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COMMISSION ÉCONOMIQUE POUR L'EUROPE   ЕВРОПЕЙСКАЯ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКАЯ КОМИССИЯ   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 Information

Fifth meeting
Geneva, 10-11 October 2016
Item 7 of the provisional agenda
Closing

Key outcomes[1]

As agreed by the Task Force on Access to Information at its fifth meeting

1.   Opening and adoption of the agenda

1. The Task Force adopted its agenda for the meeting as set out in document AC/TF.AI-5/Inf.1.

2.   Environmental information: scope and access

2. The Task Force:

(a) Welcomed the initiatives presented by the speakers aimed to further improve the domestic framework for public access to environmental information in forms and formats meeting the needs of different users;

(b) Encouraged Parties and stakeholders to take further steps in improving public access to environmental information, removing existing barriers and making sure that the scope of environmental information is interpreted broadly, in line with the Convention;

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[1] This document was not formally edited.

(c) Highlighted the importance of measures to be taken to address the lack of awareness and environmental expertise in the process of taking decisions on disclosure of environmental information and adopting executive regulations, legislative and policy documents relating to access to information;

(d) Encouraged Parties to continue trainings of public officials responsible for public access to environmental information.

3. Restrictions on access to environmental information in the Digital Age

3. The Task Force:

(a) Took note of the positive developments, lessons learned and challenges shared by the speakers;

(b) Welcomed the initiatives of the Parties and stakeholders to widen open access to environmental information, including through electronic public registers and other electronic information tools, and allow the re-use of such information, whenever possible free of charge;

(c) Called on Parties to encourage public authorities and other information providers to review, as appropriate, their copyright policies and procedures with regard to environmental information in order to promote re-use of such information and continue exchange of experience on this matter.

4. Effective dissemination of environmental information

4. The Task Force:

(a) Took note of the innovative practices, lessons learned and challenges as highlighted by the speakers;

(b) Noted the increasing public use of environmental information in electronic form and suggest strengthening capacity-building and other measures to ensure the enabling environment for the public to access such information;

(c) Welcomed further steps taken by the Parties and stakeholders in advancing Open Government, Open Data, e-Government and other similar initiatives;

(d) Highlighted the importance of capacity building and other measures that could assist Parties in joining the above-mentioned

initiatives and called on Parties, international organizations and other stakeholders to support such measures;

(e) Took note with interest of the draft summary report on the results of the survey on the implementation of the recommendations on electronic information tools (Decision II/3) (AC/TF.AI-5/Inf.3) and its accompanying document (AC/TF.AI-5/Inf.5/Add.1) and noted the deadline to provide comments on the report by 10 November 2016;

(f) Invited Parties and stakeholders to continue submitting case studies on promoting use of electronic information tools;

(g) Welcomed the suggestion by the Chair to prepare an update of the recommendations on electronic information tools in the next intersessional period;

(h) Took note of the information on the upgrade of the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy;

(i) Urged Parties to establish national nodes for the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy and to introduce Rich Site Summary (RSS) or other Application Programming Interface (APIs) feeds for news or other resources of the national nodes that are compatible with the requirements of the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy as to be able harvested for the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy;

(j) Invited national focal points to use a generic email account to facilitate the correspondence with the public, other stakeholders and the secretariat (e.g. aarhusNFP.[country name][at]...).

5. Activities under other international forums

5. The Task Force:

(a) Took note of the information provided by the representatives of the international forums at this meeting;

(b) Welcomed efforts of international forums dealing with access to information and promoting use of electronic information tools to widen public access to environmental information and called for further cooperation in supporting Parties' efforts to improve public access to environmental information;

(c) Reiterated its call upon national focal points of different international forums dealing with access to environmental information and promoting use of electronic information tools to

facilitate information sharing and effective cooperation at the national level.

6.   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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