



CHAPTER SEVEN

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (ECE)

Members of the Economic Commission for Europe

Albania	Hungary	Russian Federation
Andorra	Iceland	San Marino
Armenia	Ireland	Serbia
Austria	Israel	Slovakia
Azerbaijan	Italy	Slovenia
Belarus	Kazakhstan	Spain
Belgium	Kyrgyzstan	Sweden
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Latvia	Switzerland
Bulgaria	Liechtenstein	Tajikistan
Canada	Lithuania	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Croatia	Luxembourg	Turkey
Cyprus	Malta	Turkmenistan
Czech Republic	Monaco	Ukraine
Denmark	Montenegro	United Kingdom
Estonia	Netherlands	United States of America
Finland	Norway	Uzbekistan
France	Poland	
Georgia	Portugal	
Germany	Republic of Moldova	
Greece	Romania	

This year's simulation will include one of the Economic and Social Commission's regional commissions, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). Participation in ECE includes one or two representatives for the countries that are currently represented on the Commission (see list, left). ECE will meet all four days of the Conference, and will report to a combined ECOSOC plenary session on Tuesday afternoon.

Purview of the Simulation

The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is one of five regional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. ECE focuses on analyzing, advising and assisting the Member States in cooperation with the international business community. The commission meets annually, makes recommendations and reports to ECOSOC. The 56 Member State commission was established in 1947 to support pan-European sustainable economic development. In addition to the Member States, there are over 70 global professional organizations that participate in ECE activities.

Website: <http://unece.org/>

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

Global climate change is an issue of critical importance. The release of excess pollutants, particularly carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere, coupled with manmade changes in the geography of the earth that limit its potential to reabsorb carbon into the ecosystem, has caused a warming trend in the Earth's temperature which, at present, is only accelerating. It is estimated that global temperatures will increase by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius in the next 100 years, a steeper trend in temperature change than any seen in the past 10,000 years. No nation or region will be unaffected, and all must cooperate to solve the problem. Progress on this issue demands the worldwide diplomatic reach and consensus-building ability of the United Nations.

The actions that need to be taken in response to the crisis fall into two categories. Mitigation policies aim to reduce the ratio of carbon released to carbon absorbed worldwide, thereby reducing the severity of climate change. Adaptation strategies recognize that global warming has already occurred and will continue in the future. Mitigation and adaptation strategies are complementary to one another and ideally would be developed in concert, because the amount of adaptation that will be necessary is dependent on the effectiveness of mitigation activities.

The UN has been attempting to tackle the issue by establishing documents and treaties dealing at least in part with climate change. The most relevant of these is the Framework Convention for Climate Change, which seeks to reach a stable level of pollutant emissions worldwide to reduce interference with the climate. The Kyoto Protocol is the binding international treaty on climate change,

although some major contributors to global carbon emissions have not ratified it, and many countries that have ratified it are failing to meet their mitigation commitments. Other important UN actions on climate change include the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation on Sustainable Development, as well as the Millennium Development Goals, which address environmental sustainability as Goal 7.

The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is particularly concerned with sustainability in the energy, urban development, and transport sectors, and is working to develop mitigation and adaptation strategies in each area. Energy sustainability has great potential for climate change mitigation, and many side benefits for the region. Energy efficiency projects aim to reduce overall demand, and save money, which can be put to better use in the context of a global economic recession. The development of a set of sustainable energy options for the region not only reduces emissions of carbon dioxide and other pollutants into the atmosphere, but also enhances energy security for Member States by reducing dependence on imported oil and spurring technological advances.

Urban development is another fertile field for mitigation activities in such a highly developed region. More efficient building strategies can lessen energy demand by reducing the need for constant heating and cooling. Design of cities to include parks and drainage systems can contribute carbon-absorbing greenery and improve the microclimates within a city, again slackening demand for artificial climate control. Cities are also a crucial place for the implementation of climate change adaptation strategies, because of the population concentrated there. Urban areas must be more resilient to natural

disaster than ever before, due to a population increase along with an increased probability of previously rare events such as floods, storms, and droughts.

The transportation sector is both a well-known contributor to carbon emissions and a crucial piece of the global and European economy. Adaptation strategies for the transportation network have not been well studied to date but will be needed to preserve the smooth flow of goods and people around the globe. Necessary components of any comprehensive adaptation plan will include engineering and retrofitting of ports to deal with rising sea levels, increased road maintenance in the face of larger seasonal temperature shifts, and disaster preparedness for transportation hubs. Mitigation efforts for transportation are better known and include efforts to develop alternative fuel vehicles and the infrastructure that will enable their widespread use.

Adaptation strategies are not politically difficult to put into effect due to their immediate and visible benefits to the population, but mitigation efforts can be more difficult to frame and implement. It is not enough simply to set targets for reducing carbon emissions - there must be effective strategies in place to enforce the accomplishment of those goals. Technological development is one answer that can be a win for both industry and the climate because of the economic opportunities that come with it. However, policies that make polluters liable for the costs of their actions may also be necessary in order to create economic incentives for climate-positive strategies. These types of solutions can be quite difficult to implement, and it is up to the region, countries, and even local governments to cooperate in developing a series of increasingly specific solutions that work for each area.

The countries of the ECE have a special responsibility to pursue climate change mitigation. Members include many of the world's most developed countries and also the biggest contributors to global carbon emissions; in 2008, half of the world's energy was consumed in the ECE region, which is home to about a fifth of the global population. Meanwhile, the effects of climate change are being felt disproportionately in some of the least developed countries in the world, including African states, where severe droughts have already caused famine. The ECE community must face this challenge by curbing its contributions to climate change, finding ways to protect its own population from the damage that has already been done, and assisting less developed regions in their efforts to deal with the situation.

Questions to consider from your government's perspective on this issue include

- What are the most effective ways to quickly reduce carbon emissions on a large scale within the ECE region?
- What adaptation strategies are necessary in the short term to keep the ECE region functioning smoothly? In the long term?
- How much responsibility do ECE countries bear for the effects of climate change on other areas of the world, and what is an appropriate response?

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ECE/HBP/2010/4

FCCC/TP/2009/2/REV.1

ECE/ENERGY/WP.4/GE.2/2010/3

ECE/CEP/155

A/RES/64/73

Framework Convention on Climate Change

Additional Web Resources

<http://unfccc.int> - Framework Convention on Climate Change
www.unep.org/climatechange/ - UN Environmental Programme
www.unece.org/oes/disc_papers/climat_change.html - ECE on Climate Change

SUSTAINABLE QUALITY OF LIFE IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Affordable and safe housing is the foundation of a quality lifestyle. Individuals with secure housing have an easier time finding meaningful employment, and their families are protected from the outdoor elements and natural disasters. Safe housing also has important health implications, particularly if there are dangerous chemicals present, poor air quality, or unsafe sources of heat or coolant. The location of housing determines access to public transportation, food, and other necessities.

Over the course of the last few decades, the growth of the housing market has not matched the speed at which the population has increased. This, coupled with an influx of immigrants into European nations and the ever-widening income gap, has left many Europeans without affordable and safe housing. As a result, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) formed the Committee on Human Settlements to focus on the issue.

In 2000, ECE articulated its broad goals for the upcoming new millennium. One of the areas ECE addressed was housing and land management, in recognition of the relationship between housing and economic growth and development. The ECE Strategy for a

Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the Twenty First Century (the “21st Century Report”) set forth four recommendations: effective urban planning, the promotion of neighborhood regeneration, the refurbishment of the multi-family housing stock, and the promotion of access to affordable and adequate housing, infrastructure, facilities and public spaces. ECE contended that the implementation of these four recommendations would enhance the quality of life for individuals living in human settlements, thereby promoting economic growth and prosperity.

After the release of the 21st Century Report, ECE turned its attention to the implementation of the suggestions set forth in the 21st Century Report. It published one report, *Housing Finance Systems for Countries in Transition: Principles and Examples*, which provided a detailed analysis of various models of common housing finance in ECE countries. These examples allow a transitioning country to compare models and assess which policy may be most appropriate for their country. Another report, *Guidelines on Social Housing*, addressed the gap in income of the working poor and the cost of housing. The report emphasized that the affordability of housing is tied to an individual’s quality of life and social cohesiveness of society, and was the first attempt at best practice sharing among nations with respect to social housing.

In 2010, ECE revisited the initial 21st Century Report. By this time, the Committee on Human Settlements had been renamed the Committee on Housing and Land Reform. The Committee on Housing and Land Reform concluded that while a great deal of information had been produced, there was a gap between policy recommendations and implementation. As a result, the Committee recommended a ECE –wide housing policy, as discussed in the document “Principles and Goals for Affordable, Healthy, and Ecological Housing.” The Principles and Goals for Affordable, Healthy, and Ecological Housing were very specific in contrast to the broader ideas put forth previously by the Committee. The Committee also discussed the viability of making a ECE-wide housing policy legally binding. This led to the creation of the Working Group on a Possible Legally Binding Instrument on Affordable, Healthy and Ecological Housing in the ECE Region. This working group, still in its early stages, held its first meeting in April 2011.

ECE has declared that all citizens have the right to live in an ecologically sound and energy efficient home. However, the housing sector often maintains inefficient practices such as the wasteful use of water, little use of renewable energy, and improper waste disposal. As a result, the Committee adopted an Action Plan for Energy-efficient Housing in the ECE Region, which enumerated 12 policy goals aimed at improving energy efficiency in the housing sector by 2020.

Persistent housing shortages remain for a large percentage of the population and limit alternatives to ownership. Other challenges in building safety also persist, including the use of toxic materials in construction, unsafe building and construction practices, poor indoor air quality, hazardous heating systems, and lack of accessibility for the disabled. In addition, there has been increasing recognition of the link between disaster preparedness and improving security in building construction, as discussed at the International Forum on Natural Disasters and Building and Construction Safety in November 2010.

Questions to consider from your government’s perspective on the issue include

- What success has your country had with implementing the goals put forth in the ECE “Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the Twenty First Century?” How can your country help other nations mirror your successes?
- Could an ECE-wide housing policy be viably created? If so, should it be legally binding?
- What should be done to make the housing sector more energy efficient?
- How can the implementation of the goals set forth by the Committee on Housing and Land Management be incentivized?

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ECE/HBP/138
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Additional Web Resources

- <http://www.unhabitat.org/> - UN HABITAT
<http://live.ECE.org/hlm/welcome.html> - ECE Committee on Housing and Land Management: