

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

Fifth session

Maastricht, the Netherlands, 30 June and 1 July 2014

Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

Promotion of the Convention and relevant developments and interlinkages: promotion of the Convention's principles in international forums

Draft Decision V/4 on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums¹

[As adopted by the Meeting of the Parties]

The Meeting of the Parties,

Recalling article 3, paragraph 7, of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention),

Recalling also its decisions II/4, III/4 and IV/3 on promoting the principles of the Convention in international forums, decision V/5 on the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 and decision V/6 on the Work Programme for 2015–2017,

Mindful of the importance of increasing understanding of the challenges faced and the good practices employed by international forums with respect to public participation, through further sharing experience gained under the Convention with international forums,

Welcoming the increasing number of requests from interested international forums seeking expert assistance from the secretariat and Parties on this topic,

Acknowledging the progress made by Parties, international organizations, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in promoting the application of the Convention's principles,

Recognizing that expert assistance is an important powerful tool for the promoting the principles of the Convention and sharing the considerable experience accumulated under the Aarhus Convention in an efficient and direct manner,

Also recognizing the valuable work that has been done to implement article 3, paragraph 7, while acknowledging the considerable challenges still to be addressed to fully implement this provision,

1. *Notes with appreciation* the work undertaken under the auspices of the Working Group of the Parties, which has provided a true multi-stakeholder platform for effectively addressing a number of important issues;

2. *Expresses its gratitude* to France for its ongoing leadership of this work area;

¹ This document was not formally edited.

3. *Reiterates* its commitment to continue to apply the Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus Convention in international forums (Almaty Guidelines) (contained in decision II/4) within the activities and subsidiary bodies established under the Convention;

4. *Decides* to continue the work on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums under the authority of the Working Group of the Parties;

5. *Requests* each Party to:

(a) Further actions to promote public participation at the national level regarding international environmental decision-making processes and take appropriate actions within the framework of international organizations in matters relating to the environment, bearing in mind relevant provisions of the Almaty Guidelines;

(b) Interact within and between its ministries to inform officials involved in other relevant international forums about article 3, paragraph 7, of the Convention and the Almaty Guidelines;

(c) Consider innovative ways to improve its own public's access to information and participation in international forums and share their experience with other Parties;

(d) Continue, either individually or in collaboration with other Parties, Signatories or like-minded Governments, to promote the principles of the Convention in the procedures of other international forums and in the work programmes, projects, decisions, instruments and other substantive outputs of those forums whose practices do not presently reflect the Guidelines or the principles of the Convention;

(e) Consider providing expert assistance to other interested Parties, Signatories or Governments on possible good practices to facilitate the public to participate more effectively in international forums, including when hosting important international events;

6. *Requests* the Working Group of the Parties:

(a) To convene regularly, on a needs basis, a thematic session on promoting the principles of the Convention in international forums as an item on the agenda of its meetings with a view to providing opportunities for Parties, Signatories and stakeholders to exchange experiences in the context of promoting the application of the principles of the Convention with respect to those international forums within the definition of paragraph 4 of the Almaty Guidelines identified by Parties or stakeholders to be of particular priority;

(b) If it considers that one or more specific issues merit more in-depth consideration, to convene, on an ad hoc basis, a workshop or other event on that theme, and/or mandate a consultant or group of experts to examine the subject matter and to report on their findings to the Working Group of the Parties;

(c) To oversee the collection and dissemination of good practices and innovative initiatives to promote the principles of the Convention through the Aarhus Good Practice online database;

(d) Subject to available resources, undertake a global review of the state of the art with respect to participatory tools and mechanisms for consulting the public on international decision-making and to share the outcomes of the review with Parties, stakeholders and interested international forums;

7. *Requests* the secretariat to provide upon request expert assistance, including, as appropriate, commenting on draft documents and expert participation at meetings or events organized by international forums, training sessions, workshops, learning centres or other platforms:

(a) To interested international forums seeking to make their processes more transparent and participatory;

(b) To individual Parties wishing to put in place tools or mechanisms to assist the public to participate more effectively in international forums, including when hosting an important conference of any international forum;

8. *Invites* Parties, Signatories, international and other organizations ~~to~~ ~~continue~~ supporting the implementation of article 3, paragraph 7 of the Convention ~~to~~ ~~allocate sufficient funds~~:

(a) At the national level, to support the participation of the public before, during and in the follow-up to meetings and events of international forums;

(b) At the international level, to support international forums to promote more effective public participation in their projects, processes and policies;

(c) To ~~the Convention's work programme, to~~ support ~~its~~ the activities of the Convention's work programme on this topic, including the secretariat's expert assistance and capacity-building work, in order that it may respond usefully to the expected ongoing demand;

9. *Welcomes* the offer of ~~France~~ ~~to continue~~ to lead the work on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums.