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Economic Commission for Europe**Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range
Transboundary Air Pollution****Working Group on Strategies and Review**

Geneva, 4–6 September 2023

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Progress in the implementation of the 2022–2023 workplan**Report of the Task Force for International Cooperation on
Air Pollution***Summary*

At its forty first session in December 2021, The Executive Body adopted decision 2021/5 on the mandate of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Air Pollution and welcomed the willingness of Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to lead the work of the Forum.

The present report describes the activities during the first two years of the Task Force and presents progress in the implementation of the 2022-2023 workplan for the implementation of the Convention, including the results of the first meeting of the Task Force (Bristol, October 2022) and the first Forum meeting (Gothenburg, March 2023).

I. Introduction

The Forum for International Cooperation on Air Pollution (FICAP) and supporting Task Force for International Cooperation on Air Pollution (TFICAP), were established by the 41st Executive Body meeting of the UNECE Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) under the lead of United Kingdom and Sweden.

The Forum will promote international collaboration towards preventing and reducing air pollution to improve air quality globally. It will facilitate international exchange of information and mutual learning on both the scientific/technical and policy levels. It is intended to act as a repository of technical information and a convener of countries and organizations, with the goal of increasing international cooperation on addressing air pollution.

The Task Force will act as a steering group for the wider Forum, comprised of a select group of Air Quality experts to assist the co-chairs in setting the direction for the Forum and encouraging participation from a diverse range of countries and organisations.

II. First meeting of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Air Pollution (TFICAP)

The 1st meeting of the Task Force was held in Bristol, UK between 11-12 Oct 2022. The meeting brought together international delegates across governments, IGOs, NGOs, and the Air Convention, to participate in open discussions to shape the focus and direction of the Forum as it progresses. The meeting was conducted in a hybrid format with both in-person and online participation. Breakout rooms were used to facilitate collaborative discussion across the two days.

Attendance

Over 80 Air Quality experts, officials and representatives across multiple regions of the world attended the inaugural meeting of TFICAP. The session was formally opened by Trudy Harrison MP, Minister of the Environment, United Kingdom Government.

A number of delegates joined the meeting remotely, including those from: Slovenia, Netherlands, Norway, Estonia, Hungary, Serbia, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Georgia, South Korea, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Argentina, Colombia, Panama, Thailand, Kenya, Canada, United States of America, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

There was in-person attendance from: Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Maldives, Argentina, Germany, Austria, Norway, Kenya, United States of America, Switzerland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

The meeting was attended by a broad range of representatives across national governments, Inter-governmental Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, charities, universities, and Air Convention Taskforces and ICPs.

Summary of the main discussion points

Session 1: Capacity Building and Outreach

One of the primary areas of focus for the meeting was on existing capacity building and outreach activities to encourage regional cooperation on improving air quality. Taskforce members shared best practice and regional considerations for the Forum to consider in its own approach. The Task Force discussed how existing multilateral and national programmes have helped countries and regions to build up air quality management competences and what is missing from existing/ previous international forums.

Members from National Governments and International Organisations contributed their views on the essential building blocks for improving global cooperation on air pollution. Perspectives were shared from the following parties:

- **Dr Bill Parish (UK Government)** shared insight on UK policymaking and areas of UK-led innovation in relation to transboundary air pollution.
- **Professor Young Sunwoo (Dept. of Environmental Engineering, Konkuk University / IUAPPA, South Korea)** spoke on recently implemented policies and existing regional cooperation programmes.

- **Sangmin Nam (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Thailand)** shared learning from capacity building in the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Soraya Smaoun (United Nations Environment Programme, Kenya)** spoke on UNEP's regional cooperation on a political and technical level across central Asia, Africa and Latin America
- **Norberto Vidal (Focal Point to the Intergovernmental Network on Atmospheric Pollution of Latin America and the Caribbean, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Argentina)** provided insight into the Air Pollution LAC Network including current capacity building and information exchange activities.
- **Paul Almodovar and Carrie Wheeler (US EPA)** shared their existing outreach efforts including the US EPA megacities partnership and AQM capacity building in central Asia.

Representatives from the following taskforces and ICPs under the Air Convention presented on the 'building blocks' for their regional work on air pollution:

- **Tiziano Pignatelli (Task Force on Techno-Economic Issues)** explored the synergies between TFTEI and TFICAP with the aim of sharing the historic technical and scientific expertise of the Air Convention with a wider global audience.
- **Tim Butler (Task Force on Hemispheric Transport of Air Pollutants)** detailed the taskforce's current international outreach activities, and global international network of experts.
- **Stefan Åström (Task Force on Integrated Assessment Modelling)** – provided an overview of integrated assessment modelling, regional cooperation activities including GAINS exchanges, and cooperation with TFICAP on model and data development.
- **Chris Dore (Task Force on Emissions Inventories and Projections)** – outlined existing resources available to TFEIP, current capacity building activities such as workshops across Central Asia, and barriers to delivering long-term benefits.
- **Felicity Hayes (ICP Vegetation)** – shared details of the outreach activities conducted by ICP Vegetation such as online courses and webinars, ozone impact handbooks and app activity. Felicity also explored options to strengthen collaboration internationally and opportunities for engaging scientists and policymakers.

During breakout sessions, participants were presented with 3 prompts for discussion relating to capacity-building and outreach related activity for FICAP to consider. The summary of these discussions is outlined below:

1. *What is the rationale for Governments and International organisations to engage in cooperation on air pollution?*
 - a) It is important to recognise the transboundary impact of air pollution (which is stronger in some regions than others and affects countries in different ways).
 - b) Engaging in cooperation on air pollution provides smaller countries and communities with a voice to find solutions with neighbours or regionally.
 - c) Cooperation facilitates sharing of technical expertise and aids general growth, ensuring that resources are shared equitably across parties and encouraging more diverse input.
2. *How can the Air Convention and other Forums best coordinate and share information to help all Countries make progress to improve air quality?*
 - a) It was acknowledged that there is a need for IGOs/Conventions and major Countries to work together to ensure coordinated and complementary action is taken.
 - b) Delegates noted the importance of understanding what expertise and knowledge exists across different institutions that can underpin technical and scientific cooperation across regions
 - c) It was recommended that a useful first step could be to bring together organisations, information and translations of key texts to build a more coordinated approach.
3. *What areas of 'best practice' can we identify from different programs of capacity building in different regions?*

- a) It can be recognised that different regions have different issues faced by tackling air pollution. However, there are commonalities that can be found in approaches and technical requirements to understand and treat issues.
- b) Capacity building and outreach requires input from receiver and proponent. The key to a sustainable approach is to ensure on the ground support and sufficient capacity.
- c) On the ground and virtual capacity building is possible. Sustained relationships on both sides are important for delivering desired outputs.

Session 2: Topics of interest for the Forum to pursue

The second area of focus for the meeting was to establish the most relevant topics of interest for the forum to pursue. Taskforce members discussed topics of information, tools, guidance, and techniques relevant to all regions to tackle air pollution as the ‘building blocks’ for air quality improvements.

Participants also shared views on content for discussion in the wider Forum and supporting webpages and how the Forum should operate in the multilateral environment. Looking ahead to the forum event in 2023 in Sweden, delegates also considered how best to take forward international collaboration and inter-regional cooperation on air pollution.

- **Sarah Barnekow (Swedish Environmental Protection Agency)** led a demonstration of the preliminary FICAP webpage, currently hosted within the Swedish EPA website. Delegates were introduced to the ‘foundations’ of the website, which will act as a hub for policy, scientific and technical resources.

During breakout room sessions, participants were presented with 3 prompts for discussion relating to potential topics of interest for FICAP to consider, and information-sharing via the FICAP website. The summary of these discussions is outlined below:

1. *Can we identify any common subjects or themes of interest in most parts of the world? And what differences in needs and interests can we see between regions?*
 - a) Mapping ‘pathways to action’ to understand the building blocks needed to improve air quality from technical insight to policy action.
 - b) A range of measures that could be implemented at different levels of resource (eg. low-cost) and on different scales such as national and sub-national measures.
 - c) Horizon-scanning activity could be helpful in assessing differing needs/interests across regions.
2. *What information is most useful for the FICAP website to hold?*
 - a) A basic repository of information that is simple to navigate and which can be developed as the forum progresses.
 - b) Information from a diverse range of sources both within the Convention and externally, targeted at different regional needs to ensure inclusivity.
 - c) Topics which are universally relevant and from credible sources, to encourage information sharing.
 - d) Information on sources of existing funding, and signposting to donor websites.
3. *What themes should be discussed in the first Forum meeting? (taking place in Gothenburg in March 2023)*
 - a) Building blocks for achieving action/ implementation.
 - b) Horizon scanning to understand key priorities and needs across different regions, as well as mapping of existing programs to ensure we are collaborating most effectively rather than duplicating work.
 - c) Financing opportunities, including requirements for funding and how countries can be matched with donors.

Summary of outcomes

- The Taskforce meeting acted as a convener of key air quality experts, officials and representatives across a diverse range of countries, organisations and taskforces. The hybrid nature of the meeting ensured varied geographic representation and provided delegates with the opportunity to communicate with a wide scope of parties.

- Multiple regional and organisational perspectives were shared which provided key insight into the wide scope of existing capacity building and outreach initiatives currently being undertaken. This will assist the Taskforce in its scoping of key areas for collaboration and support.
- The taskforce engaged in open discussion on topics of interest for the forum to pursue, identifying pathways to policy action and building blocks for implementation as a key area to pursue.
- The taskforce was introduced to the preliminary FICAP website and discussed what information would be most useful for the website to hold.
- The taskforce engaged in conversation around the first Forum meeting in March 2023, providing suggestions for possible agenda items.

III. First meeting of the Forum for International Cooperation on Air Pollution

The inaugural Forum for International Cooperation on Air Pollution (FICAP) was held in Gothenburg, Sweden on 16th March 2023 and brought together 178 air quality experts from across the globe to collaborate on the reduction of air pollution through common policy solutions.

The meeting was comprised of two panel-led sessions, with hybrid audience participation both online and in person. FICAP followed on from the 7th annual Saltsjöbaden International Science-Policy Workshop, part of the official meeting programme of the Swedish EU Presidency.

The Forum was formally opened by the United Kingdom Minister for Environmental Quality and Resilience, Rebecca Pow. In her opening speech, Minister Pow urged a multi-sectoral, multi-generational approach reaching across national borders, in order to fully address the global impact of pollution.

Summary of the main discussion points

Session 1: Pathways to air pollution action in a regional context

Panellists:

- **Peringe Grennfelt**, *Swedish Environmental Research Institute (IVL)*
- **Laurence Rouil**, *Chair of the Steering Body of the European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (EMEP)*
- **Isaura Rabago**, *Chair of the Working Group on Effects (WGE)*
- **Sangmin Nam**, *Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)*
- **Beatriz Cárdenas**, *World Resource Institute (WRI), Latin America*
- **George Mwaniki**, *World Resource Institute (WRI), Africa*
- **Markus Amann**, *Consultant for the World Bank, formerly at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, (IIASA)*

This session mapped the key steps and building blocks for establishing regional cooperation on air pollution, shared lessons learned and discussed what kind of cooperation may be most useful in different regions

The first three panellists used the UNECE air convention as an example and pointed to the importance of transparency and close cooperation between scientists and policymakers as key success factors for the formation and development of the air convention in the UNECE region. Science is used to alert policymakers of the situation, supports implementation of measures, and monitors the success of measures. However, science is not part of the policy decision making process. Bridging concepts like "critical loads" and "integrated assessment modelling" have been important tools for the effect-based approach of the air convention. To have the science network within the convention was deemed particularly important.

The panel also discussed similarities and differences with initiatives in other regions and focused on the key subjects for regions to cooperate on.

For Asia - Pacific region (UNESCAP) a more decentralised approach has been taken, than in the UNECE region, under the 2022 Regional Air Pollution Action Plan. The need to act now is strongly felt. The science-policy linkage was noted as very important and cooperation to strengthen this link is required.

In Latin America health effects in cities and megacities is in focus and what solutions could come from collective engagement. Shortening the path from the initial science evidence to policy action is a priority, in addition to building a strong cohesive narrative to influence non-experts, the public and decision makers.

For the Africa region, cooperation on using research not only as a dataset but also as a means for capacity building was highlighted. Along with ways of encouraging African nations to continue progress at a reasonable pace using trade and supply chains in particular to phase out high polluting practises. Also, the possibilities to ‘leapfrog’ transitional arrangements of other regions and using newer technological developments for finding solutions was highlighted as a benefit.

Panellists also shared recent practical experiences of air pollution management and possibilities for the work of the Forum. For most countries and communities, self-interest to treat local issues is often paramount. However, harnessing collective energy has the economies of scale to help all communities to achieve better air quality. Long-range aspects of air pollution should be better communicated to help encourage higher ambition and use of multilateral governance to achieve win-win outcomes.

It was highlighted that using experience of UNECE region and the domestic legislative and governance architecture of air quality management of certain countries can be useful for other regions to investigate and utilise already existing methods for their own development. – This was highlighted as something the Forum could facilitate between the UNECE region and other regions. Particular attention could be given to the levels of government involved in decision-making on air pollution management and how local, regional, long-range and international pollution can be managed effectively.

Side event: Emissions Inventories and Air Quality Management Report

Presenters:

- **Chris Dore**, *Task Force on Emission Inventories and Projections (TFEIP)*
- **Carolin Sanz Noriega**, *UNECE Air Convention Secretariat*
- **Tom Grylls**, *Clean Air Fund (CAF)*
- **Soraya Smaoun**, *United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)*

The Forum heard from the UNECE secretariat and TFEIP on the newly launched UNECE Inventory E-Learning Course and the role of emission inventories in supporting international cooperation on air pollution. The e-learning course can be completed here: <https://unccelearn.org/course/view.php?id=166&page=overview>.

CAF and UNEP presented the key findings from their joint ‘Strengthening Air Quality Guidance Management’ report, which can be viewed here: <https://www.cleanairfund.org/resource/strengthening-air-quality-management-guidance/>

UNEP and CAF are eager to collaborate on implementing the recommendations from this report, which include enhancing coordination and online curation of guidance materials. They warmly invite interested parties to actively engage and reach out for collective action.

Session 2: ‘No regret’ actions for improving air quality

Panellists:

- **Valerie Hickey**, *Director, World Bank*
- **Pam Pearson**, *International Cryosphere Climate Initiative (ICCI)*
- **Zbigniew Klimont**, *Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)*
- **Aleksander Macura**, *RES foundation*
- **Bill Parish**, *Deputy Director, UK Government*
- **Alice Kaudia**, *Climate and Clean Air Coalition, Africa*
- **Noe Megrelishvili**, *Vice chair of the Executive Body to the Air Convention, Georgia*

Panellists were tasked with the hypothetical question: ‘from a developing country perspective, what would you push a fictitious decision maker to do to solve air pollution issues?’ Firstly, the panel spoke from the IG/NGO perspective, where the World Bank, ICCL, and IIASA discussed the measures which should be prioritised and financed worldwide. With regards to funding, it was agreed that any measures need to be sustainable for countries to manage in the long term and not isolated to individual projects

Key priorities discussed included agricultural waste-burning mitigation, the second-hand car market in developing countries, the power sector and trade-offs when moving away from fossil fuels, cleaner domestic cooking fuels, nitrogen challenges, and improvements in waste management.

Panellists also referenced the Climate and Clean Air Conference in May 2023 (Bangkok) which will include the launch of the “Clean Air and Climate Solutions for ASEAN” study promoting a bundle of 15 'priority measures' across sectors which could be described as no-regret and are also applicable to regions beyond ASEAN. Details on the conference can be found here: <https://www.unep.org/events/conference/climate-and-clean-air-conference-2023>

Secondly, the panel spoke from a regional perspective to assess what is achievable at a local level, and the relative associated trade-offs. Perspectives were shared from Serbia (West Balkans), the UK (Western Europe), Kenya (Sub Saharan Africa), and Georgia (The Caucasus).

Across the West Balkans, the issue of residential burning was highlighted, and the panel suggested possible measures such as prohibiting residential use of certain heaters and stoves. In this instance, the need for effective public communication and join-up with an international partner were noted. From the Western Europe perspective, panellists spoke of the similar importance of moving towards behaviour changes for the next level of measures. E.g. tackling food waste, livestock farming intensity, dietary changes, agricultural land management and green energy implementation. Also noted was the challenge of making climate change, sustainable development, and air pollution aims work together, and better understanding the co-benefits and trade-offs.

From the African perspective, the CCAC Africa Integrated Assessment was referenced, which identified certain ways to ‘leapfrog’ development trajectories in relation to air pollution. However, it was noted that solutions are needed quickly to keep up with current levels of urbanisation. It was noted that the experiences of other developing countries are useful to help reduce the acceleration of air pollution related issues.

Across the Caucasus region, the significance of the Batumi Action for Cleaner Air (BACA), an instrument where government could make voluntary commitments was highlighted. It was recognised to have provided a positive pressure to act also through public/NGO/active citizen participation. It was recommended that action should be strengthened through improvements in data and monitoring to show progress to date and compare this with alternative no-action scenario modelling.

Conclusions and next steps

Discussions at the Forum showed a clear wish and ambition from different regions to increase cooperation on air pollution management. This is reflected in the recent actions many regions are taking to increase cooperation on air pollution. However more can be done to make sure regions do not need to reinvent processes and knowledge can be pooled to help all regions make further progress.

Communication was highlighted as an area that needs to be stepped up so that the long-range aspects of air pollution, both within a country and across regions are understood and that Governance is organised at the right levels to effectively tackle locally generated air pollution and cooperate wider on its impacts and effects.

Forum participants evidences the plethora of forthcoming actions and publications which will form a blueprint of the measures which hold co-benefits with climate change mitigation, can be financed potentially through development organisations, and are widely deployable across regions. Technology and technical skills out there for countries to share and a platform for mutual learning is desirable for all regions to utilise and benefit from.

In addition, the meeting showed that a multitude of actors, organisations, and communities have identified air pollution as a key priority area. Many organisations are supporting initiatives and are taking global responsibility in different areas. There is a high degree of energy between Countries, communities and organisations to facilitate action on air pollution. Recognising the role effective air quality management to improve human health, mitigate climate change, and reduce and reverse biodiversity loss.

As the Forum sits under the UNECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (Air Convention), the Forum is well placed to support and contribute to ongoing efforts, bringing the knowledge, experience, and technical assistance of the 44 years’ experience of the Convention to the wider global community through these existing initiatives rather than duplicate them. As well as through bespoke work with countries and regions if requested.

Drawing on the conclusions from the Forum, co-chairs have agreed a program of next steps to include:

- In cooperation with the UNECE Air Convention secretariat and Convention Task Force chairs, list topics where the Air convention has experiences to share through the Forum as well as list relevant experts for the different areas. This can be a basis for conducting targeted regional webinars where there is mutual interest.

- Organise with development agency partners, link ups from regions and countries interested in utilising the UNECE Air Convention experience to help set up local arrangements and understand domestic air pollution management by Parties within the UNECE region for national or sub-national use.
- Continue to develop the Forum’s web presence and understand what information and data would be useful to collate and communicate to a wide set of countries
- Plan for the 2nd Task Force meeting under the Air Convention (steering group of the Forum) to take place in autumn 2023.
- Work with other regional organisations to understand the needs and interests of regions and what further collaboration and cooperation could be achieved

IV. Follow up on elements of the TFICAP work plan ambition for 2022-2023

A preliminary action plan for the Task Force was presented at the 41st session of the Executive Body in an informal document for agenda item nr 7, with detailed activities proposed for delivery during its first year followed up below.

Indicative timing	Workplan Activity	Task Force Progress
Early 2022	1.1 Outreach and engagement with potential Task Force participants to establish a broad base of active participants both within and outside the convention.	During early 2022, TFICAP conducted an outreach tour across Taskforces, ICPs, scientific bodies, IGOs and country focal points to raise awareness of the new taskforce to establish a diverse group of taskforce members to participate in the 1 st taskforce meeting.
Mar – Sept 2022	1.2 Establish independent web-presence and website. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of participants of the Task Force - Informal ways of working document. - Details of all Task Force meetings including all papers and minutes. - Information regarding the first meeting of the Forum and participants - Toolkits as and when developed (see workplan item 1.5). - Links to any other profile-raising awareness activities (social media etc). 	FICAP has a preliminary web-presence, located within the Swedish EPA website, here . The site contains key background on the Forum, details of Forum news and events, and a section for informative toolkits, which will be developed as the Forum progresses. Other areas of the website will be added and expanded according to feedback on regional needs following discussion with the Taskforce. The co-chairs are exploring avenues to host the site independently which will be sustainable in the long-term.
10-11 October 2022	1.3 Hold first meeting of the Task Force. The first meeting of the Task Force will:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree ways of working document. - Agree broad structure for the Task Force website. - Hear from participants on current outreach activities and what participants would like from the first event/proposals for the first event. - Discuss content for the website and toolkits. - Discuss the agenda for the first annual event of the Forum. - Discuss the usage of BACA in the Forum context. 	The 1 st meeting of the Task Force was held between 11-12 October 2022 in Bristol, UK. The taskforce engaged in discussions on current outreach activities, topics of interest for the forum to pursue, suggestions for the FICAP website including content, and agenda items to be considered for the 1 st forum meeting to be held in March 2023.
16 March 2023	1.4 Hold a Forum event (FICAP), supported by the Task Force, open to any country, International organization, experts, or other interested parties inside or outside the convention to join.	The 1 st Forum event was held in Gothenburg, Sweden on 16 March 2023. Co-chairs worked closely to use insight from the 1 st taskforce meeting to inform the agenda, format and cast list for the forum meeting.

	<p>- The location and format of the event will be determined by the co-chairs taking into account the views of the Task Force and will be chaired by the co-chairs.</p> <p>- The co-chairs will decide on the topics to be considered at the event based on advice from the Task Force. A non-exhaustive list of potential topics for the first annual event is in annex B below.</p>	<p>The meeting followed on directly from Saltsjöbaden VII. FICAP co-chairs worked together with the organisers to ensure that the Saltsjöbaden working group on International Collaboration complemented the agenda of the Forum meeting.</p>
2023	<p>1.5 Develop toolkits for the Forum website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy - Scientific and technical - Funding <p>The Task Force will develop three toolkits:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A scientific and technical toolkit – a webpage with links to advice and guidance. 2. A policy makers toolkit – A page of links to advice and guidance aimed at policy makers. 3. Funding opportunities – A page of links to global funding opportunities on air quality issues. 	<p>Toolkits will be shaped based on insights from the 1st Forum meeting, according to regional needs and demand for specific information.</p>
Continuous	<p>1.6 Develop a list of events at which The Forum will be represented.</p> <p>The Forum co-chairs/ participants will present/discuss the forum and its work at a range of international meetings to increase the profile of the Forum.</p>	<p>The list of upcoming forum events can be found on the FICAP website and the UNECE website.</p> <p>Co-chairs are in ongoing discussions with relevant parties in the lead up to the Forum meeting to promote the work of the Forum, develop links to existing Air Quality activity and establish new key partnerships.</p>