

Declaration on Clean Air for 2020–2030 and beyond in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution

1. We, the representatives of the Parties to the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention), recognize that air pollution is the single greatest environmental risk to human health and one of the main avoidable causes of death and disease globally, and that it also affects other aspects of society, such as the economy, ecosystems and climate.

2. We met in Geneva, in December 2019, in the framework of the thirty-ninth session of the Executive Body for the Air Convention, concerned that air pollution is a problem with far-reaching impacts owing to its transport over long distances.

3. We strongly appreciate the substantial contribution of the Air Convention to the development of international environmental law. Since its inception 40 years ago, the Air Convention has developed into a successful regional framework for controlling and reducing the damage to human health and the environment caused by transboundary air pollution. This has been demonstrated through: the decoupling of pollutant emissions and economic growth; the substantial reduction of emissions of certain air pollutants; and the reversal or deceleration of acidification in forest soils and lakes.

4. Yet we remain concerned that air pollution still causes significant environmental threats and health problems, and that new challenges continue to emerge. In this context, we reaffirm our commitment to improving air quality, for the purposes of fostering a better environment and reducing negative impacts on human health.

5. We therefore urge action to address the priorities for future work under the Air Convention, as identified in its long-term strategy for 2020–2030 and beyond, including, among other things:

(a) Maximizing the impact of the Air Convention, including by increasing ratification and implementation of its Protocols;

(b) Ensuring the provision of resources for the effective long-term operation of the Air Convention's monitoring, modelling and assessment capabilities;

(c) Continuing to focus on the pollutants best controlled at the regional level and considering the need for further action to address remaining and emerging issues;

(d) Supporting scientific activities that respond to policy needs and questions, influence priorities and guide decisions, both in terms of what policy should address and how it should be developed;

(e) Improving cooperation between different levels of government, recognizing the increasing challenge of hemispheric influence on air quality in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region; recognizing also that local air pollution, including in cities, is heavily influenced by transboundary air pollution and vice versa;

(f) Promoting an integrated approach to environmental policymaking, recognizing that air pollution is the central link in the interaction between ground-level ozone, nitrogen, human health, climate change and ecosystems;

(g) Improving communication on work under the Air Convention, achievements and remaining challenges, in order to raise awareness among policymakers and the public, including through the promotion of tools that help to raise awareness at the political level of the need to improve air quality, such as the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air initiative;

(h) Sharing the Air Convention's 40 years of experience and scientific expertise, striving to play a key role in the development of further policy cooperation between regions and working towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. We welcome the establishment of a forum for international cooperation on air pollution, as agreed by the Executive Body for the Air Convention, focusing on exchange with other regions and working closely with other relevant initiatives, in line with the objectives of United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 3/8 on preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally.

7. We recognize the important contributions made during the first forty years of the Air Convention's existence and we commit ourselves to continuing to use the best available science to advance efforts to address air pollution.
