Recommendation 402 (1964)[1]

European Conference on Air Pollution

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

Recalling its Recommendation 290 in which it asked the Committee of Ministers "to convene a European Conference on air pollution, under the auspices of the Council of Europe :

a. to study and propose technical and scientific measures to combat the causes and the effects of air pollution on health and individual and national economies and, for this purpose, to study the possibilities :

of establishing permanent collaboration between the various national research institutes ;

of setting up a European centre for research, documentation, information and scientific and technical aid in the clean-air campaign ;

b. to study, in the light of present national legislations, the possibility of drawing up a European Convention on air pollution ;

c. to organise a publicity campaign on the growing dangers of air pollution";

Thanking the Committee of Ministers for acting on this Recommendation ;

Congratulating the Secretary-General on the excellent way in which this Conference was organised ;

Satisfied with the success of this Conference held on the initiative of its Social Committee ;

Having examined the fourteen general reports discussed by the Conference and the forty-two proposals submitted by the participants ;

Having participated in the debates of the Conference in the person of delegates specially appointed by the Assembly ;

Having taken note of the request from the Committee of Ministers for an opinion on the proposals and overall reports of the Conference ;

Having examined the decision of the Committee of Ministers to set up an ad hoc Committee of Experts to find ways and means of following up the Conference,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

1. grant the ad hoc Committee the following terms of reference : "to determine, on the basis of the results of the European Conference on Air Pollution, to what extent and by what means the Council of Europe should contribute to the fight against air pollution";

2. support the idea that the Consultative Assembly should be represented in the ad hoc Committee by a member of its Social Committee ;

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1. Assembly debate on 5th November 1964 (12th Sitting) (see Doc. 1827, report of the Social Committee). Text adopted by the Assembly on 5th November 1964 (12th Sitting).

3. transmit to the ad hoc Committee the proposals outlined below for further action. These suggestions should be regarded as constituting a programme of work to be carried out gradually. The programme should include the following studies :

(a) Human health

Co-ordinating research on the immediate effects of pollution and the effects of prolonged exposure, on the relationship between pollution and respiratory diseases, on morbidity and mortality and establishing the bases of a standardisation of methods for the observation and notation of symptoms.

(b) Animals and plants

Developing and making more widespread experiments designed to attenuate the effects of pollution on animals and plants (the planting of resistant species, vegetation screens, soil fertilisation, the curative feeding of livestock, etc.).

(c) Economic effects

(i) Ensuring that statistics on the economic aspects of air pollution are compiled on the basis of standard methods in order to obtain comparable results, and encouraging investment in research and the operation of anti-pollution devices (subsidies, tax concessions, etc.).

(ii) Investigating a common method of assessing the cost of the damage caused by pollution which would make it possible to estimate and compare such damage in each of the countries.

(d) Danger thresholds

(i) Fixing orders of priority : the first objective should be to supplement as speedily as possible the information on those harmful pollutants which have been the most thoroughly investigated because they are the most widespread. This applies to sulphur oxides, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and poly-cyclic aromatic hydro-carbons, which are potentially carcinogenic.

(ii) Devising standard methods for determining the chemical pollutants in the air.

(iii) Establishing, at the European level, a list of allowable maximum concentrations with a view to coming to an agreement on danger thresholds acceptable to all.

(e) Measuring

Completing a glossary and a comparative vocabulary of terminology and units of measure drafted by the General Rapporteur, in cooperation with the national Rapporteurs, in order to arrive at a standard terminology.

(f) Apparatus

(i) Standardising methods and equipment with a view to facilitating international cooperation and obtaining comparable results.

(ii) Devising a method for measuring particulate emissions (soot and flying ash) for the control and standardisation of apparatus.

(g) Meteorology

(i) Encouraging research, particularly on the influence of topographical and geographical factors on dispersion and the depositing of point-source and large-source emissions.

(ii) Compiling and keeping up-to-date European pollution maps showing pollution sources and the distribution of pollutants in relation to meteorological, topographical, geographical and seasonal conditions.

(iii) Establishing a close liaison between the national meteorological services, with a view to pooling efforts and co-ordinating methods.

(h) Combustion

(i) Collecting statistics on measurements made in various European towns on domestic heating methods and appliances, the fuels employed and the measures of control applied, as well as on methods currently under consideration for removing sulfa-dioxide from combustion gases.

(ii) Making a comparative study of emissions produced by individual heating, collective central heating in buildings, the heating of large complexes and town heating.

(iii) Developing and co-ordinating research on air pollution caused by domestic and industrial heating appliances, and by encouraging exchanges of experiences.

(iv) Establishing a list of departments and institutes which deal with these problems in different countries and considering the possibility of short-term exchanges of specialised and, in particular, inspection staff.

(i) Motor vehicles

(i) Creating a documentation bulletin reproducing communications sent in by each country on the problem of air pollution caused by motor vehicles.

(ii) Encouraging and promoting studies on specific technical problems concerning air pollution due to motor vehicles.

(iii) Studying the possibility of working out for motor vehicles technical standards to which all such vehicles leaving the country where they are registered would be required to conform.

(j) Industry

(i) Examining the problems arising in individual industries by carrying out exchanges of information on techniques to be employed for reducing emissions, and by considering the possibility of establishing in this sector common standards to be recommended to Governments.

(ii) Studying the possibility of short-term exchanges of inspection staff to familiarise them with control methods employed abroad, and securing the adoption of common inspection standards.

(iii) Organising the gathering of information and exchanges of information between countries and facilitating contacts between organisations dealing with the same problem in order to avoid duplication.

(k) Town and country planning

(i) Carrying out regional and national studies on air pollution and on affected areas.

(ii) Supplying all available information to the local and national authorities responsible for planning, to executives, to planners and to the public at large as broadly and objectively as possible and, if necessary, gathering such information.

(iii) Prescribing the use of statistical data on air pollution in all major regional planning projects.

(l) Co-operation

(i) Examining studies and research in progress, determining existing shortcomings, promoting co-operation between research workers and study centres, taking stock of the results achieved, and determining what studies should be carried out or continued, and which bodies are best fitted to do this work.

(ii) Making the most of the experience and resources of existing centres in order to promote European co-operation in the exchange of documentation between experts.

(iii) Developing, step by step, co-operation in the spheres of research, the standardisation of measuring methods and apparatus, documentation, information and legislation.

(iv) Holding, from time to time (say every four or five years) a European Conference on Air Pollution in order to give Governments an opportunity to review the situation and examine the progress made in the interval.

(m) Information

(i) Setting up, within the Council of Europe, a permanent information centre whose task it would be to collect from the Council of Europe countries all information of use in the campaign against air pollution. Its work would be as follows :

publishing a quarterly bilingual bulletin in which the documentation and information would be summarised under headings based on a Europe-wide classification system ;

keeping a card-index of air pollution publications ;

keeping a card-index of organisations concerned with air pollution ;

preparing documentation for journalists, for public information purposes, and users of plant and appliances liable to cause air pollution if unskilfully operated, to advise them on the best way to avoid causing nuisances ;

establishing an audio-visual information centre (film library, photo library, etc.) ;

assisting national bodies to organise meetings, congresses and exhibitions ;

lastly, helping to organise certain Europe-wide campaigns and co-ordinating international action in the field of information.

This programme of work would be carried out in stages.

(ii) Drawing up a list of study, research and documentation establishments dealing with air pollution problems. This list should give the names of the persons concerned and indicate the exact address and nature of each institution.

(n) Legislation

(i) Making a thorough comparison of the legislations of the member countries on air pollution and endeavouring to harmonise such legislation in Europe.

(ii) Supplying the Governments concerned with information, with a view to the adoption of appropriate legislation within the framework of national institutions.

(iii) Preparing the text of a convention flexible enough to be acceptable to all the member countries.

(iv) Drawing up international legal agreements of limited scope on specific points ;

4. set up, within the framework of the Council of Europe, an inter-governmental co-ordinating committee entrusted with the task of carrying out, step by step, the programme outlined under point 3.

This committee would comprise representatives of all the inter-governmental organisations interested in the campaign against air pollution.

The committee, while endeavouring, for the sake of economy, to avoid duplication, should entrust the execution of the programme either to committees of experts already existing in other organisations or to inter-governmental committees or subcommittees to be set up within the Council of Europe.