

Aarhus Convention Meeting of the Parties

REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE BUREAU Kiev, 19 May 2003

Attendance:

Bureau members: Aida Iskoyan (Armenia), Rita Annus (Estonia), Thierry Berthelot (France), Giuliana Gasparrini, (Italy), Tatiana Shakirova (Kazakhstan), Jerzy Jendroska, (Poland, Chair).

NGO Observer: John Hontelez (European Environmental Bureau, for European ECO Forum)

Other Observers: Karel Blaha (Chair of PRTR Working Group, Czech Republic), Federica Rolle (Italy)

1. Adoption of agenda

The provisional agenda was adopted, with the understanding that the meeting would focus primarily on issues requiring discussion in advance of the extraordinary meeting of the Parties or which were otherwise urgent, and that other substantive issues would be dealt with at the next meeting.

2. Matters arising

The secretariat reported on recent developments and matters arising from the previous meeting not otherwise covered by the agenda, notably the outcomes of the first meetings of the Compliance Committee (17-18 March 2003), the new Task Force on Access to Justice (10-11 March 2003) and the new Working Group on genetically modified organisms (9-11 April 2003) and the preparations for the forthcoming meeting of the Task Force on Electronic Tools (23-24 June 2003).

3. Preparations for the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parties

On the basis of information provided by the secretariat, the Bureau discussed the forthcoming series of meetings and events in Kiev, namely the informal preparatory meeting on 20 May convened primarily for the purpose of finalising the draft resolution of the Signatories to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR), and on 21 May, a side-event on what PRTRs are and how they work, a press conference on the PRTR protocol, the extraordinary meeting of the Parties itself and the signing ceremony for the three protocols. For the extraordinary meeting of the Parties, the secretariat had prepared a Chairman's brief to assist the French Ambassador Delegate for the Environment M. Denys Gauier who as head of the French delegation had kindly agreed to chair the meeting in light of the unavailability of the Polish Minister for the Environment.

It was agreed that it was important to use the opportunity of the preparatory meeting on 20 May to inform delegations of and seek their support for the plans for the extraordinary meeting of the Parties itself, and that the Chair of the Meeting of the Parties should preside over that part of the preparatory meeting. The remainder of the meeting, which would be devoted to finalising the draft text of the resolution of the Signatories, would be chaired by the Chair of the PRTR Working Group, Mr Karel Blaha, as previously announced.

It was noted that the draft resolution did not propose a lead country for the new Working Group on PRTR expected to be established at the extraordinary meeting of the Parties. It was agreed that following the Kiev conference, the Bureau should undertake consultations, with the assistance of the secretariat, in order to identify a prospective lead country and chairperson who would then be proposed for election at the first meeting of the new Working Group.

4. Preparations for first meeting of the Working Group of the Parties

It was decided to defer discussion of the issues listed under this agenda item to the third meeting.

5. Vacant position on and other changes in the composition of the Bureau

The Bureau agreed to recommend the following changes in the composition of the Bureau for adoption by the Meeting of the Parties and the extraordinary meeting:

- Mr. Berthelot (France) would stand down from the Bureau and be replaced by Mr Pallemmaerts (Belgium) in accordance with the decision of the Meeting of the Parties.
- Mr Jendroska (Poland) would stand down as Chair and Mr Pallemmaerts would be elected in his place. Mr Jendroska would remain as Vice-Chair, replacing Ms Gasparrini (Italy) who would continue to serve on the Bureau.

Finally, as Norway and Belgium were the only countries to have ratified the Convention since the first meeting of the Parties and since a representative of Belgium would be replacing the representative of France in the Bureau, and furthermore bearing in mind the question of regional balance, it was agreed to recommend to the Meeting of the Parties to elect a representative of Norway to the Bureau, if Norway were willing to put a candidate forward.

6. Joint Bureaux meeting

The Bureau briefly discussed the invitation from the Chair of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) to participate in a joint meeting of the Bureaux of the ECE environmental conventions and the CEP (Geneva, 3 July 2003). It was agreed that in order to prepare effectively for the meeting, it could be useful for Bureau members to exchange ideas in advance, either by e-mail or at an informal meeting on the eve of the joint bureau meeting (see point 8).

7. Calendar of meetings 2003-4

The Bureau briefly discussed the forthcoming schedule of meetings. In addition to the second meeting of the Working Group on GMOs (1-3 October 2003) and the first meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (23-24 October 2003), it was provisionally agreed to hold the first meeting of the Task Force on Financial Arrangements on 10-11 November 2003, subject to having identified in due time a country willing to lead the work in this area. The secretariat was requested to make further enquiries with the aim of identifying a lead country.

It was agreed that the first meeting of the PRTR Working Group should be scheduled during the first quarter of 2004, and that if it were decided by the Working Group of the Parties to convene a Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums as had previously been discussed, this should also meet during that period.

8. Date and venue of next meeting

It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Bureau in Geneva on 4 July 2003, immediately after the joint meeting of the Bureaux, and to explore the possibility of holding a short informal meeting either during the late afternoon or evening of 2 July to prepare for the joint bureaux meeting.

9. Host country for the second ordinary meeting of the Parties

The Bureau noted the written confirmation provided to ECE by Ms Aitkul Samakova, the Kazak Minister for the Environment, of her government's willingness to host the second ordinary meeting of the Parties. The Central Asian Regional Environmental Centre had also indicated its willingness to assist. It was agreed to recommend that the Meeting of the Parties welcome this offer and give a mandate for detailed discussions between the secretariat and Kazakhstan on the logistics and practical arrangements, in consultation with the Bureau. The matter could then be taken up by the Working Group of the Parties at its meeting in the autumn.

10. Any other business

The secretariat informed the Bureau that the UN Publications Board had given conditional approval to the introduction of a logo for the Aarhus Convention, based on the design submitted but with certain modifications being made. The revised design was in the course of preparation.