

Informal Session on the Policy Response to the 2016 Scientific Assessment Report (SAR): Key issues

Note: The Ad-hoc policy review group (PRG) will first present the status of its work and a progress report along with several key preliminary findings to the WGSR. The informal session will be an open discussion on the following key questions to inform our recommendations on the 2016 SAR. The “key questions” represent a selection of issues on which the PRG wishes to encourage dialogue and feedback from Heads of Delegation to the WGSR. The discussion during the session will be informal and open, in accordance with the “Chatham House” rule, encouraging participants to speak as individuals and to express views that may not be those of their organizations or countries. The information shared at the session will not be reflected in the meeting report, which will primarily reflect that a discussion on the matters raised has taken place.

1. What are the most important priorities in your country for work in the Convention to address the scientific and technical gaps discussed in the 2016 scientific assessment report?
2. The SAR indicates the need for taking an integrated approach for a) understanding the interplay between air pollution and climate change, and b) addressing air pollution and climate change in an integrated manner, such that mitigation policy co-benefits are maximized and dis-benefits minimized. An example would be in regards to the complex interactions between reactive nitrogen and ozone, and their effects on air pollution and climate (and other effects such as biodiversity). It is recognized that the complexity of these interlinkages poses challenges for designing, and communicating the usefulness of mitigation activities. The SAR also cites that action is needed on methane in order to effectively address rising background ozone levels.
 - Is the Gothenburg Protocol currently designed to adequately address air pollution and climate change in an integrated manner? (i.e., are changes required in the Protocol to more explicitly consider the effects of climate change on health, air pollution and ecosystems?)
 - Should the Gothenburg Protocol address methane emissions as a precursor to ozone?
3. As air pollution by NH₃ and NO_x and their reaction products (ozone and secondary particles) is of central importance to reactive nitrogen fluxes and effects, it is reasonable to deal with reactive nitrogen in an air pollution framework, i.e. within the Gothenburg Protocol’s multi-effect, multi-pollutant approach.
 - How can reactive nitrogen emissions (including NH₃ and NO_x, but also N₂O and other nitrogen compounds outside the air pollution framework) be addressed in a manner that achieves air pollution, climate change, and biodiversity objectives?
4. The Assessment Report clearly states that emission reductions from agriculture are a high priority. What is the best approach for facilitating/stimulating abatement measures in this sector?

5. Keeping in mind the review mechanisms agreed in the amended Gothenburg Protocol (Art. 3(12) and 10(3) and (4)): should we focus only on issues/pollutants that are explicitly mentioned in the amended text (ammonia and black carbon), should we include more issues/pollutants not adequately addressed (e.g. methane as a precursor of ozone), or broaden the review to all of the commitments?
6. Do countries have enough information to determine the most cost-effective control measures to implement in order to meet emissions ceilings and other obligations under the Protocols? And how do we communicate the economic costs (e.g., lower productivity in the economy and lost wages due to increased health incidences from asthma and respiratory illnesses) for countries in the UNECE region if they do not reduce air pollution in line with the goals and obligations in the Convention's Protocols?
7. Unintentionally released POPs are mainly produced under the combustion process. In the future, should the WGSR consider them like other combustion-related pollutants to be addressed under a Gothenburg Protocol revision or should they continue to be considered under the POPs Protocol?
8. What types of information would be helpful for countries (e.g., benefits of ratification, energy efficiency, technical data) to increase the implementation and ratifications of the POPs, Heavy Metals and the 1999 and/or the 2012 Gothenburg Protocol?
9. Which outreach activities should be prioritized for the coming 5 years?
10. What are the views on expanding the geographic scope of CLRTAP beyond the UNECE region to bring more countries to the table? Options include formally broadening the geographic region, inviting countries outside the UNECE region to specific meetings, and holding workshops.
 - What are experts' opinions on the value of hosting a policy-oriented workshop with official representatives from countries outside the UNECE region and regional organizations to discuss results from the Task Force on Hemispheric Air Pollution and next steps for cooperation on a broader scale?