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## Economic Commission for Europe

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

#### Thirty-seventh session

Geneva, 11-14 December 2017

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

#### Policy response to the 2016 scientific assessment of the Convention

### Highlights of proposed updates to the long-term strategy for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution

#### Submitted by the ad hoc policy review group of experts on the 2016 scientific assessment of the Convention

#### *Summary*

At its thirty-fifth session (Geneva, 2-4 May 2016), the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution established an ad hoc policy review group of experts on the 2016 scientific assessment of the Convention (see ECE/EB.AIR/135, annex II). It requested the policy review group to propose updates and revisions to the long-term strategy for the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/106/Add.1, decision 2010/18, annex) based on findings in the 2016 assessment report and the policy recommendations developed by the group (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2017/3 and Corr.1), and taking into account the report of the ad hoc group of experts on the action plan for the implementation of the long-term strategy for the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/2012/15).

The present document sets out the highlights of updates proposed by the ad hoc policy review group and should be read in conjunction with the long-term strategy.

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## I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-fifth session (Geneva, 2-4 May 2016), by its decision 2016/1, the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution established an ad hoc policy review group of experts on the 2016 scientific assessment of the Convention (see ECE/EB.AIR/135, annex II). It requested the policy review group to propose updates and revisions to the long-term strategy for the Convention based on findings in the 2016 scientific assessment report<sup>1</sup> and the policy recommendations to be developed by the group, and taking into account the report of the ad hoc group of experts on the action plan for the implementation of the long-term strategy for the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/2012/15). At its thirty-sixth session (Geneva, 15-16 December 2016), the Executive Body invited the policy review group to highlight issues requiring further discussion with regard to the long-term strategy for the Convention in advance of its thirty-seventh session (ECE/EB.AIR/137, para. 24).

2. In accordance with decision 2016/1, the policy review group's policy response to the 2016 scientific assessment (final report), which is to inform the proposal for the update of the long-term strategy, was to be submitted to the Working Group on Strategies and Review. The final report (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/2017/3 and Corr.1) was duly submitted to the Working Group at its fifty-fifth session (Geneva, 31 May-2 June 2017) for discussion, as reflected in the report of the session (ECE/EB.AIR/WG.5/118).

3. The present document thus presents the issues and updates that the policy review group believes are important to include in any update to the long-term strategy and a proposed structure for that update. The proposal follows the mandates from the Executive Body as set out above and focuses on long-term recommendations.

4. The points and issues raised in the present document are not to be understood as replacing the 2010 version of the long-term strategy, but rather modifying or adding to it. However, certain text may be replaced, for example, if something in the 2010 version has already been accomplished. The document should be read in conjunction with the 2010 long-term strategy.

5. The group proposes to integrate the four themes under which it had organized its work in its final report:

- (a) Enabling sound policy decisions;
- (b) Maximizing the impact of the Convention and its Protocols;
- (c) Improving the technical and scientific basis;
- (d) Improving communication, outreach and cooperation.

6. In addition, the policy review group proposes that the strategy be guided by the four priorities for the Convention identified in the group's final report:

- (a) Implementation of the Convention and all the current protocols;
- (b) Ratification of the three latest protocols;
- (c) Increased cooperation with countries outside the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region;

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<sup>1</sup> See Rob Maas and Peringe Grennfelt, eds., *Towards Cleaner Air: Scientific Assessment Report 2016* (Oslo, 2016) and United States Environmental Protection Agency and Environment and Climate Change Canada, *Towards Cleaner Air: Scientific Assessment Report 2016 — North America* (2016, online report).

- (d) Further review and possible revision and extension of the protocols.
7. The policy review group also proposes the time frame for the revised long-term strategy be until 2030, so that it can contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the Sustainable Development Goals. As noted in paragraph 3 of the 2010 long-term strategy, the revised long-term strategy may also consider developments over a longer time frame, up to 2050.
8. The revised long-term strategy could have the following five chapters:
- (a) Introduction;
  - (b) Strengths and successes of the Convention;
  - (c) Remaining challenges for human health and ecosystems;
  - (d) Priorities for future action;
  - (e) Conclusion.
9. The Executive Body is invited to discuss and comment the proposals made by the policy review group as presented in the present document.

## **II. Proposed structure and elements of a revised long-term strategy**

### **A. Introduction**

10. At its thirty-sixth session, the Executive Body invited the policy review group to highlight issues requiring further discussion with regard to the long-term strategy in advance of the its thirty-seventh session.
11. In that regard, the group recommends taking into account its policy recommendations in response to the 2016 scientific assessment report and the discussions at and the recommendations by the Executive Body at its thirty-seventh session.
12. In addition, a number of events and initiatives related to international air pollution mitigation have taken place over recent years. The policy review group recommends taking into account the global context of international environmental action on air pollution reduction, including work done through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
13. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in 2015. The Convention contributes to the implementation of a number of those goals, including specifically Goal 3 (good health and well-being), Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production).
14. UNEP has built on two protocols under the Convention, raising the profile of persistent organic pollutants and mercury to the global level. In 2001 and 2013, respectively, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Minamata Convention on Mercury were adopted. While there have been major achievements under these two separate UNEP conventions, it is recommended that their progress and gaps should be assessed to determine if further action in the ECE region is needed.
15. In 2016, a new legally binding agreement on climate change — the Paris Agreement — entered into force. As per its article 2, the agreement aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development

and efforts to eradicate poverty. The policy review group recommends taking into account implications for air pollution resulting from the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and synergies between air pollution and climate change policies (see section D, below).

16. On a regional level, much action has taken place, including the adoption of the revised European Union National Emissions Ceilings Directive,<sup>2</sup> cooperation under the Canada-United States Air Quality Agreement and steps that have been taken to introduce best available techniques in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

17. In addition, at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8-10 June 2016), ministers endorsed the voluntary Batumi Action for Cleaner Air, an initiative supporting countries' efforts in improving air quality and protecting public health and ecosystems. The Batumi Action initiative provides an opportunity to inspire national action and promote additional collaboration within and beyond the ECE region.

## **B. Strengths and successes of the convention**

18. One of the major strengths of the Convention is the technical and scientific work it carries out. To maintain the Convention's scientific leadership role, further efforts are needed in various areas. It is recommended that the policy review group's long-term recommendations in sections D (Improving the technical and scientific basis) and A (Enabling sound policy decisions) of its final report be the foundation for updates to this aspect of the long-term strategy.

19. The Convention's other key strength is its ability to facilitate and promote the exchange of information and knowledge between countries and international organizations, both within and outside the ECE region.

## **C. Remaining challenges for human health and ecosystems**

20. As is clearly stated in the 2016 scientific assessment, there is a need to further reduce particulate matter, ozone, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals and nitrogen compounds, in particular from sources identified in the assessment.

21. The policy review group recommends that, while maintaining the primarily regional scale of Convention activities, the Convention should also assess the health and ecosystem impacts of measures taken at the regional scale on local and urban air quality. In addition, the impacts of air pollution at the hemispheric scale on regional and local air quality should be further assessed.

22. The group recommends highlighting the importance of science related to the impacts on air quality of air pollutants that also have near-term climate impacts.

## **D. Priorities for future action**

23. The policy recommendations developed by the policy review group highlight the priorities for future action under four key themes including:

- (a) Enabling sound policy decisions;

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<sup>2</sup> Directive (EU) 2016/2284 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2016 on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants, amending Directive 2003/35/EC and repealing Directive 2001/81/EC, O.J. (L 344), pp. 1–31.

- (b) Maximizing the impact of the Convention and Protocols;
- (c) Improving the scientific and technical basis;
- (d) Improving communication, outreach and cooperation.

24. The group is of the view that an integrated approach for environmental policy will yield the most benefits. To enable sound policy decisions, the group identified three strongly interrelated policy fields that should form the basis for integrated environmental policy development under the Convention:

- (a) Ozone-nitrogen-climate-biodiversity interactions;
- (b) Nitrogen management;
- (c) An integrated approach to air pollution and climate change policies and measures.

25. It is also important to recognize that air pollution control measures will alter the net climate balance. The policy review group recommends that mitigation policies take an integrated approach and avoid negative consequences. This applies not only to the energy and transport sectors (primarily carbon dioxide, but also black carbon and for some countries methane) but also to agriculture (methane and nitrous oxides).

26. The highest priority for the Convention is to maximize its impact and that of its protocols by increasing ratification and implementation of the protocols, notably the three latest, amended protocols: the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (Gothenburg Protocol); the Protocol on Heavy Metals; and the Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

27. In addition, the group recommends reviewing and updating the 1999 Gothenburg Protocol, as amended in 2012, following the entry into force of the amendments. Based on the 2016 scientific assessment, these updates should include the consideration of additional commitments for certain pollutants, specifically: particulate matter, including black carbon; ammonia; and ozone precursors, including methane.

28. The policy review group also recommends improving the technical and scientific basis for the Convention and its protocols by better assessing progress in improving air quality, human health and ecosystem effects. Therefore, the group recommends to further align monitoring and modelling activities for air quality with those undertaken for assessing impacts on health and ecosystems. This will provide a clearer understanding of the progress made and the remaining issues that need to be addressed. In addition, it is recommended that the work under the Convention take every opportunity to make monitoring networks serve multiple clients (national and international) and other problems (e.g., climate change and land-use and biodiversity management).

29. The policy group further recommends improving hemispheric and transcontinental cooperation in reducing emissions because hemispheric influence on air quality within the ECE region is still a challenge.

30. Finally, the group recommends highlighting opportunities for cooperation and improved communication with other regions and organizations. For example, the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air initiative represents a new means of inspiring countries and encouraging more national action on air pollution within and outside the ECE region. Additionally, broader cooperation should be pursued with countries outside the ECE region in order to address air pollution at the global scale, and communication should be increased using the group's recommendations contained in section D (Improving communication, outreach and cooperation) of its final report to guide this activity.

## **E. Conclusion**

31. The policy review group will update the conclusion in the 2010 version of the long-term strategy, as appropriate.

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