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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Meeting of the Parties to the
Convention on Access to Information,
Public Participation in Decision-making and
Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

Working Group of the Parties to the Convention

REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING

1. The first meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention was held in Geneva on 23-24 October 2003.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Governments of Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom, United States of America and Uzbekistan. The Commission of the European Communities was also represented.
3. Representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) attended the meeting.
4. The following regional and non-governmental organizations were also represented: Earthjustice, European ECO-Forum, GLOBE Europe and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC).
5. Mr. Marc Pallemerts (Belgium), Chairman of the Working Group, opened the meeting. He briefly reminded delegations of the mandate of the Working Group, which was established at the first meeting of the Parties to the Convention (Lucca, Italy, 21-23 October 2002) as an open-ended subsidiary body which would oversee the implementation of the work programme (decision I/14). According to the decision, the Working Group should prepare the meetings of the Parties, oversee and direct the activities of subsidiary bodies established by the Meeting of the Parties, keep under review the need for amending the Convention and prepare proposals to this end for the Meeting of the Parties, and make such proposals and recommendations to the Meeting of the Parties as it considered necessary for achieving the purposes of the Convention.

6. After these introductory remarks, the Chairman drew the attention of delegations to an informal paper giving an overview of the current status of ratification of the Convention and signing of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs). He noted that, since the first meeting of the Parties, the following States had deposited their instruments of ratification with the United Nations Secretary-General: Belgium, on 21 January 2003; Cyprus, on 19 September 2003; Norway, on 2 May 2003; and Portugal, on 9 June 2003. The Chairman then invited delegations to report on any recent developments with respect to the ratification of the Convention and the signing of the Protocol in their respective countries.

7. The representative of Bulgaria announced that the Bulgarian Parliament had ratified the Convention on 2 October 2003 and that the ratification instrument would soon be deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General.

8. The representative of the European Commission reported on its efforts to prepare for the ratification of the Convention and the Protocol by the European Community. The Commission had been working intensively to present all the necessary instruments for adoption and the final steps of this process, including a proposal for a decision on the approval of the Convention by the European Community, would be submitted to the Council of the European Union on 27 October 2003. As a first step toward ratification of the Protocol, the Commission would put forward a proposal for adapting Community law during the first half of 2004.

9. The representative of Uzbekistan reported on the activities undertaken through parliamentary hearings and expert groups to analyse the implications of possible accession to the Convention. This work suggested that the necessary national legislation was already in place and that the decision of the Government of Uzbekistan to become a Party to the Convention was only a matter of time.

I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

10. The Working Group adopted the agenda for the meeting as set out in document MP.PP/WG.1/2003/1, with the addition of two new items under 'Any other business', namely the issue of the logo of the Convention and cross-cutting issues with respect to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

II. POLLUTANT RELEASE AND TRANSFER REGISTERS

11. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the recent developments with respect to the Protocol on PRTRs. At their extraordinary meeting (Kiev, 21 May 2003), the Parties had adopted the Protocol and established a new Working Group on PRTRs to undertake the necessary activities pending the entry into force of the Protocol and the first session of its Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.PP/4, para. 23). In addition to this, the Protocol had been discussed within the PRTR Coordinating Group of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals and referred to in the report of that body to the forthcoming meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (Forum IV, Bangkok, November 2003).

12. The Working Group was invited to take note of the preparations for the first Meeting of the Working Group on PRTRs. The Chairman informed the Meeting that the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, had made some enquiries as to which countries would be willing to play a leading role in supporting the work of the Working Group, as this could facilitate the preparation of the first meeting; and that the Czech Republic had indicated its willingness to present the candidacy of Mr. Karel Blaha, Chairman of the previous Working Group on PRTRs, as Chair of the new Working Group. He invited any other countries interested in nominating candidates to serve as officers to the new Working Group to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

13. REC and UNITAR informed the Meeting of their respective capacity-building activities for the ratification and implementation of the Protocol. REC reported on its plans to focus on facilitating the implementation of the Protocol in Central and Eastern Europe, while UNITAR informed the Meeting of its efforts, generously supported by the Government of the Netherlands, to further develop the 'virtual classroom' in order for it to become a capacity-building tool for the development of national PRTRs.

III. GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

14. On behalf of the Chairman of the Working Group on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), who was not present, the secretariat presented a summary of its work. The Working Group had held two meetings in 2003. During both it had spent some time looking at the needs and experiences of countries with respect to public participation in activities on GMOs and then examined possible options for taking a legally binding approach on this issue, as set out in its mandate (decision I/4).

15. Despite efforts to find consensus, there remained two quite distinct points of view within the Working Group on GMOs. Some of its delegations, notably from countries in transition and non-governmental organizations, felt that there was a strong and urgent need for the introduction of a legally binding regulatory framework establishing public participation procedures with respect to activities involving GMOs. Their preferred option was one or other kind of amendment to the Convention. Other delegations, notably from EU countries, remained unconvinced of the need to introduce additional, legally binding requirements and felt that they needed to gather more information on the needs of countries and to gather more experience with implementing recently amended EU legislation on this subject.

16. In the light of this polarization of views, the idea had been raised of adopting a differentiated approach, whereby the EU countries would rely on their existing legislation and a legally binding option would be developed for the countries lacking an appropriate framework. The Working Group on GMOs had recognized that such an approach might have far-reaching political implications and concerns had been expressed that it could set an unwelcome precedent, so the secretariat had been requested to bring the issue to the attention of the Working Group of the Parties.

17. The delegation of Italy, on behalf of the European Union, informed the Meeting that new proposals were being explored. One option that was mentioned by one delegation during the discussion was the possibility of developing a legally binding approach for the countries of Eastern Europe, the

Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) under the auspices of the 'Environment for Europe' process. Another option suggested by one delegation was an amendment to the Convention in the form of a new framework article that would allow for flexibility in the implementation of its particular requirements.

18. Some delegations, including the environmental organizations present, reiterated their support for a legally binding approach and expressed concern that by spending time on discussing whether there was a need for a legally binding approach and by including various non-binding options in its deliberations, the Working Group on GMOs was failing to respect its mandate as set out in decision I/4. That decision had not simply been part of an intergovernmental process but represented a commitment made by Ministers to the public throughout the region, which was now being placed in jeopardy.

19. While it was generally recognized that there were precedents in international law for having differentiated obligations under a single legal instrument, some concern was expressed about the implications of a precedent that would be created should the differentiation be exclusively on the basis of some countries' membership in a particular regional economic integration organization.

20. The Working Group took note of the results of the meetings of the Working Group on GMOs and urged that Working Group to work towards the timely fulfilment of its mandate by developing the most appropriate options for a legally binding approach, for submission to the Parties and possible adoption at their second meeting. The Chairman welcomed the constructive spirit expressed during the discussion of this issue and expressed the hope that its outcome would enable the Working Group on GMOs to make speedy progress in its work.

IV. ACCESS TO JUSTICE

21. The Chairman, in his capacity as Chairman of the Task Force on Access to Justice, introduced the report of its first meeting, held in March 2003, and informed the Meeting of the plans for future work. In particular, he reported on the specific needs for capacity-building for judges, expressed by the majority of participants in the meeting, and invited governments and organizations that were expecting to be in a position to help to address this need to notify the secretariat in advance of the second meeting of the Task Force, scheduled for 20-21 November 2003.

22. As regards the issue of financial and other non-legal obstacles to access to justice, the lead country had prepared a short questionnaire that was circulated within the Working Group and would be distributed electronically to the Task Force. The feedback on this questionnaire should be submitted at least a week before the second meeting of the Task Force so that it could be made available to its participants in advance. The Chairman informed the Meeting that a working paper on good practices with respect to the effectiveness of remedies, to be prepared by the lead country, would also be distributed alongside the questionnaire.

23. Many delegations expressed the view that the Task Force should focus on examining good practice examples and capacity-building rather than on engaging in discussions on other, more theoretical, issues related to access to justice or attempting to develop interpretative guidelines. Some

delegations felt that it was important not only to exchange information on good practices but also to learn from problems and mistakes. Some delegations also felt that because of the difficulties that they were encountering in implementing the Convention's article 9, some form of guidance on its implementation would be useful. The Chairman, in his capacity as Chairman of the Task Force on Access to Justice, pointed out that the Task Force would continue to address all aspects of its mandate in a balanced way. One delegation proposed that the Task Force should be transformed into a working group because of the importance of the implementation of article 9.

24. The Working Group took note of the progress in the work of the Task Force reported by the Chairman and invited the Task Force to take account of the various views expressed in prioritizing its activities.

V. ELECTRONIC INFORMATION TOOLS

25. On behalf of the lead country, Ms. Nelly Ilieva (Bulgaria) presented the report of the first meeting of the Task Force on Electronic Information Tools (Sofia, 23-24 June 2003, MP.PP/WG.1/2003/4). The Task Force had been established under the authority of the Working Group of the Parties by decision I/6 of the Meeting of the Parties to continue and develop the work of the earlier task force in advancing the use of electronic information tools to further the implementation of the Convention. At its first meeting, the Task Force had examined good practice examples in the application of electronic information tools, partly on the basis of responses to a questionnaire on the use of electronic tools to promote a more effective implementation of the Convention. The Task Force had reviewed the list of possible activities annexed to the report of the workshop held in Arendal, Norway, in March 2001 and, on this basis, had identified several priorities for national initiatives and capacity-building projects. The secretariat and GRID-Arendal had briefed the Task Force on plans for developing a clearing-house mechanism for the Convention and the Task Force had agreed to continue work at its next meeting, scheduled for 26-27 January 2004, on developing guidelines on the content of national 'nodes' that would become part of the clearing-house mechanism.

26. The secretariat gave a brief presentation on the latest preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society, including a proposal for a side event on the themes covered by the Aarhus Convention. The event would address the implications of using information and communication technologies to promote access to information and facilitate public participation in decision-making in environmental matters. The event, scheduled during the Geneva phase of the Summit (10 December 2003), would showcase examples of good practice in the use of electronic information tools to promote environmental rights and thus promote the principles of sustainable development and effectively work to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

27. The Working Group welcomed the Task Force's efforts and took note of the developments with respect to the World Summit on the Information Society. It also invited the Task Force on Electronic Information Tools to give further consideration to the complex issue of the digital divide at its future meetings.

VI. CAPACITY-BUILDING AND CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

28. The secretariat reported on the capacity-building efforts undertaken since the first Meeting of the Parties. Following up on two subregional workshops for Central Asia, the secretariat, in cooperation with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia and the Kyrgyz Ministry of Ecology, had organized a national workshop on the implementation of the Convention in Kyrgyzstan on 9-11 October 2003. The workshop had provided a forum for sharing information on good practices and for identifying areas of future subregional cooperation, as well as an opportunity for discussion on the joint UNECE/UNITAR programme on the development of a national profile (see para. 31 below).

29. To streamline and rationalize capacity-building activities and promote synergies, in particular with a view to providing coherent input to the implementation of the EECCA Environment Strategy, the secretariat had convened a meeting on 30 September 2003 with several international and regional organizations undertaking capacity-building activities in the EECCA region. The Meeting had reviewed existing and proposed activities and agreed upon the need for improved information exchange, cooperation and, where applicable, coordination. It had also provided an opportunity to discuss the future of the capacity-building service, originally established by UNECE, UNEP and GRID-Arendal. The three partner organizations had come to feel that the service did not match the reality and that the service should grow into a capacity-building framework involving additional organizations. It had therefore been agreed to develop the service into a broader capacity-building framework, to be facilitated by the Convention's secretariat. The results of the meeting had recently been presented to the Environmental Action Programme's Task Force and the Committee on Environmental Policy.

30. The secretariat reported on the progress in the development of the clearing-house mechanism for the Convention, especially the efforts, undertaken in cooperation with GRID-Arendal, to develop the mechanism in its pilot form with a view to launching it in early 2004 before the second meeting of the Task Force on Electronic Information Tools.

31. Mr. Achim Halpaap (UNITAR) informed the Working Group of the progress in launching the joint UNECE/UNITAR programme on the development of a national profile, an assessment tool for the implementation of the Convention. He presented the objectives and methodology of the pilot programme to the Working Group and emphasized the importance of the country's ownership over the process of developing the document and the multi-stakeholder nature of the process.

32. The Working Group of the Parties expressed its satisfaction with the progress made in these areas of work, welcomed the efforts made to develop the capacity-building framework and thanked all organizations and governments involved in the process.

VII. COMPLIANCE MECHANISM

33. On behalf of the Chairman of the Compliance Committee, who was unable to attend, the secretariat informed the Working Group of the work undertaken by the Compliance Committee since its establishment at the first meeting of the Parties. It had held two meetings, during which it had focused on establishing the procedures for handling the cases which would come before it. The Committee had not

considered any actual cases of alleged non-compliance. On the basis of decision I/7 on the review of compliance, the Committee had further developed provisional procedures for communications from the public, which had been publicized on the Convention's web site. The Committee had also developed procedures for submissions by a Party in relation to its own compliance, submissions by a Party in relation to another Party's compliance and referrals made by the secretariat, as well as further procedures regarding its own modus operandi. At the second meeting, the Committee had discussed cooperation with NGOs and future resource requirements (see paras. 34 and 56 below), as well as the implications of the reporting requirements set out in decision I/8 for its work. This last topic would be addressed in more detail at its forthcoming meeting. The secretariat also informed the Meeting that no notifications of 'opt-outs' in accordance with paragraph 18 of the annex to decision I/7 had been received by the Depositary.

34. The Chairman reported on a letter received from the Chairman of the Compliance Committee, which noted the uncertainty as to the number of communications from the public that would need to be processed by the Committee following the deadline of 23 October 2003 and the consequent uncertainty in the resource requirements of the mechanism in the forthcoming period. The letter expressed concern that the relevant figures in document MP.PP/WG.1/2003/7 should not be interpreted too rigidly and requested the Working Group, through its Chairman, to mandate the secretariat to allocate additional resources to the servicing of the compliance mechanism if this proved to be necessary. This matter was taken up in the context of the discussion on the assessment and prioritization of activities (see para. 56).

35. One delegation, supported by another, expressed concern at a reference in the information sheet on communications from the public published on the Convention's web site to the effect that a specific instance of a person's rights under the Convention being violated could be the subject of a communication from the public. It considered that this could mislead members of the public into thinking that the compliance procedure was a redress procedure for a specific violation of their rights.

36. The Working Group took note of the results of the work of the Compliance Committee. It agreed to refer the concern expressed on the document on communications from the public to the Chairman of the Compliance Committee.

VIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

37. The secretariat presented a background paper prepared at the request of the Bureau in the light of the need expressed in the Lucca Declaration (para. 28) to consider whether further work was needed under the Aarhus Convention on the issue of public participation in strategic decision-making, taking into account the new Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (MP.PP/WG.1/2003/5).

38. The paper first outlined the sequence of discussions and events relevant to the topic that had taken place in the framework of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the European "Environment and Health" process. It then examined the public participation provisions in the Protocol on SEA and their relationship to those in the Aarhus Convention, first by comparing the type

and scope of decision-making covered under the two instruments and then by comparing the public participation requirements applied to such decision-making. The analysis noted that, whereas the Protocol on SEA did in some specific instances extend the rights to public participation provided under article 7 of the Aarhus Convention, on balance its requirements for public participation in decisions on plans and programmes fell short of those in the Convention. Furthermore, the Protocol did not extend the rights provided under article 8 of the Convention at all. The paper noted that work undertaken to support the implementation of article 7 of the Aarhus Convention could contribute towards the implementation of the public participation provisions of the Protocol on SEA.

39. The paper noted that strategic decisions tended to have the most far-reaching effects and that public participation at this level of decision was consequently most relevant in securing the objective set out in article 1 of the Convention ‘to contribute to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being’. The paper also highlighted a number of possible difficulties in applying public participation at the strategic level such as the differences from one country to another in the procedures for strategic decision-making as compared with project-level decision-making.

40. Finally, the paper outlined some procedural options for further work in this area, falling under three categories: “soft” options based upon compilation and exchange of information, recommendatory measures, and legally binding measures, noting that the implementation of any of the options would occur after the second meeting of the Parties and on the basis of a mandate from it (MP.PP/WG.1/2003/5, paras. 48-50 and 54).

41. The Chairman thanked the secretariat for preparing the document and encouraged delegations to give their comments by focusing on the following two questions:

(a) Do you think that further work is needed in this area under the Aarhus Convention?

(b) If so, what would be your preference with respect to the three types of procedural option set out in the document?

42. The delegation of Italy, on behalf of the European Union, stated a preference for the “soft” options and suggested, as more specific measures, establishing close cooperation with the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the use of electronic tools to facilitate the exchange of views and experiences on this matter. It opposed the establishment of a task force for the time being because the implementation of the Protocol on SEA was still on an early stage and there was a need for acquiring more experience in this area.

43. Most delegations agreed that it would be appropriate to pursue the “soft” options and focus on exchanging information and experiences with respect to the implementation of articles 7 and 8 of the Convention. However, some delegations suggested that this should be seen only as a first step in the process and that a decision should be prepared for possible adoption at the second meeting of the Parties.

44. The Working Group thanked the secretariat for its thorough legal analysis and decided that further work was needed with respect to sharing experiences and exchanging information through electronic and other means. It requested the secretariat to prepare a paper focusing on information-sharing and

exchange of experiences, based on the input received from the Parties, Signatories and other States, outlining possibilities for further activities in this area for its consideration at its next meeting. In addition, the Working Group requested the secretariat to give consideration to the need to facilitate the exchange of information in this area in the development of the clearing-house mechanism.

IX. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS

45. The Chairman presented a paper on public participation in international forums (MP.PP/WG.1/2003/6) which had been prepared by the Bureau as a starting point for discussion pursuant to paragraph 31 of the Lucca Declaration. Through that paragraph, the Parties had recommended that consideration should be given to the possibility of developing guidelines on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international environmental decision-making processes and within the framework of international organizations in matters relating to the environment. The paper summarized previous deliberations on the issue both within the framework of the Aarhus Convention and under the Committee on Environmental Policy, and set out a number of questions concerning the scope, content and format of, and process for developing, possible guidelines which it invited the Working Group to address.

46. During the discussion, several delegations emphasized the importance of a broader ownership of the process, which could be achieved by working closely with the secretariats of other UNECE conventions in order for the results of this work to achieve the broadest possible acceptance within the UNECE region. It was suggested that broader consultations, including with UNEP, would be useful to determine what could be done to promote these principles at the level of global organizations and processes. Some delegations noted that there was a distinction between the concept of public participation in international forums and the notion of promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international environmental decision-making processes and within the framework of international organizations in matters related to the environment, as referred to in its article 3, paragraph 7, of the Convention.

47. The Working Group decided to establish, within available resources, a small ad hoc expert group, composed of experts designated by governments, NGOs, relevant international organizations, other UNECE environmental conventions and multilateral environmental agreements to consider the scope, format and content of possible guidelines and the appropriate process for their development, taking into account the need to avoid duplication of efforts and to ensure the broadest possible ownership of such guidelines, and the experience already gained by Parties and Signatories in the implementation of article 3, paragraph 7. The expert group would consider inter alia the questions raised in paragraph 7 of document MP.PP/WG.1/2003/6 and draw up options for further consideration by the Working Group. The Working Group furthermore agreed to keep the Committee on Environmental Policy informed of progress on an ongoing basis, as it had requested.

X. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

48. The Chairman informed the Meeting that following an approach by the Bureau, France had kindly offered to lead the work of the Task Force on Financial Arrangements and had nominated Mr. Olivier

Martin to chair it. The Working Group welcomed the offer by France to lead the work of the Task Force and approved Mr. Martin's nomination as its Chairman.

49. On behalf of France, Mr. Martin set out his delegation's ideas on how to structure the work of the Task Force on Financial Arrangements. He proposed that the first meeting of the Task Force would take place in Geneva on 23 March 2004, immediately before the third meeting of the Working Group on GMOs so as to minimize costs. France would prepare a background paper for the meeting, and in order to gain broad input to that paper, delegations were invited to make written submissions setting out their positions and to submit these to the secretariat by 31 December 2003. Interested delegations were invited to designate experts for participation in the Task Force and to notify the secretariat accordingly.

50. The delegation of Italy, on behalf of the European Union, expressed its support for the procedure proposed by France, in particular the commenting procedure, which it considered would provide an opportunity for all delegations, including those from non-donor countries, to express their views on the issue.

51. The Working Group approved the proposed method of working and requested the secretariat to send out a letter to all the focal points informing them of the arrangements.

XI. ASSESSMENT AND PRIORITIZATION OF ACTIVITIES IN THE 2004-2005 WORK PROGRAMME

52. The secretariat presented a paper, prepared in consultation with the Bureau, providing an assessment of the activities in the work programme for 2004-2005, including a breakdown of estimated costs, as well as indicating a possible way of prioritizing the activities funded through the 'shares' system (ECE/MP.PP/2, paras. 64-66). The paper indicated that the funds received to date had fallen short of the estimated core requirements, partly because not all the contributions pledged had actually been received. With respect to prioritization, the secretariat suggested that it should be applied with some degree of flexibility and that if additional prioritization were needed, this should be done within the allocated amount for each activity in order to keep all activities in the work programme.

53. The secretariat also distributed an informal paper providing an overview of the individual contributions received since the first meeting of the Parties in relation to the pledges made there. The Working Group was then invited to use these documents as a basis for further discussion on the assessment and prioritization of activities.

54. Several delegations suggested that the resources available under the regular UNECE budget should also be included in the overview. It was noted that additional contributions made in response to a request for support for the capacity-building service and the clearing-house mechanism had been made by some governments and were not included in the overview.

55. The Chairman invited delegations from countries to comment, where appropriate, on the outstanding contributions for 2003 and to indicate the number of 'shares' that they intended to contribute for the year 2004. The following information was given by delegations regarding their intentions:

Country or delegation	Shares (1 share = US\$ 20,000)
Austria	½ share for the year 2004, subject to budget approval.
Belgium	1 share for the year 2004, subject to budget approval.
Denmark	No additional contributions for the year 2004 foreseen. Next pledge will be 2005.
Finland	½ share for the year 2004, subject to budgetary approval.
France	Approximately 3 shares for the year 2004, subject to budgetary approval.
Germany	2 shares for the year 2004, subject to approval by Parliament.
Italy	Not in a position to specify a precise figure at this time; but there is a general willingness to contribute.
Netherlands	Possibly 2 shares for the year 2004, subject to submission of specific request and approval thereof.
Norway	Intention to contribute 1 share for the year 2004.
Spain	Intention to contribute 1 share for the year 2004 and 1 share for 2005, subject to budgetary approval.
Sweden	1 share for the year 2004, subject to budgetary decisions.
United Kingdom	Considering contribution of 3 shares, possibly more depending in part upon outcome of Working Group discussions. Possible further contribution through clearing-house mechanism to the work of the Task Force on Electronic Tools. Subject to approval.
European Commission	Final approval for contribution to the 2003 budget was delayed due to some internal procedural difficulties but it is expected shortly. Possibilities for a contribution for the year 2004 are still being analysed, so no concrete details are available at this time.

56. The Working Group of the Parties agreed on the approach proposed by the secretariat with respect to the assessment and prioritization of activities as set out in paragraph 26 of document MP.PP/WG.1/2003/7, with the inclusion of activities on public participation in international forums in the third category. It also agreed upon the general need for flexibility as proposed in paragraph 30 of the document. As regards the request from the Chairman of the Compliance Committee, the Working Group decided that, should it become impossible for the secretariat and the Committee to process communications received from the public with the resources allocated under the work programme, the secretariat would, in consultation with the Bureau, undertake provisional measures to deal with the situation and report on these measures to the Working Group of the Parties at its next meeting. It was also agreed that, should such a situation arise, the secretariat would send a letter to all Parties, Signatories and other States, requesting them to consider making additional contributions for this purpose.

57. The Working Group requested the secretariat to provide, as soon as possible after the end of the fiscal year 2003, a financial report on the funds received and the expenditures incurred in the implementation of the work programme, including the funds made available from the regular UNECE budget. It also requested the secretariat to send a letter to all Parties and Signatories calling their attention to the financial situation and reiterating the invitation contained in decision I/13 of the Meeting of the Parties for all governments in a position to do so, to contribute financially to the implementation of the agreed work programme.

XII. PREPARATIONS FOR THE SECOND ORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARTIES

58. Ms. Tatyana Shakirova (Kazakhstan) informed the Meeting of the progress on the preparations for the second ordinary meeting of the Parties. She confirmed that the Government of Kazakhstan in consultation with the secretariat was making the necessary arrangements to host the meeting in Almaty in May 2005.

XIII. FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

59. The Working Group agreed to hold its next meetings on 3-4 May 2004 and 1-3 November 2004.

XIV. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A. Development of a Convention logo

60. The secretariat informed the Meeting of the latest developments in its efforts to gain official approval for the Convention's logo, which had been developed at the request of the Bureau. The secretariat had revised the provisional version of the logo which had been available at the first meeting of the Parties in order to meet the specific requirements of the United Nations Publications Board and at the request of the Board had sent the logo to the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs for final clearance. The Office of Legal Affairs took the position that it was not possible to develop the logo as a United Nations logo, since the Convention itself was not part of the United Nations and was not operating under its auspices.

61. As the logo had been developed at the initiative of the Bureau, the secretariat had referred the matter to the Bureau at its meeting on 22 October 2003 and the Bureau had decided that it would inform the Working Group of the Parties on this issue.

62. The Working Group agreed that the Chairman, with the assistance of the secretariat and in consultation with the Bureau, should write to the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs expressing concern, asking it to reconsider its position and to accept the decision taken by the Publications Board. The Working Group of the Parties asked to be kept informed on further developments in this matter.

B. Relevant developments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

63. The Chairman drew the Working Group's attention to the report of the European regional workshop on the implementation of article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which would be presented shortly to that Convention's Subsidiary Body for Implementation, and recommended establishing synergies between both conventions (FCCC/SBI/2003/10, para. 33 (b)) both nationally and internationally. The Working Group took note of these developments and expressed satisfaction with the progress.

XV. ADOPTION OF REPORT AND CLOSURE OF MEETING

64. The Working Group adopted its report based on a draft and entrusted its Chairman and the secretariat with finalizing the text on the understanding that the French- and Russian-speaking delegates would reserve their positions until the report was available in French and Russian as well. The Chairman thanked the delegations for their contributions to the discussions and the secretariat for its efficient assistance in the meeting. Finally, he thanked the interpreters and closed the meeting.