ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

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

Seventh meeting
Geneva, 2–4 May 2007

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE MEETING

To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
starting at 11.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 2 May 2007

I. PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Status of ratification of the Convention and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

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New accreditation procedures have been introduced for all delegates attending meetings at the Palais des Nations. Delegates are therefore requested to complete the registration form, which is available from the Aarhus Convention’s website (www.unece.org/env/pp/practical.htm), and to transmit it to the Aarhus Convention secretariat no later than 2 weeks before the meeting – namely, by 18 April 2007 – either by fax (+41 22 917 0634) or by e-mail (public.participation@unece.org). On their way to the meeting, delegates should obtain an identification badge at the Pass and Identification Unit of the UNOG Security and Safety Section, located at the Pregny Gate, 14, Avenue de la Paix (see the map on the Convention’s website). In case of difficulty, please contact the Aarhus Convention secretariat by telephone at +41 22 917 1502/2682.

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3. Pollutant release and transfer registers
4. Genetically modified organisms
5. Public participation in international forums
6. Access to justice
7. Electronic information tools and the clearing-house mechanism
8. Public participation in strategic decision-making
9. Reporting requirements
10. Compliance mechanism
11. Capacity-building
12. Long-term strategic planning
13. Financial arrangements
15. Implementation of the work programme for 2006–2008
16. Preparations for the third ordinary meeting of the Parties
17. Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”
18. Any other business

II. ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda

Item 2: Status of ratification of the Convention and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

1. The secretariat will provide the Working Group with an overview of the status of ratification of the Convention, the amendment to the Convention and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs). Delegations will be invited to report on any recent or anticipated developments with respect to the ratification of the Convention, the amendment to the Convention and the Protocol in their respective countries.
Item 3: Pollutant release and transfer registers

2. The Chair of the Working Group on PRTRs will be invited to report on the outcome of the fourth meeting of that Working Group, scheduled for 14–16 February 2007. The Working Group is expected to take note of these activities, in particular the preparations for the entry into force of the Protocol. These include the preparation of rules of procedure and a compliance mechanism; financial arrangements; options for the establishment of subsidiary bodies; procedures for the preparation, adoption and monitoring of work programmes; a reporting mechanism; the status of technical guidance documents; the PRTR cost analysis; the capacity-building activities matrix; and the activities promoting international outreach and international PRTR coordination.

3. In the light of the rate of progress towards entry into force of the Protocol, the Working Group may also wish to evaluate the possibility that the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol could take place back-to-back with the third meeting of the Parties to the Convention.

Item 4: Genetically modified organisms

4. The Working Group is expected to discuss the prospects for entry into force of the amendment on genetically modified organisms adopted through decision II/1, taking into account the information provided under agenda item 2. The secretariat will report on the steps taken to clarify the Convention’s provision dealing with the conditions for the entry into force of such amendments (art. 14, para. 4), including the involvement of the ad hoc group of legal experts established at the sixth meeting of the Working Group (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2006/2, para. 20) and any correspondence with the Depositary. The Working Group is expected to discuss further steps towards resolving the matter.

5. Delegations will also be invited to report on any activities to support the application of the Guidelines on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice with Respect to Genetically Modified Organisms and of the amendment to the Convention pending its entry into force. In particular, the Working Group is expected to review preparations for the proposed regional or international expert meeting on this topic and to provide guidance on its goals and themes.

Item 5: Public participation in international forums

6. The Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums, Mr. Laurent Mermet (France), and the secretariat will report on progress in the implementation of the Task Force’s workplan. In particular, they will report on the outcome of the second meeting of the Task Force (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.1) and present a synthesis paper summarizing the responses to the questionnaire that was circulated as part of the consultation process (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.2 and Add.1–Add.5). The Chair of the Task Force will also update the Working Group on the preparations for the international workshop on the topic, provisionally scheduled for 20–21 June 2007. The Working Group will be invited to review the progress achieved and to provide guidance as appropriate. It will also be invited to consider a proposal from the Bureau to request the Task Force to assist the Working Group with the task of reviewing the Almaty Guidelines and preparing recommendations for consideration by the
Meeting of the Parties, pursuant to decision II/4 (ECE/MP.PP/2005/2/Add.5, para. 8). Finally, it will be invited to consider putting in place a procedure for the submission of comments by Parties, Signatories, other interested States, NGOs and other relevant actors relating to their experience with the application of the Guidelines for consideration by the Task Force in accordance with Decision II/4 (ECE/MP.PP/2005/2/Add.5, para. 7).

Item 6: Access to justice

7. The secretariat will report on capacity-building and other activities being implemented under the auspices of the Task Force on Access to Justice, and in particular on the plans for a workshop on access to justice aimed at representatives of the higher levels of the judiciary from six of the countries of Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asia. The Working Group will be invited to take note of these activities and plans and to comment as appropriate.

Item 7: Electronic information tools and the clearing-house mechanism

8. The secretariat will report on the outcome of the fifth meeting of the Task Force on Electronic Information Tools that took place on 23–24 November 2006. The Working Group is expected to take note of these activities, in particular the measures taken to monitor the implementation of decision II/3, the further development of the clearing-house mechanism and the programme of capacity-building workshops on electronic information tools for nodes of the Clearinghouse (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.3 and Add.1 and Add.2).

Item 8: Public participation in strategic decision-making

9. The secretariat will report on progress achieved in this area, notably preparations for a workshop on public participation in strategic decision-making and the drafting of a compendium. The Working Group will consider this information and decide on further steps.

Item 9: Reporting requirements

10. The Chair of the Compliance Committee, Mr. Veit Koester, will present guidance prepared by the Committee, pursuant to its mandate under decision I/7, annex, paragraph 13 (c), on the implementation of the reporting requirements in decisions I/8 and II/10 with respect to the second reporting cycle (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.4). The Working Group will be invited to review the guidance and comment as appropriate. The secretariat will give a demonstration of the way in which information on the status of implementation of the Convention, including the information contained in the national implementation reports, has been made more accessible through the website.

Item 10: Compliance mechanism

Item 11: Capacity-building

12. The secretariat will report on the implementation of capacity-building activities, in particular the outcome of the fourth inter-agency coordination meeting (4 December 2006, ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.5). It will also demonstrate improvements in the way in which information on capacity-building is displayed in the Clearinghouse. The Working Group will be invited to take note of the various developments and activities and to encourage Parties, Signatories, other States and other relevant bodies to continue to provide support for them, taking account of the needs and priorities identified during the discussion.

Item 12: Long-term strategic planning

13. The Chair of the Working Group, Ms. Hanne Inger Bjurstrøm, will report on behalf of the Bureau on the progress made by the Expert Group on Long-Term Strategic Planning. The Working Group will be invited to comment as appropriate.

Item 13: Financial arrangements

14. The Chair will present a paper setting out options for a draft decision on financial arrangements (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.6) prepared by the Bureau pursuant to the request of the Working Group at its sixth meeting (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2006/2, para. 69). Delegations will be invited to express their preference for one or more of the options set out in the paper. The Working Group will then be invited to further discuss the options and agree upon further steps in the preparation of a draft decision with a view to narrowing the range of options under consideration.

Item 14: Financial report for 2006

15. Pursuant to decision II/6, paragraph 4, the secretariat will present a report on the status of financial contributions received and the expenditures incurred in 2006 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.7). The Working Group will be invited to take note of the report and to consider its implications for the implementation of the 2006–2008 work programme.


16. The Working Group will be invited to consider on the basis, inter alia, of any recommendations by the Bureau and information provided under the preceding agenda items whether any adjustment of the work programme is required.

17. Having regard to the voluntary scheme of contributions established under decisions I/13 and II/6, the need to secure sufficient funding for the implementation of activities in the work programme adopted under decision II/7 for the forthcoming year, and the levels of expenditure anticipated (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2006/9), delegations will be invited to indicate the type and number of “shares”, or the amount of funding, that they intend to contribute for the years 2007 and 2008.
Item 16: Preparations for the third ordinary meeting of the Parties

18. The representative of Latvia, the host country of the third ordinary meeting of the Parties, and the secretariat will report on preparations for the meeting, including a special event to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. The Working Group is expected to consider these preparations, discuss the main elements for the programme and agenda of the meeting, and decide upon further steps in the preparatory process. It may also wish to discuss any implications arising from the possibility that the meeting could take place back-to-back with the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

Item 17: Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”

19. The secretariat will brief the Working Group on the preparations for the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe“, scheduled to take place in Belgrade on 10–12 October 2007. Members of the Bureau will report on the outcome of an informal meeting of representatives of the Bureaux of the five UNECE environmental conventions and the Committee on Environmental Policy, where a paper on the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements was discussed. The Chair will report on preparations for an Aarhus side event at the conference. The Working Group may wish to discuss the relevance of the conference to the Convention and whether the Aarhus Parties should have any distinctive input to the conference.

Item 18: Any other business

20. Delegates wishing to propose points under this item are requested to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.