

## **First meeting of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Air Pollution (TFICAP)**

The 1<sup>st</sup> 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 discussions 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 conversations around the first Forum meeting in March 2023, providing suggestions for possible agenda items.