

Joint Thematic Session: Managing Uncertainties

Introduction

Mike Holland, mike.holland@emrc.co.uk

10th Joint session of EMEP Steering Body and Working Group on Effects

Structure of this session

1. Introduction: 3.00 - 3.10
2. Effects: 3.10 – 3.40
3. Scenario modelling: 3.40 – 4.30
4. Views from the policy interface, civil society: 4.30 – 4.45
5. Draw conclusions, develop plan: 4.45 – 5.00

Key issue

- Robustness of final policy recommendations
- Every task force, ICP, etc. has its own set of certainties
- Many won't affect the robustness of our conclusions
- What desired improvements in uncertainty treatment can be achieved on a timescale supporting the Gothenburg revision?

Managing uncertainties is not all about 'uncertainty' (quantifiable or not)

- Focus on 'information quality', a mix of
 - Certainty
 - Things we are sure of
 - Uncertainty in quantified aspects of our work
 - Things we are less sure of (but can quantify)
 - Uncertainty regarding aspects outside of analysis
 - Elements that we don't take into account at all

Objectives of this session

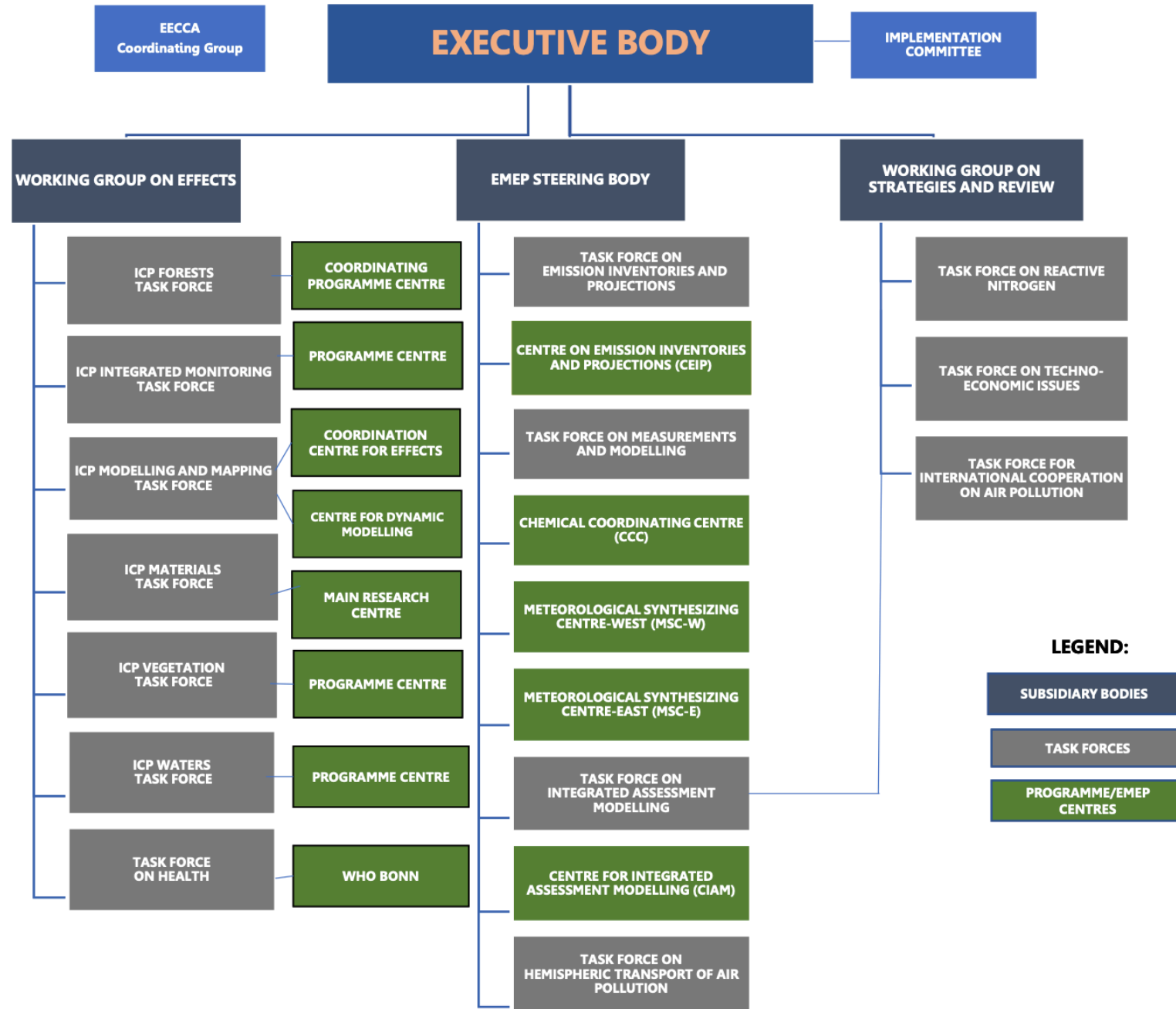
1. Develop understanding of how information quality is characterised in different parts of the Convention
2. Consider:
 - a. Whether current practice on uncertainty is sufficient
 - b. How the quality of data and analysis vary across UNECE
 - c. Which uncertainties should be prioritised
 - d. Where are we most confident in the data available
 - e. Scope for improving handling of uncertainty:
 - i. On different timescales (short, long...)
 - ii. Within and between TFs, ICPs, Centres
3. How good are we at communicating the information we generate (and its quality)?
 - a. Between science groups
 - b. With policy makers
 - c. With other stakeholders

Managing uncertainties is a question of science AND communication

- Including outside of the Convention Bodies, telling the world
 - What is done under the Convention
 - Why we are doing it
 - The pros and cons of action
 - How robust the work is
- Are we sure that we communicate well?
 - In particular, can different audiences understand
- Are we sure that we use the right channels to reach people interested in our work?

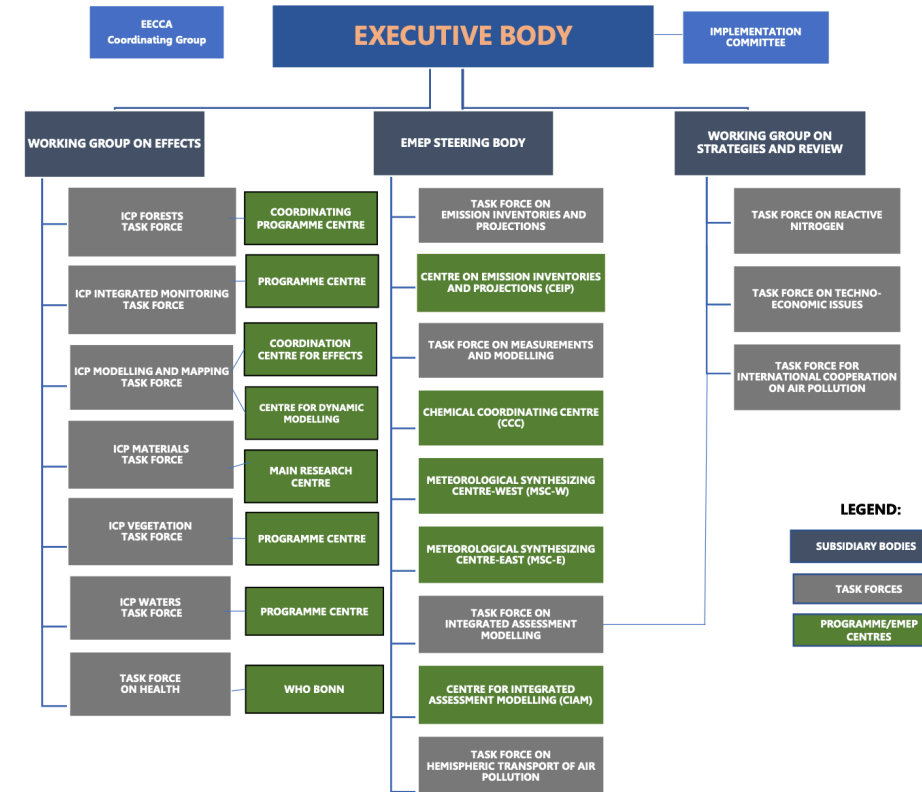
Context

- Uncertainty exists:
 - Within Convention bodies
 - Between Convention Bodies
 - With groups not shown on the chart:
 - Public
 - Industry
 - Decision makers
- But it is not open-ended
 - Measurement and other observations



Uncertainty in communication outside of the Convention structure

- The nature of the problem
- The size of the problem
- The environmental improvements made since the Convention began
- The analysis carried out and the results generated by it
- How policy proposals link to the analysis
- Interactions between policy areas (air, climate, biodiversity)
- Confidence in recommendations...
- We need to adapt reporting to reflect the audiences for the work



Questions

- What are the strengths of analysis for your group?
 - Are there uncertainties of concern for your outputs and/or for downstream activities (e.g. IAM)?
 - How does uncertainty vary geographically in the UNECE region?
 - Is there a plan for dealing with the most problematic issues? Timescale?
 - Do you feel you have a sufficient approach to addressing uncertainty?
 - Do you feel that your work is communicated well in outputs from the Convention? (either your own, or outputs from others)
-
- *Not asking for a lot of detail in the meeting.*
 - *No need to answer every question and you can raise other issues if you see fit.*

Desired end product of this session

- Understanding how different groups address, or want to address uncertainty / information quality
- Views from non-scientists of the adequacy of work on uncertainty
- Basis for generating a time-bound plan for better management of uncertainty under the Convention