From:	Alexander Juras
To:	Fiona Marshall
Cc:	Barbara Ruis; DRCR_Intern03-Elfi Klabunde; Fatou Ndoye
Subject:	Re: Invitation to comment on second draft of the Recommendations on Public Participation in Decision-making
Date:	13/11/2012 10:24

Dear Fiona,
The OECD guidlines for online public consultation can be found here:
http://www.oecd.org/about/membersandpartners/publicaffairs/guidelinesforonlinepublicconsultation.htm.

As mentioned in Santiago, I think it is important to address online consultations, because I am seeing right now a trend to more and more use these to ensure public participation. While there are clear advantages (better outreach - but not to those who do not have internet access, they will be completely excluded!-, less costs in comparison to face to face meetings/hearing etc.), I am also a bit worried by the trend to look at online consultations as an alternative to physical participation in relevant meetings, hearings etc. While it is tempting to organise online consultations instead of face to face meetings, in my view, online consultation should **complement** face to face meetings but in many cases cannot replace them. In addition, doing a proper online consultation, needs also financial and human resources from the organiser, in my view often not much less than a physical meeting. There are however certainly savings, because travel costs do not apply.
I would certainly suggest to include a paragraph on online consultation in the Recommendations, maybe along the following lines (let's discuss this further):

Online Consultations
With the widespread availability of modern communication technologies, Online Consultations can increase citizens understanding and the quality of their participation.
Online consultations can complement face to face meetings and hearings, but should not be used to fully replace physical participation of the concerned public in meetings, hearings etc.
A properly conducted online consultation should include the following elements:

1. Identification of relevant target group for the consultation
2. A full explanation of the consultation process, its role and impact in the decision making process
3. Provision of all relevant documents
4. An adequate timeframe for providing input into the consultation by stakeholders
5. An analysis of input received and publication of the analysis, with the opportunity for further inputs by the target group
6. A mechanism to feed the outcomes of the online consultation into the decision making process.

I also copied my colleague Barbara Ruis for further input.

Best regards

Alexander

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▼ Fiona Marshall---07/11/2012 12:12:59 AM---From: Fiona Marshall/UNECE/GVA/UNO@UNGVA To:

Alexander Juras/UNEP/NBO/UNO@UNON

From: Fiona Marshall/UNECE/GVA/UNO@UNGVA
To: Alexander Juras/UNEP/NBO/UNO@UNON
Date: 07/11/2012 12:12 AM
Subject: Re: Invitation to comment on second draft of the Recommendations on Public Participation in Decision-making

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Dear Alexander,

Thank you for your comments today regarding the challenges presented by the growing trend towards online consultations.

I think it would be very useful to add a short paragraph on this issue into the next draft of the Aarhus Convention's Recommendations on Public Participation in Decision-making to be prepared following the close of the current commenting round on 30 November 2012. In case you did not receive our email of 20 October circulating the second draft of the Recommendations for comments, please find it forwarded below. We would be very glad to receive any other comments that you may have on the text also.

In keeping with the spirit of Aarhus, we will be publishing the comments received on our website. With respect to the issue of online consultations, it would thus be very helpful to receive a brief email for you setting out your suggested text and providing the link to UNEP's guidelines on online consultations to which you referred in our conversation.

Thank you very much for bringing the issue of online consultations to my attention. I also look forward to continuing our exchange regarding Aarhus Parties' obligations to promote the principle of the Convention in international processes in the near future.

With many thanks and best regards,
Fiona

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website: www.unece.org/env/pp/welcome.html

-----Forwarded by Fiona Marshall/UNECE/GVA/UNO on 11/06/2012 06:00PM -----
To: Public Participation/UNECE/GVA/UNO@UNGVA
From: Public Participation/UNECE/GVA/UNO
Date: 10/21/2012 07:26PM
Cc: Fiona Marshall/UNECE/GVA/UNO@UNGVA, Sadaf Shamsie/UNECE/GVA/UNO@UNGVA
Subject: Invitation to comment on second draft of the Recommendations on Public Participation in Decision-making

(See attached file: Draft_Recommmendations_on_PPDM_21.10.2012_tc.pdf)
(See attached file: Draft_Recommmendations_on_PPDM_21.10.2012_clean.pdf)
(See attached file: Draft_Recommmendations_on_PPDM_21.10.2012_clean.doc)

To: National focal points to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and stakeholders

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached for your review and comments, the second draft of the Recommendations on Public Participation in Decision-making in Environmental Matters being prepared under the auspices of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making of the Aarhus Convention.

We would like to thank all those who commented on the first draft of the Recommendations circulated at the end of May 2012 for their thoughtful and thorough comments. All comments received were carefully reviewed and have been taken into account in the preparation of the second draft.

As you may recall, the work to prepare the draft Recommendations is in response to the request by the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, at its second extra-ordinary session (Geneva, 19 and 22 April 2010), for the Task Force to prepare draft recommendations on improving the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on public participation in decision-making (decision EMP.II/1, paragraph 2(c)).

Invitation to comment on second draft

The second draft is attached in English in both clean and track changes formats. The track changes format shows all changes that have been made to the first draft in the light of the comments received. The clean format is attached for easier reading and also for inserting any comments you may have on the second draft. The second draft is also being translated into Russian. The Russian version will be circulated and posted later this week.

We would be grateful to receive your written comments, in track changes form in the attached clean Word version of the second draft, by **Friday, 30 November 2012** to public.participation@unece.org

Participants attending the third meeting of the Task Force (Geneva, 29-30 October 2012) which is being held as a joint event with the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, will also have an opportunity to discuss and develop the attached draft during that meeting. A separate email will be sent to registered participants in this regard.

Among the comments received on the first draft, was a suggestion to incorporate some diagrams or flow charts to visually explain some of the key parts of the recommendations. As well as your written comments, we thus invite you to submit any diagrams or flowcharts that you consider nicely illustrate relevant parts of the Recommendations for consideration in the preparation of the third draft.

We also invite you to submit a list of some examples from your country of plans, programmes and policies relating to the environment. We would be grateful if you would send us an English translation of the official titles of these plans, programmes and policies and if possible, a weblink to where the text of the plan, policy or programme can be accessed online. Examples received may be considered for possible use as practical examples in future drafts.

Several comments noted that the first draft was very technical and not so easy for non-lawyers to read. These comments are very much been taken on board and it is intended that once the comments on the second draft have been incorporated, and before circulating the third draft next February, the document will go through a careful review with the sole aim to make the language and structure as user-friendly as possible. In the attached second draft, however, in order to make sure that all points are explained in a precise and correct manner, the more technical style is still largely maintained.

In keeping with the spirit of the Aarhus Convention, and in response to requests received from civil society, we would propose to post all comments received on the second draft on the Convention's website, together with the drafts themselves. Both the first and second drafts will be made available online at http://www.unece.org/env/pp/ppdm.html

The process going forward

Following the expiry of the commenting period on the second draft, all comments received will be considered in the preparation of the third draft. The third draft will be

circulated electronically for comments in late February 2013 and will also be discussed at the fourth meeting of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making to be held in Luxembourg on 12-13 March 2013.

We thank you in advance for your comments and contribution to this valuable initiative.

Kind regards,

Fiona Marshall

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