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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

Thirteenth meeting

Geneva, 9–11 February 2011

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

Substantive issues: public participation in international forums

Draft decision on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums

Prepared by the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat

Summary

This document contains a proposed draft decision on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) in international forums, prepared by the Bureau of the Parties to the Convention with the assistance of the Convention secretariat, in order to facilitating discussion on this topic by the Working Group of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting.

The Working Group may wish to consider the present document with a view to submitting it to the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (Chisinau, 15–17 June 2011) for possible adoption. The draft decision contained herein takes into consideration that activities presently under way should be completed by the time the text is presented to the Meeting of the Parties.

The document is submitted to the Working Group in view of its mandate to “make such proposals and recommendations to the Meeting of the Parties as it considers necessary for the achievement of the purposes of the Convention” (ECE/MP.PP/2/Add.15, para. 2 (d)), and further to a decision by the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties, taken at its twenty-sixth meeting (9 November 2010), on the need to enhance Parties’ implementation of their obligations under the Convention in this area.

The Meeting of the Parties,

Recalling article 3, paragraph 7, of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), which requires each Party to promote 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,

Recalling also its decisions II/4 and III/4 on promoting the principles of the Convention in international forums,

1. *Notes with appreciation* the work undertaken by the Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums;

2. *Expresses its gratitude* to France for its leadership of the Task Force;

3. *Reiterates its commitment* to continue to apply the Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus Convention in international forums (contained in decision II/4) within the activities and subsidiary bodies established under the Convention;

4. *Considers* that significant work still remains to be done to implement article 3, paragraph 7, of the Convention and that the principal focus of work on this issue in the next intersessional period should continue to be to encourage Parties to do so;

5. *Notes* the importance of increasing understanding of the challenges faced, and the good practices employed, by international forums with respect to public participation, through further exchanges of experience between the Convention and international forums;

6. *Agrees* that the future work in this area will take into consideration the relevant activities undertaken by Parties, Signatories, the secretariat and other stakeholders;

7. *Decides* to continue the work on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums under the authority of the Working Group of the Parties;

8. *Agrees* that the Working Group of the Parties shall:

(a) Oversee progress in implementing article 3, paragraph 7, through an annual intersessional review of the work undertaken by Parties, Signatories and other stakeholders to promote the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums;

(b) Provide a forum for capacity-building in order to address issues identified and challenges encountered in the implementation of article 3, paragraph 7, through, inter alia, thematic sessions on the subject;

9. *Calls on* Parties and Signatories to:

(a) Coordinate within and between ministries to inform officials involved in other relevant international forums about article 3, paragraph 7, and the Almaty Guidelines;

(b) Provide access to information and enable public participation at the national level regarding international forums;

(c) Promote the principles of the Convention in the procedures of other international forums and in the work programmes, projects, decisions, instruments and other substantive outputs of those forums;

10. *Encourages* individual Parties to explore innovative ways to promote public participation in international forums at the national and international levels, including

learning centres and twinning activities between two or more individual Parties, to evaluate those practices' effectiveness, and to share their evaluations with other Parties;

11. *Also encourages* collaborative activities by groups of Parties to promote the Almaty Guidelines and the principles of the Convention in international forums whose practices do not presently reflect the Guidelines or the principles of the Convention;

12. *Requests* the secretariat, subject to availability of resources, to undertake the following:

(a) To provide advisory assistance to interested international forums, as appropriate;

(b) To expand the electronic compendium of case studies on promoting public participation in international forums;

(c) To continue outreach to interested international forums in a focused way, e.g., through trainings, workshops, learning centres or other platforms, and by inviting representatives of interested international forums to attend meetings of the Convention bodies;

13. *Invites* therefore Parties, Signatories, international and other organizations to allocate funds for the activities on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums at all levels;

14. *Welcomes* the offer of [France] [to continue] to lead the work on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums.
