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Chair's Summary: Meeting of the Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane Helsinki, Finland, 16-17 January 2019

Introduction

The Expert Group on Black Carbon and Methane (EGBCM) held its sixth meeting in Helsinki, Finland on 16-17 January 2019. Mikael Hildén (Finland) chaired the meeting. Participants included seven Arctic States (Canada, Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the United States); three Observer States (Germany, Italy, Japan); three Arctic Council Working Groups (AMAP and ACAP/EPPR) and invited guests from the EU Action on Black Carbon in the Arctic, Finnish Ministry of the Interior and the Finnish company Arbonaut.

Welcoming remarks from the Minister of the Environment, Energy and Housing

The Finnish Minister of the Environment, Energy and Housing, Mr. Kimmo Tiilikainen welcomed participants to the last meeting of the EGBCM during the Finnish chairmanship and encouraged the group to continue its good work and provide high quality data. The recent IPCC report had stressed the importance of reducing warming of the Arctic and the reduction of black carbon emissions is an essential aspect of this. The benefits of reducing black carbon emissions had been presented at the Arctic Council side event at COP24 and recognized by the Arctic Environment Ministers' meeting (AEMM) in October 2018 where personal observations of climate change had been shared during the Talanoa Dialogue lunch. Mr. Tiilikainen noted that the international political landscape was currently not conducive to ambitious environmental policies. Finland has allocated specific funds for work to reduce gas flaring and black carbon emissions in the Arctic. The Finnish President strongly supported reductions of black carbon emissions and recently also raised the issue during his visit to China.

Brief report from the SAO meeting in Rovaniemi, 1 November 2018 and the Arctic Environment Ministers' meeting in Rovaniemi, 10-12 October 2018

The EGBCM Chair noted that the AEMM had been an opportunity to invite Observers to contribute to the aspirational goal. Henna Haapala thanked everybody for their inputs to the AEMM and stressed the importance of continued assessments and monitoring by Arctic Council Working Groups. At their Rovaniemi meeting SAOs welcomed EGBCM's on-going work and confirmed their commitment to take action on short lived climate pollutants. The EGBCM Chair had stressed the need for data improvement. The Russian Federation had informed that they were collecting data but probably would not be able to deliver data for the publication of the current summary report on black carbon and methane from the EGBCM group.

Summary of black carbon and methane emissions by the EGBCM technical group

Kaarle Kupiainen from the technical group presented the summary of black carbon and methane emissions based on the data in the draft report. For the final draft report the technical group would extract data from CLRTAP and UNFCCC to be up to date. Any newer updated data had to be provided by Arctic States and Observer States themselves. The group discussed how to illustrate assumptions about future Russian emissions. The group also discussed whether to include LULUCF in the methane emission estimates and projections and decided not to include LULUCF. The Arctic Council Secretariat offered to assist in producing infographics for visualizing the overview of emissions and projections.

[Report from the Arctic Council side event on black carbon at COP24 in Katowice, Poland](#)

The EGBCM Chair briefed the group about the side event. It had been opened by the Polish and Finnish Environment ministers and included presentations by the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), the OECD, the World Bank, the Finnish Institute for National Health and Welfare, the Aleut International Association, and AMAP. The Chair noted that Katowice is an area where black carbon emissions are felt quite concretely, and emissions reached emergency levels during COP24. Poland's recent actions to reduce emissions are described in its national report. It was briefly discussed if it was worthwhile considering a side event for COP25 in Chile. The conclusion was that some joint effort with other groups or countries may be worth considering, whereas a separate event is likely to take too much effort. Chile itself has been an active partner in CCACCCAC.

[Status of black carbon work of the AMAP SLCP group and of ACAP](#)

Kaarle Kupiainen presented AMAP's on-going work on the 2021 assessment of SLCP issues. The work is based on global scientific literature as well as climate models. Around 50 scientists from 15 countries are involved and the analyses will be peer reviewed during summer 2020 according to scientific procedures. AMAP's assessment covers anthropogenic and natural emissions and all relevant air pollutants, not only black carbon and methane. Arctic observations (atmosphere, snow samples, ice cores, lake sediments) are included and the study looks at co-effects on human health and ecosystems. A number of scenarios will be developed based on data sets such as the International Energy Agency's World Energy Outlook 2018 and based on various mitigation scenario variants. AMAP's work is based on collaboration with other Arctic Council Working Groups, with the CLRTAP center, IIASA, EU Action on Black Carbon in the Arctic, OECD and it is connected to IPCC and other UN organizations.

Patti Bruns, ACAP Executive Secretary, presented six ACAP projects that will be the main deliverables from ACAP for the Rovaniemi Ministerial meeting. As an example, a desk top study of a new community based black carbon and public health assessment has just been approved and will now move to the PSI committee with a view to approval for funding. The project will strengthen local capacity to mitigate and prevent black carbon pollution in identified Alaskan and Russian villages.

[Update on the EU Action on Black Carbon \(project implementation managed by AMAP\)](#)

Simon Wilson and Russel Shearer from the AMAP secretariat presented outputs from the project, including a review of black carbon emissions inventory and reporting systems which pointed out some gaps and deficiencies in the current reporting system and recommendations for improvements. Several updated baseline and mitigation emissions scenario datasets would be made available for use by EGBCM. Guidance documents on best available techniques economically achievable to address black carbon from gas flaring and from domestic burning were forthcoming. It was proposed to coordinate efforts regarding dissemination and outreach products ahead of the Arctic Council Ministerial meeting. The EU Action project hoped to be able to continue the fruitful co-operation with the EGBCM under the incoming Icelandic chairmanship.

[Intervention by the Chair of the Senior Arctic Officials, Ambassador Aleksi Härkönen](#)

Ambassador Härkönen provided an update on preparations for the Rovaniemi Ministerial meeting and described Finland's support for national and international projects related to black carbon, including a new project concerning preparedness for wildfires.

[Information on development work related to the mitigation of wildfires](#)

Mr. Tuomo Kauranne from the Finnish company Arbonaut introduced the use of airborne laser scanning (LIDAR) for making three-dimensional mapping of forests. Such maps with relevant thematic layers

(canopy bulk density, buildings, roads, water sources, slopes, tree species and terrain models) could provide the basis for developing fire risk management based on local conditions. Examples of conditions in Finland, Russia, and Mediterranean climates and different approaches to fire risk management were presented. It is essential to communicate the importance of preventive work to homeowners and landowners. The group exchanged national experiences based on recent wildfires. EPPR had discussed wildfires at a recent meeting and AMAP planned to review the issue in a future assessment. The complexity of the issue merit recognition of wildfires also by the EGBCM in its recommendations.

[Discussion of the draft EGBCM Summary of Progress and Recommendations Report 2019](#)

The group reviewed all sections of the draft report and several edits were made online. A number of suggestions for restructuring the text were made, such as removing the technical recommendations from the executive summary and including a visualization of emissions in the executive summary. It was agreed/suggested to reiterate the voluntary nature of the recommendations.

[Next steps for the EGBCM Summary of Progress and Recommendations Report 2019](#)

The group agreed to an updated work program with deadlines up to the Rovaniemi Ministerial meeting. Based on discussions during the meeting and specific text suggestions forwarded subsequently to the Chair, the Chair of the EGBCM will forward a new clean version with a view to receiving comments no later than 11 February 2019. The draft report will then be forwarded to SAOs for consideration during the SAO meeting in Ruka on 12-13 March 2019.

[Work programme for the EGBCM 2019-2021](#)

The future Icelandic Chair of the EGBCM, Mrs. Kristín Linda Árnadóttir, presented key elements of the future Icelandic Chairmanship's programme. Key elements will be ocean and marine issues, climate change, and the wellbeing of Arctic communities, including health. Other important issues will be plastic pollution, continued meteorological cooperation, gender equality and adaptation and resilience. The first EGBCM meeting will probably take place in October 2019 in Iceland, if possible, back to back with the Arctic Circle Conference. A black carbon session at the Arctic Circle Conference could be considered.

The current Chair suggested to evaluate the experiences of the 2017-2019 period and encouraged participants to reflect on challenges and share their reflections. The Chair's efforts to make the EGBCM's work visible at many meetings and seminars were commended. The ongoing importance of the Framework was noted, however, it was suggested to revisit portions of the framework document to allow for more flexibility in regards to timelines for national reporting and more outreach to stakeholders. During the 2019-21 period new types of information would be forthcoming from the EU Action on Black Carbon in the Arctic, OECD project and the AMAP SLCP assessment.