

Improving participation of European non-EU countries in CLRTAP Protocols

Informal document prepared by the Netherlands

Introduction

Since the start of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP), eight protocols have entered into force, which has led to a significant reduction in the emission of acidifying and eutrophying substances, heavy metals (HM) and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in Europe. The most recent protocol on the abatement of acidification, eutrophication and ground-level ozone (also known as “the Gothenburg Protocol”) has been signed by many countries. However, actual ratification is currently almost limited to UNECE member States that are also a member of the European Union (EU): out of the 24 Parties that have ratified the protocol, only Switzerland, Norway and the United States are not members of the EU. It is noted that in eastern and south-eastern parts of Europe (EECCA and SEE), countries seem to have difficulties in committing themselves to the targets set in the last three protocols (Gothenburg, HM and POPs).

The reasons for the difficulties these countries are experiencing are, for example, a lack of reliable data on current and past activities and emissions, different units used in emission standards, no infrastructure to implement the requirements that the protocols set (on permitting and enforcement, making and reporting emission inventories, drafting action plans, etc.), and a lack of statutory possibilities to require emitters to implement emission reduction techniques. CLRTAP’s Centre for Integrated Assessment Modelling (CIAM) has recently estimated what the potential for emission reductions is for non-EU countries if they would implement some relatively modest abatement measures. These potentials appear to be quite substantial¹.

Ratification of protocols by European, non-EU UNECE Member States will have a positive effect on air quality in those countries and, through the reduction of transboundary fluxes, on the environment and public health in Europe as a whole.

Last but not least, a strong ECE CLRTAP has a good influence on EU air pollution policy which uses practically all data and instruments of the Convention (emission inventories, air quality and effects monitoring, dispersion modelling, integrated assessment modelling etc).

Therefore, the Netherlands is currently investigating further possibilities to support ratification of the last three CLRTAP protocols (HM, POPs and Gothenburg) by EECCA and SEE countries. Several options are considered, which are described below.

Possible actions

1. Adjusting the protocols – One of the reasons for the inability to ratify or implement protocols as stated by the so-called *countries with economies in transition* (EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asian) and SEE (South East European) states) is that the level of ambition of the protocols is too high to be achieved in the available time. In the upcoming revision of the POP and Gothenburg Protocols, a differentiated target could therefore be included for EECCA and/or SEE countries. Options are to use a different base year for EECCA/SEE countries or a prolonged implementation deadline.

¹ “Emission control potential in non-EU countries”, CIAM, Laxenburg, 2008

2. Increasing familiarity with, and political support for, the protocols – Although CLRTAP will have existed 30 years in 2009 and is one of the most successful international environmental agreements with 8 protocols all of which are in force, it is relatively unknown by politicians and citizens. The Convention is especially important for those countries that are not part of a regional entity with its own environmental legislation (like the EU); for these, the various protocols can be a driving force to improve environmental quality. A possible option to bring the protocols to the attention of politicians and citizens could be the organisation of an attractive event in one of the EECCA or SEE countries.

The Netherlands considers that the meeting of the Executive Body (EB) with a session where ministers would be signing new or revised protocols would be such an event. For the EECCA and SEE countries the impact will be the greatest if the EB meeting will take place in one of the EECCA or SEE countries. The best opportunity to do this is 2009 when the CLRTAP also celebrates its 30th anniversary. Aside from the meeting of ministers, this meeting could be extended with a number of side-events such as workshops or other activities.

3. Supporting the implementation – The problems experienced by EECCA (and SEE) countries are comparable and partly derive from the Soviet Union and its disintegration. This applies to the absence of reliable and usable statistics for emission inventories, a different approach to emission limit values (tonnes per year instead of mg/m³), difficulties in implementing emission limit values and technical requirements (BAT) into law, financial problems and sometimes the lack of political commitment for necessary institutional reforms. Many countries are also interested in receiving support to build up monitoring sites for air pollution and for the drafting and reviewing of national implementation plans that are necessary to ratify the protocols.

Exchanging information and training of staff can contribute substantially to solving these problems and can therefore lay a solid base for a successful execution of the requirements stated in the protocols. Under action 3, the Netherlands therefore proposes to organise a series of workshops and country visits by experts that are focussed on the items described above. Under this action, EECCA and SEE countries could also be invited to visit CIAM to discuss and, where necessary, update country specific information in the GAINS database.

Process and procedure

Essential for the success of this project is the possibility of signing one or more new protocols in 2009. The CLRTAP has existed 30 years and what would be a better anniversary celebration than the ceremonial signing of a new protocol. It would be the flagship of the whole project for the EECCA and SEE countries to incorporate them more into the CLRTAP process. Chances of getting financial support for the project without a signing session are estimated to be very low for ministers would not be interested to come to a normal EB meeting. At the WGSR meeting in September 2008. The Netherlands will give a presentation advocating making a new POP Protocol instead of amending the current one. The Working Group on Strategies and Review (WGSR) will be asked to comment on the idea of revising the current protocol into a new protocol and the project. The decision to make a new protocol is for the Executive Body (EB) to take and this should be on the agenda in December 2009.

For the project to proceed it is important that the 42nd WGSR is fairly positive towards making a revised/new POP Protocol. If this is the case then the preparation for the project outlined in this paper

will be continued and financing for it will be explored. Only after the decision of the EB to make a new POP Protocol will the project be finalised, financing will be formalised in contracts etc. The project could start in early 2009.

Estimated costs (draft):

Action 1

Prior to the meetings of the WGSR and EB in 2009, EECCA and SEE countries could be invited to a preparatory meeting on the negotiations for the POP and Gothenburg protocols. Assuming 3 WGSR meetings and 1 EB meeting, this action would probably cost EUR 300 000 (4 x EUR 75 000).

Action 2

An EB with a signing ceremony and dinner for ministers and EB members will cost about EUR 350 000. This also takes into account the travelling of interpreters (EN, FR, RU) and UNECE staff from and to Geneva.

Action 3

Assuming 4 workshops could be held in 2009 and 2 in 2010, this action could probably cost 6 x EUR 75 000 = EUR 450 000.

The revision and updating of GAINS data will probably cost EUR 20 000 per country. If an estimated 12 countries would participate, this would cost EUR 240 000.

Coordination of the project

1 person at the UNECE secretariat in Geneva for 1 year: EUR 200 000.

Project support from the Dutch ministry of Environment: within regular budget.

Total costs of the entire project are therefore estimated at EUR 1.5 mln (excluding VAT)

Possible organisations that could contribute to this project are the ministries for Environment, for Foreign Affairs and for Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, private institutions, the EBRD and World Bank. And of course, other ECE countries are welcome to support the project with funding.