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**EXECUTIVE BODY FOR THE CONVENTION ON LONG-RANGE
TRANSBOUNDARY AIR POLLUTION**

Twenty-fifth session
Geneva, 10–13 December 2007
Item 12 of the provisional agenda

OPENING THE CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOLS

Note by the Bureau

INTRODUCTION

1. At its twenty-fourth session, the Executive Body discussed the possibilities for opening the Convention and its protocols (ECE/EB.AIR/89, paras. 60–62). While all delegations agreed that efforts to maintain outreach activities should continue, some delegations proposed the Executive Body should begin considering amending the legal instruments, while others urged caution noting the practical implications and the heavy workload of the Convention bodies. The Executive Body invited its Bureau to consider the issue of opening the Convention further to explore any alternative options, to develop a more focused way forward, and to report back to the twenty-fifth session.
2. At its meetings in 2007, the Bureau discussed the issue as requested and found that the document on possibilities for opening the Convention (ECE/EB.AIR/2006/8) presented to the

Executive Body at its twenty-fourth session still provided a useful summary of possibilities and options from a legal perspective. The Bureau agreed that it had nothing to add to this legal and technical appraisal in that document.

3. The Bureau further agreed that, to provide a broad basis for discussions on making the Convention more open, it should prepare a document for consideration by the Executive Body providing additional relevant information, in particular on existing related activities. In consultation with the secretariat, it has examined the existing and potential links with other regions and countries outside the UNECE region and presents its findings below.

I. ADDRESSING AIR POLLUTION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

4. One of the objectives of opening the Convention is to enable air pollution problems to be addressed at the global level. The Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution has demonstrated the movement of some air pollutants between continents and has drawn attention to the benefits of emission controls on at least a hemispheric basis.

5. Various international forums have discussed the possibilities for global agreements for controlling air pollution on a multi-regional basis, but apart from the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, there have been no initiatives from Governments or global organizations to negotiate a global agreement for other air pollutants.

6. Indeed, discussions that have taken place within regions and informal discussions between representatives of regional agreements have suggested that the regional approach could perhaps be more effective, since it provides a more efficient, more targeted mechanism for addressing regional issues.

7. Global level discussions at the Commission on Sustainable Development have confirmed this view. Even at the ninth session of the Commission in 2001 attention was drawn to the effectiveness of regional agreements. In particular, the report of the Secretary General on Protection of the Atmosphere (E/CN.17/2001/2), noted in some regions, declarations and resolutions had been issued and studies and monitoring programmes initiated and implemented to address transboundary air pollution. It referred to, inter alia, the Cañuelas Declaration on the Control and Prevention of Atmospheric Pollution in the countries of southern South America, the Harare Resolutions on the Prevention and Control of Regional Air Pollution in Southern Africa and Its Likely Transboundary Effects, and the Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and Its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia. It also noted monitoring programmes such as the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET) and the Programme to Address ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) Regional

Transboundary Smoke and Haze in South-East Asia, initiated by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). At that time it was suggested the Commission might recommend initiating and enhancing regional cooperation to reduce levels of air pollution.

8. The Chair's report from the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2006 also stressed regional and sub-regional approaches for tackling air pollution. It noted agreement at the fifteenth session to "strengthen regional and sub-regional cooperation for improved air quality and control of transboundary air pollution, both anthropogenic and naturally occurring, using an approach which combines, as appropriate, monitoring, abatement, research, or policy formulation as well as sharing of regional experiences, and encourage countries to cooperate in relevant regional and sub-regional frameworks, and mechanisms agreed upon by countries concerned".

9. In the UNECE region, the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference, taking place in Belgrade in October 2007, will discuss the implementation of the UNECE multilateral environmental agreements. The document prepared for the Conference discussions by the secretariat (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/12), includes a chapter on synergies with other international programmes and outreach. This draws attention to steps that some conventions have taken towards accepting parties from outside the region, as well as steps being taken to link with countries that are neighbours to UNECE. The document concludes, "the UNECE conventions are effective instruments for protecting the environment and human health and for strengthening international cooperation. They are useful models for other regions, and 'exporting' their experience, methods and approaches through outreach and international collaboration can benefit regions facing similar problems. Further efforts for outreach activities and exchange of information with other regions of the world should be made."

10. At the Belgrade Ministerial Conference, a side-event entitled "Tackling regional, hemispheric and global air pollution: the potential role of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution" has been organized by the Global Atmospheric Pollution Forum (see below). An informal paper for the side-event (ECE/BELGRADE.CONF/2007/INF/8) describes how the Forum sees the Convention taking a leading role in helping to address air pollution problems at the regional, hemispheric and global scales. The paper suggests the Convention might do this by:

- (a) Promoting the infrastructure for inter-regional cooperation;
- (b) Promoting scientific and technical cooperation among regional groups;
- (c) Proposing partnership programmes with other regions to tackle urgent common problems;

(d) Using its expertise and experience to open international debate on new policies and institutions.

II. THE GLOBAL ATMOSPHERIC POLLUTION FORUM

11. While formal global agreements are lacking, at a less formal level an initiative by the International Union of Air Pollution Prevention and Environmental Protection Associations (IUAPPA) established the Global Atmospheric Pollution Forum in 2004. Now benefiting from Swedish Government funding and support from the Stockholm Environment Institute, which acts as a secretariat, the Forum has brought together representatives from the Convention; the Air Pollution Information Network for Africa (APINA); EANET; ASEAN; the Clean Air Initiatives in Asian Cities (CAI-Asia), Sub-Saharan African Cities (CAI-SSA), and Latin American Cities (CAI-LA); the Inter-American Network for Atmospheric/Biospheric Studies (IANABIS) in Latin America; the Malé Declaration; and the Atmospheric Brown Clouds (ABC) initiative. The Forum involves the international organizations that are involved in the regional processes such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNECE, UNEP and WMO, as well as officers of the governing bodies and representatives of programme centres of the regional agreements. For the Convention, the secretariat and the Chair and Bureau members of the Executive Body have been involved in the Forum discussions.

12. Now that the Forum is well established, it is discussing proposals for future collaborative projects. It is also looking to strengthen the links between regions, possibly using mechanisms such as memorandums of understanding between individual regional agreements. More information on the Forum and its activities can be found at <http://www.sei.se/gapforum/origins.php>.

13. The Forum recognizes the importance of building air pollution control measures on sound science and sees the Convention as an important model for other regions. It notes specifically that “future regional and hemispheric efforts, particularly in developing nations, can benefit from the experience of initiatives such as the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution in bringing together data and technical expertise from various participating Governments to develop policies for pollution prevention and abatement. As the oldest and most comprehensive regional air pollution agreement, the Convention has a critical role to play in leading and supporting regional programmes in other parts of the world, and helping explore policy scenarios and future pathways forward”.

III. SCIENTIFIC LINKS BETWEEN THE CONVENTION AND OTHER REGIONS

14. At the scientific level, there are good links between the Convention's scientific bodies and work outside the region. Some of this is through formal contacts and some through informal links between individual scientists. Some examples of collaboration are provided below.

15. Many individual scientists are associated with scientific work focused on other regions. Such inter-regional links are helped by global-scale international meetings, such as the Acid Rain Conferences held every five years, and by collaborative projects especially those focused on other regions and supported by UNECE member States.

16. At a more formal level, the Convention has scientific links through its Working Group on Effects and EMEP¹ Steering Body and their subsidiary bodies and programme centres. Scientists and scientific organizations are welcomed at their annual sessions, and the 2007 session of the EMEP Steering Body had presentations from representatives of the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, which is responsible for the secretariat for a number of Asian agreements, as well as from the Japanese programme centre of EANET.

17. Certain Convention programme centres have regular contacts with other regions. The Chemical Coordinating Centre of EMEP regularly attends the Scientific Advisory Committee meetings of EANET and shares experiences and advice from the UNECE region. The Meteorological Synthesizing Centre-West (MSW-West) and MSC-East of EMEP have been developing global scale atmospheric transport models that will provide the Convention with a more global perspective to the Convention's work as well as a possible tool for other regions. The International Cooperative Programme on Forests of the Working Group on Effects also has close links with EANET and joint meetings have been arranged in Asia.

18. Of particular relevance to linkages to other regions is the Convention's work on hemispheric air pollution. The EMEP Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution was charged with encouraging participation of experts from outside the region and has been very successful in doing this. Reports of the Task Force indicate that experts from the following countries have participated in at least one of the Task Force meetings: Cambodia, China, Egypt, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea. A number of global organizations, as well as representatives from other regional agreements, have also taken part in meetings.

¹ The Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe.

IV. ATTRACTING PARTICIPATION AND SHARING THE CONVENTION'S EXPERIENCE

19. In addition to the encouragement given by the Executive Body and by lead countries for programmes and task forces to involve other regions in the work of the Convention, the Executive Body has taken specific steps to invite delegations from countries outside the UNECE region to attend its sessions. While responses to these invitations has been rather limited to date, the Bureau has agreed that this is an important message to the outside world and has requested the secretariat to continue to invite all non-UNECE countries to the annual Executive Body sessions.

20. The term “outreach” has been widely used in recent years and it appears often in the agendas and reports of the Executive Body, its subsidiary bodies and their Bureaux. The Executive Body Bureau recognizes that there is a need to raise the awareness of delegations to the issue of links to other regions to ensure they have an understanding of what is already happening, what is being planned for the future and how individual countries and programmes might contribute further to such work.

21. The Bureau has taken advantage of opportunities to present the Convention's work through nominated “ambassadors” who carry out outreach activities by agreement of the Bureau. Sometimes these are one-off occasions where an expert represents the Convention with the blessing of a bureau or the secretariat. However, the Bureau has made a more long-standing arrangement with Mr. L. Nordberg, former Chief of the Convention's secretariat. In his work for the Swedish government, Mr. Nordberg has had a number of opportunities to inform regions outside UNECE of the activities under the Convention. In 2001, the Bureau welcomed the support offered to the Convention by Mr. Nordberg and noted he might indicate to any audience that he was acting under the auspices of the Bureau of the Executive Body. To maintain his good links with the Convention, Mr. Nordberg has reported to the Bureau and the secretariat has ensured that Mr. Nordberg has been kept updated on the work under the Convention. The Bureau has noted that the issue could be brought before the Executive Body to enable Mr. Nordberg to act under the auspices of that body if it were considered necessary.

22. The Bureau has actively encouraged the secretariat to participate in outreach activities. A member of the secretariat has regularly attended the intergovernmental meetings of EANET and has also attended other intergovernmental meetings, such as that for the Malé Declaration. These meetings have presented good opportunities for describing the Convention's work and there are many instances in which the meetings call upon the Convention to share its experience on certain issues. Such request cover a wide range of issues, from scientific and technical to financial, legal and management matters.

23. For such outreach activities, the secretariat has made use of the Convention's Trust Fund to cover the costs of its travel. This is a particular instance of where participation in activities is dependent upon the available resources.

V. CONCLUSIONS

24. The Bureau believes that the Convention has taken a number of useful steps to encourage the participation of, and collaboration with, other regions. It considers that continuation of such activities is important but this must be balanced against the expected heavy workload over the next few years for Governments and their delegations, Convention bodies and the secretariat. It will be a challenge to develop links further, but opportunities to do this should be exploited if possible whenever they arise.

25. The Executive Body may wish, inter alia, to:

- (a) Take note of the work being done on opening the Convention, as well as the views of the Bureau for continuing these important activities;
- (b) Welcome the activities of the Global Atmospheric Pollution Forum, and request the Bureau and the secretariat to keep it informed of developments and possibilities for cooperation;
- (c) Note the important activities of the Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollution, and urge its lead Parties to continue to encourage participation from other regions;
- (d) Urge Convention bodies, in particular programmes, task forces and expert groups, to collaborate with relevant experts and organizations from outside the region to share the Convention's experiences and useful scientific and technical information;
- (e) Endorse the informal "ambassador" system operated by the Bureau, and invite the Bureau to maintain a list of "Convention Ambassadors" who can present information under the auspices of the Executive Body for the Convention;
- (f) Recognize the important role of the Bureau and the secretariat in the outreach exercise, and note the importance of contributions to the Convention's Trust Fund to supporting the secretariat's travel to meetings outside the region;
- (g) Agree that the secretariat should continue to invite participation from non-UNECE countries at sessions of the Executive Body.
