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28 December 2006

To: Aarhus Convention National Focal Points
NGOs
IGOs

Dear colleagues,

Survey of capacity-building strengths and needs

The importance of capacity-building activities and other means of facilitating practical implementation of the Convention has been emphasized by the Parties to the Convention at their second meeting (May 2005, Kazakhstan) and reconfirmed by the delegations during the last meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (5-7 April 2006).

It was pointed out that a strategic approach to capacity-building was needed which would take into account not only the identified needs, but also how these were prioritized at the regional, subregional and national levels.

The Working Group of the Parties noted that systematic organization of information related to capacity building and available from various sources was needed to obtain a clear and comprehensive picture of needs and priorities at various levels.

Furthermore during the discussion at the last session of the Working Group it was pointed out that while the main focus of capacity-building assessments and initiatives was usually on the countries with economies in transition, capacity constraints in Western countries, which often differed in nature, also had to be addressed.

The secretariat indicated its intention, subject to the availability of resources, to compile, systematically organize and analyze the available information with a view to presenting the outcomes at the next meeting as well as incorporating it into the Convention's Clearinghouse. To that effect it presented a questionnaire addressing priority capacity-building constraints as well as outputs and lessons of capacity-building initiatives. The questionnaire was made

available during the session of the Working Group in April.

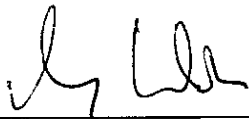
Attached you will find a copy of the questionnaire.

In order for the secretariat to process responses with a view to presenting the outcomes at the next meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (2-4 May, 2007), we would like to ask you to kindly send us the filled questionnaires at the latest by **5 February 2007**.

Please feel free to add further pages should your response require more space.

I would like to use this opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Wates', is written above a horizontal line.

Jeremy Wates
Secretary

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

Encs: Questionnaire on capacity-building strengths and needs