

Financial requirements for an additional session of the WGSR in 2023

Note by the Executive Body Bureau in consultation with the secretariat

For the 41st session of the Executive Body, its Bureau, in cooperation with the secretariat, presented a note¹ to support discussions on the overall financing of the Air Convention, and in particular the current situation regarding available secretariat resources. The note explained the different sources of funding for the Air Convention, the overall financial situation and the need to strengthen the financing on a long-term and stable basis. It was particularly noted that the current resource gap in the secretariat has hindered the smooth performance of core secretariat functions, including the organisation of additional meetings in relation to the review of the Gothenburg Protocol.

The Executive Body took note of this information and requested its Bureau:

- (a) in cooperation with the secretariat, to assess the financial situation of the Convention in further detail, using as a basis the information presented at the session, giving initial consideration to an assessment of the financial requirements for holding an additional meeting of the Working Group on Strategies and Review in 2023;
- (b) to present its draft findings to the Working Group on Strategies and Review at its 60th session;
- (c) to present its assessment of the financial situation of the Convention, in particular on the funding of the secretariat on a stable basis, for discussion at the 42nd session of the Executive Body.

This note summarises the requirements for holding an additional meeting of the Working Group on Strategies and Review in 2023. Such an additional meeting would be highly important and a key priority due to the expected continued high workload in the follow-up to the Gothenburg Protocol review.

Such a meeting implies two main resource needs: staff costs/staff hour allocation and conference costs.

For the staff resources, two main options could be envisaged in the short term:

- 1) to down-prioritise other secretariat tasks to reallocate staff time within existing resources, or

¹https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Financing%20of%20the%20Air%20Convention%20Note%20for%20the%20Executive%20Body_final.pdf

- 2) to provide extrabudgetary (voluntary) contributions for additional secretariat recruitment to enable the meeting organisation in 2023.

The first option is less attractive not least as the secretariat support resources are already at a minimum and there are few options left for further down-prioritizing or reallocating the work without hampering the Convention's operations.

Germany has announced that they will kindly provide an associate expert in the Convention secretariat through the Junior Professional Officers Programme. This is an additional resource which will allow the secretariat to organize an additional meeting of the Working Group on Strategies and Review in 2023.

This offers a short-term solution, before an Executive Body decision on stable and long-term funding, including for the secretariat, can be made.

On the conference costs: a three-day meeting would, in addition to the staff costs, imply charges for official documentation, conference services, logistics, simultaneous interpretation and in the case of a hybrid meeting costs for the remote meeting platform. For an in-person meeting these extra costs are estimated to 42 000 USD while the costs for a hybrid meeting are estimated to 63 000 USD. The exact sum depends notably on the number of official documents and the format of the session. It should be noted that, to secure the possibility of a second WGSR meeting in 2023, clarity on the preferred way forward for this additional meeting is needed at the 42nd session of the Executive Body.

An alternative path to solve the conference costs and/or staff costs for an additional WGSR meeting that could be explored is to amend Decision 2002-1 on financing the core non-EMEP activities in order to extend the scope of funded activities. This would mean sharing the costs across all Parties in line with the agreed scale of contributions but would also carry a potential risk if not all Parties pay their share timely and in cash. This option may also be further considered in the context of the long-term funding to be discussed in the next step.

The EB Bureau therefore recommends the Working Group on Strategies and Review to recommend that the Executive Body at its 42nd session invites Parties to make earmarked voluntary contributions to cover the conference costs of a second WGSR in autumn 2023.

The EB Bureau will continue to assess the financial situation in further detail and develop a proposal on options for a long-term and stable solution including for the secretariat for discussion by the Executive Body at its **42nd** session.