

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF AIR POLLUTION PREVENTION ASSOCIATIONS

**STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION  
IN THE ABATEMENT  
OF AIR POLLUTION AT REGIONAL, HEMISPHERIC  
AND GLOBAL SCALES**

**Memorandum to the Executive Body of the Convention  
on Long-Range Transport of Air Pollution.**

**Introduction**

1. In recent years the International Union has become increasingly concerned that the framework for tackling air pollution at the regional, hemispheric and global scales no longer adequately reflects our understanding of the nature and scale of atmospheric problems. The Union has therefore welcomed a number of recent steps by the Convention, notably its commitment to 'outreach' and the establishment of the EMEP Task Force on Hemispheric pollution. However it hopes that the Executive Body will now give consideration to the desirability of further steps, particularly the opening of the Convention to accession by parties outside the UNECE Region. This memorandum sets out the considerations which have led the Union to this view.

**Background**

2. At regional scale a wide variety of new networks, both regulatory and scientific, has emerged in recent years, but there has so far been limited co-operation and sharing of experience between them, and progress remains slow. The global POPs Convention was an important achievement, but it stands in stark contrast to slow progress at the global scale on other issues. Meanwhile new evidence is emerging on the extent of hemispheric and global transport, and the focus of concern has been shifting from acidification to hemispheric ozone and aerosols, and their impacts on health and on crops. Underlying these concerns is a general recognition that policy may now need to address not just point source effects but also the wider 'greying' of the northern hemisphere, and the impacts of regional pollution on global systems.

3. In the light of these concerns, the Union, in conjunction with the Stockholm Environment Institute and with the encouragement of the UNECE Convention on Long Range Transport of Air Pollution, UNEP and other relevant bodies, established the Global Atmospheric Pollution Forum. Its aims are to promote mutual support and exchange of experience between regional groupings and to develop consensus on how to promote a more effective framework for addressing atmospheric problems at the hemispheric and global scales.

4. Over its first twelve months the Forum has been consulting widely on how more rapid progress might be made towards these objectives, in particular through a series of Inter-Regional Dialogues which brought together representatives of different regional networks for informal discussion. In preparing the recommendations set out in this paper the International Union has drawn closely upon the results of this process.

### **Key Considerations**

5. In the light of discussions so far, the following general considerations should, in the Union's view, now underlie developments in this field:

- While a Global Convention on Atmospheric pollution is likely to become necessary, it may be simpler and more prudent to achieve this by a sensible and progressive evolution of existing institutions, rather than by the potentially more time-consuming and complex establishment of new agreements and machinery;
- To ensure that limited resources are deployed as effectively as possible, it is important to encourage a clear understanding of which issues are most appropriately addressed at, respectively, regional, hemispheric and global scales;
- It must be recognised that effective action at the hemispheric and global scales depends upon the strengthening of capacity at the regional scale in many areas of the world;
- Early consideration needs to be given to how regional air pollution networks can better relate to and draw support from operations at the regional scale by international institutions such as WMO, WHO etc;
- Any institutional changes should protect and build upon the valuable resources in the various regional and other secretariats and expert centres, especially those developed by LRTAP and UNEP (Regional Resource Centre for Asia Pacific)
- There are wide disparities between regions in the scale of their problems and their capacity to address them. There should be a clear understanding that an underlying principle of institutional change should be to seek over time better to match resources and capabilities to the relative scale of problems in the different regions;
- There should be recognition that air pollution problems, and appropriate abatement strategies, are likely to be closely related to wider economic, resource and development issues. Nevertheless, while these wider linkages are important, any new framework must avoid being side-tracked from essential air pollution abatement objectives if it is to be effective.

## **Developing a Global Air Pollution Convention: A Practical Way Forward**

6. Since development of a new convention could be time-consuming and complex, IUAPPA considers that a better course would be to build on existing institutions. Opening up the current UNECE Convention on Long Range Transport of Air Pollution to all nations would be one way of doing this. There are a number of precedents for widening UNECE Conventions in this way, including the Aarhus Convention on Access to Environmental Information, the Water Convention and the Environmental Impacts Assessment Convention. Such a step would require amendment to the Convention, as provided in Article 12, but the Union hopes that all parties to the convention would support such a proposal.

7. In considering this proposed course it should be recalled that the Convention is already an autonomous body, with no intrinsic restriction on its geographical scope. The link to UNECE is there only through its appointment as secretariat.

8. While the Convention might provide a global framework it would be important for the regional agreements to continue and enhance their work. To be able to address regional needs, groups such as EANET, Male, UNECE, and APINA should maintain their existing role and identity under the Convention, though their participating countries might gather under the Convention which might provide the forum for the global framework. In particular the review of the Gothenburg and other LRTAP Protocols should continue with the existing Parties.

9. In parallel with steps to secure a formal opening of the Convention to other parties, co-operation between the secretariats of UNECE, EANET, Male etc. should be strengthened.

10. The responsibilities of the Convention should evolve, as circumstances require, across the regional, hemispheric and global scales. The initial priority is likely to be further action on regional agreements and the enhancement of capacity at regional scale, but this should be pursued within a framework which allowed easier movement to the hemispheric and global scales as particular issues required.

11. If the work of the Convention is to be effectively targeted and duplication avoided, it is also important that it be closely linked with the work of certain other international agencies working in related fields. Among the most important are the World Meteorological Organisation and the UNEP Chemicals Programme. From the beginning there should be close and continuous programme co-ordination at a high level between the three agencies. Co-location in Geneva will facilitate this.

12. Progress in abating air pollution at the regional scale would also be assisted by better co-ordination with other international bodies relevant to air pollution which have substantial programmes at the regional scale. Obvious examples here are FAO and WHO. Following a review of the current regional activities of such bodies, the UN should convene a meeting of senior representatives to explore options for streamlining links among their programmes with a view to strengthening air pollution abatement at the regional scale.

## First Steps

13. Progress in developing and strengthening any global air pollution framework will depend on a sequence of parallel steps by a number of organisations over several years. All the relevant regional networks will want to satisfy themselves that evolution in the way proposed would enable their own work programmes to be sustained whilst permitting more effective common action across a range of areas of common interest.

14. The issues also need to be explored in major international environmental fora to ensure that developments in atmospheric pollution policy fit comfortably with wider developments in international environmental policy and with the wider agendas of the United Nations and its agencies. The Union hopes that UNECE and the Commission on Sustainable development, in particular, will give early consideration to the inclusion of the issue in the agendas of their major ministerial meetings through 2006 and 2007.

15. Meanwhile, it is hoped that the LRTAP Convention, as a natural development of its work on outreach, will take an early decision in principle to allow the Convention to develop in the way proposed here. At the same time EANET, Male, APINA and other networks are urged to consider, in their 2006 executive and ministerial meetings, how far these proposals, in their current or amended form, could help them meet their regional objectives and participate more effectively in the wider consideration of hemispheric and global issues.

October 2005