

**Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation  
in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters**  
**Fourth session**  
**Chisinau, 29 June - 1 July 2011**  
**General Segment**  
**Item 4 (b):**  
**Substantive issues:**  
**Access to information, including electronic information tools**

**Statement by the United Kingdom**  
**Report of the Task Force on Electronic Information Tools**

The Task Force on Electronic Information Tools was established by the First Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention in 2002.

Over the last 9 years, the Task Force has worked to promote the wider use of electronic information tools as an effective instrument for the implementation of the Convention's provisions on the dissemination of environmental information and the promotion of public participation in environmental decision-making through electronic means.

The third Meeting of the Parties in 2008 extended the mandate of the Task Force in time. The principle tasks of the Task Force were to identify solutions with respect to electronic access to information and to organise training workshops and undertake other capacity-building activities, as appropriate and subject to the availability of financial and human resources.

This was followed up by a meeting of the task force in December 2008 to discuss implementation of the mandate. A report on this meeting was presented by the Secretariat to the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Working Group of the Parties in July 2009.

As agreed at that meeting, work in the last intersessional period has focused on sharing good practice and capacity-building.

The Task Force has continued to collect and exchange information on good practices. As part of this, the Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, supported by the UNECE, completed a project to provide an updated 'Compendium of good practice in e-access, e-participation and e-justice.' The project compiled thirty-seven case studies and produced a summary of trends and recommendations.

The compendium is available online on REC's e-participation website.

The Task Force has also continued the programme of capacity-building workshops initiated under the previous work programme in order to promote the application of electronic information tools.

A ‘Workshop on Electronic Information Tools to Support the Implementation of the Aarhus Convention in South-Eastern Europe’ was held in November 2010 in Skopje. This workshop was organized by the secretariat of the Aarhus Convention in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe. The aim of the event was to foster the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the South-Eastern Europe sub-region by promoting the use of electronic information tools.

The workshop brought together policy-makers, information technology specialists, representatives of non-governmental organisations and other experts, who shared their experiences on the most up-to-date applications and successful examples of use of electronic information tools.

Participants underlined the need to continue building on the outcomes of the workshop in particular in relation to public participation and identified a need for recommendations on how to improve the use of electronic information tools in public consultations. A full report of the outcome of the conference has been submitted separately to the MOP.

In conclusion, it is clear that electronic information tools will become an increasingly valuable tool to facilitate the implementation of the Convention as the power and reach of ICT continues to develop at a rapid rate. Making the best use of this will continue to be a task for the proposed task force on access to information