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## Economic Commission for Europe

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

Working Group on Strategies and Review

Sixtieth session

Geneva, 11–14 April 2022

### Report of the Working Group on Strategies and Review on its sixtieth session

#### I. Introduction

1. The sixtieth session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution was held in Geneva on 11–14 April 2022. 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 in-person attendance.
2. The Director of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Environment Division welcomed the participants in the session.
3. A representative of Ukraine informed the Working Group about the ongoing military aggression against Ukraine and its impacts on air pollution. In chronological order, representatives of the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, the European Union, Norway, Georgia and Switzerland took the floor to deliver statements in support of Ukraine, emphasizing the need for the Russian Federation to adhere to its international obligations and the Charter of the United Nations. A representative of the Russian Federation made a statement in reply,<sup>1</sup> prompting a number of delegations to walk out in response.

#### A. Attendance

4. The representatives of the following Parties to the Convention participated in the hybrid session: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom

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<sup>1</sup> The statements made by the representatives of the Russian Federation and Ukraine, together with all other documentation for the meeting, are available on the web page for the session (<https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/working-group-strategies-and-review-sixtieth-session>).



of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America. A representative of Uzbekistan also attended the meeting.

5. Representatives from non-governmental organizations, including the European Environmental Bureau, the European Chemical Industry Council, the European Federation of Clean Air and Environmental Protection Associations and the Air Pollution and Climate Secretariat, participated in the session. Also present at the meeting were representatives of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and the Technical Reference Centre for Air Pollution and Climate Change.

## **B. Organizational matters**

6. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Till Spranger (Germany).

7. The Working Group on Strategies and Review adopted the agenda for its sixtieth session, as set out in document ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/127.

## **II. Adoption of the report of the fifty-ninth session**

8. The Working Group adopted the report on its fifty-ninth session (Geneva (hybrid), 18–21 May 2021), as set out in document ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/126.

## **III. Progress in the implementation of the 2022–2023 workplan**

9. The Working Group took note of the report of the Task Force on Techno-economic Issues (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2022/1) on the progress made in carrying out the activities contained in the 2022–2023 workplan for the implementation of the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/148/Add.1, forthcoming), as well as additional information presented by its Co-Chairs, and expressed its appreciation to the Task Force for its work.

10. The Working Group took note of the report of the Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2022/2) on the progress made in carrying out the activities contained in the 2022–2023 workplan for the implementation of the Convention, as well as additional information presented by its Co-Chairs, and expressed its appreciation to the Task Force for its work. A representative of the European Union noted that the report of the Task Force was not sufficiently detailed. She stressed the need for further efforts to reduce ammonia emissions and noted that it might be interesting to consider potential opportunities for benefiting from the work under the project “Targeted research for improving understanding of the global nitrogen cycle towards the establishment of an International Nitrogen Management System” to avoid duplication of tasks, in the follow-up phase to the review of the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (Gothenburg Protocol), as amended. The Working Group requested the Task Force to finalize the analysis of the responses to the questionnaire circulated in December 2021, and to explore possibilities to advance work under item 2.2.1 on interactions between emissions of methane and ammonia of the 2022–2023 workplan as soon as possible, with the understanding that the Task Force on Techno-economic Issues was ready to contribute.

11. The Working Group took note of the information presented by the Co-Chairs of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Air Pollution on its plans for activities in 2022–2023, including preparations for a meeting of the Task Force (Bristol, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 11–12 October 2022), and expressed its appreciation to the Task Force for its work.

12. The Working Group took note of the information presented by the Co-Chairs of the Task Force on Integrated Assessment Modelling on the progress in carrying out the activities contained in the 2022–2023 workplan for the implementation of the Convention, and expressed its appreciation to the Task Force for its work.

13. The Working Group discussed the draft document entitled “Cost of inaction” (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2022/4), prepared by the Task Force on Integrated Assessment

Modelling in cooperation with the Task Force on Techno-economic Issues. The representative of the European Union noted the comments submitted<sup>2</sup> in advance of the session and suggested that the document be widely promoted among Parties and non-Parties, including through the activities of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Air Pollution. Representatives of Canada and the United States of America provided their comments on the document, noting that they would be transmitted in writing. A representative of Norway underscored the importance of information presented in the document on the magnitude of the costs of air pollution impact and the need to integrate the key findings on the cost of inaction into the final report on the review of the Gothenburg Protocol, as amended. The Working Group agreed to forward the finalized version, taking into account the comments received, to the Executive Body for consideration at its forty-second session (Geneva, 12–16 December 2022). The Working Group requested the delegations that had provided their comments during the session to send them in writing, together with potential additional comments, to the Task Force Co-Chairs by 13 June 2022.

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

14. The Working Group considered the revised draft report on the review (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2022/3) prepared by the Gothenburg Protocol review group. It welcomed the work carried out by the review group and the inputs provided by subsidiary bodies to inform the review of the Protocol.

15. The representative of the European Union noted the written comments provided in advance of the session<sup>3</sup> and invited the review group to create an overview table indicating the review questions that had been answered. She suggested that items requiring separate discussions in a follow-up to the review be identified. She pointed to the work on comparability and availability of data as a potential priority for the new science strategy. As the assessment of adequacy of the current reduction commitments and other obligations had not yet been included in the report, the speaker encouraged the scientific subsidiary bodies to share the preliminary findings as early as possible. She noted that the lack of implementation was not necessarily an issue of adequacy of the Protocol obligations but might rather point to the need for stricter enforcement and/or more detailed guidance. She suggested that the challenges related to pollution from sources outside the ECE region could be addressed through parallel work, including by exploring the role of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Air Pollution, as appropriate. The representative of the United States of America informed participants of the written comments on the report it would submit after the session. The representative of Norway emphasized the need to refer in the report to the possibility of using economic instruments to reduce emissions and to the Guidance document on economic instruments to reduce emissions of regional air pollutants (ECE/EB.AIR/118). The representative of Canada stressed the importance of following the agreed timeline for the review despite unforeseen circumstances, as there was sound scientific and technical information available for drawing the review conclusions. Based on those conclusions, an appropriate process for the path forward should be further identified by Parties.

16. The Working Group took note of the comments on the report made at the session and invited delegations to submit further comments to the secretariat by 3 June 2022. The Working Group requested that the review group continue working on the review report, incorporating the comments submitted by Parties and additional information submitted by subsidiary bodies, as appropriate. The completed report should include main conclusions on the adequacy of the obligations and the progress made towards achievement of the objectives of the amended Gothenburg Protocol. The Working Group also requested the review group to submit the final report to the Executive Body at its forty-second session for consideration of conclusions and implications for the way forward.

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<sup>2</sup> Available as an informal document on the session web page.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

17. The Working Group noted that the final report on the review would be accompanied by the documents entitled “Scientific information for the review of the Gothenburg Protocol” (Annex I) and “Technical information for the review of the Gothenburg Protocol” (Annex II). It invited delegations, task forces and scientific centres to submit further inputs to:

(a) Annex I to the Chairs of the Steering Body to the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP) and the Working Group on Effects, by 3 June 2022;

(b) Annex II to the secretariat, by 3 June 2022.

18. The Working Group considered the document entitled Review of the flexibility provisions to facilitate ratification and implementation (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2022/5) prepared by the Gothenburg Protocol review group. The representatives of the European Union and the United States of America, as well as the Chair of the Coordinating group on the promotion of actions towards implementation of the Convention in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, expressed their appreciation to the authors of the document. The representative of the European Union referred to the comments on the document submitted in advance of the session.<sup>4</sup> The Working Group invited delegations to submit further comments to the secretariat, by 3 June 2022, and requested the review group to submit the final version of the document to the Executive Body for consideration at its forty-second session.

19. The Working Group took note of the draft agenda<sup>5</sup> of the thematic session on barriers to ratification and implementation of the Protocol (The Hague, Netherlands, 27 September 2022, back-to-back with the meeting of the heads of delegations to the Working Group on Strategies and Review foreseen in the week of 26–30 September 2022)<sup>6</sup> proposed by the Gothenburg Protocol review group, and invited delegations to provide comments thereon by 3 June 2022.

20. The representatives of the European Union and the United States of America emphasized their strong interest in facilitating ratification of the Protocol. They encouraged delegations of Parties to the Convention that were not yet Parties to the Protocol to engage actively in discussions at the thematic session. The representative of the United States of America considered it critical that the barriers and the suite of recommendations to overcome those barriers be well-matched in the final version of the report on the review. The Working Group welcomed the proposal by the review group to prepare an informal document on barriers to ratification and implementation, including possible solutions to overcome those barriers, to support the discussion at the informal meeting of the heads of delegations to the Working Group on Strategies and Review and the thematic session. The Working Group agreed that the key messages of the thematic session would be presented to the Executive Body at its forty-second session, as appropriate.

21. The Working Group took note of the information presented by a representative of the Centre for Integrated Assessment Modelling on air pollution control policy scenarios. The Co-Chair of the Task Force on Integrated Assessment Modelling noted that there was potential for further progress towards achievement of the objectives of the long-term strategy for the Convention for 2020–2030 and beyond (ECE/EB.AIR/142/Add.2) and those of the Protocol, notably in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and, more specifically, in cities in that part of the region. He informed participants that the Task Force had noted the need to make the data by country available on the website, to consider including the abatement potential for shipping in the scenarios, and to conduct a sensitivity analysis to address uncertainties. The Working Group invited delegations to provide written comments on the annotated version of the presentation available on the meeting web page and other comments related to the air pollution control policy scenarios, by 6 May 2022, to the Centre for Integrated Assessment Modelling, for consideration by the review group in drafting the

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> The thematic session was subsequently rescheduled for 13 December 2022 as part of the forty-second session of the Executive Body (Geneva, 12–16 December 2022).

final review report. The Working Group invited delegations to consult with the Centre on their national scenarios and data by 30 June 2022.

22. The Working Group took note of the information presented by the Co-Chair of the Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution on progress in the implementation of the 2022–2023 workplan items with focus on methane emissions and their effect on ground-level ozone pollution.

23. The Working Group considered the informal document entitled Synergies and interactions with other policy areas, prepared by the Gothenburg Protocol review group. The representative of the European Union noted the strong case brought up for addressing air and climate issues through an integrated approach. The representative of the United States of America considered it useful to add information on barriers to taking advantage of complementarity of policies, as well as on options for using complementarities within the scope of the Protocol or any potential future instrument. He suggested that a summary of the most promising areas for reaching co-benefits and of areas of concern be added in the document. He also proposed to include any new policy ideas for achievement of multiple benefits. The representative of Canada pointed to the need for providing further details on the benefits from the “full implementation of climate policies and measures” mentioned in paragraph 2 of the informal document. The Co-Chair of the Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen provided information on synergies across the nitrogen cycle that could help to address the barriers to reducing emissions of ammonia and other forms of reactive nitrogen.

24. The Working Group took note of the options mentioned in the informal document entitled Potential options for addressing methane as an ozone precursor under the Air Convention, prepared by the Gothenburg Protocol review group. The representative of the European Commission offered to organize a second expert-level brainstorming event, should delegations be interested. The representative of the United States of America suggested that not addressing methane under the Gothenburg Protocol be included as an option. He also suggested marking each option as advantageous or disadvantageous, for easier comprehension of the document. He further suggested including information on ways of promoting or implementing the voluntary and capacity-building programmes mentioned in the document. The representative of Canada supported further assessment of the listed options. She emphasized the need to avoid duplication with other forums, and to underscore the benefits that would be added by the Convention. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland noted that the options contained in the document would require further development. The representatives of Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland suggested continuing the discussion at the heads of delegations meeting. The representative of Switzerland expressed appreciation to the authors, noting the role of such documents as an instrument of communication with institutions working on climate change and with countries outside the ECE region. The representative of the Republic of Moldova stressed the importance of addressing methane emissions and the need to build national capacity to improve inventories and the implementation of emission reduction measures.

25. The Working Group agreed that the key messages from the documents entitled Synergies and interactions with other policy areas and Potential options for addressing methane as an ozone precursor under the Air Convention would be included in the final review report and/or annex II to the report on the review submitted to the Executive Body at its forty-second session, as appropriate. The Working Group invited delegations to submit comments on the two documents to the secretariat by 3 June 2022. It invited the review group to further develop those informal documents based on comments received, for discussion at the heads of delegations meeting.

26. The Working Group acknowledged the importance of methane in ozone transboundary air pollution and requested the Gothenburg Protocol review group to take into account the information presented by the Centre for Integrated Assessment Modelling and the Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution during the preparation of the final report on the review.

27. The Working Group took note of the information presented by the Co-Chairs of the Task Force on Techno-economic Issues and the Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen with the

analysis of annexes IV–VI and VIII–XI to the Protocol, as amended, and their associated guidance documents. The Working Group discussed the way forward in analysing the role of those annexes in the review process, and noted that there was a need for further discussion also in the context of flexibilities and barriers to ratification and implementation of the Gothenburg Protocol, as amended. The representative of the European Union proposed assessing the overall usefulness and relevance of the technical annexes first, before discussing any update of emission limit values. She suggested linking information on ratification barriers with the technical annexes in the note prepared by the review group for the thematic session. She noted that more information on options and impacts concerning annex IX would be useful for consideration by Parties, including in terms of ratification barriers. The representative of Switzerland pointed to existing considerable technical potential for further improvement of air quality that had to be taken into account. He noted that, although the annexes added complexity to the Protocol, at the same time they provided a means to reach the emission reduction objectives. The representative of Norway noted that, under the Protocol, alternative emission reduction strategies could be applied instead of emission limit values set out in the annexes. She suggested that guidance for Parties on the development of such alternative strategies be prepared. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland welcomed the work on further analysis of annex IX offered by the Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen and the support by the review group in that regard.

28. The Working Group took note of the information presented by the Chair of the EMEP Steering Body and the Centre for Integrated Assessment Modelling on the condensable part in emissions of particulate matter. The representative of the European Union stressed the importance of a structured approach to discussing the scientific aspects of accounting for condensables, and noted that some clarity might still be needed on the expected outcome of the work of the ad hoc group of experts. She noted that the scientific discussions could not pre-empt any policy decisions to be made. She also noted that written comments on the presented timeline might be provided by the European Union after the session. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland expressed appreciation to the ad hoc group of experts for its work. She noted that the results of the national work on improving emission factors for emissions from residential burning would be available later during the current year. She thanked the European Union for organizing a workshop on reporting of condensables under the Convention (Brussels, 26–27 April 2022). The Working Group agreed that the policy discussion on reporting of the condensable part in emissions of particulate matter should take place at its next session.

## **V. Information-sharing by Parties on the implementation of the Convention**

29. The Working Group took note of the summary of reports on policies and strategies for the control of major air pollutants, including best practices to implement the Convention's protocols, submitted by Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Serbia. The summary had been prepared by the Bureau of the Working Group and presented by the secretariat.

30. The Working Group recalled that, in accordance with paragraph 4 of Executive Body decision 2016/3,<sup>7</sup> the period for reporting the information referred to in article 5 (1) (a) of the Protocol on Further Reduction of Sulphur Emissions, article 7 (1) (a) of the Protocol on Heavy Metals, article 9 (1) (a) of the Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants and article 7 (1) (a) of the Gothenburg Protocol was at least once every four years. The Working Group strongly encouraged the Parties that had not reported during recent years on respective protocols to do so at its next session.

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<sup>7</sup> Available at <https://unece.org/decisions>.

## **VI. Financial requirements for implementation of the Convention**

31. The Working Group considered the information presented by the Chair of the Executive Body on the financial requirements for holding an additional session of the Working Group in 2023. The representatives of the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland pointed to the need for an in-depth analysis of secretariat resource gaps, including available options to address the situation, such as tightening the costs or reshuffling existing resources, in order to support the discussion by the Executive Body. The representative of the European Union also thanked Germany for providing a temporary associate expert in the Convention secretariat through the Junior Professional Officers Programme. She noted that the presence of the temporary associate expert would provide the secretariat with the short-term staff resources to organize an additional meeting of the Working Group in 2023, and proposed that the secretariat circulate more detailed information on the practical arrangements and timing requirements for collecting extrabudgetary resources to also cover the conference costs. The representative of the United States of America emphasized that organizing an additional session of the Working Group in 2023 should not implicitly prejudice the steps following the review of the Gothenburg Protocol, as amended. Representatives of Canada, the European Union, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland stressed the need for an additional meeting irrespective of the decision to be taken by the Executive Body at its forty-second session with regard to the review. The representative of Norway welcomed the proposal to improve the existing financial mechanism and to explore the possibility of establishing a new one. She noted the long-term support by Norway to the secretariat provided through its annual contributions and encouraged other delegations to follow its practice. The representative of Switzerland pointed to the option of supporting the work of the secretariat in the long run through contributions calculated based on the United Nations scale of assessments as a preferred option, as it would provide for fair support by all Parties. He noted that the option of support through voluntary contributions could also be explored, as long as there was a sufficient number of Parties willing to contribute. The Working Group welcomed the Bureau's proposed way forward for assessing the financial situation in the longer term and recommended that the Executive Body invite Parties at its forty-second session to make earmarked voluntary contributions to cover the conference costs of an additional session of the Working Group (Geneva, 4–6 September 2023, tentative).

## **VII. Review of the rules of procedure for sessions of the Executive Body**

32. The Working Group took note of the information on the progress of work of the ad hoc group of experts. Representatives of Canada, the European Union, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America welcomed the plans of the ad hoc group for its next steps in the review of the rules of procedure.

## **VIII. Other business**

33. The Working Group took note of the information announced by Sweden on the upcoming "Saltsjobaden VII" workshop (Gothenburg, Sweden, 13–15 March 2023), preceded by an Early career workshop (12–13 March 2023), and invited delegations to identify participants for the workshops.

## **IX. Adoption of the draft report on the sixtieth session**

34. The Working Group on Strategies and Review reviewed and adopted the draft report containing conclusions and recommendations agreed at its sixtieth session. It entrusted the secretariat with finalizing the report.