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

Working Group on Strategies and Review

Fifty-eighth session

Geneva, 14, 15 and 17 December 2020

Report of the Working Group on Strategies and Review on its fifty-eighth session

I. Introduction

1. The fifty-eighth session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution was held in Geneva on 14, 15 and 17 December 2020. Due to the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and related restrictions, the session was held in a hybrid mode, allowing for both remote and limited in-person attendance.

A. Attendance

2. The representatives of the following Parties to the Convention participated in the hybrid session: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America.

3. There was also participation by representatives from non-governmental organizations, academia and international research institutions, including: the European Environmental Bureau; the European Federation of Clean Air and Environmental Protection Associations; Green Transition Denmark; the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis; NOVA University Lisbon; the University of Lisbon; and the University of Coimbra (Portugal).

B. Organizational matters

4. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Jennifer Kerr (Canada).

5. The Working Group adopted the agenda for its fifty-eighth session, as set out in document ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/123/Rev.1.¹

6. A representative of the European Union thanked the Executive Body Bureau and the secretariat for their efforts to organize the sessions of the Working Group on Strategies and Review and the Executive Body in a hybrid mode despite the extraordinary circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. He nevertheless expressed disappointment at the shortened duration of the sessions and called on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) secretariat to explore alternative solutions for future meetings to ensure sufficient meeting time should the ongoing health and distancing measures be maintained. He stressed the need for a one-day break between the sessions of both bodies in case they were held back-to-back. The Working Group took note of the intervention by the representative of the European Union.

II. Adoption of the report of the fifty-seventh session

7. The Working Group adopted the report on its fifty-seventh session, as set out in document ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/122.

III. Progress in the implementation of the 2020–2021 workplan

8. The Working Group took note of the report of the Task Force on Techno-economic Issues on the progress made in carrying out the activities in the 2020–2021 workplan for the implementation of the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2020/1, paras. 19–31), as well as additional information presented by the Co-Chair of the Task Force, and expressed its appreciation for the work done by the Task Force.

9. The Working Group took note of the presentation by the Co-Chair of the Task Force on Integrated Assessment Modelling on current progress in carrying out the activities in the 2020–2021 workplan for the implementation of the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/144/Add.2) and expressed its appreciation for the work done by the Task Force. The Working Group invited delegations to submit their comments on the draft assessment report on ammonia and the draft guidance document on prioritizing reductions of particulate matter so as to also achieve reduction of black carbon (available as informal documents of the session) to the Task Force Co-Chairs by 1 February 2021.

10. The Working Group took note of the report of the Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen on the progress made in carrying out the activities in the 2020–2021 workplan for the implementation of the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2020/2, paras. 11–17) and expressed its appreciation for the work done by the Task Force.

11. The Working Group discussed the draft guidance document on integrated sustainable nitrogen management (ECE/EB.AIR/2020/6–ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2020/5) prepared by the Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen, noting further amendments made as part of an additional consultation session prior to the session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review. Representatives of the European Union, Canada and Norway welcomed the document as a useful tool for facilitating the attainment of a number of objectives of the Convention and for informing the review of the Protocol to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (Gothenburg Protocol). The representative of the European Union suggested that the draft guidance document could be revised in the future, should feedback from Parties on its application demonstrate the need for such a revision. The representative of Norway informed participants of the country's contribution to support the work of the secretariat in finalizing and promoting the guidance document. The Working Group forwarded the draft guidance document as

¹ All documentation for the meeting is available on the web page for the session: <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/working-group-strategies-and-review-fifty-eighth-session>.

amended to the Executive Body for consideration and adoption at its fortieth session (Geneva, 18 December 2020).

IV. Hemispheric transport and control strategies for use in future scenarios

12. The Vice-Chairs of the Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution informed participants of the key outcomes of the work of the Task Force, the focus of its planned activities and the reorganization of its website. A representative of the European Union agreed that further work should continue to focus on pollutants and precursors addressed by the Convention, i.e., those with important transboundary influence at the global level. A representative of Switzerland encouraged the Task Force experts to consider the synergetic effect of nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and methane on ozone concentrations. A representative of Canada expressed the willingness of the Party to cooperate with the Task Force Co-Chairs, Vice-Chairs and experts to finalize the work on the policy questions to the Task Force and to help guide their views, also in relation to the website.

13. The Working Group took note of the information provided by the Task Force and expressed appreciation for its work. The Working Group agreed that the policy questions directed at the Task Force included in annex I to the preparatory document entitled “Preparations for the review of the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone as amended in 2012” (ECE/EB.AIR/2020/3–ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2020/3) could also serve as input to the ongoing discussions on policy questions, control strategies and priority sectors for analysis.

14. The Working Group further agreed to consider opportunities for improving communication between the Working Group and the Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution and other scientific bodies as appropriate. The Working Group welcomed the initiative of a new Task Force website designed to enhance communication with policy bodies and encouraged delegations to provide comments thereon.

V. Review of sufficiency and effectiveness of the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone

15. The Working Group considered the preparatory document submitted by the Gothenburg Protocol review group (see para. 13 above) and expressed its appreciation to the group in that regard. The Working Group discussed the proposed plan for the review, including its scope and content, and work schedule. It took note of the information summarizing progress in the evaluation of mitigation measures for black carbon emissions and ammonia control measures pursuant to article 10 (3) and (4) of the Protocol and agreed that said work should be carried forward as part of the review in general.

16. The Working Group invited delegations to submit comments on the following informal documents, as well as additional views on the evaluations called for in article 10 (3) and (4) of the Gothenburg Protocol, to the secretariat by 1 February 2021:

(a) Considerations for ammonia relevant to future review of the Gothenburg Protocol;

(b) Informal document on prioritizing reductions of particulate matter to also achieve reduction of black carbon.

17. The Working Group welcomed the informal document on non-technical and structural measures, and the background documentation on past reviews and barriers to implementation and ratification of the Convention’s Protocols, and invited delegations to submit comments on those documents in time for their consideration by the Working Group at its fifty-ninth session (Geneva, 17–20 May).

18. The Working Group recommended to the Executive Body that:

(a) The scope of the review be kept broad at the current time and that the focus be on gathering scientific and technical inputs to the review;

(b) It request subsidiary bodies to consider the tasks contained in annex I to the preparatory document and implicated bodies to submit timelines for the completion of their tasks, as well as any initial inputs, to the secretariat by 1 February 2021, with additional material to be submitted as informal documents for consideration by the Working Group at its fifty-ninth session;

(c) It request the Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review to compile the inputs and information received into an annotated outline for consideration by the Working Group at its fifty-ninth session;

(d) An amendment be made to the workplan to cover additional tasks related to the review of the Gothenburg Protocol not covered by the mandates of scientific task forces, international cooperative programmes and centres.

19. The Working Group agreed to hold a thematic session on barriers to ratification and implementation as part of its next session to be held in person.

VI. Reporting of the condensable part in emissions of particulate matter

20. The Chair of the Steering Body to the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP) informed participants of the key messages from the workshop on the best approaches in treatment of condensables in emission inventories and modelling (online, 17–19 March 2020), organized by the Meteorological Synthesizing Centre-West, and the outcomes of the discussion on condensables in emission inventories and modelling by the EMEP Steering Body at the sixth joint session of the Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects (Geneva, 14–17 September 2020). The representative of the European Union drew the participants' attention to the non-paper document from the European Union and its member States on condensable particles in emission inventories (residential heating) (informal document No. 3) proposing to establish a clear road map to advance the scientific work and stepwise policy discussion on that complex issue. The representative of Norway, referring to the note distributed by the delegation of Norway, informed the session of ongoing efforts to develop a harmonized standard for measuring emissions from wood stoves, to be adopted by the European Committee for Standardization. She expressed the hope that the final version of the standard would take into account the condensable part and allow for more accurate estimation of particulate matter in emissions from wood stoves. The Working Group took note of the information presented.

21. The Working Group welcomed the proposal of the EMEP Steering Body to establish a working group to develop a stepwise science-based approach for accounting for the condensable part in particulate matter for scientific assessments, and encouraged the establishment of the working group as early as possible in 2021. The Working Group agreed to continue the discussion on policy implications of reporting of the condensable part in particulate matter emissions at its fifty-ninth session. The Working Group noted the need to examine both the policy and science aspects of the issue, and the importance of that discussion in the context of the review of the Gothenburg Protocol.

VII. Election of officers

22. In order to secure the stability and continuity of the work of the Working Group in the face of the ongoing pandemic, and inviting endorsement by the Executive Body, the Working Group decided, on an exceptional basis, to defer the elections of its vice-chairs for their next term, meaning that Mr. Ivan Angelov (Bulgaria), Ms. Dominique Pritula (Canada) and Mr. Till Spranger (Germany) would continue in their roles in the interim.

VIII. Other business

23. The Working Group expressed its sincere and heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Markus Amann and his team at the Centre for Integrated Assessment Modelling for their significant contributions to the work of the Convention.

IX. Adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group

24. The Working Group on Strategies and Review adopted the conclusions and recommendations agreed at its fifty-eighth session.
