

AARHUS CONVENTION: UK VIEWS ON FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

(in response to Secretariat's questions in email of 13 July 2006)

- (i) *What general principles should guide and inform a longer-term scheme of financial arrangements. Are they the same or different from the principles contained in the preambles of Decisions I/13 and II/6?*

The UK agrees that principles of stability, predictability and fair-burden sharing are still relevant to the scheme of financial arrangements for the Aarhus Convention. In addition, the arrangements should also be driven by principles of strong budgetary prioritisation and accountability. A further additional principle is that the ambition of the programme of work should be adjusted to match the resources available, rather than vice versa. With the emphasis on implementation, rather than development, of the Convention made at MOP2 in Almaty, the presumption should be that the overall budgetary requirement of the Convention itself will reduce in future years.

- (ii) *Should the scheme be a) purely voluntary, b) purely mandatory, or c) combining both voluntary and mandatory elements?*

The UK considers the initial voluntary scheme of financial arrangements has proved its worth and should continue for the foreseeable future. As paper ECE/MP.PP/AC.1/2006/6 recognises, more resources have been raised through the Convention's scheme of voluntary contributions than through the scheme of any other UNECE environmental convention for its respective work programme. As that paper also recognises, legally binding mechanisms require considerable time and resources to prepare, not least because their binding nature may make them more difficult to negotiate. Given that only 21 out of the 39 Parties currently contribute to the Aarhus Convention, the case for entering into negotiations on a legally binding option is not strong, as all Parties would need to contribute. There is no evidence that Parties that do not currently make contributions would be more likely to commit to making contributions under a mandatory regime.

- (iii) *Who should contribute under the scheme?*

As now, Parties, signatories, or other bodies could make contributions.

- (iv) *Should the scheme indicate (prescribe, recommend or suggest) the amount to be contributed by each Party, and if so, what scale should be used for this purpose?*

No.

- (v) *What should be funded through the scheme? Should there be a differentiation between activities carried out under the auspices of the Meeting of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies on the one hand and*

activities aimed at supporting implementation in individual countries (eg capacity building)? If so, should the latter be funded through a separate mechanism?

The scheme should be limited to activities agreed by the Meeting of the Parties and under their control via an agreed programme of work and associated budget. The UK considers that capacity-building activities should be at the discretion of individual countries, and not centrally controlled. Voluntary contributions of this type may well result (as in the case of UK financial support in the region) in greater overall investment in activities that include a public participation element.

(vi) What should be the key requirements of the scheme with respect to management, monitoring and reporting?

The principles and mechanisms of greater budgetary control, including improved financial reporting by the Secretariat, agreed at MOP2 should form the basis of these elements, in particular greater accountability, to support the additional principles identified in answer to question (i).