



Brussels, 30 January 2025
(OR. en)

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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP)
Forty-fourth session of the Executive Body (EB 44)
(Geneva, 9–12 December 2024)
- Statements by the EU and its Member States

Delegations will find in the Annex, for information purposes, a compilation of agreed statements as delivered at the abovementioned meeting on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP)

Forty-fourth session of the Executive Body (EB 44)

(Geneva, 9-12 December 2024)

- Statements by the EU and its Member States -

Agenda item 4. Review of the implementation of the 2024–2025 workplan

(a) Science

The European Union (EU) and its Member States (MS) take note of the report of the 10th joint session of the EMEP Steering Body and the Working Group on Effects, welcome the progress made therein and appreciate the work done.

The EU and its MS support the Executive Body (EB) in its decision to adopt the amendment proposed by the Task Force on Emission Inventories and Projections (TFEIP) to the Guidelines for Reporting Emissions and Projections Data under the Convention and the associated template to include the estimated future impacts of previously approved adjustments in projection submissions/reporting, in addition to the regular submission of projections based on best science estimates, for information purposes and on a voluntary basis. However, as emission projections are not used for compliance purposes, the Annex IV Projections reporting template should only be revised in its footnote (c), and care should be taken for not including formulas in the compliance total cells, that could give the message that previously approved adjustments would also be granted for future years.

We propose to make a small amendment to the new inserted text proposed in the draft decision, so as to make sure that the inclusion of previously approved adjustments into the projections would only relate to the most recent applicable emission reduction commitments for the party concerned:

“Emission projections are not used for compliance purposes, however, the estimated future impacts of previously approved adjustments related to the latest applicable emission reduction commitments may be included in the projections submission for information purposes and solely in addition to the regular submission of projections based on best science estimates, as indicated in the annex IV projections reporting template.”

We also note that TFEIP proposed to insert the new text after the fourth sentence and not after the third sentence in paragraph 27, as incorrectly stated in the draft decision. As the adjustment to the projections would be for information purposes only and should not affect the relevance of reporting the ‘with additional measures’ projections, we propose to add the following clarification in paragraph 27 after TFEIP’s proposed new sentence.

“If the inclusion of estimated future effects of previously approved adjustments in reported projections would demonstrate compliance with emission reduction commitments while the unadjusted projections would not, ‘with additional measures’ projections should still be provided”.

Furthermore, the EU and its MS support the EMEP’s recommendation to request a test study conducted by the Centre on Emission Inventories and Projections (CEIP). This study will investigate the practicalities of utilizing UNFCCC methane emissions data for the purposes of the Air Convention, and the additional work needed to achieve full consistency between the two methodologies and reporting.

In addition, we urge the EB to adopt a decision to include an item in the 2026-2027 workplan for International Cooperative Programmes (ICPs) focused on analysing available biodiversity data, synthesising findings, and developing receptor maps. This initiative will play a crucial role in understanding the interconnections between air quality and biodiversity, and feed into the ongoing Gothenburg Protocol (GP) revision.

The EU and its MS encourage the EB to actively urge task forces and centres to explore collaborative opportunities with other international fora, such as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Arctic Council, and the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC). Strengthening these collaborations is essential for improving the integration of emission reporting and addressing the global challenges posed by air pollution and climate change.

(b) Policy

The EU and its MS thank the Working Group on Strategies and Review (WGSR) for its report of the sixty-second session and take note of the progress in the implementation of section II of the workplan (policy).

We suggest postponing the discussion on possible changes in the future reporting on strategies and policies in line with the Convention and its protocols until the revision of the GP is concluded or moving the discussion to an expert group to report on it at the next WGSR.

Analysis of policy-relevant information and follow-up to the review of the Gothenburg Protocol, as amended

We note that the Task Force on Reactive Nitrogen (TFRN) seeks further guidance from the WGSR on workplan item 2.1.3 ‘on providing support for a possible update of Annex IX’ and on workplan item 2.2.8 on ‘further work on co-mitigation of CH₄ and NH₃ emissions from agricultural sources’, and that the implementation of both items is subject to available resources. We believe it is crucial that this work is carried out in due time so as to fit into the overall Gothenburg Protocol revision process. We are open for further discussions on this topic. We welcome the TF’s intention to finalise a draft revised Guidance Document in early 2025, which should be in time to consider this revised guidance document in conjunction with a possible revision of Annex IX.

The EU and its MS thank the Task Force on Integrated Assessment Modelling (TFIAM) and its Center for developing the draft policy brief on potential targets to reduce risks to health and ecosystems. The document provides detailed results on least-cost optimisation for 2040 as the target year, along with an initial analysis of options for reducing biodiversity risks and the inclusion of sectoral and staged/phased approaches. At this stage, our statement outlines the following preliminary views and preferences for further modelling work:

- On the base year: For modelling and scenarios we prefer a base year as recent as possible for which reliable data are available (i.e., 2015 on the understanding that TFIAM sees this as the most appropriate year).
- On the target year: we prefer 2040 as the target year and projections in five-year steps up to 2050.

- We (strongly) prefer to set a target for the whole ECE region accompanied by sub-regional analysis, rather than targets per country. We welcome work on optimised scenarios for combined PM_{2.5}, biodiversity and ozone effects.
- We have no objection to using both premature deaths and years of life lost per 100,000 inhabitants.
- At this stage we are open to getting more information on how the dynamic population is modelled in IIASA, and what the advantages and disadvantages of using dynamic versus static population are.
- We have no objection to using the accumulated average exceedance indicator based on the minimum or mean empirical critical loads in optimisation for ecosystem protection.
- In case of establishing overarching health and biodiversity targets in the future text of the Gothenburg Protocol, we support the majority view presented in the Leuven meeting that the overarching health target for the UNECE region should be set at convention level and not be binding at the level of each individual country.
- Extending the modelling exercise for various ambition levels from 50% up to 60% or 70% for static population or to equivalent ambition levels for dynamic population would facilitate a more informed decision.
- We think that methane contribution to transboundary ozone is significant enough to continue the discussion on it. However, as more information is needed on the practical implications of the policy options for methane, we are not yet in a position to make a statement on this matter. We can support the creation of an ad-hoc group on this topic but with well-defined objectives.
- The EU and its MS would still like to further explore the different options discussed at the informal meeting in Leuven, before stating a final EU position on the technical annexes.

Development and promotion of guidance documents

We are pleased to hear that the TFTEI is committed to revising the Guidance Document on Stationary Sources and the Guidance Document on Mobile Sources according to the timetable as agreed in the 2024-2025 Convention workplan (item 2.2.2). We consider a timely revision of both guidance documents necessary to be able to respect the agreed timetable for a potential revision of the Gothenburg Protocol, as the updated content of these guidance documents is linked to potential updates of the Technical Annexes.

We thank the TFRN for its report on progress in implementing its activities under the 2024-2025 Convention workplan, and in particular on the revision of the ammonia guidance document. This will be very relevant to supporting progress in reducing ammonia emissions and in considering potential optimisations under the Gothenburg Protocol revision. We look forward to continuing these discussions in 2025 including at a Brussels workshop on 23-25 June 2025.

We thank the TFIAM for its annotated outline of the planned Guidance Document on Non-technical and Structural Measures and note that this outline has been further developed to a first draft in the meantime. We look forward to a timely delivery of the final draft of the guidance document and its further discussion as part of the Gothenburg Protocol revision process.

(c) Compliance

The EU and its MS thank the Implementation Committee for its twenty-seventh report and take note of the progress in the implementation of section III of the workplan (compliance). We continue to emphasise the importance of the fulfilment of all obligations to the Convention by all Parties and we remain committed to reducing our emissions and to report emission data and projections in a correct and timely manner.

(d) Capacity-building to promote ratification and implementation

The EU and its MS take note of the provided information and thank the secretariat for the report and updates. We reiterate our continued strong support for these capacity-building efforts as a way to achieve tangible results, in terms of real progress towards ratification and implementation of the Convention and its Protocols, especially if they also include interactive sessions and in-person training where possible.

From our side, apart from supporting via dedicated projects capacity building from the secretariat, the EU will also fund one to two (TAIEX) strategic workshops during 2025, in order to promote capacity building for non-Parties.

(e) Communication, awareness-raising, outreach and cooperation

The EU and its MS thank the secretariat for its substantial work on communication and outreach activities and take note of the information provided.

The EU and its MS endorse the secretariat's communication and outreach efforts to uphold the Convention's visibility both within and beyond the ECE region. They support fostering collaboration among regional agreements worldwide and sharing the Convention's experiences to help advance a global response to air pollution. This is more relevant than ever in the context of responding to the UNEA-6 Resolution On Promoting Regional Cooperation On Air Pollution To Improve Air Quality Globally.

Agenda item 5. Revision of the Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone, as amended in 2012

The EU and its MS thank the WGSR for preparing the draft plan, and we appreciate that it provides an overview of ongoing and necessary activities, along with a tentative timeline for the revision process. The EU and its MS express their support for the current draft plan for the revision of the GP.

We support the removal of the square brackets from point 2.1.12 of table 1. (*Overview of ongoing and required activities*). We consider the policy brief by TFIAM a good starting point for defining the emission reduction commitments.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the Task Forces, ICPs, and centres for their preparatory work on revising the GP, and we encourage them to continue their efforts related to this process.

The EU and its MS observed that the shortages of resources needed to implement all relevant tasks in Table 1 of the plan for the revision of the GP, as amended in 2012, remain unresolved. We remind task forces and centres to prioritise work which supports the revision process.

We welcome the outcomes from the useful and successful informal meeting in Leuven, Belgium, in October. However, the EU and its MS continue to encourage the EB to schedule two sessions per year for the WGSR until 2026 as we believe this formal discussion time is also crucial for the success of the revision process.

We believe that current non-Parties would in particular benefit from continuing with the technical annexes, whether binding or non-binding. We consider it important that these annexes are thoroughly revised and restructured, potentially by sector and focused on the largest reduction potentials, thus retaining the high ambition level of the Protocol. We would welcome further information on the preferences of current non-Parties on the future role and scope of the technical annexes and are ready to discuss this issue further at this EB session. With that said, we propose that the Task Force on Techno-Economic Issues (TFTEI) should give priority to current non-Parties in its 2025 preparatory work on the revision of the technical annexes. The EU and its MS are ready to actively support TFTEI in this work.

The EU and its MS express their appreciation to the Bureau of the Working Group on Strategies and Review for preparing a paper on new approaches to facilitate the ratification and implementation of a future revised GP by current non-Parties. We acknowledge that the five approaches outlined in the paper, or combinations of them, could all contribute to some degree to overcoming the protocol-related barriers faced by current non-Parties, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. At this stage, we remain open to further discussion on all these approaches although we stress the need to maintain the high level of ambition of the GP. All of the proposed approaches suggest a more tailored and focused strategy compared to the current uniform approach applied across the entire EMEP region.

Agenda item 6. Revision of the mandate of and operational rules for the Implementation Committee

Firstly, we would like to take note that the IC has been performing its duties well, while in challenging conditions for the past years.

The EU and its MS have reviewed the draft, and agree with the need for the revision of the mandate and the operational rules of the Implementation Committee (IC) as suggested in documents ECE/EB.AIR/2024/3. This revision is necessary to ensure feasible working methods and that the mandate better matches the current situation.

However, the EU and its MS would like to propose some modifications to the draft. We submit our proposals in writing.

We also think that it would be appropriate to keep allowing IC to review compliance with other obligations (as detailed in the technical annexes) as well. Retaining this option would also be more future proof, as we may decide for a revised protocol to establish specific technical annexes for current non-Parties and/or include an obligation to report a national air pollution reduction programme as an alternative to emission reduction commitments (which would be more difficult to establish for these countries for the time being). In that case, it would be useful for the implementation committee to be able to monitor compliance with the reporting of the reduction programme and/or the Technical Annexes requirements.

Agenda item 7. Review of the rules of procedure for the sessions of the Executive Body

The EU and its MS thank the ad hoc group of experts, including legal experts and the Secretariat who contributed, for the new report proposing a revised text of the Rules of Procedure.

We also thank the work of the WGSR and the secretariat in drafting and forwarding the proposed revised rules of procedure to the executive body.

The EU and its Member States thank the Chair for her balanced compromise proposal presented to us this morning, which we were prepared to accept in full.

Noting that a Party has requested further deletions, we can, in the spirit of compromise, accept these changes.

We note that the Bureau and the Secretariat responded really well to the challenge of COVID and Convention work continued. However, we felt that the Rules review process allowed us the possibility to clarify the decision-making powers of Bureau on moving to hybrid meetings and an opportunity to learn from previous experiences.

Agenda item 8. Financial requirements for the implementation of the Convention

The EU and its MS thank the secretariat for the preparation of the note and for making the effort to make it much clearer than in the past.

The EU and its MS agree with the allocation of the remaining funds to the CIAM and the CEIP to support their work on the revision of the GP.

The EU and its MS can accept the suggestion that a single contribution be not less than \$1,000 considering the administrative transaction costs of each payment, even though we are open to the opinion of those Parties who are affected by this increase.

According to the following considerations, the EU and its MS request the Secretariat to modify table 14 so that the new table 14 contains only the costs of core activities as defined in Decision 2002/1. In this way table 14 will be consistent with decision V as proposed in document ECE/EB.AIR/2024/3.

We are concerned that including the costs of both core activities and intergovernmental activities in the same decision may be detrimental to the payment of recommended contributions for the core activities, and at the same time not as effective as expected in covering also the costs of intergovernmental activities.

The EU and its MS look forward to finding a long-term solution to the secretariat's financial problems, which are connected to the overall financial crisis in the UN. The EU and its MS propose that the Secretary raise the question of the overall financial situation to the appropriate political level.
