

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Bureau of the Executive Body

Meeting

19 March 2024

Virtual meeting

Note of the meeting

I. Attendance

Bureau members: Ms. Kimber Scavo (United States of America), Chair; Ms. Cristina Leonardi (Italy), Vice-Chair; Mr. Noe Megrelishvili (Georgia), Vice-Chair; Ms. Dominique Pritula (Canada), Vice-Chair; Mr. Jesper Leth Bak (Denmark), Chair of the Working Group on Effects; Ms. Laurence Rouil (France), Chair of the EMEP Steering Body; Mr. John Salter (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review, and Mr. Marek Maasikmets (Estonia), Chair of the Implementation Committee

Observer: Ms. Panagiota Dilara (European Union)

II. Addition to the agenda and preliminary information

An information item regarding UNEA-6 was added to the agenda. On the Chair's request, the secretariat informed the Bureau about a delay in the publication of the report of the forty-third session of the Executive Body (Geneva, 11–14 December 2023) due to a Party's comments to the report and noted the coordination to work on an acceptable solution to those comments.

III. Joint meeting of the Extended Bureaux of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects

The Chair of the EMEP Steering Body expressed her contentment with the progress of the 2024–2025 workplan and the outcomes of the joint meeting of the Extended Bureaux of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects (Geneva, hybrid, 28 February – 1 March 2024). As a follow-up to the meeting all centres and task forces were requested to provide information on their work related to the revision of the Gothenburg Protocol, as amended 2012, for coordination purposes within the tight timeframe for the revision. Regarding the in-depth review of emission inventories conducted by the Centre on Emission Inventories and Projections (CEIP) she raised the question whether those should focus more on countries with a need to improve their inventories. The Chair of the Working Group on Effects equally expressed his contentment with the meeting. He pointed to the need to focus more strongly on biodiversity and nature restoration in the context of transboundary air pollution and the revision of the Gothenburg Protocol, as amended 2012.

IV. Sixty-second session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review

The Bureau was informed that the advance version of the provisional agenda for the upcoming sixty-second session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review (Geneva, 27–31 May 2024) had been published on the Convention’s website together with the other official documents. The Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review informed the Bureau about the official document entitled “Draft plan for the revision of the Gothenburg Protocol, as amended in 2012” (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2024/1) as a starting point for Parties’ discussions at the session. An accompanying list of already existing in-depth documents on key aspects of the revision compiled by the WGSR Bureau will be published as an informal document for the session. He also informed the Bureau that the document to facilitate ratification and implementation of a future revised Gothenburg Protocol by current non-Parties will be available as an informal document for the session together with a courtesy translation into Russian provided by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Chair informed the Bureau about the informal Heads of Delegations meeting (Leuven, Belgium, 21–24 October 2024) hosted by the Flanders Environment Agency (VMM).

V. Review of the rules of procedure for sessions of the Executive Body

The Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review as a member of the rules of procedure review group informed the Bureau that the related documents had been circulated for comments to Parties, the Rules of Procedures Review Group and the ad hoc group of legal experts and that an official document is available on the website of the upcoming session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review in an advance version (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2024/2). The secretariat informed the Bureau that this document will be accompanied by an informal document explaining and showing the proposed changes in comparison to the current rules of procedure. The Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review noted that the Parties would have to decide on the set-up of a break-out group during the WGSR session as suggested by the Chair of the Rules of Procedure Review Group. The secretariat further pointed to editorial changes necessary to bring the rules of procedure in line with other rules of procedure.

VI. Operational rules of the Implementation Committee

The Chair of the Implementation Committee informed the Bureau about a draft of the operational rules for the Implementation Committee prepared by him in cooperation with the secretariat and his intention to circulate it to the members of the Committee for their discussion as a follow-up to the respective Executive Body’s request at its forty-third session. When finished, the draft will be sent to the ad hoc group of legal experts for their review in conjunction with the proposed draft mandate in tracked changes and an explanatory note on the proposed changes by the EB Bureau. The Chair introduced her note entitled “Improving the efficiency of case referrals” and asked the Bureau for comments by 29 March 2024. The Chair of the Implementation Committee pointed out that in his view the changes to the mandate would not necessarily solve the financial concerns in the support of the Committee and supported the note of the Chair. He also informed the Bureau that the Implementation Committee will hold an informal meeting at the margins of the upcoming session of the Working Group on Strategies

and Review. It was agreed to approach the Centre on Emission Inventories and Projections (CEIP) for a meeting with the Chair, the Chair of the EMEP Steering Body and other interested Bureau members to discuss the Chair's note.

VII. Financial requirements for the activities under the Convention, JPO extension and UN liquidity crisis

The secretariat informed the Bureau about the receipt of financial contributions for capacity-building activities from the European Union, the United States of America and Switzerland. It informed the Bureau about its participation in the EU-funded project "Air Quality for Better Citizen's Health" under the EU Green Connectivity Programme for Georgia. The major part UNECE will be implementing, as listed in the 2024-2025 workplan for the implementation of the Convention, is covering activities on best available techniques to provide technical assistance to Georgia for the implementation of the Law on Industrial Emissions. UNECE, in cooperation with the WHO, will also carry out two activities on capacity-building on gender mainstreaming in air quality management. In response to concerns raised by Bureau members, the secretariat assured the Bureau that for this project no time or resources will be taken away from supporting the intergovernmental activities of the Convention. The Bureau welcomed the project including the activities on gender mainstreaming in air quality management.

The secretariat informed the Bureau that it had not yet received enough contributions to approach Germany for an extension of the post of the Junior Professional Officer currently working at the secretariat. It informed the Bureau about the UN's liquidity crisis with additional consequences for the secretariat's staff situation: No maternity leave cover is provided for one post and one temporary post faces the risk of not being extended unless the circumstances change. Overall, the secretariat already works with one staff member less and could lose two staff members in autumn of 2024, the latter two currently covering the work areas of the Working Group on Strategies and Review, EMEP/Working Group of Effects, and the Implementation Committee. The secretariat reiterated that reserves and extrabudgetary resources are essential to avoid situations like these. The Chair encouraged the secretariat to raise this issue again at the upcoming session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review and asked the Bureau members to consider further support.

VIII. Change of UN conference modalities

Following the secretariat's information on the withdrawal of the mandate of the United Nations Office in Geneva to conduct virtual or hybrid meetings as of early 2023, the Chair suggested a public broadcast of the tenth joint session of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects (Geneva, 9–13 September 2024). The Bureau discussed the matter.

IX. Other business

The Chair informed the Bureau about UNEA-6 and the resolution on air pollution that had been adopted. She thanked from Canada and the UK for their work on the resolution.

X. Date, place and time of the next meetings

The Chair suggested to hold an informal virtual Bureau meeting after the upcoming session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review (to be determined) and an informal in-person/hybrid Bureau meeting on 24 October 2024 in Leuven (Belgium).