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Item 12 of the provisional agenda

Activities of bodies of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and international organizations relevant to the Convention

Activities of the Bureau

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its mandate (ECE/EB.AIR/91/Add.1, annex I) the Bureau of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution functions as an inter-sessional forum for initiating strategic action and for securing operational coordination, including making decisions upon urgent matters. The mandate requires that all substantive decisions shall be reported to the Executive Body. The secretariat has prepared this document for reporting purposes, as required under the mandate.

II. Meetings of the Bureau in 2011

2. At its twenty-eighth session in 2010, the Executive Body elected Mr. M. Williams (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) as Chair. The following were elected as Vice-Chairs: Mr. R. Ballaman (Switzerland), Mr. P. Meulepas (Belgium), Ms. F. San Martini (United States), Mr. T. Johannessen (Norway), Ms. N. Karpova (Russian Federation) and Ms. S. Vidic (Croatia). In accordance with rule 20.3 of the Rules of Procedure, the Russian Federation nominated Mr. S. Vasiliev to replace Ms. N. Karpova, who was not able to exercise her functions as a member of the Bureau due to her departure from the Ministry of Natural Resources. In addition, a representative of the European Commission was invited to attend Bureau meetings as an observer, to ensure effective coordination with European Community activities on air pollution.

3. To date, the Bureau has held two meetings in 2011: on 15 April and on 16 September. A third meeting has been scheduled for 12 December prior to the opening of the Executive Body's twenty-ninth session.

III. Activities in relation to the International Maritime Organization

4. In its decision 2010/2 the Executive Body requested the Chair of the Executive Body to inform the International Maritime Organization (IMO) of its concern about the climate and health impacts of black carbon emissions, and to urge IMO to adopt requirements to reduce emissions of black carbon from international shipping, especially in areas that impact the Arctic climate.

5. In January 2011, the Chair of the Executive Body sent a letter to the Secretary General of IMO, sharing the findings of the report of the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Black Carbon. The letter highlighted the impact of black carbon emissions in the Arctic and the decisions taken by the Executive Body in that respect and urged IMO to consider taking actions to reduce black carbon emissions from shipping in and near the Arctic.

6. IMO responded to the letter in February 2011, giving information about recent deliberations of the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) and its Subcommittee on Bulk Liquids and Gases (BLG). It noted that an informal document submitted to the fifteenth session of the Subcommittee on BLG in February 2011 summarized the main findings of report of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Black Carbon. The Subcommittee had decided to seek clearer instructions on how black carbon should be addressed and had invited member Governments and international organizations to submit documents containing concrete proposals to enable further consideration of the matter. It invited the Executive Body, through the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), to consider submitting concrete proposals to future sessions of MEPC.

7. The Bureau, in cooperation with the secretariat prepared and submitted a document on reduction of emissions of black carbon from shipping in the Arctic to the sixty-second session of MEPC, held from 11 to 15 July 2011 (MEPC 62/4/3). The document highlighted the important public health benefits that can be achieved by reducing black carbon-rich particulate matter, while also slowing the rate of warming in the Arctic region.

8. MEPC agreed a workplan for addressing the impact in the Arctic of black carbon emissions from ships and instructed the Subcommittee on BLG to: develop a definition for black carbon emissions from international shipping; consider measurement methods for black carbon and identify the most appropriate method for measuring black carbon emissions from international shipping; investigate appropriate control measures to reduce the impacts of black carbon emissions from international shipping in the Arctic; and submit a final report to the sixty-fifth session of MEPC in 2014.

IV. Activities in relation to the United Nations Environment Programme

9. In February 2011, the Chair of the Executive Body sent a letter to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) regarding the UNEP/World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Integrated Assessment on Black Carbon and Tropospheric Ozone and related work carried out by Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution and the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Black Carbon, inviting future cooperation on this issue. It received a positive response. The letter and the

response were circulated to the Bureau. The issue of black carbon and tropospheric ozone was discussed during the twenty-sixth UNEP Governing Council meeting in February 2011. The Chair informed the Bureau about follow-up activities with regard to the UNEP/WMO Assessment, and his participation in the elaboration of an action plan on that issue.

V. Activities in relation to the European Union

10. Three members of the Bureau (Mr. Williams, Ms. Vidic and Mr. Ballaman) participated in a consultation meeting of the European Commission Stakeholder Expert Group in June 2011, as part of a comprehensive review of the European Union Thematic Strategy on Air Pollution intended to identify areas for improvement and set new long-term objectives beyond 2020. Subsequently, they filled in a questionnaire aimed at collecting views and experiences relating to the Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) and its fourth Daughter Directive (2004/107/EC), highlighting points of interest to the Convention related to further ambition levels in a revised Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (Gothenburg Protocol) and the National Emission Ceilings Directive (2001/81/EC), improvements in the EURO standard process in terms of delivering real emission reductions, closer links between air quality and climate change and emissions from agriculture.

VI. Recommendations of the Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution on wider global cooperation

11. At its twenty-eighth session in 2010, the Executive Body decided to implement the recommendations in the report of the Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution on wider global cooperation, and requested the Bureau, in consultation with the Bureaux of the Steering Body for the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe, the Working Group on Effects and the Working Group on Strategies and Review, and the secretariat, to develop a set of questions designed to evaluate the level of interest and capacity of relevant organizations outside ECE for further cooperation, and to explore the most effective ways for furthering that cooperation.

12. The Bureau discussed the issue at its meetings in April and September. It noted that the co-Chairs of the Task Force had initiated work on a draft set of questions which would be circulated to the Bureau members, other Convention bodies and the secretariat. At the time of writing this document, this work was still ongoing.

VII. Action Plan for the implementation of the long-term strategy for the Convention

13. In its decision 2010/18, the Executive Body requested the Bureau to develop an action plan for the implementation of the long-term strategy and to submit it for approval to the twenty-ninth session of the Executive Body in December 2011. At its meeting in April 2011, the Bureau exchanged preliminary views on possible elements of the action plan and subsequently discussed a draft prepared by Mr. F. S. Martini circulated prior to its meeting in September. The action plan, as agreed by the Bureau, is presented in document ECE/EB.AIR/2011/6.

VIII. Other issues

14. As requested by the Executive Body (ECE/EB.AIR/106, para. 57 (d)), the Bureau considered the outcomes of the forty-eighth session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review in April 2011, and provided guidance for the preparation of the agenda and the continuation of work at the forty-ninth session of the Working Group in September 2011, including the organization of informal sessions and small drafting groups. Considering the outcomes of the forty-ninth session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review, the Bureau noted that the revision of the Gothenburg Protocol was not finalized and proposals for amendments could not be submitted for adoption to the twenty-ninth session of the Executive Body, as originally planned.

15. The Bureau therefore decided that negotiations would continue during the Executive Body session in December 2011. It proposed that a special session of the Executive Body be organized back to back with the fiftieth session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review (30 April–4 May 2012).

16. The Bureau took note of the discussions held by the Bureaux of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects and agreed on the advantages of having biennial or three-year workplans rather than annual ones and on the need for a clear distinction in the workplan between routine work carried out each year and new developments and research which might require more than one year to accomplish. It requested the secretariat to prepare the draft workplan for 2012–2013 (ECE/EB.AIR/2011/5) accordingly.
