

Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range
Transboundary Air Pollution

Bureau of the Executive Body

Meeting

28 May 2020, via videoconference

Report of the meeting

I. Attendance

Bureau members: Ms. Anna Engleryd (Sweden, Chair), Mr. Sergey Vasiliev (Russian Federation), Mr. Richard Ballaman (Switzerland), Ms. Elizabeth Nichols (United States of America), Ms. Jennifer Kerr (Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review), Ms. Isaura Rabago (Chair of the Working Group on Effects) and Mr. Manfred Ritter (Chair of the Implementation Committee).

Observers: Ms. Susanne Lindahl (European Union).

Not present: Ms. Laurence Rouil (Chair of the EMEP Steering Body).

II. Preparations for the sixth Joint session of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects

The Chair of the Working Group on Effects noted that the provisional agenda of the joint session was yet to be finalized. She informed the Bureau that the programme would include two thematic sessions: 1) review of the Gothenburg Protocol and 2) ozone. She further noted that the currently being drafted strategy for science work under the Convention would consist of two documents: one with general overview and another detailed one with technical annexes.

The secretariat informed the Bureau about the gradual resumption of services at the Palais des Nations, progress in the preparation of official documents for the joint session and the planned discussion on condensables by the EMEP Steering Body at the session. The secretariat would keep the Bureau informed of further developments and requirements with respect to the size of delegations and availability of separate listening rooms for observers and additional members of delegations for the official meetings in September and December.

The Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review offered to make an introductory presentation on the review of the Gothenburg Protocol to facilitate the discussion by the EMEP SB and the WGE.

The Bureau member from Switzerland stressed the importance of holding a policy dialogue for the purpose of target setting under the new Protocol that would be better placed under the WGSR in 2021.

III. Review of compliance

The Chair of the Implementation Committee informed the Bureau about the outcomes of the Committee's 44th session, which was held remotely on 13-14 May 2020 with a shortened programme. He noted that Croatia and Spain had replaced their members in the Committee. He further noted that some long-standing cases were close to being resolved in 2020. The Committee members briefly discussed potential changes to its mandate and noted that they did not see any need for revisions.

IV. Preparations for the fifty-eighth session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review and the fortieth session of the Executive Body

The Chair of the WGSR presented the revised agenda of the fifty-eighth session. She informed the Bureau of an explanatory note sent to delegations to facilitate preparations for the session in December and of the Gothenburg Protocol review group convened by her in order to advance the work on the plan and the work schedule of the review.

The Bureau agreed that the session of the WGSR should start in the morning on 14 December 2020 to allow for sufficient time for discussions. The Bureau also agreed that the agenda item on condensable should be an information item only. It further agreed that a short discussion on the forum should be included in the agenda.

The Bureau considered the draft provisional agenda of the fortieth session of the Executive Body. The Chair of the Executive Body explained the addition of item 4(f) on exchange of experience with virtual meetings and possible organization of work under the Convention in the future.

The secretariat informed the Bureau about the preparation of official documents for the sessions and stressed the importance of collecting preliminary comments, so that only minimal changes were to be introduced in the final version. The Bureau discussed the status of the Guidance document on integrated sustainable nitrogen management noting that although it was a stand-alone document not being referred to by any of the protocols, it would still need to undergo official adoption by the Executive Body, as envisaged by the 2020-2021 workplan for the implementation of the Convention.

V. Implementation of the 2020-2021 workplan for the implementation of the Convention and related follow-up to the thirty-ninth session of the Executive Body

The Bureau discussed the implementation of the tasks assigned to it in the 2020-2021 workplan:

Items 2.1.5 (Next steps on broader geographic cooperation on air pollution, including the role for the Convention and for the Forum for international cooperation on air pollution) and 5.2.1.2 (Outreach and cooperation activities through the Forum for international cooperation on air pollution)

The Chair of the Executive Body informed the Bureau that the potential lead countries were awaiting the agreement by their respective governments. She noted that Argentina was willing to host the first meeting under the Forum in spring 2021, in the meantime a possibility to organize a virtual curtain raiser in October 2020 was being considered.

The secretariat made an overview of its comments to earlier comments by Parties and presented the draft mandate of the Forum for further discussion. The Bureau thanked the secretariat for preparing the draft and agreed to discuss it in detail at its next meeting on 29 June. Any comments on the draft mandate should be sent with tracked changes to the secretariat with a copy to all Bureau members by 15 June 2020. The Bureau noted that the document with comments on the proposal should be kept, as it contained information that might be useful for lead countries. It also noted that an email or a letter would need to be sent to Parties to explain advantages of keeping the Forum under the Convention.

Item 3.5 (Review and consider possible revisions to the mandate of the Implementation Committee taking into account relevant EB decisions and recommendations and strategic priorities set out in the long-term strategy and the 2016 scientific assessment).

The secretariat presented a background note containing information on possible revisions to the mandate of the Implementation Committee and the rationale behind. This included a harmonized approach to the review of compliance by Parties with their different emission reduction commitments for the same pollutant under different protocols, taking into account decision 2019/2 which partially amends the Committee's mandate. Following an initial exchange of views, the Bureau agreed to continue the discussions at its next meetings.

VI. Other business

The observer from the European Union noted that as there had not been any specific mandate of the ad hoc group of legal experts adopted, and as there had not been many nominations made lately to the roster of legal experts, there might be an interest by Parties to expand the roster. The Bureau agreed that it was a timely suggestion in view of potential revision of the Gothenburg Protocol and suggested that the European Union prepared an informal document that could be presented to Parties in December.

VII. Date, time and place for the next meeting

The Bureau agreed to hold its next meetings on 29 June 2020 at 14:00 CET via Microsoft Teams and the meeting after in September in conjunction with the joint session of the EMEP SB and WGE.