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(CSTD)**

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**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international  
organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2022 to  
implement the outcomes of the WSIS**

**Submission by**

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 26<sup>th</sup> session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

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**Progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the  
World Summit on the Information Society  
at the regional and international levels**

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The implementation of the outcomes of WSIS by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) remains focussed on areas related to economic development and environmental sustainability.
2. UNECE is engaged in the active promotion of access to environmental information, including through the use of modern digital technologies by both public authorities and the public. It has continued to contribute to the development of digital and shared environmental information systems. It also promotes public access to environment-related information on products. The aim is to ensure that timely, reliable and high-quality environmental information, which is essential for evidence-based policies and informing the public, is easily accessible.
3. UNECE facilitates the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in urban development and land administration, including through policy advisory work based on Key Performance Indicators. In the area of transport, it has advanced the shift of the paper-based TIR to the eTIR electronic system. In energy, it has set up a virtual collaborative environment for experts on energy efficiency and buildings.
4. UNECE work on innovation, including using digital technologies, resulted in new policy guidance documents on high-growth entrepreneurship and sustainable development in Central Asia, and innovation and ICT infrastructure development in Moldova and Ukraine. Through the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), UNECE has launched several activities to help countries put the new SPECA Innovation for Sustainable Development Strategy into practice.
5. UNECE has developed various eLearning initiatives, including a course on air pollution and the Air Convention and a platform that brings together multiple courses on inland trade transport and trade connectivity.

## II. OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC ACTIONS

6. The following sections describe the work done by the various UNECE subprogrammes to support individual WSIS Action Lines.

### A. ACTION LINE C1: THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS AND ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROMOTION OF ICTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

#### Innovation: National e-strategies

7. The handbook “*Supporting Innovative High-Growth Enterprises in the SPECA sub-region*”, which will be published in the near future, seeks to assist policymakers in the design of effective policies and institutions to foster the potential of innovative, high-growth entrepreneurship, including with the support of and in areas related to information and communications technologies (ICTs).
8. As part of its programme of Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews, UNECE published the [Reviews of the Republic of Moldova and of Uzbekistan](#), which, among other issues, look at the state of ICTs infrastructure, and prospects for its development, while considering how these technologies can be harnessed to foster innovation.

#### Urban development

9. UNECE published a Smart Sustainable City Profile of Tbilisi, Georgia and a Smart Sustainable Country Profile of the Republic of San Marino, which were prepared using the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Smart Sustainable Cities (SCC) developed by UNECE and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) in the context of the United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) initiative. The Profiles identify needs for the use of information and communications technologies as a “means of implementation” for achieving sustainable urbanism while advancing the 2030 Agenda. The Profiles provide also action-oriented recommendations that were adopted by national and city authorities and presented to UNECE member States during the 83rd session of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (3-6, October 2022, San Marino).
10. Together with FAO and the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), UNECE published “*Accelerated Digitalization and the Future Role of Land Administration in the UNECE Region and Beyond*”, which provides a coherent action-oriented reference framework for harnessing ICT and innovation for the purpose of unlocking the full potential of land administration. The emphasis is on consolidating land administration mechanisms that accelerate the documenting, recording, recognizing, and monitoring of the different forms of “people to land” relationships and at the same time are interoperable, flexible, participatory and inclusive.

### B. ACTION LINE C3: ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

#### Environment

11. In 2022, UNECE launched the seventh pan-European environmental assessment and continued to support the implementation of a Shared Environmental Information System across the pan-European region. The final review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental

Information System in Europe and Central and the seventh pan-European environmental assessment were presented at the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (5-7 October 2022, Nicosia). Ministers confirmed their commitment to keeping the pan-European region under regular review and invited countries to continue their efforts to implement all pillars of the Shared Environmental Information System and to address any remaining gaps. They encouraged countries, when developing digitalization of environmental information systems relying on open data, big data and state-of-the-art digital technologies, to improve data availability, transparency and public participation in decision-making. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment remained the knowledge platform for the development of environmental monitoring, assessment and information systems supported by the Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics

12. Activities under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) aimed to further advance effective public access to environmental information. In 2022, the focus remained on active dissemination of environmental information, as open digital data records, and the use of modern digital technologies by both public authorities, and the public in accordance with decision VII/1 on promoting effective access to information<sup>1</sup> and the updated recommendations on the more effective use of electronic information tools<sup>2</sup>. A particular attention was given to promoting public access to environment-related information on products and the use of new technologies in this area<sup>3</sup>.
13. The Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) to the Aarhus Convention provides minimum standards for equal rights and transparency in the use of environmental data and offers a legal framework for enhancing public access to information. Free web-based access to geo-referenced environmental data empowers the public, decision makers in government and industry, scientists and journalists to make informed choices. Ongoing work covers issues such as comprehensive data gathering and links with other electronic databases; modern means to provide easy to access information; and promotion of knowledge about use of pollutant releases and transfers for fact-based decision-making, including with regard to spatial planning, human health and the shift to a sustainable and circular economy.

### Energy

14. In 2022, UNECE established a virtual Collaborative Environment for Experts on Energy Efficiency in Buildings in the UNECE region. It aims to develop a network of experts from public and private sectors on energy efficiency in buildings and help strengthening their capacities by sharing knowledge and expertise. It has two components: (i) online database of experts, and (ii) online collaborative tool. The database of experts includes policy makers in the field of housing and construction and energy efficiency, architects, building contractors, energy service companies, representatives of academia, representatives of international organizations and civil society. The collaborative tool collates energy efficiency projects, best practices, case studies, and relevant events.

## **C. ACTION LINE C4: CAPACITY-BUILDING**

### Environment

15. The secretariat of the Aarhus Convention and of the Protocol on PRTRs, in cooperation with partner organizations, continued its efforts to strengthen countries' capacities to disseminate and reuse

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2022/04/pp-aarhus-convention-mop7-decision-vii1-effective-access-information>.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://unece.org/environment/documents/2022/02/updated-recommendations-more-effective-use-electronic-information>.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Public-Participation/events/365937> (tab Thematic session on Access to Information).

environmental information and promote modernization of nationwide digital environmental information systems using best available state-of-the-art digital technologies, including establishing and improving PRTRs. Knowledge management tools, such as the Aarhus Clearinghouse and its online databases, support these efforts.

## **E. ACTION LINE C7: ICT APPLICATIONS: BENEFITS IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE**

### **1. C7. e-Business**

#### Transport

16. Azerbaijan, Georgia, Pakistan, Tunisia, Türkiye and Uzbekistan have finalized the interconnections of their national customs systems to the eTIR international system, which will move away from the paper-based TIR to an electronic system. With assistance of UNECE, the six countries are performing the conformance tests required to ensure the proper functioning of the interconnections. The start of the official operations of the eTIR procedure is set in November 2022, following the announcement to all contracting parties of the TIR Convention.

### **2. C7. e-learning**

#### Environment

17. Under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, an eLearning course was developed to raise awareness about air pollution and its effects, ways to prevent and reduce harmful emissions, and the Convention and its protocols as an international framework for cooperation on cleaner air. The course is designed to build capacities of a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, government officials, staff from intergovernmental/non-governmental organizations, private sector professionals, students/academia, and others. Taking this course should enable learners to contribute to, and ultimately drive forward actions on cleaner air. The course is accessible to learners free of charge on the UNCC:eLearn platform, which is managed by UNITAR.

#### Transport

18. In 2022, UNECE launched an eLearning platform dedicated to inland transport and trade connectivity – LearnITC - bringing together multiple eLearning courses on the UN Inland Transport Legal Instruments as well as the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide. The courses are primarily designed to train policymakers, government officials, staff from intergovernmental/non-governmental organizations, private sector professionals, students/academia, and other stakeholders. They aim to equip participants with the knowledge and resource materials to understand the main concepts of sustainable transport and trade connectivity, in particular the UN Inland Transport Legal Instruments and the trade recommendations and standards. Each module uses a mix of learning tools and features engaging content with clear storylines, complemented by interactive features, relevant tools, and links to additional resources.

### **3. C7. e-Environment**

#### Environment

19. In 2022, the Aarhus secretariat, in collaboration with UNITAR, OECD, EEA, UNEP, OSCE, CBD and other partner organizations, continued to provide up-to-date information on available electronic tools for access to environmental information and Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs). The related good practices and case studies can be accessed at the PRTR.net global portal, PRTR Learn, the UNECE Public Participation website, the Aarhus Clearinghouse for environmental democracy, and the online Aarhus Convention and Protocol on PRTRs national implementation reporting tools.

#### **D. C11: INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION**

##### **C11: Regional action plan**

20. UNECE, together with ESCAP, is supporting the countries of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) in their efforts to spur innovation while fostering regional co-operation on sustainable development. This support is structured around the implementation of the Action Plan of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development. The aim is to develop and consolidate national capacities to design and implement innovation policies for sustainable development, considering not only national contexts and existing constraints but also recognizing any possible transboundary effects.