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**ASSESSMENT OF THE 2002 REVIEW EXERCISE
AND OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. The Executive Body, at its nineteenth session, discussed the procedures for reviewing the strategies and policies of Parties to the Convention for the abatement of air pollution (ECE/EB.AIR/75, paras. 70-79), and agreed on a revised questionnaire on strategies and policies for 2002 (EB.AIR/2001/2). The new questionnaire was based on the previous questionnaire used to solicit replies for the 2000 review, but contained two new sections. Section 7 (questions 50-58) covered obligations under the 1999 Gothenburg Protocol, while section 8 contained new general questions as proposed by a consultant from the Netherlands. The aim of the new general section was to provide greater focus for the replies from Parties and to aid comparisons between Parties' reports.

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2. Furthermore, the Executive Body requested the secretariat to make the questionnaire Internet based for the 2002 review process and to produce a draft report providing a summary of the most important information from Parties, to be submitted to the Executive Body at its twentieth session (ECE/EB.AIR/75, paras. 78-79). The Internet-based system was intended to facilitate the process of replying by Parties, as well as the collating of replies by the secretariat and the preparation of the summary of the 2002 Review.
3. This document is intended to: (i) inform the Executive Body about the 2002 strategies and policies review exercise, including feedback received from Parties on their experience in using the Internet-based system; and (ii) to present possible options to the Executive Body for its next review.

I. THE 2002 STRATEGIES AND POLICIES EXERCISE

4. An Internet-based questionnaire on strategies and policies for air pollution abatement was made available to Parties as of 15 February 2002, with a deadline of 22 April 2002 for replies to be entered into the system. Access to the system was terminated on 31 May 2002; replies received later than this were submitted by electronic mail or on hard copy. In total, 34 Parties replied to the questionnaire. Twenty-one Parties replied by the deadline, using the Internet-based system or a combination of the Internet and electronic mail: Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States. Another four Parties replied within one week after the deadline (Croatia, Estonia, Slovakia and the United Kingdom). Later replies were received from Cyprus, Denmark, France, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Norway, Poland, Portugal and the Russian Federation (Questions 1-8 only). Due to certain technical problems, the system presented difficulties for some users, in particular with storing tables. A detailed breakdown indicating the response rates by Party, by question and by protocol, is available on the Convention's web site.
5. The questionnaire was made available in English, French and Russian. Most Parties replied in English; the exceptions were France, Greece and Monaco, which replied in French, and Armenia and Belarus, which replied in Russian. As decided by the Executive Body at its nineteenth session, all replies are posted on the web site for the Convention both in English and in the languages in which they were received.
6. In July 2002, the secretariat contacted the national experts responsible for completing the questionnaires to invite feedback on the use of the Internet-based system, as well as on the contents of the questionnaire. Aware of the technical difficulties encountered, the secretariat solicited information on specific problems in filling in the questionnaire, as well as general

comments on the questions themselves, in order to improve the policies and strategies exercise in future. Parties were asked to comment on whether the questions were: (a) comprehensible, (b) sufficiently clear, targeted and relevant for gathering national information and (c) easy to answer concisely.

7. Feedback was received from eight Parties (Armenia, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Netherlands, Monaco, Spain and the United States). Comments were both technical and structural, i.e. concerning both the technical problems with using the Internet-based questionnaire and suggestions for restructuring the contents of the questionnaire itself, to avoid duplication and facilitate the compilation of replies.

A. Feedback on technical issues

8. As this was the first time an Internet-based questionnaire was used for the review, it is not surprising that certain technical problems presented themselves in the course of filling in the questionnaire and in collating replies. These included: inaccurate character limitations per question; insufficient size of response window; problems with the <save> button; problems with inputting data and storing data in tables; problems with passwords and difficulties in reading and/or printing replies once entered. Moreover, the expert from the Netherlands suggested linking the Internet-based questionnaire to other reports or web sites to facilitate replies. All of the problems cited by Parties can be solved by 2004.

9. There were also many positive comments about the usefulness of the questionnaire. For example, the expert from Canada remarked that the questionnaire had “worked reasonably well and set the stage for a much smoother reporting next time.” The expert from Denmark said that it was a pleasure to work with the system, once he got used to it, and having previous replies available saved time.

B. Feedback on the structure of the questionnaire

10. The main feedback on the structure of the questionnaire was received from the United States and the Netherlands. The expert from the United States suggested including a list of common strategies for each question where Parties could tick boxes to indicate measures taken, for example: licence/permits, taxes/charges, emission limit values (ELVs)/quotas, technology/best available techniques (BAT), sulphur content/fuel quality, alternative energy, consumption/conservation and emission standards. For questions regarding source categories, moreover, the questionnaire could include a list of the source categories from the technical annexes to the protocols, requesting identification of categories considered major contributors to pollution. Providing a list of measures to choose from at the beginning of each protocol-related section and a

list of source categories for source-related questions would allow Parties to give more interesting details in their texts, and avoid duplication in their replies.

11. The expert from the Netherlands suggested that the questionnaire be restructured in a way that would avoid overlapping replies. For example, some measures on technology exchange or research and development apply to all or most pollutants under the Convention. It may be more efficient to move the generic parts of the protocol-related questions to the general section. This would allow Parties, when answering the protocol-related questions, to concentrate on additional information related to a particular protocol. Generic information, for example, on research and development, could be asked for in the general section, while pollutant-specific information would be asked for in the protocol-specific question. Other generic topics could include: exchange of technology, application of BAT and information-related questions. This may require that part of the general section should no longer be considered as optional. Parties would be encouraged to cross-reference their replies.

12. It was also suggested by the expert from the Netherlands to move the general section to the front of the questionnaire, to further strengthen its role in providing general basic information on the relevant air pollution policies. This will become increasingly important in the future, given the increasing focus on integration of policies. However, the Implementation Committee may discourage this approach, as it has previously suggested that the general section should appear at the end of the questionnaire.

13. In addition, it was noted that some topics under one of the protocol-related questions are covered under subsequent protocols (e.g. sulphur is covered in three protocols). It may therefore be more useful to separate questions that relate to the current situation (e.g. on emission limit values) from those that relate to history, but are still relevant for compliance purposes. For the former, it may be suitable to have a single reply with a table giving a full overview of emission limit values for specific sources; similar questions in other protocols may refer to this reply.

14. Finally, it was noted that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) had adopted a format for reporting on policies and measures that enabled further standardization and comparability of answers. Cooperation between UNFCCC and the Convention on reporting on strategies and policies was recommended in order to compare formats used in the reporting process. Using similar formats would enable easy comparison and harmonization between UNFCCC and Convention reports.

II. OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE STRUCTURE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE REVIEW

15. This chapter is intended to provide the basis for discussion by the Executive Body on the preparation for its 2004 review. At the nineteenth session of the Executive Body, several Parties suggested streamlining the questionnaire in the future, and noted the need to coordinate it with other bodies requiring similar information, such as the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNFCCC and the European Community (EC). One expert suggested including a question, either in the questionnaire or in its covering letter, on the effectiveness of measures taken by Parties. Another expert suggested strengthening the obligations for information on research and monitoring for the Protocols on Nitrogen Oxides and VOCs (ECE/EB.AIR/75, para. 77).

16. Prior to the nineteenth session of the Executive Body, the Implementation Committee had also considered the draft questionnaire, noting with concern the increased volume of the general section that might place an additional burden on Parties and the secretariat. There was concern that this might affect the quality and timeliness of reporting to the protocol-related mandatory sections of the questionnaire, which were of most interest to the Implementation Committee (EB.AIR/2001/3, paras. 42-44). Previous reports of the Implementation Committee also reflect its wish to maintain a protocol-related focus in the questionnaire, as well as the need for concise and precise information on the implementation of obligations under protocols. At the tenth meeting of the Implementation Committee, it was pointed out that the absence of objective criteria to determine a suitable response to each question rendered its task of assessing whether Parties had complied fully with their reporting obligations under the Convention and its protocols difficult.

A. Separating the functions of the questionnaire into protocol-related obligations and general policy questions

17. One function of a protocol-related questionnaire is to enable countries to meet their reporting obligations under the protocols to which they are party. Moreover, as noted above, responses should assist the Implementation Committee in its assessment of whether Parties have fulfilled their obligations under the respective protocols. The general policy section provides general and more detailed information on the national strategies and policies of Parties that can be disseminated in an interesting and user-friendly manner. These two functions, meeting and assessing reporting obligations and general information on strategies and policies, could be separated.

18. Moreover, the Executive Body may wish to decide if the two parts of the questionnaire should continue to be filled in the same year, or whether it would be preferable to stagger the

questionnaire. For example, the protocol-related part of the review could continue on a biennial basis, with the next questionnaire in 2004; the general part could be reviewed every three or four years, with the next questionnaire in 2005 or 2006.

19. Staggering the review exercise could ease the reporting burden on Parties. In addition, regarding the presentation of results, the protocol-related questionnaire could be presented as a report for the Implementation Committee; results from the general questionnaire could be summarized in a strategy and policy review. While the protocol-related questions provide essential information for the Implementation Committee to carry out its work on a continuous basis, air pollution policy does not shift radically from year to year and might be adequately reflected on a four-year basis. The Executive Body may wish to consider the alternative timing for the completion of the two parts of the questionnaire.

B. Modifying the questionnaire to obtain more detailed and relevant information

20. Based on the feedback provided by the United States and the Netherlands, among others, the Executive Body may wish to consider adding a list of policy measures at the beginning of each question that Parties can tick where appropriate. As noted above, this would simplify and avoid duplication of replies, and allow Parties to provide more detailed information on measures taken.

C. Structure and focus of the 2004 review and suggestions for the future

21. The structure and content of the 2004 review may partly depend on whether the Executive Body decides to separate the two functions of the questionnaire. If separated, the 2004 review could be a report for the Implementation Committee focused on protocol-related obligations. In 2006, the review could encompass information on general policies and strategies. Such a review could also be a means for communicating the work and successes of the Convention, in line with the forthcoming preparations for the Workshop on Enhanced Communications for the Convention. Moreover, the Executive Body may wish to focus the review on a specific theme, for example, the latest protocol(s) to enter into force, or the protocol to be examined by the Implementation Committee at that time.

22. It could be envisaged, moreover, that the review process should gradually move toward a fully Internet-based exercise, with increasingly less need for hard-copy output, i.e. a hard-copy publication of the summary of replies. By refining the Internet-based system, the database of replies by Parties could be made immediately available on the Internet, allowing Parties to view their replies as well as those of other Parties. Moreover, the questionnaire could remain accessible for amendment on the Internet all year round, enabling Parties to update their information about policies and strategies at any time but with a deadline set for the review by the Implementation Committee and/or the secretariat.

23. In summary, the Executive Body may wish to decide:

(a) To separate the review process (and thus the questionnaire) into two parts: a protocol-related part and a general policy part;

(b) To stagger reporting in the coming years, e.g. reviewing the protocol-related part in 2004 and 2006 and the general policy part in 2006; or to allow for reporting on a continuous basis, with the Internet-based questionnaire accessible for year- round input and updating.

(c) How to make available the results of reviews in the future, for example: the responses received to the questionnaire made accessible via the Internet; a summary of the protocol-related part in a report to the Implementation Committee; a review or executive summary to be produced, as in the past, reflecting the results of the general policy part, or a combination of these;

(d) To incorporate the suggestions from the United States to restructure the questionnaire, including a list of common strategies to “tick off”;

(e) To accept the comments from the Netherlands, and others, to avoid overlapping questions (and replies) by moving the common topics like research and development, public participation and exchange of technology to a mandatory general section.