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## Economic Commission for Europe

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

#### Thirty-fourth session

Geneva, 18 December 2015

## Report of the Executive Body on its thirty-fourth session

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The thirty-fourth session of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) was held on 18 December 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland. It was held back to back with the fifty-third session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review (Geneva, 15–17 December 2015).

### **A. Attendance**

2. The session was attended by representatives of the following Parties to the Convention: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America. Delegates from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan also attended the meeting.

3. Also present at the meeting were representatives from Aarhus University, the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Arctic Council, the Coordination Centre for Effects, the European Environmental Bureau, the European Federation of Clean Air and Environmental Protection Associations, the International Investment Center and the University of Lisbon.

### **B. Organizational matters**

4. Ms. Anna Engleryd (Sweden) chaired the meeting.

5. The Executive Body adopted the agenda for its thirty-fourth session, as set out in document ECE/EB.AIR/132, with changes proposed by the Chair.<sup>1</sup>

6. The Executive Body adopted the report of its thirty-third session (ECE/EB.AIR/127 and Add.1).

## **II. Report on credentials**

7. Delegations were invited to submit their credentials during the session. The officers of the session reported that 27 Parties to the Convention were present with credentials. The Executive Body adopted the report on credentials.

## **III. Matters arising from meetings of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, meetings of the Convention's subsidiary bodies and other related meetings**

8. The secretariat informed participants about the status of the preparations for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016),

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<sup>1</sup> All documentation for the meeting is available on the following web page for the session: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=38060#/>.

based on the outcomes of the twenty-first session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Committee on Environmental Policy (Geneva, 27–30 October 2015).

9. The Executive Body took note of the report on the status of the preparations of the Batumi Conference, in particular the preparations related to the Conference theme “improving air quality for a better environment and human health”.

10. The Chair of the Implementation Committee presented a progress report on the Committee’s work (ECE/EB.AIR/2015/2), prepared based on the outcomes of the Committee’s thirty-fifth session (Budapest, 27–29 May 2015).

11. Summarizing the work of the Committee in 2015, the Chair acknowledged with appreciation the cooperation of a number of Parties and encouraged all Parties to continue to work closely with the Committee by sending the required information and responding to requests from the secretariat.

12. The Executive Body took note of the progress report on the work of the Implementation Committee.

13. The Chair of the Executive Body noted that the current terms of eight of the nine Committee members would conclude in December 2015.

14. The Executive Body decided to postpone the election of Implementation Committee members until its thirty-fifth session (Geneva, 2–4 May 2016) to ensure the continuity of the Committee’s work between the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth sessions of the Executive Body.

15. The Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review reported on the outcomes of the Working Group’s fifty-third session. Due to back-to-back meetings of the Working Group and the Executive Body in 2015, it had not been possible to hold a full session on the exchange of experience among Parties, in line with Executive Body decision 2013/2; the limited time available had allowed for only a few Parties to make presentations.

16. The Executive Body took note of the report by the Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review on the outcomes of its fifty-third session, specifically in relation to conclusions and recommendations adopted by the Working Group (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/114, forthcoming). It also decided to postpone the evaluation of the effectiveness of decision 2013/2 until its thirty-sixth session (Geneva, 15–16 December 2016).

17. The Chairs of the Steering Body to the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP) and the Working Group on Effects reported on the outcomes of their first joint session (Geneva, 14–18 September 2015), including the outcome of the review by the Expert Review Team of applications for adjustments under the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (Gothenburg Protocol) to inventories for the purposes of comparing total national emissions with them.

18. The Executive Body took note of the report by the Chairs of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects.

19. The Executive Body also welcomed the progress in the preparation of the 2016 assessment report under the Convention, based on the presentation of the summary for policymakers and the main scientific report by the editors of the assessment, and:

(a) Noted that Canada and the United States would provide their contributions and comments on both parts of the report by 15 February 2016;

(b) Invited all interested Parties to the Convention to provide their comments by 15 February 2016;

(c) Requested the editors of the report to prepare the updated drafts of the documents for consideration at the joint meeting of the Extended Bureaux of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects (Geneva, 14–17 March 2016) and the final drafts for consideration at the thirty-fifth session of the Executive Body.

20. The secretariat presented the status of outreach activities, including updates on the cooperation with the Arctic Council, the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners.

21. The Executive Body took note of the report by the secretariat and welcomed cooperation between ECE, UNEP and WHO. It encouraged the continuation of those contacts, also in the light of resolutions 1/7 of the United Nations Environment Assembly and 68.8 of the World Health Assembly on air quality.

22. The Executive Body welcomed the information provided by the Chair of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme on cooperation opportunities and encouraged the further exploration of such cooperation opportunities with EMEP.

#### **IV. 2016–2017 workplan for the implementation of the Convention**

23. Opening the discussions on the draft 2016–2017 workplan for the implementation of the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/2015/1–ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2015/1), as well as a complementary informal document on the basic and multi-year activities related to science,<sup>2</sup> the Executive Body considered the need to change the sequence of its sessions as well as those of the main subsidiary bodies under the Convention.

24. In that regard, the Executive Body decided that:

(a) In 2016, the sessions of the Executive Body and the main subsidiary bodies under the Convention would be held in accordance with the schedule agreed at the session (see annex);

(b) Starting from 2017, the sequence of annual meetings would be as follows:

(i) Sessions of the Working Group on Strategies and Review would be held in May/June;

(ii) Joint sessions of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects would be held in September;

(iii) Sessions of the Executive Body would be held in December.

25. The delegations further provided specific comments in relation to the draft 2016–2017 workplan.

26. With regard to agenda item 1.2.4 (assessment of heavy metal and persistent organic pollutant pollution levels), the delegation of Belarus noted that for Belarus the activity should be focused on heavy metals, coordinated with other ongoing studies and linked to the work in the country with respect to the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

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<sup>2</sup> Informal documents are also available on the web page for the meeting (<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=38060#/>), by clicking the “informal documents” tab.

27. The Executive Body also considered the recommendation of the Working Group on Strategies and Review regarding the establishment of an ad hoc group of experts with a time-limited mandate to develop a policy response to the 2016 assessment report.

28. In that regard, the Executive Body decided to add an item 2.1.3 to the workplan on the formulation of policy response to the 2016 assessment report and to establish an ad hoc group of experts to carry out that workplan item. It further invited interested Parties to submit nominations to the ad hoc group to the Chair of the Executive Body by 15 February 2016.

29. Following the discussion on the workplan for the Convention for 2016–2017, the Executive Body adopted the workplan as amended during the session (ECE/EB.AIR/133/Add.1).

## **V. Financial requirements for the implementation of the Convention**

30. The secretariat introduced the note on the financial requirements for the implementation of the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/2015/3) and informed the Executive Body about the status of Parties' contributions to the trust funds for financing the Convention's implementation, the use of resources in 2014 and the proposed level of contributions in 2016.

31. The Executive Body took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the amount of contributions made by Parties to the trust fund for effects-oriented activities as of 30 November 2015 (US\$ 483,475) and recommended to use the amount as a basis to co-fund the effects-oriented activities in 2016.

32. The representative of the Coordination Centre for Effects informed participants about an upcoming major cut in the financing of the Centre and its implications for the delivery of items in the Convention workplan.

33. The Executive Body expressed concern at the substantial decrease in the financing of the Coordination Centre for Effects.

34. The Executive Body decided to continue the general discussion on the financing of science and effects-related activities, as well as the financing of different task forces under the Convention, at its thirty-fifth session.

35. The Executive Body further requested the Bureaux of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects to prioritize the science-related items of the 2016–2017 workplan in view of insufficient financial resources and to present the priorities to the Executive Body at its thirty-fifth session.

36. With respect to the financing of EMEP activities (*ibid.*, para. 12), the Executive Body:

(a) Decided on the detailed use of resources in 2016 as set out in table 2 of document ECE/EB.AIR/2015/3, and on the scale of mandatory contributions as set out in table 3 of that document;

(b) Supported the Steering Body's call on the Parties to the Protocol on Long-term Financing of EMEP (EMEP Protocol) to consider making additional voluntary contributions, in kind or in cash through the trust fund, to ensure that the work in 2016 could be accomplished as foreseen in the draft 2016–2017 workplan for the implementation of the Convention;

(c) Requested the Steering Body, with the assistance of its Bureau, to present the details of the 2017 budget for approval by the Executive Body at its thirty-fifth session;

(d) Urged Parties that had not yet done so to pay their 2015 contributions in cash to the trust fund and, in 2016, to pay their contributions so that they reached the trust fund in the first half of the year.

37. With respect to effects-oriented activities (*ibid.*, para. 22), the Executive Body:

(a) Took note of the contributions made to the trust fund for effects-oriented activities for 2014 and welcomed the payments made, but also expressed disappointment at the lack of response by many Parties;

(b) Urged all Parties that had not yet done so to consider providing the recommended contributions to the trust fund for the financing of core activities without undue delay;

(c) Decided that the essential international coordination costs for financing the core activities of the Convention and its protocols, other than those covered by the EMEP Protocol, would be \$2,152,700 in 2016, and would provisionally be \$2,152,700 in 2017 and \$2,152,700 in 2018;

(d) Decided to apply the 2013 United Nations scale of assessments in calculating the recommended contributions for 2016–2017 (*ibid.*, table 11);

(e) Based on the information provided by the secretariat on the contributions made to trust fund for effects-oriented activities as of 30 November 2015, decided to use that amount as a basis to co-fund the effects-oriented activities in 2016;

(f) Requested the secretariat to inform Parties of the recommended contributions to the trust fund to meet the 2016 budget, inviting them to make them as agreed in revised decision 2002/1;

(g) Encouraged Parties to make the recommended contributions to the trust fund before 30 November each year;

(h) Noted with appreciation the essential support provided to the Convention and its bodies by lead countries, countries hosting coordinating centres and those organizing meetings, as well as countries that funded activities of their national focal centres/points and the active participation of national experts.

38. With respect to promotion and implementation of the Convention (*ibid.*, para. 29), the Executive Body:

(a) Reiterated its support to that element of the work programme, underlining that an enlarged implementation of the Convention in countries in transition of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia was crucial for the future of the Convention;

(b) Invited all Parties, but especially those that led task forces and expert groups, to promote activities such as special workshops in countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and to collaborate with the secretariat in developing and carrying out such projects;

(c) Approved the proposed 2016–2017 budget of \$1,712,000 for the promotion and implementation of the Convention;

(d) Welcomed the contributions to the trust fund, and thanked those countries that had contributed.

39. Finally, the Executive Body noted that if the communication activities carried out by the secretariat over the past year (see informal note on communication by the secretariat)

were to be maintained at the same level, additional funding of \$157,000 would be needed in 2016–2017 to co-fund the secretariat post currently funded by Germany.

## **VI. Other business**

40. The Executive Body welcomed the note by the ad hoc group of legal experts on ratification of amended protocols that had not yet entered into force, submitted to the session as an informal document in response to a request by the Executive Body at its thirty-third session, and requested the secretariat to submit the note as an official document to the Executive Body at its thirty-fifth session.

41. The Executive Body further took note of the request submitted by Luxembourg to the secretariat regarding the provision of legal advice with respect to some obligations under the Gothenburg Protocol, as amended in 2012, and requested the ad hoc group of legal experts to provide such advice.

42. The Executive Body further invited Parties to nominate experts to the ad hoc group of legal experts, through the secretariat, by 15 February 2016.

43. The Executive Body welcomed the call by Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters to strengthen cooperation between the work under the Protocol on PRTRs and the Air Convention, in particular with regard to capacity-building in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It requested the secretariat to explore opportunities for organizing a joint workshop for experts from the subregion that were involved in the work related the Air Convention and its protocols and the Protocol on PRTRs, with the aim to promote the ratification and strengthen the implementation of those instruments.

## **VII. Adoption of decisions taken at the thirty-fourth session**

44. The Executive Body adopted the decisions taken at its thirty-fourth session on 18 December 2015.

## Annex

### List of main meetings under the Convention in 2016

#### *January*

- Thirty-sixth session of the Implementation Committee (Geneva, 26–28 January)

#### *March*

- Joint meeting of the Extended Bureaux of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects (Geneva, 14–17 March)

#### *May*

- Executive Body Bureau (Geneva, 2–3 May)
- Thirty-fifth session of the Executive Body (Geneva, 2–4 May)

#### *September*

- Thirty-seventh session of the Implementation Committee (Geneva, 5–7 September)
- Second joint session of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects (Geneva, 13–16 September)

#### *December*

- Executive Body Bureau (Geneva, 12 December)
  - Fifty-fourth session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review (Geneva, 13–14 December)
  - Thirty-sixth session of the Executive Body (Geneva, 15–16 December)
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