestation, protection of forests from natural disasters, forestry technology expansion, and the safeguarding of forest functions and resources.⁷⁰ Recent SFM developments include the publication of the *European Green Deal* (2020), a set of policy initiatives aimed at achieving climate neutrality in the EU by 2050.⁷¹ The *European Green Deal* includes the EU Forest Strategy for 2030 (2021), which aims to improve the quality and quantity of Europe's forests in order to preserve their socio-economic benefits and resources.⁷² Together, the *European Green Deal* and the EU Forest Strategy for 2030 provide a guide for Member States to utilize when drafting CSPs, as the EC assesses whether the drafts align with EU legislation and commitments.⁷³

Role of the International System

The International Arrangement of Forests (IAF) forms the global foundation for knowledge sharing, monitoring, promoting collaborative partnerships, and funding initiatives related to SFM.⁷⁴ The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the IAF in October 2000 as an international forest governance mechanism.⁷⁵ It includes five components: the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), the Secretariat of UNFF, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (GFFFN), and the UNFF Trust Fund.⁷⁶ The UNFF is a functional commission of ECOSOC.⁷⁷ It is composed of all Member States and focuses on monitoring, assessing, and reporting on SFM in line with its quadrennial Programme of Work.⁷⁸ The current quadrennial Programme of Work focuses on linkages between UNFF's work and the SDGs; interlinkages between forest management, climate change, and biodiversity; and incorporating a gender perspective into UNFF's work.⁷⁹ The CPF is composed of 15 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and supports the UNFF by enhancing cooperation and coordination between all Member States.⁸⁰ The CPF promotes the implementation of all United Nations

⁶⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Partnerships*. 2023.

⁶⁹ European Commission. *Common Agricultural Policy*. 1962.

⁷⁰ European Commission. *Using the CAP to Upscale Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry Management Practices*. 2021.

⁷¹ European Commission. *The European Green Deal*. N.d.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ European Commission. *CAP Strategic Plans*. 2023.

⁷⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *International Arrangement on Forests*. 2024.

⁷⁵ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 22 July 2015 (E/RES/2015/33)*. 2015.

⁷⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *International Arrangement on Forests*. 2024.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *UN Forum on Forests - 20th session (5-9 May 2025)*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Programme of Work*. 2020; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Co-Chairs' Summary: Expert Group Meeting on Quadrennial Programme of Work of the UN Forum on Forests for the period 2021-2024*. 2019.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Collaborative Partnership on Forests*. 2024.



forest agreements related to SFM, such as the United Nations Forest Instrument.⁸¹ The GFFN procures financing for the UNFF by facilitating access to existing and emerging financing opportunities within and outside of the United Nations system.⁸² Member States provide voluntary contributions to the UNFF Trust Fund, which supplements funding from the regular budget and enhances the UNFF's capacity to perform its work.⁸³ The CPF, GFFN, and UNFF Trust Fund focus on concretizing partnerships between NGOs, United Nations entities, and funding mechanisms to support the UNFF's work.⁸⁴

The United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 (2017), adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 71/285 (2017) on "United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2023", encapsulates the international community's approach to achieving SFM and SDG 15 (life on land).⁸⁵ Established by the UNFF, the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 contains six Global Forest Goals and 26 targets to reach by 2030.⁸⁶ These goals include reversing forest loss globally through SFM while preventing forest degradation and addressing climate change; enhancing forest-based benefits and improving the livelihoods of individuals reliant on forests; and increasing protected forest area and sustainably managed forests globally.⁸⁷ This also includes mobilizing additional financial resources to promote SFM; promoting governance frameworks to implement SFM and enhancing forests' contribution to the 2030 Agenda; and enhancing cooperation on forest-related issues at all levels.⁸⁸ In 2018, the UNFF requested the UNFF Secretariat prepare a report summarizing progress towards achieving the Global Forest Goals.⁸⁹ The Global Forest Goals Report (2021) evaluated progress towards achieving these goals based on 52 voluntary national reports and 19 voluntary national contributions from Member States.⁹⁰

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) helps Member States define and monitor progress towards SFM, provides information and policy advice, supports institutional and technical capacity building, and reports on SFM.⁹¹ FAO provides assistance through their programmatic work and with supporting international initiatives such as the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030.⁹² FAO's SFM Toolbox further supports FAO's work promoting SFM practices by providing a set of tools and case studies to Member States interested in implementing SFM within their specific context.⁹³ Key FAO programs within the UNECE region include the joint FAO-EU Forest Law

⁸¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Collaborative Partnership on Forests*. 2024.

⁸² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network*. 2024.

⁸³ Anada. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Preparation for the Midterm Review (MTR) of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF): Assessment on actions related to the UNFF Trust Fund*. 2023. p. 4.

⁸⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Collaborative Partnership on Forests*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network*. 2024; Anada. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Preparation for the Midterm Review (MTR) of the International Arrangement on Forests (IAF): Assessment on actions related to the UNFF Trust Fund*. 2023. p. 4.

⁸⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *UN Forum on Forests - 20th session (5-9 May 2025)*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030*. 2024.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ United Nations Forum on Forests. *United Nations strategic plan for forests 2030*. 2017.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Global Forest Goals Report 2021*. N.d.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Sustainable Forest Management*. 2024.

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ *ibid.*



Enforcement, Governance, and Trade (FLEGT) program and the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM).⁹⁴ FLEGT focuses on eliminating illegal logging practices and funding improvements in forest governance.⁹⁵ FLRM supports forest and landscape restoration monitoring globally; within the UNECE region, FLRM plays a key role in shaping forest and landscape restoration practices in the Mediterranean.⁹⁶

UNECE performs all work related to SFM, including structuring overall goals for achieving SFM within the UNECE region and strengthening forest reporting and management, in conjunction with FAO.⁹⁷ UNECE and FAO jointly adopt an Integrated Programme of Work (IPoW) related to SFM every four years.⁹⁸ The most recent IPoW for 2022-2025 outlines the overall goal of supporting Member States and regional organizations in their SFM efforts.⁹⁹ The IPoW structures efforts around data, monitoring, reporting, and assessment, policy initiatives, communications and public outreach, and capacity building.¹⁰⁰ UNECE's Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry (COFFI) and FAO's European Forestry Commission (EFC) work together to promote SFM throughout UNECE's region.¹⁰¹ In 2017, COFFI and EFC established the Team of Specialists on Monitoring SFM.¹⁰² The team's objectives are to strengthen forest reporting and assessment processes and advise UNECE and FAO on SFM data collection and publication.¹⁰³ The Joint UNECE/FAO Working Party on Forest Statistics, Economics, and Management also contributes to achieving the IPoW in the areas of statistical measurement and forestry management.¹⁰⁴ Within Europe, UNECE and FAO's Forest Communicators Network jointly developed the Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe (2011).¹⁰⁵ The framework provides public messaging recommendations to Member States and non-governmental organizations to aid in communicating awareness and knowledge of European sustainable forestry.¹⁰⁶

The Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Forest Europe) aids European countries in developing common SFM policies to help achieve SFM and SDG 15 (life on land).¹⁰⁷ Member States are individually responsible for their national forest policies, but can develop common European strategies for SFM through Forest Europe.¹⁰⁸ At the third Ministerial Conference in 1998, Forest Europe published the Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management.¹⁰⁹ These

⁹⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Natural Forest Management: FAO's work on SFM*. 2024.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism*. 2024.

⁹⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Governance*. 2024.

⁹⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Integrated Programme of Work*. 2024.

⁹⁹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Integrated Programme of Work 2022-2025*. 2021.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Governance*. 2024.

¹⁰² United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Team of Specialists on Monitoring Sustainable Forest Management*. 2024.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Governance*. 2024.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Strategic Framework for Forest Communication in Europe*. 2011.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ European Commission. *Sustainable Forest Management*. N.d.; Forest Europe. *About*. 2024; Wolfslehner et al. *Evaluating Sustainable Forest Management Strategies with the Analytic Network Process in a Pressure-State-Response framework*. 2008.

¹⁰⁸ European Commission. *Sustainable Forest Management*. N.d.; Forest Europe. *About*. 2024.

¹⁰⁹ Forest Europe. *Annex 2 of Resolution L2: Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management*. 1998.



guidelines established six criteria for European SFM such as: appropriate forest resource usage, supporting forest ecosystem health, conserving biological diversity within forests, and engaging in protective forest management.¹¹⁰ Held in 2021, the last Forest Europe meeting focused on strengthening monitoring and reporting on SFM, synergizing regional efforts with other international bodies, and concretizing a shared vision for European forest management.¹¹¹ Despite the existence of guidelines and efforts to coordinate policies, neither Forest Europe nor other international bodies have evaluated whether these measures have been implemented or, when implemented, whether they have been successful in helping achieve SFM and SDG 15 (life on land) within Europe.¹¹²

Measuring Sustainable Forest Management

It is difficult to assess the current state of SFM and progress towards SDG 15 (life on land) in the UNECE region due to the lack of reliable and comparable data across the region.¹¹³ UNECE reports that not all forest features within its region are monitored, assessed, or reported in accordance with SDG Indicator 15.2.1, which measures progress towards SFM.¹¹⁴ The region also lacks a standardized regional data collection process or repository, as each Member State may collect its own national-level data using metrics that differ from regional metrics.¹¹⁵ This is the case globally as well as within the UNECE region.¹¹⁶ For example, FAO is responsible for measuring three SDG 15 (life on land) indicators relating to SFM and captures this information within the SDG Indicators Data Portal.¹¹⁷ However, the portal currently lacks any data sources for measuring the proportion of forest area within legally established protection areas.¹¹⁸ Many organizations within the region collect data, but do so in different ways, and report their collected data across multiple platforms instead of a single platform accessible to all.¹¹⁹ This makes it difficult to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of SFM within the UNECE region.¹²⁰

UNECE works with other United Nations entities to propose common sets of criteria and indicators and socialize common data sharing platforms amongst Member States.¹²¹ The United Nations Forest Instrument encourages Member States to implement a common set of criteria and indicators for measuring SFM globally, though the instrument lacks specifics on exactly what should be measured.¹²²

¹¹⁰ Forest Europe. *Annex 2 of Resolution L2: Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines for Sustainable Forest Management*. 1998.

¹¹¹ Forest Europe. *Bratislava Ministerial Declaration: The Future We Want - The Forests We Need*. 2021.

¹¹² Wolfslehner et al. *Evaluating sustainable forest management strategies with the Analytic Network Process in a Pressure-State-Response framework*. 2008.

¹¹³ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *INForest*. 2024.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *SDG Indicators Data Portal - Indicator 15.2.1*. 2024.

¹¹⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *INForest*. 2024; United Nations, General Assembly. *Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (A/RES/62/98)*. 2008; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Guidelines for the Development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management*. 2019.

¹¹⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *SDG Indicators Data Portal*. 2024.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *INForest*. 2024.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ *ibid.*; United Nations, General Assembly. *Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (A/RES/62/98)*. 2008; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Guidelines for the Development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management*. 2019.

¹²² United Nations, General Assembly. *Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (A/RES/62/98)*. 2008.



Acknowledging this, UNECE published the Guidelines for the Development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management in 2019.¹²³ These guidelines promoted comprehensive and universal data collection on SFM by providing a reference for Member States to create criteria and indicators for measurement that reflect universal norms while still being Member State-specific.¹²⁴ In 2021, UNECE and FAO launched INForest, a platform which serves as a central data and information sharing repository for Member States within the UNECE region.¹²⁵ Data collected for the UNECE region relates to measuring changes in forest area, forest health, and current protection status, degree of forest management, the consumption of forest-derived energies, and trade in forest products.¹²⁶ These guidelines and platforms seek to socialize and standardize data collection and reporting across the UNECE region.¹²⁷ However, the data collected may differ from national or other international data due to the overall lack of global standardization.¹²⁸

Potential solutions face regional and global difficulties in resourcing, staffing, coordinating, supporting, and spreading awareness of how to measure SFM.¹²⁹ The joint UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section created the Accountability Systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia project in 2016.¹³⁰ This project promoted a regional approach to SFM, including regional-specific measures for data collection and reporting.¹³¹ A 2023 report cites that the main issues this project faces are limited resources, shortage of qualified staff, lack of internal coordination on project aims, unavailable capacity, and low public awareness of the importance of forestry.¹³² Outside of this project, the Guidelines for the Development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management (2019) identifies additional areas of difficulty for achieving SFM.¹³³ These areas include achieving compromises between project stakeholders, integrating commonly agreed upon frameworks to achieve regional standardization in data gathering and reporting, low political will, and difficulties integrating new measures into existing systems.¹³⁴ In 2018, UNFF established the UNFF Clearing House on Forest Financing in an attempt to solve resourcing issues.¹³⁵ This database provides information on SFM financing opportunities and acts as a data source for measuring SFM.¹³⁶

¹²³ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Guidelines for the Development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management*. 2019.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *INForest*. 2024; INForest. *Key indicators for the UNECE region*. 2024.

¹²⁶ INForest. *Key indicators for the UNECE region*. 2024.

¹²⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *INForest*. 2024; United Nations, General Assembly. *Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (A/RES/62/98)*. 2008; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Guidelines for the Development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management*. 2019.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Reporting on Forests and Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia - Focus on Criteria and Indicators*. 2023; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Guidelines for the Development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management*. 2019. p. 11.

¹³⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Reporting on Forests and Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia - Focus on Criteria and Indicators*. 2023.

¹³¹ *ibid.*

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Guidelines for the Development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management*. 2019. p. 11.

¹³⁴ *ibid.* p. 11.

¹³⁵ European Environment Agency. *Clearing house mechanism*. N.d. 2024.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*



Promoting Gender Equality in Sustainable Forest Management

Obstacles for achieving gender equality within SFM include a lack of data collection, limited inclusion in policy creation, and restricted land-ownership rights.¹³⁷ In 2004, a collaborative effort by UNECE, FAO, and the International Labor Organization's Committee on Forest Technology, Management, and Training created a Team of Specialists on Gender and Forestry.¹³⁸ This published a report, *Time for Action* (2006), which found that women in forestry are typically only involved in decision making when forests are already degraded.¹³⁹ The report also found that women are often left out of service provisions such as technology and credit, and lack access to formal education, employment opportunities, and communication networks.¹⁴⁰ Installing gender inclusive practices within SFM helps ensure that SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 15 (life on land) can be achieved, a wider range of perspectives can be included in policy making decisions, as well as combating climate change, and transforming economic systems within SFM to become more sustainable.¹⁴¹

UNECE and FAO are committed to ensuring the installment of gender inclusive norms and practices in all of their activities and policy work.¹⁴² UNECE works toward achieving gender equality in forestry with strategies such as the *Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development* (2005).¹⁴³ This strategy identifies gender equality as a key component for sustainable development education and encourages Member States to implement gender equality in their educational programs.¹⁴⁴ Following the publication of this strategy, FAO released the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure*, which assists Member States in implementing gender equality within forestry related policies, laws, and frameworks.¹⁴⁵ In 2019, UNECE's Expert Group on Resource Management (EGRM) launched the EGRM Women in Resource Management Initiative to promote gender equality in resource management.¹⁴⁶ This initiative helps achieve SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) by aiding societies through educational and financial initiatives for women.¹⁴⁷ Afterwards, UNECE published its *Gender Action Plan* (2021), a tool for implementing measurable courses of action for general policy creation, dialogue initiatives, and program outlines surrounding gender equality.¹⁴⁸

Although generalized initiatives and frameworks for gender equality have been implemented, there is still a lack of forestry-specific frameworks for gender equality.¹⁴⁹ In 2019, UN DESA launched the Gender

¹³⁷ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. *Time for Action - Changing the gender situation in forestry*. 2006.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁴² United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*. 2021.

¹⁴³ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development*. 2005.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure*. 2022.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *EGRM Women in Resource Management*. 2019.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Gender Action Plan*. 2021.

¹⁴⁹ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. *Time for Action - Changing the gender situation in forestry*. 2006.



Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management Project in Uzbekistan.¹⁵⁰ The Gender Action Plan worked with local NGOs such as the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan in order to implement gender equality initiatives specifically within SFM and forestry sectors.¹⁵¹ The Women's Committee focused on implementing education for women in forestry, integrating more women into forestry by creating job opportunities for them, and increasing the use of technologies and information sharing in order to empower women.¹⁵² This project is restricted to only in Uzbekistan and has yet to be implemented internationally.¹⁵³ Obstacles for achieving gender equality in SFM globally include a lack of specified frameworks and initiatives for international SFM and a lack of consistency in data sharing and information gathering.¹⁵⁴

Conclusion

Forests provide communities with natural resources and socio-economic opportunities and are important for combating climate change and achieving SDG 15 (life on land).¹⁵⁵ SFM assists in combating climate change, protecting the environment, and supporting the livelihoods of the more than one billion people who depend on forests.¹⁵⁶ SFM is an essential contribution to sustainability globally, as it aids the legal, technical, environmental, social, and administrative facets of forestry.¹⁵⁷ Gaps to achieve SFM include a lack of standardized measuring procedures and gender inequality within forestry jobs and policy creation.¹⁵⁸ UNECE, through partnerships with FAO, the EU, and Member States, works towards filling these gaps in order to maintain alignment with the 2030 Agenda, the 2022-2025 Integrated Programme of Work (2021), and Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests.¹⁵⁹

Further Research

Delegates should consider the following as they conduct further research: How can Member States contribute to SFM and achieve SDG 15 (life on land)? Which additional entities within the United Nations system, can Member States work with to promote SFM within the UNECE region? How should Member States contribute to standardizing SFM data measurements and reporting? How can Member States promote gender equality in SFM through the United Nations and by working with each other?

¹⁵⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Gender Action Plan for Sustainable Forest Management Project in Uzbekistan*. N.d.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵² *ibid.*

¹⁵³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Time for Action - Changing the gender situation in forestry*. 2006.

¹⁵⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *SDG 15 Day: Focus on Forests in the "Super Year" for Nature and Beyond*. 2020.

¹⁵⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Sustainable Forest Management*. 2024.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Gender in Forestry*. 2016; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. *Accountability Systems for Sustainable Forest Management in the Caucasus and Central Asia*. 2021.

¹⁵⁹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Integrated Programme of Work 2022-2025*. 2021; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *UN Forest Instrument*. 2024.



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<https://www.un.org/esa/forests/collaborative-partnership-on-forests/index.html>

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<https://sdgs.un.org/topics/forests>

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<https://www.un.org/esa/forests/forum/capacity-development/forest-financing/index.html>

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<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15>



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Wolfslehner et al. Science Direct. *Evaluating sustainable forest management strategies with the Analytic Network Process in a Pressure-State-Response framework*. 2008. Retrieved 2 September 2024 from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0301479707000618>



2. Improving Sustainable Energy Development and Transition

Introduction

The use of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas are at the forefront of climate change, taking account of over 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with the energy sector being responsible for roughly three quarters of greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁶⁰ Most Member States rely on the use of fossil fuels, however, a transition towards cleaner, renewable energy can help decrease the effects of fossil fuels on air pollution and the environment as a whole.¹⁶¹ The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) states that 55% of the world's population living in cities are directly affected by the negative side effects of burning fossil fuels, furthering the need to transition towards cleaner energy solutions.¹⁶² With this, the role of UNECE in achieving sustainable energy encompasses the enhancement of clean and affordable energy access to all while negating greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon footprint in the European region.¹⁶³ The modernization of the energy sector in terms of the decrease of coal consumption is key to negating climate change effects across all Member States.¹⁶⁴ The European Union (EU) states that available energy has decreased by 4.5% since 2021, highlighting the importance of access to clean, equitable, and sustainable energy for all.¹⁶⁵

Climate change is at the focus of global challenges, highlighting the need to transition towards cleaner and more efficient energy for all to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 (affordable and clean energy).¹⁶⁶ UNECE identifies a “just transition” as an integrated approach to sustainable development bringing social progress, workers’ protection, and environmental success together towards a framework of democratic governance.¹⁶⁷ With this, there is an urgency to transition from fossil fuels towards energy transition materials, which the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) categorizes as naturally occurring substances, often found in rocks, that are ideal for renewable technologies.¹⁶⁸ These energy transition materials play a vital role in improving sustainable energy and development in all fields.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, the UNECE subsidiary body, Group of Experts on Energy Efficiency, aims to increase energy efficiency globally.¹⁷⁰ In doing so, energy efficiency has the potential to seek access to affordable

¹⁶⁰ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Causes and Effects of Climate Change*. N.d.; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *For a livable climate: Net-zero commitments must be backed by credible action*. N.d.

¹⁶¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe et al. *UNECE Renewable Energy Status Report*. 2022. pp. 9, 17.

¹⁶² *ibid.* p. 64.

¹⁶³ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *About Energy Programme*. N.d.

¹⁶⁴ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Just Transition*. N.d.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *President's Summary of the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*. N.d.; Eurostat Statistics Explained. *Energy statistics-an overview*. 2024.

¹⁶⁶ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Resource Management of Young Member Group. *Critical Minerals for the Sustainable Energy Transition: A Guidebook to Support Intergenerational Action*. 2024; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Energy Efficiency*. N.d.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Just Transition*. N.d.

¹⁶⁸ United Nations Environment Programme. *What are energy transition materials and how can they unlock the clean energy age?*. 2024.

¹⁶⁹ United Nations Environment Programme. *Critical Materials*. N.d.

¹⁷⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Energy Efficiency*. N.d.



and sustainable energy for all, along with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon footprint within the energy sector.¹⁷¹

Achieving net-zero requires a transition in energy production and consumption.¹⁷² Net-zero is identified as eliminating carbon emissions to a short measure of residual emissions that can be absorbed and stored by nature, leaving zero emissions in the atmosphere, thus reaching SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy).¹⁷³ Currently, 30% of energy consumption stems from renewable sources.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, carbon emissions must decrease by 45% by 2030 to reach net-zero by 2050 and decrease climate change.¹⁷⁵ These efforts can be seen through advances in energy technologies and practices that incorporate a transformation of energy systems across all Member States, specifically in the European region.¹⁷⁶

International and Regional Framework

The continued use of non-renewable fossil fuel sources perpetuates global warming.¹⁷⁷ Energy efficiency can create a new foundation for the global energy sector to promote using renewable sources rather than fossil fuels, driving towards sustainable development and energy transition.¹⁷⁸ The *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* (1987) states that recent energy efficiency improvements have helped with consumption limitations and shown cost-effective results, further legitimizing that sustainable and efficient energy can drive progress towards sustainable development.¹⁷⁹ Not only does energy efficiency promote sustainable energy, but also has the potential to stabilize industrialized nations primary energy consumption, as well as allow for growth within developing nations by transitioning towards sustainable and efficient energy alternatives, thus helping decrease environmental damage.¹⁸⁰

The *European Energy Charter* (1991) and the following *Energy Charter Treaty* (1994) encourage sustainability and inclusiveness within the energy sector.¹⁸¹ The *European Energy Charter* acts as a foundation for the *Energy Charter Treaty*, underlying the basis for international energy cooperation.¹⁸² Not only did the *European Energy Charter* provide international collaboration within the energy sector but lead to the *Energy Charter Treaty* to be put into action in 1998.¹⁸³ The *Energy Charter Treaty* is a multilateral framework for energy cooperation through the promotion of energy security and access to energy markets

¹⁷¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Energy Efficiency*. N.d.

¹⁷² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *For a livable climate: Net-zero commitments must be backed by credible action*. N.d.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy*. N.d.

¹⁷⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *For a livable climate: Net-zero commitments must be backed by credible action*. N.d.

¹⁷⁶ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *President's Summary of the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*. N.d.

¹⁷⁷ United Nations, World Commission on Environment and Development. *Our Common Future*. 1988. p. 20.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* p. 21.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.* pp. 53, 147.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. 147.

¹⁸¹ International Energy Charter. *The Energy Charter Treaty*. 1994; International Energy Charter. *The European Energy Charter*. 2015.

¹⁸² International Energy Charter. *The European Energy Charter*. 2015.

¹⁸³ International Energy Charter. *The Energy Charter Treaty*. 1994.



for Member States.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, the *International Energy Charter* (2015) was adopted and signed during the Ministerial Conference, outlining international cooperation within the energy sector.¹⁸⁵

The implementation of sustainable energy development and transition is vital in reaching the 2030 Agenda, further achieving SDG's.¹⁸⁶ The *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development* (Rio+20), took place in 2012 creating an international focus to promote sustainable development across all Member States.¹⁸⁷ In this, there is a clear correlation between energy efficiency and renewable energy practices within sustainable development.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, the launch of the "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative by the United Nations Secretary-General highlights sustainable energy in terms of energy access to all, renewable energies, and energy efficiency, further promoting the need for a sustainable, stable form of energy.¹⁸⁹ In doing so, this transition would help achieve the goals set forth by the *Paris Agreement* (2015) aiming to keep the global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius and limit temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals highlights the need to have a world with access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy, as highlighted in SDG 7.¹⁹¹ This can be incorporated through promoting efficient water and energy usage, sharing renewable energy in the energy sector, and facilitating access to clean energy for all Member States.¹⁹² Regionally, the EU has set forth to drive change within the energy sector, specifically through *The Green Paper* (2013), a 2030 framework for climate and energy policies, seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote renewable energy, and secure energy supplies through an efficient approach.¹⁹³ Alongside this, the *Energy Union Strategy* (2015) aims to provide clean and affordable energy to all within the European region.¹⁹⁴ The EU published *EU energy in figures* (2021) highlighting energy related statistics to show the transparency in the energy sector.¹⁹⁵

Role of the International System

The transition from coal to alternative energy options is paramount for sustainable energy and development in Europe.¹⁹⁶ With new technology advancements worldwide, the use of renewable energy sources advance economies and collaboration between Member States to achieve sustainable energy transition and development.¹⁹⁷ UNECE has a large role within implementing sustainable energy development and transition, specifically through the UNECE Energy Programme and UNECE Committee on Sustainable Energy.¹⁹⁸ The Energy Programme is a subcommittee focusing on resilience and carbon

¹⁸⁴ International Energy Charter. *The Energy Charter Process*. 2015.

¹⁸⁵ International Energy Charter. *The International Energy Charter*. 2016.

¹⁸⁶ United Nations, World Commission on Environment and Development. *Our Common Future*. 1988.

¹⁸⁷ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20*. N.d.

¹⁸⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *The future we want (A/RES/66/288)*. 2012.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *Key aspects of the Paris Agreement*. N.d.

¹⁹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

¹⁹² *ibid.*

¹⁹³ European Union. *Green Paper A 2030 framework for climate and energy policies*. 2013.

¹⁹⁴ European Union. *Energy Union*. N.d.

¹⁹⁵ European Union. *EU energy in figures*. 2021.

¹⁹⁶ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *ECE The First Ten Years*. 1957.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *About Energy Programme*. N.d.; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Committee on Sustainable Energy*. N.d.



neutrality, renewable energy, energy efficiency, just transition, and several other areas within the energy sector with a goal to focus on international cooperation, foster UNECE policy recommendations, and assist Member States.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, the Committee on Sustainable Energy is an intergovernmental body with the goal to create international communication on energy and cooperation amongst Member States and all relevant stakeholders through hosting events, such as the UNECE Sustainable Energy Week 2024.²⁰⁰ Moreover, UNECE published the *Critical Minerals for Sustainable Energy Transition, A Guidebook to Support Intergenerational Action* (2024) highlighting the need to transition towards more sustainably sound energy practices to further achieve sustainable development, as critical minerals are pertinent to evolving into a clean transition and reaching net-zero.²⁰¹ In fact, the use of critical minerals not only enhances clean energy but can improve social and economic development through the implementation of a critical minerals value chain, which meets an end-to-end life cycle of products.²⁰² Specifically within the energy sector, the use of critical minerals has potential to move towards a sustainable transition and usage of energy through the sourcing of materials, production, consumption, and recycling of the materials.²⁰³ UNECE is a partnering organization in the *Policy Briefs in support of the United Nations High-Level Political Forum 2023: Ensuring Universal Energy Access and Advancing Just, Inclusive, and Equitable Energy Transitions* recommending clean energy transitions, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy inclusivity to achieve SDG 7.²⁰⁴

UNECE's recent efforts to implement sustainable energy is highlighted in the *UNECE Annual Report 2023* to help achieve sustainable development, specifically in the energy sector.²⁰⁵ UNECE has collaborated with various partners to help achieve sustainable development, such as the European Commission, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and several others.²⁰⁶ In fact, UNECE partnered with UNDP, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Organization for Migration and local financial institutions in North Macedonia to support the Green Finance Facility, aiding affordable financings for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.²⁰⁷ In doing so, UNECE and UNDP hosted training sessions on energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in hopes that the participants will collaborate to present these projects to the Green Finance Facility as well as local and international financial institutions to promote a renewable energy generation and improve energy efficiency not only internationally, but locally, to help reach sustainable development.²⁰⁸ Not only did UNECE provide support to Member States through advancing more than 55 workshop trainings, but also aided governments in terms of creating policy options to increase sustainable energy to help Member States with energy shocks and crises.²⁰⁹

¹⁹⁹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *About Energy Programme*. N.d.

²⁰⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Committee on Sustainable Energy*. N.d.; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE Sustainable Energy Week 2024*. N.d.

²⁰¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Resource Management of Young Member Group. *Critical Minerals for the Sustainable Energy Transition: A Guidebook to Support Intergenerational Action*. 2024.

²⁰² *ibid.*

²⁰³ *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Policy Briefs in support of the UN High-Level Political Forum 2023: Ensuring Universal Energy Access and Advancing Just, Inclusive, and Equitable Energy Transitions*. 2023.

²⁰⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE Annual Report 2023*. 2024.

²⁰⁶ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Partnerships*. N.d.

²⁰⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE provides training to help finance energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in North Macedonia*. 2023.

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*

²⁰⁹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE Annual Report 2023*. 2024.



To achieve sustainable energy and development, there must be an increased level of awareness for the transition towards efficient energy.²¹⁰ The United Nations General Assembly has adopted several resolutions to promote change within the energy sector, such as General Assembly resolution 65/151 (2011) on “International Year of Sustainable Energy for All” marking 2012 as the International Year of Sustainable Development for All.²¹¹ In addition, General Assembly resolution 67/163 (2013) on “Reliable and stable transit of energy and its role in ensuring sustainable development and international cooperation” highlights that reliable and efficient energy is key to reaching sustainable development, as well as the urgency to develop better energy systems in regards to energy transferring and sharing between Member States.²¹² Regionally, the European Commission, the EU’s primary executive branch, participates in the work of International Energy Agency, which published *Net Zero by 2050 A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector* (2021) illustrating how the energy sector can reach net-zero by 2050 with all stakeholders transitioning towards clean energy systems.²¹³

Sustainable Energy Development and Equity

Access to energy is a precondition for health, economy, and an essential multiplier for all the SDGs.²¹⁴ Currently, only 44.8% of the population living in least developed countries have access to electricity, and 76% of rural areas have access to electricity, while urban areas have 97%.²¹⁵ Around 3 billion people do not have access to clean cooking energies, while 2.2 billion people rely on traditional wood fuels, resulting in 4 million deaths due to household pollution.²¹⁶ This issue can be faced by expanding renewable sources of energy, such as wind and solar power, meaning that electricity becomes more accessible for lower and middle-income households worldwide.²¹⁷ This phenomenon is described as energy poverty, which causes high energy costs compared to low income households, and low energy performances of buildings and appliances.²¹⁸ Each household faces different complications depending on external factors such as geography and climate, as well as household characteristics such as gender, health, and specific transportation needs.²¹⁹ In 2022, over 41 million people in Europe were unable to keep their house heated, while 7% of the population was in debt from their utility bills.²²⁰

²¹⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Year of Sustainable Energy for All (A/RES/65/151)*. 2011; United Nations, General Assembly. *Reliable and stable transit of energy and its role in ensuring sustainable development and international cooperations (A/RES/67/263)*. 2013.

²¹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Year of Sustainable Energy for All (A/RES/65/151)*. 2011.

²¹² United Nations, General Assembly. *Reliable and stable transit of energy and its role in ensuring sustainable development and international cooperations (A/RES/67/263)*. 2013.

²¹³ International Energy Agency. *Net Zero by 2050 A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector*. 2021.

²¹⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022. p. 24.

²¹⁵ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *President’s Summary of the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development*. N.d.

²¹⁶ *ibid.*

²¹⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Synergy Solutions for Climate and SDG Action: Bridging the Ambition Gap for the Future We Want*. 2024. p. 38.

²¹⁸ European Union. *Commission Recommendation 2023/2407 of October 2023 on energy poverty*. 2023. p. 1.

²¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 1.

²²⁰ European Parliament. *Energy Poverty in the EU*. 2023. p. 3.



The concept of energy poverty was introduced in a European Parliament directive and EU council.²²¹ The narrative has broadened to include a just and fair energy transition, while also tackling the root causes of energy poverty.²²² Within the same directive, Member States of the EU are encouraged to include a definition of energy poverty in their national law.²²³ However, Member States of the EU struggle to tackle energy poverty at local, national, and regional levels, as they face low income, high energy bills, and low energy efficiency.²²⁴ Taking these struggles into account, UNECE and the United Nations Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) are in a joint collaboration with the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia.²²⁵ Together, UNECE and ESCAP have a joint publication on *Strengthening Cooperation for Rational and Efficient use of Water and Energy Resources in Central Asia* (2004).²²⁶ Furthermore, UNECE is lead on a multi-year project, “Improving the energy efficiency of the global building supply chain industry and its products to deliver high performance buildings” with UNDP, ESCAP, UNEP, UNEP Climate Change Centre, Green Building Alliance, Institute for Energy Efficiency, and the Passive House Institute.²²⁷ The project aims to cut the emissions from building infrastructure to mitigate greenhouse gasses and the carbon footprint by improving the life cycle of infrastructure in Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine.²²⁸

Even though great advancements for sustainable energy development and transition have been made, approximately 2.1 billion people depend on the use of traditional fuels and technologies, such as wood, charcoal, dung, and crop waste as their main energy source for cooking.²²⁹ In Europe, large scale investments in conventional energy sources, such as the use of fossil fuels, have slowed the development of renewable energy sources.²³⁰ Additionally, several Member States have a high dependency on energy imports, creating risks for energy security as it depends on a foreign source.²³¹ The World Health Organization (WHO) has linked emissions originating from wood heating to severe health effects, such as respiratory and cardiovascular mortality and morbidity.²³² Additionally, the inadequate use of cooking fuels and equipment in households increases indoor air pollution, contributing to increased mortality, premature deaths, high rates of chronic diseases, and shorter life expectancy.²³³ By 2019, there was a slight decrease in the number of deaths attributed to particle air pollution caused by household and ambient air pollution, but the rate of deaths by this year was still 104 per 100,000 people.²³⁴ Many households across Europe are below WHO standards, which are detailed in the *WHO Housing and Health Guidelines* (2018),

²²¹ European Union. *Commission Recommendation 2023/2407 of October 2023 on energy poverty*. 2023. p. 9.

²²² *ibid.* p. 9.

²²³ *ibid.* p. 1.

²²⁴ *ibid.* p. 11.

²²⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Partnerships*. N.d.

²²⁶ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE and partners kick off major project on energy efficiency and carbon footprint of building industry in seven countries*. 2023.

²²⁷ *ibid.*

²²⁸ *ibid.*

²²⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*. 2024. p. 22.

²³⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe et al. *UNECE Renewable Energy Status Report*. 2022. p. 24.

²³¹ *ibid.* p. 24.

²³² *ibid.* p. 87.

²³³ *ibid.* p. 124.

²³⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*. 2024. p. 12.



as power supply is not always reliable or sufficient to meet the demand for adequate living.²³⁵ The co-benefits obtained from shifting to a less carbon-intensive society would ensure more resilient and democratic energy systems by reducing poverty and including social and environmental justice.²³⁶

Creating new energy services generates new employment opportunities for women, with off-grid systems expected to create 4.5 million jobs by 2030.²³⁷ The development of renewable energy and energy efficiency has an important impact on climate change, while also promoting inclusive economic development and job creation.²³⁸ The use of suitable energy sources drives the creation of an effective public digital transformation.²³⁹ UNEP defines digital transformation as using digital technologies to encourage transformation in environmental decision-making, economic incentives, business models, human behaviors, and environmental governance.²⁴⁰ As a result, UNEP forecasts that global CO₂ emissions could be reduced by at least 20%, and the use of natural resources in products would be reduced by 90% with the detoxification of supply chains.²⁴¹ These factors are important for transforming the economy and accelerating progress towards the SDG's.²⁴² This enables financial service providers to use technology to facilitate secure payments aiming to support the livelihoods of disadvantaged groups in society, and further achieves SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure) and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities).²⁴³ It is predicted that the global transition towards net-zero will establish 14 million new jobs in the renewable energy sector.²⁴⁴ However, there will also be a loss of jobs in the fossil fuel sector, thus the EU has developed mechanisms in order to anticipate and facilitate the shift of laid-off fossil fuel workers into more sustainable industries.²⁴⁵

Government Incentives and Regulations to Transition to Sustainable Energy

Globally, more than \$7 trillion annually is being channeled to subsidize the fossil fuel economy, highlighting the need to reform taxation and subsidy practices.²⁴⁶ The allocation of resources towards subsidies affects the long term transition towards sustainable energy sources, which is why reforms are necessary to accelerate energy systems and transition to sustainable futures.²⁴⁷ Fossil fuel subsidies are defined based on different methodologies, for in some cases it is based on political, social, and cultural perspectives of natural resources, meaning there is a need to achieve greater political and social

²³⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*. 2024. p. 12.

²³⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Synergy Solutions for Climate and SDG Action: Bridging the Ambition Gap for the Future We Want*. 2024. p. 33.

²³⁷ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022.

²³⁸ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Synergy Solutions for Climate and SDG Action: Bridging the Ambition Gap for the Future We Want*. 2024. p. 7.

²³⁹ *ibid.* p. 7.

²⁴⁰ United Nations Environment Programme. *Digital Transformation*. 2022. p. 3.

²⁴¹ *ibid.*

²⁴² United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions: Secretary General Report*. 2024. p. 9.

²⁴³ *ibid.* p. 9.

²⁴⁴ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Synergy Solutions for Climate and SDG Action: Bridging the Ambition Gap for the Future We Want*. 2024. p. 38.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.* p. 33.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 19.

²⁴⁷ *ibid.* p. 19.



acceptability regarding the transition towards different energy sources.²⁴⁸ Therefore, it can be argued to align economic and tax policies as part of domestic resource mobilization.²⁴⁹ In Europe, there was a slight decrease in fossil fuel subsidies until 2021, where the amount passed from €56 billion, to €123 billion in 2022, as a measure to protect consumers from high prices.²⁵⁰ This in turn, prevents resources to be allocated towards more sustainable sources of energy.²⁵¹

Energy tariffs for fossil fuel-based energy are an important factor when analyzing the long-term success of renewable sources of energy because they define the competitiveness of renewable energy facilities.²⁵² Governments can address the barrier that low-tariffs present for renewable energy by developing new market instruments that create enabling conditions for further deployment of renewable energy, making these sources more affordable and competitive.²⁵³ Subsidies are used as a political and economic tool which affects Member States' urgency to shift towards sustainable energy sources.²⁵⁴ Thus, reform is impacted by factors including political or popular support for the government, as this gives the government the confidence to make these reforms.²⁵⁵ UNDP and EU recognize there is a need for Member States to take these measures into account, as it correlates with electricity and gas consumption.²⁵⁶ These measures may also be determined by Member States themselves with the creation of national policies and action plans.²⁵⁷ UNDP concludes in *Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reforms Lessons and Opportunities* (2021), that removing fossil fuel subsidies is the first step towards correctly pricing energy.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, reducing fossil fuel subsidies is an important incentive that promotes the correct pricing of energy, and establishes a foundation for a successful transition towards sustainable energy sources.²⁵⁹

Right to Energy (2020) states that a decentralized energy generation is a useful tool to evaluate domestic energy policies and include civil society in climate change challenges.²⁶⁰ For instance, local energy initiatives, such as cooperatives, can be generated with the help of community members.²⁶¹ *Moldova's Law on the Promotion of the Use of Energy from Renewable Sources* (2016), exemplifies how to promote

²⁴⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reforms Lessons and Opportunities*. 2021. p. 20.

²⁴⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Synergy Solutions for Climate and SDG Action: Bridging the Ambition Gap for the Future We Want*. 2024. p. 19.

²⁵⁰ European Commission. *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council 2023 Report on Energy Subsidies in the EU*. 2023. p. 3.

²⁵¹ *ibid.* p. 3.

²⁵² United Nations Economic Commission for Europe et al. *UNECE Renewable Energy Status Report*. 2022. p. 125.

²⁵³ *ibid.* p. 125.

²⁵⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reforms Lessons and Opportunities*. 2021. p. 34.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 34.

²⁵⁶ Pye et al. *Energy Poverty and vulnerable consumers in the energy sector across the EU: analysis of policies and measures*. 2015. p. 4.

²⁵⁷ *ibid.* p. 4.

²⁵⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reforms Lessons and Opportunities*. 2021. p. 7.

²⁵⁹ *ibid.* p. 7.

²⁶⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Energy Transition and the Post-Covid-19 Socioeconomic Recovery: Role of Women and Impact on Them*. 2022. p. 19.

²⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 19.

distributed energy generation.²⁶² The objective promotes non-discriminatory connections between households and electricity grids with district heating networks.²⁶³ This objective is put in action by obliging system operators to provide access to all actual or potential users with the electricity transmission and distribution networks.²⁶⁴ Alongside, localized action and integrated policies that create an impact at a local level allows Member States to overcome struggles and maximize co-benefits in between sectors, including air pollution control and energy transition.²⁶⁵ Small energy suppliers also face serious financial distress and an increased risk to cover unexpected consumption variations in the market.²⁶⁶

UNECE has identified the reduction of fossil fuel subsidies as an important factor when working to accomplish carbon neutrality.²⁶⁷ *The Paris Agreement* defines carbon neutrality as obtaining a balance between man-made carbon emissions with carbon removal through natural sinks or engineered carbon emissions technologies, such as bioenergy with carbon capture and storage.²⁶⁸ Even though advances have been made towards accomplishing this goal, UNECE produces 39% of the global CO₂ emissions, and 80% of the region's energy supply depends on fossil fuel sources of energy.²⁶⁹ During the 26th meeting of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, the final argument called upon parties to accelerate effort towards phasing-out of the inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, while supporting those most vulnerable, generating a just transition.²⁷⁰ During the transition, UNECE provides a platform for developing policies, regulatory frameworks, and standards encouraging energy transition in the region and different industries, as well as generating public-private partnerships.²⁷¹

Conclusion

The transition to sustainable energy development is imperative for addressing climate change and ensuring a stable equitable future for all.²⁷² The urgency of this transition is undermined by the significant dependency on fossil fuel based energy.²⁷³ Efforts made by UNECE and other United Nations bodies demonstrate commitment to fostering sustainable energy practices.²⁷⁴ The implementation of renewable energy technologies and the reduction of fossil fuel dependence are critical steps in achieving all SDG's,

²⁶² United Nations Economic Commission for Europe et al. *UNECE Renewable Energy Status Report* . 2022. p. 38.

²⁶³ Republic of Moldova. *Forth Progress Report under Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/ec as adapted by the Ministerial Council Decisión 2012/04/MC-EnC*. N.d. p. 11.

²⁶⁴ *ibid.* p. 11.

²⁶⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Synergy Solutions for Climate and SDG Action: Bridging the Ambition Gap for the Future We Want*. 2024. p. 6.

²⁶⁶ European Union. *Renewal of Joint Common Principles for Enhanced Consumer Protection This Winter*. 2022. p. 2.

²⁶⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Carbon Neutrality in the UNECE Region, Technology Interplay under the Carbon Neutrality Concept*. 2022. p. 12.

²⁶⁸ *ibid.* p. 13.

²⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 21.

²⁷⁰ *ibid.* p. 12.

²⁷¹ *ibid.* p. 10.

²⁷² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024*. 2024.

²⁷³ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *Carbon Neutrality in the UNECE Region, Technology Interplay under the Carbon Neutrality Concept*. 2022.

²⁷⁴ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. *UNECE Annual Report 2023*. 2024.



specifically SDG 7.²⁷⁵ However, Member States still face challenges in terms of sustainable energy development and equity.²⁷⁶ For instance, European Member States face complications when distributing energy, causing energy poverty.²⁷⁷ In addition to government incentives and regulations for transitioning to sustainable energy, many fossil fuel subsidies are influenced by economic and political factors, which can make them increase.²⁷⁸

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can UNECE further support Member States identify and reduce energy poverty? What are the sectors relating to energy that have no or little national, regional, or international frameworks and legislation? Who are other actors in the energy sector that have not been included in projects, and programs? What are other forms that UNECE can motivate governments to take actions for new sustainable energy methods and transition to them? What are other forms of sustainable energy that have little legislation development?

²⁷⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Policy Briefs in support of the UN High-Level Political Forum 2023: Ensuring Universal Energy Access and Advancing Just, Inclusive, and Equitable Energy Transitions*. 2023.

²⁷⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025*. 2022.

²⁷⁷ European Union. *Commission Recommendation 2023/2407 of October 2023 on energy poverty*. 2023.

²⁷⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reforms Lessons and Opportunities*. 2021.



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