

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Bureau of the Executive Body

Meeting

16 November 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. Laurence Rouil (Chair of the EMEP Steering Body), Ms. Isaura Rabago (Chair of the Working Group on Effects) and Mr. Manfred Ritter (Chair of the Implementation Committee).

Observer: Ms. Susanne Lindahl (European Union).

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

The secretariat provided an update on availability of official pre-session and informal documents and informed the Bureau of communication held with Parties. The Bureau discussed preparations for and organization of the WGSR session.

The Chair of the WGSR noted that for the discussion of progress in the implementation of the workplan (item 3 of the provisional agenda), short verbal updates would be provided by the Co-Chairs of task forces in addition to official reports submitted earlier. Their presentations would be posted in advance of the session. The draft Guidance document on integrated sustainable nitrogen management would be the only guidance document presented for approval by the Working Group at its fifty-eighth session. Other documents prepared in accordance with the workplan would be presented at the fifty-ninth session of the Working Group.

She suggested that in view of the time shortage, the development of recommendations on control strategies under item 4 would have to be postponed. Some policy relevant questions have already been included by the Gothenburg Protocol review group in its document. Twenty minutes assigned for this agenda item would be used for an update by the TFHTAP, which was putting in place a mechanism to answer these policy questions by the WGSR.

The Chair of the WGSR noted that 2 hours 40 minutes were assigned for item 5 on the review of the Gothenburg Protocol. The review group convened by the WGSR Chair would present its document, which would not be open for negotiations and serve as a basis for discussions by the Working Group. She suggested that the Working Group would initiate the required by article 10 of the Protocol evaluation of control measures for ammonia and black carbon taking note of respective informal documents prepared for the session. The Bureau agreed to that and noted that the Chair of the Working Group might seek assistance by the Gothenburg Protocol review group for preparing the draft annotated outline of the review document for its discussion at the May session.

The Bureau noted that under item 6 on reporting of condensables, an update by the Chair of the EMEP Steering Body and an intervention by the European Union on issues not included in its non-paper would be made.

The Chair of the Executive Body and the Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review agreed to send a joint letter to delegations. The Bureau requested the secretariat to organise an informal session on Wednesday for any informal discussion that might be needed. The Bureau also agreed that the Chair's notes should be shared with Vice-chairs, so that in case of a technical problem on the Chair's side they could step in.

The Bureau requested the secretariat to draft an informal document with expected conclusions and decisions of the Executive Body by 23 November in advance of the EU coordination meeting scheduled for 1 December. It also asked the secretariat to encourage the authors and co-authors of informal two-page documents supporting discussions on the review of the Gothenburg Protocol to prepare those by 23 November.

The Chair of the Executive Body presented the proposed organization of the session by provisional agenda items. Given the timeframe of the session, the Executive Body would avoid holding discussions and focus on decision-making. Decisions would be adopted by silence agreement. The Chair noted that interventions would be allowed under item 4(b) on the policy part of the workplan and item 5 on review of the Gothenburg Protocol. In the Chair's letter, participants would be invited to consult all the documents in advance of the session.

The Bureau discussed the upcoming election of the Chair and officers of the Executive Body, the Chair of the WGSR and members of the Implementation Committee. The Bureau underscored the challenges of securing nominations and elections of Chairs, officers and Committee members and the risk of undermining the stability under the Convention in view of the pandemic situation; and expressed their concerns about the lack of time during the upcoming session to hold these elections. The Bureau further expressed its worries about the text of the call for nominations issued by the secretariat, which had not been consulted with the Bureau, and considered it strategically incorrect not to highlight in this text the difficulty of holding elections in the current circumstances and not to mention the possible option of extending the current term of office by 1-2 years. It noted that the Bureau's understanding was that the secretariat would issue a pro-forma letter rather than actively pursue new nominations. It considered that the secretariat had not followed the Bureau's call for stability. A Bureau member questioned whether it was the role of the secretariat to encourage or discourage certain nominations. The Bureau maintained that the consultation on the election of

new candidates should be held with those currently holding the posts, so that Parties making nominations would better understand the resource implications for them. The Bureau questioned the request by the secretariat to send nominations in a form of official letters rather than sending them in an email message from the national focal point. The observer from the EU observed that the secretariat's replies to nominations submitted from some parties have been unfortunately phrased and have been perceived as undue encouragement to withdraw nominations; this may have the effect of discouraging nominations. The Bureau reiterated the importance of ensuring a well-functioning leadership of the EB and WGSR.

The secretariat noted that calling for and collecting nominations was a procedural step carried out by the secretariat. It noted its duty to safeguard the UN values, to uphold its principles of impartiality and equal geographical representation and to follow the rules of procedure for sessions of the Executive Body. For this reason, it encouraged rotation and nominations from Parties that previously had not participated in the elected bodies with an objective to bring in new candidates in view of previously expressed concerns about potential lack of nominations. The secretariat suggested that stability could be enhanced through overlapping terms, while re-election of officers and members for multiple consecutive terms would undermine the rules of procedure. In case there were not enough nominations received, an extension for officers for their third term could be considered. The secretariat noted that it was not the responsibility of the Chairs or officers currently in office to find their successors. The secretariat explained that official nomination letters were required as a response to the call by the UNECE Executive Secretary in order to follow the established procedure.

III. Other business

The Bureau inquired about availability of the final version of the report of its previous meeting and upheld its willingness to discuss further the Forum on international cooperation on air pollution at a meeting with the secretariat in January.

IV. Date, time and place for the next meeting

The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting remotely on 4 December 2020.