

Informal document no. 4
Fifty-seventh session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review
Agenda items 7 & 8
Workshop on air pollution abatement, including to reduce air pollutants that are also short-lived climate pollutants
Proposal for the forum for collaboration on reducing air pollution

Proposal for Forum on International Cooperation on Air Pollution

NB: A previous version of this document was presented to the Global Event on Clean Air, which took place as a special session during the 38th session of the Executive Body.

See also <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45532> for presentations from the above-noted special session.

Why international cooperation on air pollution (AP) policy?

Some air pollutants travel long distances. Even if local ‘hotspots’ are tackled, reduction of global or trans-regional background levels remains a challenge. International transport is important for mercury and numerous persistent organic pollutants (POPs), and there are global policy instruments on mercury and POPs (the Minamata and Stockholm Conventions). However, long-range and even transcontinental transport is also important for other air pollutants and cooperation to reduce these air pollutants is limited, and remains regional in scope. Moreover, it could be said that there remain gaps in the geographic coverage of such cooperation.

Human exposure to fine particulate matter in cities is largely influenced by, long-range transport of air pollutants. Particulate matter precursors (ammonia, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides) are picked up by air masses travelling over the source regions. Ozone concentrations are also largely influenced by transboundary and even transcontinental transport of ozone and its precursors (nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and methane).

Efforts to reduce fine particulate matter and tropospheric ozone (including their precursors) would therefore benefit from a discussion that is broader in geographic scope.

In short, air pollution is a serious global problem with far-reaching impacts due to its transport over long distances so the need for coordinated action is imperative. This necessity has recently been expressed through the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and World Health Assembly resolutions. The Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention) has 40 years of experience in tackling transboundary air pollution on a regional basis, from both the scientific and policy angles, and is keen to cooperate with other regions to ascertain common challenges, exchange

experiences on developing and implementing air pollution policy, and cooperate as appropriate to reduce emissions of air pollutants.

Forum for Collaboration on Air Pollution

As a first step, a forum for exchange of information and mutual learning could be established. This means it would be a less formal group than a Task Force. Any country, subnational government or organization should be welcome to participate. The Forum could be initiated/led by the Air Convention.

Taking into consideration the discussions during the informal global session on clean air the EB, at its 38th session, agreed to establish a forum for collaboration on reducing air pollution and requested the EB Bureau to further elaborate this proposal for discussion at the 57th session of the WGSR and the 5th joint session of the EMEP SB and the WGE, with a view to making a recommendation for the consideration of the Executive Body at its 39th session.

The participants at the global event on clean air recommended that the forum should be steered by the Air Convention in close cooperation with other key stake holders and especially with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to link the initiative to the platform called for in UNEA's resolution 3/8 on air pollution. They also recommended to reach out to countries and organizations not present at the session. It was also noted as important to involve the climate change community and to take a "one atmosphere" approach.

Possible activities of the Forum

- Homepage – possibly housed at UNECE
- Electronic newsletter
- List and inform about relevant meetings and events – members to send information/ invitations
- Offer "forum members/ambassadors" (not necessarily only the Air Convention secretariat), who can participate in meetings/conferences and share regional experience, from the Air Convention community or from other regional collaboration efforts.
- Help to establish contacts for science cooperation (for example to share lessons learned with harmonized handbooks, monitoring methods, risk assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness and benefits of air pollution reductions on health and the environment and possibly adaptation of Air Convention tools for other geographic scopes or activities, see further science cooperation proposal)
- Match funding opportunities with country efforts. (World Bank, European Investment Bank, bilateral aid, and others).
- Promote a data driven approach to air quality management (AQM). There are templates for different components of AQM developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in their bilateral work (how to set up an Emission Inventory (EI), how to communicate health impacts to the public, etc) those could be refined and used by the Forum as well, be distributed to countries/cities via regional organizations. Mostly for developing countries in other regions than the UNECE.

- Regular review of international policy initiatives in the AP field and undertake a scan of the state of international law on air pollution – members to help with information (timing to be determined by Forum members).
- Collect, promote and follow up on Batumi Action for Cleaner Air commitments outside of the UNECE. (adapted version for this purpose)
- Face-to-face meetings every 2nd year. Those could rotate between hosts. Possibility to participate via Web link should be investigated.
- Have regular conference calls to maintain a dialogue/make connection and continue making progress.
- Make suggestions regarding further cooperative efforts that may be established, if the group believes this to be appropriate and called for.

The secretariat has created a page on the Convention website on international cooperation to reduce air pollution, which will be expanded further at the forum's launch. Discussions with UNEP have been initiated to discuss their potential involvement in the process.

Next steps

Next steps for setting up the Forum were discussed by the EB Bureau at its meeting in Laxenburg, Austria, in March. At that meeting a small planning group to prepare for the launch of the Forum in cooperation with the EB bureau was created. The Bureau agreed on the following next steps:

- Discuss the division of tasks and role of Policy bodies, Science bodies, Secretariat, forum leads;
- Re-contact UNEP on their possible involvement and co-lead;
- Contact the participants from the global event in December and other relevant organizations and countries and invite them to take part in the work, including to establish the Forum (and the 40th anniversary event at the 39th session of the EB);
- Discuss how to engage the climate community. CCAC could take an initial lead on SLCPs;
- Formulate guiding questions/topics for discussions during the WGSR session and workshop which is expected to result in further recommendations for the Forum and its activities;
- Planning group in cooperation with the EB Bureau, develop a draft mandate for the Forum;
- Create a “model webpage” and circulate it to the participants from the global event. The web page could in a first version contain:
 - Short info on participants, countries and organizations, with contact details
 - Create a list of relevant meetings and events (ask participants from the global event for input)
 - Gather links to tools/guidelines using the list sent to UNEP to include on the website
 - Draft a first electronic newsletter including information on the global session, the launch of the Forum, the long-term strategy of the Convention and its content relevant to global cooperation

- Follow up to BACA including commitments/results
- Gather information on funding possibilities (i.e., World Bank, European Investment Bank, others);
- Create and keep list of invitees and members. Help to set up webinars/ conference calls;
- Investigate possibilities to translate documents/ guidance/tools into other languages such as Spanish;
- Discuss time and place for first meeting. Should be announced at the launch; and
- Identify lead countries/parties/organizations/persons.

List of questions to inform discussion of the Forum for International Cooperation on Air Pollution at the 57th session of WGSR

THEME 1: Meeting scientific and technical needs at the country level

1. What are the main needs of the workshop participants and how can the Air Convention help? What kind of capacity-building training is the most helpful and what can be done to help ensure that the new capacity is retained?
2. How do we better use the available technology and experience that we already have? Would it be more useful if these resources or technical tools, including templates for component of Air Quality Management, were accessible online?
3. How can the Forum help in countries without enough staff to link people/organizations together? How can the awareness level of the scientific and technical facts of air pollution be raised?
 - Materials and type of information (health effects, emissions, pollution levels)
 - Groups that should be engaged

THEME 2: Awareness raising at the policymaker and political levels

1. What is the impact of transboundary air pollution in your country? Is it an issue, and what can be/is possible to be done about it?
2. What kind of policy instruments/mechanisms/tools would be helpful in raising awareness of the importance of addressing transboundary air pollution?
3. How can the Forum help raise awareness at both the national level and with city governments on the cost of air pollution's impact on human health and ecosystems and the economic costs of inaction?

THEME 3: Matching funding needs and opportunities

1. What is the first step to link funding with countries that have proposals? Announcement in newsletter? Website?
2. How can the Forum help countries put together funding proposals? Is there a need for a template? Could concrete steps and advice on the website help?

THEME 4: Expanding the scope of regional cooperation

1. What kind of regional cooperation if any exists in given areas, and is there an appetite to increase the scope of the cooperation? If so, how can the Air Convention help?

2. What international initiatives should the Forum participate in (i.e., to maximize information sharing)? Better Air Quality Conference with Clean Air Asia Initiative, CCAC, WHO, etc.
3. How can the Forum act as a linking mechanism to bring together different regional initiatives, networks and partnerships, so that they're all talking to one another and all the right people are involved?
4. Should the Forum help existing regional networks to organize a regional negotiating body like the Air Convention to address transboundary air pollution in their region?