

Forum for International Cooperation on Air Pollution: Proposal

Background

The need for coordinated actions has been recognized in many different international fora (e.g. through the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and World Health Assembly resolutions). The importance of cooperation beyond the UNECE region has also been recognized in the updated long-term strategy for the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/142/Add.2, decision 2018/5, annex, para 76). Given its 40 years of experience in tackling transboundary air pollution on a regional basis, the Convention is keen to cooperate with other regions to ascertain common challenges and to exchange experiences on air pollution policy.

Following a special event on clean air globally, the Executive Body, at its 38th session in 2018, agreed to establish a forum for collaboration on reducing air pollution and requested the Bureau of the Executive Body to further elaborate this proposal. The proposal has been updated based on discussions during the global event on clean air, which recommended that the forum should be steered by the Air Convention in close cooperation with other key stakeholders 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. In these discussions, it was also recommended to reach out to countries and organizations not present at the session. It was also considered important to involve the climate change community and to take a "one atmosphere" approach.

I. Purpose

1. The Forum for International Cooperation on Air Pollution (the Forum) is a forum for international exchange of information and mutual learning on both the scientific/technical and policy levels. It is intended to be a repository for technical information and a convener of countries and organizations with the goal of increased international cooperation on addressing air pollution.

II. Vision and Mission

1. The Forum's vision is to promote international collaboration towards preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally.

2. The Forum aims to fulfil its purpose including by:

- a. Acting as an international platform for information sharing, mutual learning and collaboration on air pollution;
- b. Fostering emissions reductions of air pollutants through exchange of information on best practices and policy approaches;
- c. Taking a "one atmosphere" approach in addressing international air pollution;
- d. Facilitating the matching of funding opportunities with country efforts and needs;
- e. Promoting an evidence-based approach to air quality management;
- f. Working to raise public awareness of the health and environmental impacts of air pollution;
- g. Collaborating and communicating with partners and stakeholders.

III. Proposed structure and operation

1. The Forum is open to participation by UNECE and non-UNECE country representatives, as well

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as representatives of organizations and conventions with an interest in reducing air pollution.

2. The aim is, that in the initial phase, the Forum will be led by one or more countries, including at least one from the UNECE region, who are to appoint chairperson(s). Interested countries are invited to express their interest to the UNECE secretariat.

3. The Forum operation and activities will be funded through voluntary financial and in-kind contributions.

4. The Forum will mainly be a web-based platform but may also meet. Efforts should be made to make use of tools that enable virtual meetings, although periodic face-to-face meetings could be held.

IV. Activities of the Forum

Activities of the Forum could include:

Information sharing on policy

1. Providing a platform to exchange information and views on addressing air pollution and raise awareness of its health and environmental impacts;
2. Providing an overview of international policy initiatives in the air pollution field and summarize the state of international efforts to address air pollution;
3. Seeking connections with relevant organizations or bodies involved in practical efforts to reduce air pollution;
4. Sharing experiences on regional cooperation, including the UNECE Air Convention's multi-lateral regional structure and framework as a model for other regions;
5. Promoting tools such as the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air;
6. Promoting an integrated approach for the management of air quality and other environmental issues to achieve multiple benefits and coordinating to that end with relevant organizations as appropriate;
7. Promoting regional cooperation on air pollution in existing or future networks;

Information sharing on science

8. Facilitating access to scientific information, for example online databases for best available control technologies;
9. Encouraging sharing information related to international transport and global emissions of air pollution and their impacts on ecosystems and human health;
10. Helping 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 targeted "hands-on" training workshops) and possibly adaptation of UNECE Air Convention tools for other geographic scopes or activities;

Technical capacity building and information sharing on funding opportunities

11. Reaching out to funding organizations and providing a platform for information sharing on funding opportunities for country participants and other organizations;
12. Providing a platform for information sharing on available capacity-building and training opportunities;
13. Sharing experience and information that could inform the development of action plans for addressing air pollution, including in urban centres;
14. Promoting an evidence-based approach to air quality management, including related to the development of emission inventories and the communication of health and ecosystem impacts to the public.

V. Next steps

1. Develop terms of reference for the Forum for consultation with Forum participants (led by Executive Body Bureau);
2. Identify countries willing to lead the Forum;
3. Organize first meeting;
4. Continue to develop website for the forum;
5. Reach out to organizations such as UNEP, WMO, WHO, CCAC, GMI, WRI, IUAPPA and C-40 and others to explore possible synergies in activities.