

**INFORMAL DOCUMENT ON REVISING AND UPDATING THE
DRAFT COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FROM 2003 (Item 12(b) of the
action plan)**

1. The long-term strategy (LTS) for the Convention requires (para. 16(k)) “The bodies under the Convention should also actively contribute to an extensive and user-friendly communications strategy and system that highlights the work and benefits of the Convention. This communications strategy will in particular help to increase the visibility of the Convention and raise political awareness of pollution issues in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-East Europe (SEE).”

2. The action plan for implementing the LTS indicates the need to “revise and update the draft communications strategy from 2003 to help increase the visibility of the Convention, in particular to raise political awareness of air pollution in EECCA and SEE countries.”

3. The 2003 document (EB.AIR/WG.5/2003/7) is reviewed in detail in the annex to this document. That document provided recommendations towards developing a communication strategy, but did not consider all aspects of such a strategy, for example, it made only scant reference to the needs of EECCA countries and none to SEE countries.

4. The ad hoc Expert Group aimed to provide guidance for developing a communication strategy that updates and improves the 2003 document. The formal report to the Executive Body provides recommended actions for achieving a complete and effective communications strategy which would:

(a) Ensure efficient and effective sharing of information between Parties, in particular for Parties in the EECCA and SEE regions, leading to sound decision making and future planning (through communication links, documentation and meetings);

(b) Enable effective communications with international organizations with similar interests to the Convention, and help develop important links for collaboration and sharing data and information;

(c) Provide mechanisms for highlighting the Convention’s work to the public at large and helps promote the Convention throughout the region to make it better known.

5. The Ad Hoc Expert Group considered the wide spectrum of issues that would be needed to implement a comprehensive communication strategy for the Convention under the three main areas identified above. Its formal report makes recommendations on the development of specific areas of communications, many of which are related to other issues being addressed in the action plan for the LTS.

6. In view of the overlap with the LTS task addressing the Convention’s work with other international organizations, the conclusions for this area of work (item (b) above) are mostly reported under task 12(a) of the action plan (see section III of the formal report, Regional and Global Networks and Agreements).

Annex

COMMENTS ON, AND ANALYSIS OF, THE RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOP ON COMMUNICATIONS HELD IN THE UK IN 2003

Introduction

1. Using the text of the report of the workshop (EB.AIR/WG.5/2003/7), as submitted to the Working Group on Strategies and Review at its thirty-fifth session in 2003, this annex considers action subsequently taken by the Convention and others to address the conclusions and recommendations of the workshop. In the text below, the text of the report is reproduced in italics with smaller font. Each part of the report is followed by comments on action taken and progress made. Section headings are mostly those used in the workshop report.

I. The report

A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE CONVENTION

*Recommendations from the workshop on communications
prepared by the Chairman and the organizing committee
in collaboration with the secretariat*

4. At the request of the Executive Body at its eighteenth session, a meeting of an open-ended group of experts had been held in Geneva (24 April 2001) to develop elements for a communication strategy. One of the goals was to identify environmental communications expertise to help the Convention communicate better with its various audiences. The group had agreed that a lack of applied communication expertise hindered the ability of the Convention to transmit its work and results effectively. It had also agreed that environmental communication experts had neglected problems of long-range transboundary air pollution. The group recommended a workshop, bringing together communication experts and the Convention's subject matter specialists who could help develop ways to communicate the work and results of the Convention (EB.AIR/WG.5/2001/3, para. 9). The recommendation had been endorsed by the Working Group on Strategies and Review at its thirty-third session (EB.AIR/WG.5/70 para. 67(b)), and the Executive Body, at its nineteenth session, had welcomed the possibility of a workshop (ECE/EB.AIR/75, para. 33(c)).

5. At its twentieth session, the Executive Body had noted with appreciation the offers of Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States to convene a workshop on communications (ECE/EB.AIR/77, para. 48 (n)). The Stockholm Environment Institute at York (SEI-Y) played a lead role in developing content, commissioning papers and organizing the workshop. The Government of the United Kingdom arranged the venue.

2. As noted above (*para 4*), an open-ended group of experts met, in 2001, to develop "elements" for a communications strategy. The workshop it recommended was held on "communications". It should be stressed that the workshop was never mandated to develop the Convention's communications strategy, but prepared a report on "a communications strategy" by considering various aspects of communications considered important by the organizers of the workshop. The outputs from the workshop were a series of conclusions and recommendations that were presented for consideration by the Working Group on Strategies and Review.

3. The Working Group took note of the workshop, recommended the results be drawn to the attention of the Executive Body, and made specific recommendations with regard to the 25th anniversary of the Convention (EB.AIR/WG.5/76, para. 74). The Executive Body subsequently "took note of the results of the communications workshop" and "commended them for use by the Convention" (ECE/EB.AIR/79, para 55).

4. It should be stressed, therefore, that the Convention has never had a comprehensive, documented overall communications strategy, not even a draft one. While EB recommended the use of the workshop report, it was not adopted as the Convention's communication strategy. Consequently, simple comments and analyses of the 2003 workshop report will probably short of a complete, up-to-date communications strategy as required by the action plan for implementing the LTS. However, such comments could be a useful starting point for developing the necessary future strategy.

II. Structure of the workshop

6. After presentations by the authors of pre-circulated papers, experts discussed ideas according to three themes, exploring the following associated questions:

(a) The Convention and its stakeholders: who are the stakeholders and how can we actively engage them?

(b) Reporting to the Convention: how can we use the internal reporting system and its outputs to better communicate the Convention?

(c) Enhancing synergies beyond the Convention: what message does the Convention want to convey and how can we effectively convey it?

5. It should be noted with respect to para. 4 above, that the workshop's focus on the three areas listed in *para. 6* resulted in it considering mainly "outward looking" communications and "publicity", rather than looking at issues such as effective communications between bodies within the Convention. This partly reflects the mandate of the workshop as listed in the Convention workplan (ECE/EB.AIR/77/Add.2, item 1.10): "Organization of a workshop on enhanced communications for the Convention to identify concrete actions to improve its visibility and profile, scheduled for 9-11 April 2003 in London", i.e. the mandate was targeted to raising the visibility and profile of the Convention outwardly (or to beyond the region, and to the public at large).

6. Current deliberations on a communications strategy for the Convention could use a much broader approach and cover all aspects of communications relevant to the Convention both within and outside the Convention, including meetings, documentation, the role of the secretariat, etc. Such an approach is likely to overlap with other issues of the LTS so care is needed to ensure harmonized conclusions.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

8. The workshop recommended that the main objective of developing a communication strategy for the Convention should be to support the Convention and thus help raise awareness of the problems of air pollution, as well as to make the contribution of the Convention to air pollution abatement more visible.

9. The workshop agreed on a wide range of recommendations, which fell into one or more of the following categories: stakeholder participation, media relations, global synergies, the Internet, and Convention outputs. The workshop noted the recommendations would need to be prioritized and the question of resources addressed. A mechanism to determine the effectiveness of measures once implemented should also be considered.

7. These paragraphs reflect the focus of the workshop on awareness raising and demonstrating the contribution of the Convention to air pollution abatement. However, communications within the region, between Parties and non-Parties, between Parties and the secretariat, between sub-regions, between Convention bodies, etc. are also important and should be evaluated.

A. Activities identified for possible immediate action

10. Some recommendations required more immediate attention to ensure their effective implementation:

(a) Examine the need for, and the interest of Parties in leading, a task force, expert group or network of experts on communications. This could be either a new body or a new network of focal points for existing bodies, with the purpose of proposing new activities, and monitoring and supporting those already started;

*(b) Plan a media event to mark the 25th anniversary of the Convention in 2004; explore the possibility of linking the event to a ministerial conference or another high-level forum that would maximize press coverage and visibility; produce an anniversary book or booklet to mark the anniversary, including, for instance, data on emission trends, effects of air pollution and highlights of the Convention's achievements; draw on the forthcoming substantive reports by the Working Group on Effects (*The Assessment of Recent Air Pollution Effects and their Recorded Trends*) and EMEP (*The Assessment Report of Measuring and Modelling in Europe*) to develop media-friendly information; provide similar information on North America;*

(c) Explore options for establishing a global forum to provide a framework for interregional collaboration and to improve the outreach activities of the Convention in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Executive Body may wish to take steps towards bringing the various active regional networks together, possibly by means of a workshop.

8. The need for a group on communications was discussed by WGSR, and it "proposed the setting-up of an expert group drawn from interested Parties to consider issues of communications initially with a view to preparing for the 25th anniversary of the Convention". However, discussions at the following EB session showed reluctance to establish a new group or mechanism and the EB charged its Bureau with handling the organization of the 25th anniversary celebrations.

9. It should be stressed that the 25th anniversary was a major topic of discussion at Convention meetings at that time. The 25th anniversary celebrations, though not associated with a ministerial conference or high-level forum, attracted wide participation and interest. Books, reports, brochures and press releases were produced for the event, illustrating both the history of the Convention, its successes and its current activities at that time. A special day was set aside at the EB session for presentations from invited speakers and discussions.

10. Another recommendation for immediate action, the Global Forum, was taken forward through an initiative of the Stockholm Environment Institute (one of the main organizers of the workshop) and IUAPPA (an NGO accredited by the Executive Body). The Global Atmospheric Pollution Forum has been supported by the Convention and has been a major mechanism for promoting inter-regional communications. Its work should continue to be encouraged and supported, where appropriate, by the Convention as it provides the means for regular contacts with other regions.

B. Promote stakeholder participation in the work of the Convention

11. The workshop discussed the need to promote stakeholder participation in the activities carried out under the Convention by developing better links with policy advisers, decision-makers, and the scientific, research, business, NGO communities, as well as the general public. Specifically, the workshop recommended targeted efforts to:

(a) Continue to build partnerships with other initiatives, promoting harmonization of data and technical activities between regional and other networks, such as the European Commission's Clean Air for Europe programme (CAFE), to draw on their experience of liaising with stakeholders and to avoid redundancy; clarify reporting procedures of other relevant international agreements and organizations and develop proposals to avoid duplication of efforts and reduce the response burden of Parties;

(b) Raise the profile of the Convention among the NGO community and civil society by representing NGOs and their constituents more fully in meetings and the work of the Convention; and

(c) Promote the work and achievements of the Convention by providing expertise for related meetings; encourage national experts to promote the work of the Convention at conferences, etc., using outputs from the Convention, including information specially prepared for specific audiences on its web site.

11. Building partnerships (*para. 11(a)*) with other initiative has taken place under the Convention, but it has not always proved easy. Harmonization of data and technical activities have proved easier where the Convention has taken a lead role. Liaising with stakeholders has generally been ad hoc. Some work was done (though I am uncertain if more is needed) to clarify and harmonize some reporting procedures to different international agreements. It remains important to target organizations and activities where partnership building is needed.

12. NGO participation (*para 11(b)*) continues to be rather limited at most Convention meetings. However, steps have been taken by EB to ensure that accreditation can be given by EB. This is important for NGOs that do not have UN accreditation, and ensures participation of some NGOs important for the Convention's work. Some, highly active (and non-UN accredited) NGOs (e.g. the Air Pollution and Climate Secretariat, IUAPPA) have provided much useful publicity for the Convention and have contributed to the Convention's work and goals. The Convention should continue to encourage active participation of NGOs.

13. Promotion of the Convention's work and achievements through related meetings (*para 11(c)*) has taken place through participation of some of the more active Parties, delegates and experts in non-LRTAP Convention meetings. Available brochures on the Convention and its work facilitate this activity. Convention bodies and the secretariat should be encouraged to continue to produce outputs of reader-friendly material for wide dissemination and use at non-Convention meetings.

C. Enhance media relations to increase the visibility of the Convention

12. The workshop discussed the lack of visibility of the Convention and its achievements, noting the importance of identifying a target audience and clarifying the message to be conveyed. Target audiences included: policy advisers, decision makers, the media, the public and the scientific community. While the media had a responsibility to convey complex scientific issues in a manner comprehensible to the public, the Convention could play an important role in attracting the media through a well-honed communication strategy. Moreover, it was necessary to transform the culture surrounding the Convention's work so that all outputs were considered for their communication potential. The workshop discussed, moreover, ways to refer to the Convention by name and acronym, and suggested: "the Air Pollution Convention" and "LRTAP". Specifically, the workshop recommended targeted efforts to:

(a) Pursue proactive media relations, making media a high priority for the Convention and engendering an increased professionalism to media relations, acknowledging it as a separate area of expertise under the Convention. This could imply the part-time or temporary appointment of a press officer, free-lance services provided on an ad-hoc or continuous basis, or assistance provided by Parties as contributions in kind;

(b) Develop relations with the press and present materials in a media-friendly format. The Geneva press corps, and in particular journalists focused on environment and health, were considered good starting points; it would also be important to reach specialized publications on environment, science, health and air pollution; materials should be presented in a journalistic style, with a particular focus on human health and environmental impacts;

(c) Regularly produce media-friendly syntheses of key outputs of the Convention's work; consider a wider distribution of ECE Weekly, or the use of one-page executive summaries of important reports or documents, targeted toward non-experts. Both could be made available on the Convention's web site;

(d) Plan the timing of press releases and media events strategically; raise the profile of the Convention by coordinating press releases and events with related events of high visibility, such as a United Nations world conference, a ministerial conference or an environmental NGO forum;

(e) Develop a newsletter on the Convention, after assessing its potential readership, possibly aimed at interregional communication;

(f) Make available visual resources such as films, videos, digital video disks (DVDs), for media relations (e.g. video footage showing environmental impacts such as low-level ozone damage to forests, to be used as supplementary material to television news reports); and

(g) Develop an online database of relevant media contacts, including not only environmental correspondents, but also journalists covering business, urban and rural affairs.

14. The issue of media relations produced a large number of recommendations from the workshop, in part because it was recognized that there was a general lack of visibility of the Convention and its achievements, and it was felt that the media could be used to address this. The lack of visibility still exists and efforts should continued to address target audiences. Some Convention bodies have become more aware of the need for using outputs to advantage, and for generating media-friendly formatted material (*para 12(c)*) but efforts should be maintained to develop material that can be used for targeted communications.

15. While the workshop emphasized "proactive media relations" (*para 12(a)*), it is not apparent that this has been given a high priority by the Convention. The Executive Body may wish to consider specific action to promote this area of work. The EB has not taken steps to create a Convention-specific press officer and Parties have not offered help in kind to address the issue. However, the secretariat has made use of the UNECE Press Officer to develop publicity material, to prepare timely press releases (*para 12(d)*), and to provide guidance on material for high-level meetings and for the general public. Continued and enhanced action is required.

16. The secretariat initiated a newsletter for the Convention in response to the workshop's recommendation (*para 12(e)*). Three editions were produced and it met, at least initially, with favourable comments from those involved with the Convention. However, it proved difficult to persuade Chairs, delegates and experts to provide material for the newsletter, and there was increasing reliance on the secretariat to ensure publication. The Executive Body may wish to consider if resources should be used for such work in the future. Parties may wish to consider offering help in kind to develop a new newsletter.

17. There was little follow up on creating a media library (*para 12(f)*) mostly because little material was available. Some Convention bodies have ensured material presented at their meetings is widely available through their web sites, but no centralized service has been developed. There is a problem in ensuring information is up to date. The Executive Body may wish to consider if this activity should be given a high priority in the future.

18. Regarding an on-line database of media contacts (*para 12(g)*), no action has been taken by the Executive Body or by Parties. The secretariat continues to use the database of contacts held by the UNECE Press Officer.

D. Create global synergies to promote the Convention and share its achievements

13. The workshop discussed the possibilities for developing a network of information experts for geographical and topical outreach, including linkages between air pollution and climate change. Efforts should be made to extend the expertise under the Convention to ECE member countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as to provide assistance to countries that wished to ratify the Convention and its protocols. The workshop examined, moreover, synergies between the Convention and related activities in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and proposed activities to facilitate this work. Specifically, the workshop recommended targeted efforts to:

(a) Raise awareness of existing and potential outreach activities involving technical collaboration. The Executive Body may wish to: invite its subsidiary bodies, task forces and expert groups to encourage the participation of atmospheric pollution experts from other regions, for instance, by informing them about Convention meetings and workshops on a regular basis and inviting them when possible; collaborate with funding agencies and other existing projects to make effective use of available funding;

(b) Encourage the sharing of experience and develop guidance information to aid the accession of non-Parties; take advantage of the experience gained by Parties in their implementation of the Convention and its protocols;

(c) Address communication gaps with other regions, in particular with the Mediterranean region; explore ways and means to bridge these gaps, while encouraging stronger participation from Parties in the Mediterranean region.

19. The issue of developing a network of information experts, related to EECCA countries, to other Conventions, or to other regions, has not materialized. While links with other regions and, to some extent, other Conventions, have developed, information network links are still lacking.

20. However, targeted efforts to raise awareness of outreach activities (*para 13(a)*) through encouraging participation of non-UNECE experts and delegates in Convention meetings have made some progress. The Executive Body itself has regularly invited, as observers, participation of non-UNECE countries at its sessions; it has requested the secretariat to send invitations to missions in Geneva for that purpose. Usually there are very few responses from the missions. The Executive Body has also encouraged Expert Groups and Task Forces to invite experts from other regions to share experiences and data. Some bodies, such as the Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution, are encouraged through their mandates to involve appropriate experts from outside the region.

21. Some effort is made to share experiences with non-Parties to some Protocols through the regular sessions of the Executive Body and the working groups, since non-Parties to Protocols (and even non-Parties to the Convention) are welcome to attend all sessions. More proactively, the secretariat started development of guidance information on Protocol accession (*para 13(b)*), but this was never completed. The evolution of a more coordinated EECCA group might help determine whether the preparation of guidance documents should be started afresh.

22. Communications gaps with some other regions (*para. 13(c)*), in particular the Mediterranean region, still exist. These will need to be addressed in the future.

E. Optimize Internet capabilities to make the Convention more accessible

14. The workshop discussed the importance of the Internet in improving communications of the Convention, both as a provider of information and for its interactive potential with stakeholders. The workshop noted the importance of improving the Convention's web site to make it more attractive, user-friendly and targeted toward the appropriate audiences. The web site could be enhanced by the secretariat, or through targeted funding or contributions in kind from a Party providing an expert. Specifically, the workshop recommended targeted efforts to:

(a) Improve the visual imagery of the site; add a search engine, a separate (URL) address with a domain name similar to the name of the Convention, and other improvements to make the site more user-friendly;

(b) Introduce a subscription system, allowing visitors to the web site to receive electronic news updates, including press releases and information on the Convention;

(c) Develop presentations about the Convention that could be downloaded from the web site for use by experts in other meetings. These could include PowerPoint presentations, as well as graphic presentations such as tables, charts or maps, reflecting general information about, for instance, the status of ratification of protocols, the results of Convention meetings and workshops, news about the Convention and other air pollution issues.

23. The Convention's web site has continued to evolve and improve since the time of the workshop. Changes have been driven by the development of the main UNECE site, the co-evolution of other UNECE Convention sites, expert input from UNECE staff and expertise provided by Parties. The secretariat has also tried to respond to comments and suggestions from users, in particular Parties. The current site generally functions well, but it could be improved by, for example, giving access to more reports, especially older reports; providing up-to-date information on the work of the Convention, and ensuring that links to documents lead to the correct document (feedback from users could help).

24. The Convention has not taken steps to identify a separate URL address with a name linked to the Convention (*para 14(a)*). While I believe some other UNECE Conventions took this step, I am not certain if UNECE currently allows this practice. Similarly, no steps have been taken to introduce a subscription system (*para. 14(b)*).

25. It is now commonplace for Convention bodies to make available Powerpoint presentations through their web sites (*para. 14(c)*). The secretariat makes its presentations freely available and retains a common database of presentations that can be accessed in UNECE.

F. Make more effective use of Convention outputs

15. The workshop discussed the current reporting system under the Convention whereby Parties reported on their emissions, strategies and policies for air pollution abatement, and critical loads and levels. Convention outputs included publications presenting aggregated information on emission trends and abatement policies, as well as information on individual Parties. The workshop agreed that the current system of reporting to the Convention and better use of its outputs by Parties, the media, civil society and other stakeholders could improve the visibility of the Convention, as well as promote stakeholder participation. Specifically, the workshop recommended targeted efforts to:

(a) Promote public and media access to data produced through its internal reporting system, recognizing the wealth of information generated by the Convention; information should be made widely available to scientific researchers, NGOs and specialized journalists; data and information reported to the Convention, and used to determine compliance, should be collected, shared and made accessible, in a user-friendly form;

(b) Assess existing sets of indicators related to air pollution, with possible input from the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects, showing successes and impacts of the Convention and its protocols; reflect indicators using geographic information systems (GIS) to illustrate national and regional differences;

(c) Make Convention manuals/documents and interlaboratory comparisons more readily available. This should begin with an inventory of documents already available, as well as information on contact points, languages available, revision dates, etc.

26. There has been a continued trend to make data submitted to the Convention publicly available (*para 15(a)*). The Executive Body has promoted data sharing whilst also recognizing the need for publication of collated and analysed material. The Working Groups have discussed this issue, agreed policies for dissemination, and presented these to the Executive Body for approval.

27. Assessing impacts through indicators (*para 15(b)*) and using GIS remain ongoing challenges. Various publications/documents have addressed the issues, usually with respect to specific data sets, but the challenge for the future still remains. Assessment of successes and impacts of the Convention and its Protocols will continue to be of high relevance in negotiating protocols and evaluating strategies.

28. There has been a general trend to make manuals and interlaboratory comparisons more transparent and publicly available (*para. 15(c)*). Methods and intercomparison exercises of Convention bodies are often shared with other regions ensuring more global consistency and increased profile for the Convention's science. There is no inventory of such documents (as far as I am aware) and this may still be of value to scientific groups in other regions (as well as throughout the UNECE region).