

# Forum for International Cooperation on Air Pollution

## 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023, Gothenburg

### Meeting

The inaugural Forum for International Cooperation on Air Pollution (FICAP) was held in Gothenburg, Sweden on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023. FICAP, co-chaired by the UK and Sweden, brought together 178 air quality experts 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.

### Opening remarks

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.

### 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