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
Task Force on Access to Justice
Eleventh meeting
Geneva, 27 and 28 February 2018
Item 1 of the provisional agenda
Opening and adoption of the agenda

Key outcomes as agreed by the Task Force on Access to Justice at its eleventh meeting

I. Opening and adoption of the agenda

II. Thematic focus: Access to justice in cases on the right to environmental information
2. The Task Force:
   (a) Recalled that the effective access to justice in cases on the right to environmental information contributes to the successful implementation of other relevant provisions of the Convention, as well contributes to the achievement of targets 16.3 and 16.10 of the Sustainable Development Goal 16 and underpins other relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets;
   (b) Encouraged Parties and stakeholders to take the necessary measures to address existing challenges and further promote effective access to justice in cases on the right to environmental information;
   (c) Decided to continue the exchange of information, experiences, challenges and good practices with regard to access to justice in cases on the right to environmental information and undertake a survey to facilitate the collection of additional information;
   (d) Took note of the draft questionnaire (AC/TF.AJ-11/Inf.4) and agreed to provide final comments by 20 March 2018;
   (e) Requested the secretariat in consultation with the Chair to update as necessary and circulate the questionnaire to collect the required information and invited the Chair to report at the twelfth meeting of the Task Force on the results of the survey.

III. Stocktaking of recent and upcoming developments
3. The Task Force:
   (a) Took note of the recent developments, challenges and lessons learned related to access to justice in environmental matters as presented by the speakers;
   (b) Expressed appreciation to Parties and stakeholders for providing information on recent developments and case law to the Aarhus Clearinghouse and the jurisprudence database;

1 The document was not formally edited.
2 The list of speakers, other documents, presentations and statements are available from: http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/tfaj11.html#/

AC/TF.AJ-11/Inf.5
(c) Encouraged Parties and stakeholders to develop additional measures and promote national dialogues as appropriate to address challenges with regard to standing, scope of review, timeliness, access to effective remedies, financial barriers and access to legal aid, and continue information exchange on these matters;

(d) Reiterated the importance to strengthen efforts in promoting access to information, assistance and guidance to the public in seeking access to justice in environmental matters.

IV. Tools to promote effective access to justice

4. The Task Force:

(a) Welcomed capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives as reported by the speakers;

(b) Encouraged Parties and stakeholders to address capacity-building and awareness-raising needs in access to justice in environmental matters at the local level and with regard to vulnerable groups;

(c) Called to promote further capacity-building and strengthen specialisation of judges, prosecutors, attorneys, public interest lawyers and other legal professionals in environmental cases;

(d) Welcomed initiatives of Parties and stakeholders aimed to monitor the effectiveness of access to justice in environmental matters and collect the relevant quantitative data on the implementation of article 9 of the Convention and environmental dimension of target 16.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and called on Parties and partner organizations to undertake, support and promote similar initiatives.

V. Prioritization of the work for the inter-sessional period 2018-2021

5. The Task Force:

(a) Agreed that the Task Force meeting in 2019 would focus on access to justice in cases challenging acts or omissions that contravene permit requirements or laws relating to the environment3, focusing on cases relating to air quality (e.g. permits for industrial installations and plans and projects concerning infrastructure, land use and air quality management);

(b) Agreed to follow up on the outcomes of the current meeting with regard to access to justice in information cases;

(c) Invited to further populate, disseminate and use of analytical studies and material collected under auspices of the Task Force, the Aarhus Clearinghouse and jurisprudence database for further exchange of information, experiences, challenges and good practices.

VI. Closing

6. The Task Force:

(a) Agreed on the outcomes of the meeting as presented by the Chair and discussed under each item;

(b) Requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, to finalize the meeting report and incorporate these outcomes.

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3 In accordance with decision VI/3, para. 14 (a) (ii), adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session (Budva, Montenegro, 11-13 September 2017) available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop6_docs.html (tab post-session docs).