

Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (2016–2021): relevant actions for countries from outside the UNECE region

Note by the Bureau of the Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution

Summary

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 — and welcomed the initiatives launched by interested countries and other stakeholders aimed at improving air quality and protecting public health and ecosystems. The initiative was prepared under the leadership of the Bureau of the UNECE Air Convention. To facilitate for countries from outside the UNECE region to use the initiative, this document highlights actions under the initiative that are particularly relevant for these countries. Interested countries and stakeholders are invited to submit their voluntary commitments to this initiative by using the annexed template.

Introduction

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 — and welcomed the initiatives launched by interested countries and other stakeholders aimed at improving air quality and protecting public health and ecosystems. The initiative was prepared under the leadership of the Bureau of the UNECE Air Convention. To facilitate countries from outside the UNECE region to use the initiative, this document highlights actions under the initiative that are particularly relevant for these countries.

1. Aware of the still-severe air pollution situation in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region and beyond and the calls for action to protect public health and ecosystems, and recognizing also the importance of reducing air pollution in global fora such as the United Nations Environment Assembly and the World Health Assembly, the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air presents a number of actions for improving air quality. The objective of the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air is to encourage and support Governments and other actors in their work to improve air quality during the period 2016–2021.

2. More specifically, the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air has the following objectives:

- (a) To provide Governments and other stakeholders with a list of possible concrete actions to address local, national and regional air pollution problems for their consideration;
- (b) To inspire action on air pollution issues that are not currently being addressed;
- (c) To aid the further implementation of the commitments under the ECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) and its protocols;
- (d) To invite stakeholders (international organizations, donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)) to support actions that improve air quality, in particular capacity-building and technical assistance actions;
- (e) To invite Governments to voluntarily commit to implementing specific actions and to share their successes and further challenges at future meetings to be organised under auspices of the Air Convention.

3. Due to the different air pollution situations in countries of the different regions and their differing effects on human health and the environment, the challenges and priorities for action on air pollution will differ among countries. The arrangement and order of actions proposed for consideration in the present document should therefore not be seen in any way as constituting a ranking of the actions or conferring priority on those mentioned first.

4. Some actions are of a general nature and constitute an important starting point to better characterize the sources of air pollutants. These include monitoring activities with regard to both air quality and the resulting impacts on human health and ecosystems. These activities could be considered as prerequisites for raising the awareness of the public and policymakers on the necessity to abate noxious emissions.

5. Other actions are specifically required as starting points to establish the common basis for cooperation with other countries and to accede to international agreements. For countries where data collection and assessment are at an early stage, technical support and expertise sharing would be welcomed.

6. Governments and other stakeholders are invited to choose appropriate actions from the list of possible actions proposed below in accordance with their country-specific needs with a view to undertaking a voluntarily commitment to implementing them.

7. Countries and other potential stakeholders (international organizations, donor organizations and NGOs) are invited to envisage voluntary commitments and possibly to announce them to the secretariat to the Air Convention by using the template annexed to this document (see annex).

I. Establishment of systematic, comparable and transparent monitoring activities and emissions inventories

8. Possible actions with regard to the establishment of systematic, comparable and transparent monitoring activities and emissions inventories include:

- (a) To collect every year and maintain inventories and information on levels of:
 - (i) Emissions of sulphur, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, ammonia, volatile organic compounds and some heavy metals and some persistent organic pollutants, taking into account, as appropriate, the Guidelines for Reporting Emissions and Projections Data under the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (ECE/AB.AIR/125) (**Action 1**);
 - (ii) Ambient concentrations of the compounds mentioned in subparagraph (a) (i) above and ground-level ozone (**Action 2**);
- (b) To deliver data, as a matter of priority, for all large point sources, and as far as possible also to provide information on agriculture and mobile sources, according for example to the mechanism established by the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) to the ECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) (**Action 3**);
- (c) To foster cooperation and the exchange of information between the international, national, subnational and local authorities on issues related to air pollution (**Action 4**);
- (d) To designate institutional organizations responsible for the monitoring of air quality and the exchange of data between the various subnational networks, as well as the harmonization of the monitoring methodologies, as appropriate to national circumstances (**Action 5**);
- (e) To designate institutional organizations responsible for the establishment of yearly inventories of air pollutant emissions (**Action 6**);
- (f) Where systems are already well established, to provide technical support regarding air quality monitoring and inventory development to countries beginning to undertake these activities and to share expertise with them in this regard (**Action 7**).

II. Establishment of national action programmes that reduce air pollution

9. Possible actions related to the establishment of national action programmes that reduce air pollution include:

- (a) To control and reduce emissions of sulphur, nitrogen oxides, ammonia and volatile organic compounds, as well as particulate matter (including black carbon), heavy metals and some persistent organic pollutants that are of importance given their potential for long-range transboundary atmospheric transport and for causing adverse effects to human health, natural ecosystems, materials or crops through, e.g., acidification, eutrophication or the creation of ground-level ozone (**Action 8**);

- (b) To adopt, as necessary and on the basis of sound scientific and economic criteria, strategies, policies and programmes with measures that:
- (i) Increase energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, as well as promote low-emission practices for biomass burning (**Action 9**);
 - (ii) Promote energy-saving measures and shifts in the energy mix that contribute to cleaner air and climate change mitigation, in particular, by reducing coal burning with the aim to decrease emissions of mercury, sulphur and particulate matter. (**Action 10**);
 - (iii) Decrease the use of polluting fuels, in particular (low grade) coal and high sulphur fuels, including those for maritime transportation (**Action 11**);
 - (iv) Introduce less polluting transport systems and promote traffic management systems to reduce overall emissions and exposure from road traffic (**Action 12**);
 - (v) Promote rules in the framework of the International Maritime Organization to reduce the use of high sulphur fuels (**Action 13**);
 - (vi) Promote the development of good agricultural practices to avoid losses of ammonia in the environment as well as alternatives to open agricultural burning to avoid harmful emissions (**Action 1**);
 - (vii) Establish programmes with respect to atmospheric monitoring and modelling and health and ecosystem effects and facilitate the communication of the results to the public (**Action 15**);
- (c) To apply best available techniques to mobile sources and to both new and existing stationary sources, including in the agriculture sector, taking into account for example the related guidance documents adopted by the Executive Body for the Air Convention (**Action 16**).

III. Improvement of public awareness

10. Possible actions to improve public awareness include:
- (a) To promote, in a manner consistent with national laws, regulations and practices, the provision of information to the general public, including information on:
- (i) National annual emissions of sulphur, nitrogen oxides, ammonia, volatile organic compounds, particulate matter, heavy metals (at a minimum, lead, mercury and cadmium) and persistent organic pollutants (**Action 17**);
 - (ii) Levels of air pollution and health and ecosystem exposure according to, for example, monitoring guidelines of the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe (EMEP) (**Action 18**);
 - (iii) Real-time and forecasted air quality data (**Action 19**);
 - (iv) Measures applied or to be applied to reduce air pollution problems (**Action 20**);
 - (v) Sources, mechanisms, levels and impacts of transboundary air pollution (**Action 21**);
- (b) To make the information detailed in subparagraph (a) above available to the public with a view to minimizing emissions, including information on:
- (i) Less polluting fuels, renewable energy and energy efficiency, in particular in relation to the transport sector (**Action 22**);

- (ii) Good agricultural practices to reduce emissions of ammonia and to improve the efficiency of nitrogen fertilization, and alternatives to open agricultural burning to avoid harmful emissions (**Action 23**);
 - (iii) Human health, environmental and climate effects associated with the reduction of the pollutants listed in subparagraph (a) (i) above (**Action 2**);
 - (iv) Steps that individuals and the private sector can take to reduce emissions of the pollutants listed in subparagraph (a) (i) above (**Action 25**);
- (c) This information or parts of it could also be reported to the World Health Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, as well as, depending on the various topics and affiliation, to the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) networks through the secretariats of the relevant conventions and organizations (**Action 26**).

IV. Capacity-building and technical support

11. Possible actions to build capacity and provide technical support include:
- (a) To strengthen capacity-building activities on air quality, such as technical assistance, and support to policy development and implementation of measures to improve air quality (**Action 27**);
 - (b) To participate to the international scientific and technical activities under the Air Convention for the transfer of knowledge and technology aimed at air pollution abatement (**Action 28**);
 - (c) To further develop cooperation through bilateral partnerships (twinning efforts) or multilateral activities (**Action 29**);
 - (d) To encourage the further development under the World Bank and the various regional development banks of financing for air pollution measures (**Action 30**);
 - (e) To build partnerships with the private sector to promote clean technology and the implementation of low emissions techniques, as well as the further development of the green economy. Contacts and environmentally friendly business opportunities should be jointly developed with industry in the power sector, the car industry or with the oil, gas and chemicals organizations (**Action 31**).

V. Policy

12. Possible actions in the policy sphere include:
- (a) To explore opportunities for strengthened international cooperation on air pollution, for example under the Air Convention and between the international organizations and regional cooperation forums aimed at fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (**Action 32**);
 - (b) To become a party to relevant international agreements addressing air pollution, such as the Air Convention and its protocols, and other multilateral environmental agreements, (**Action 33**);
 - (c) To work towards the ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs under the Aarhus Convention and to report on progress in that regard to the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol (**Action 34**);

(g) To take actions in sectors that are of priority for the country in question, taking into account, for example, the specific guidance documents developed under the Air Convention,. Such actions could include actions in the agriculture, energy or transport sectors (**Action 35**).

Annex

Template for submitting voluntary commitments within the framework of the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air

The template below could be used to report on activities undertaken by countries, organizations and the private sector with a view to implementing actions set out in the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air. For each activity, please provide information on the following six items.

1. Country or organization:
2. Title^a of the activity (referencing the number of the related Batumi action(s) that the activity will achieve in parentheses):
3. Description of the activity and, if possible, target date:^b
4. Expected outcome:
5. Partners:
6. Contact points person:

Please note: This template could be submitted for information and possible further cooperation to air_meetings@unece.org

^a The title must be as precise as possible.

^b In six lines maximum (indicate any relevant websites as information resources, where available).