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Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
Access to Information, Public Participation
in Decision-making and Access to Justice
in Environmental Matters

Working Group of the Parties**Fifteenth meeting**

Geneva, 3–5 September 2012

Item 9 (a) of the provisional agenda

Preparations for the fifth ordinary session of the**Meeting of the Parties: future strategic plan****Draft proposal on the preparation of the strategic
plan 2015–2020****Note by the Bureau***Summary*

At its fourth session, the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) requested the Working Group of the Parties to develop a strategic plan for the Convention covering the period 2015–2020, to be ready for consideration and adoption at the fifth ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties.¹

The present draft proposal has been prepared by the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat. The paper outlines some possible modalities for developing a strategic plan for the Aarhus Convention, suggests an indicative timeline for the plan's preparation and a possible structure for the plan. It also highlights issues that could be taken into consideration in preparing the new strategic plan. The Working Group is invited to consider the document at its fifteenth meeting with a view to providing its comments, as appropriate, and approving it.

¹ See ECE/MP.PP/2011/2/Add.1, decision IV/8 on strategic planning for 2015–2020, available from http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop4/Documents/ece_mp.pp_2011_2_add.1_eng.pdf.

I. Modality of the drafting process

1. A strategic plan constitutes an important document of a political nature. It is therefore suggested that the Bureau, including its observer, assume the responsibility for developing the document. E-mail consultations and phone conferences should be used as much as possible for the drafting process. Drafts of the document submitted to the Working Group of the Parties will be translated into Russian and French by United Nations Conference Services (subject to the length of the document and date of its submission);² all interim drafts will be prepared in English only.
2. The drafting process could be chaired by the Chair of the Meeting of the Parties or the Chair may wish to appoint another Bureau member to undertake this task. The secretariat will provide assistance to the drafting process.

II. Structure of the strategic plan and approach to its development

3. The key elements of the current strategic plan could be maintained and its content updated, as appropriate. In this context, a framework for implementation of the strategic plan (section 4 below) could be elaborated further, as experience proves that this section in particular needs to be detailed and well formulated in order to be able to adequately assess implementation later. At the same time, a clearer presentation of the distribution of responsibilities for national implementation and for international cooperation might also be considered. In addition, some indicators or targets could be introduced, where feasible, to allow for assessing the progress in implementation of the future strategic plan. A model structure of the future strategic plan could be as follows:

1. Introduction.
 2. Vision and mission.
 3. Focal areas and strategic goals.
 4. Framework for implementation.
4. The framework for implementation could be elaborated along the lines set out in the following table.

² In accordance with the United Nations document management regulations, the document prepared by a subsidiary body and submitted for translation to United Nations Conference Services should not exceed 10,700 words. The document should be finalized for formatting, editing and translation at least 11 weeks prior to the date of the meeting. If these requirements are not met, the secretariat will need to arrange translation of the document outside the United Nations. The secretariat will explore the possibility of translating the document through in-kind contributions by interested Parties.

<i>Focal areas/strategic goals/objectives</i>	<i>Type of activity</i>	<i>Possible implementing partners</i>	<i>Indicators of progress/targets</i>
Focal area I and strategic goal I			
Objective I/1	Activity A (national)	Parties, public authorities concerned within Parties, stakeholders	
	Activity B (international)	Secretariat, relevant subsidiary body under the Convention, partner organizations	
Objective I/2	Activity A (national)	Parties, public authorities concerned within Parties, stakeholders	
	Activity B (international)	Secretariat, relevant subsidiary body under the Convention, partner organizations	

5. The Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), in its decision IV/8 on strategic planning for 2015–2020 (see ECE/MP.PP/2011/2/Add.1) specified, among others, that the new strategic plan should be based on the experiences and results of the implementation of the current Strategic Plan. The Convention's work programmes constitute an "operational" reflection of the Strategic Plan. In this regard, the following two documents provide background information on implementation of the objectives and related activities from the current Strategic Plan:

(a) Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2009–2011, including in relation to the Strategic Plan 2009–2014 (ECE/MP.PP/2011/9)³ details the objectives and related activities from the current Strategic Plan that were and were not addressed among the activities of the previous intersessional period;

(b) Work programme for 2012–2014 (ECE/MP.PP/2011/2/Add.1)⁴ provides information on the objectives and related activities from the current Strategic Plan that were addressed among the activities of the current intersessional period.

6. To facilitate the work on the preparation of the strategic plan, the secretariat could analyse the two above documents and prepare a consolidated overview of objectives and related activities from the current Strategic Plan which were or were not addressed among the activities of the previous and current intersessional periods.

7. It should be noted that in addition to those activities to be implemented primarily by the secretariat (see report on implementation of the work programme 2009–2011), several objectives and related activities from the current Strategic Plan were expected to be implemented by Parties, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. It is therefore suggested that, in addition to the report on implementation of the work programme 2009–2011, the following documents could also serve as sources for information on implementation of the current strategic plan:

³ Available from http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop4/Documents/ece_mp.pp_2011_9_eng.pdf.

⁴ Decision IV/6, available from http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop4/Documents/ece_mp.pp_2011_2_add.1_eng.pdf.

- (a) The synthesis report on the status of implementation of the Convention by Parties (ECE/MP.PP/2011/7);⁵
- (b) The report on capacity-building activities (ECE/MP.PP/2011/8);⁶
- (c) Other relevant reports prepared by stakeholders (for example, relevant reports prepared by civil society organizations);
- (d) The Chisinau Declaration (see ECE/MP.PP/2011/2/Add.1),⁷ adopted by the Meeting of the Parties, could inspire and inform the future strategic plan. Parties' individual national implementation reports⁸ may also be considered for the future strategic plan, recognizing at the same time that this will be a very resource-demanding exercise.

8. Another important aspect is that the new strategic plan and future decisions should be developed in the light of the outcomes of the evaluation of the work under the Convention (see ECE/MP.PP/2011/2/Add.1, decision IV/6 on the work programme for 2012–2014, Activity IX).⁹ It is therefore important to ensure that the outcomes of the evaluation inform the future Strategic Plan and that the evaluation is ready in advance of the final phase of preparation of the strategic plan (see also ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2012/7).

III. Indicative timeline

9. Decision IV/8 specifies that the strategic plan should be developed with the appropriate involvement of the public, and it calls upon relevant intergovernmental, regional and non-governmental organizations to contribute actively to the development of the plan. It also stipulates that the procedure for the preparation of the strategic plan should ensure that the draft plan is ready for consideration and adoption at the fifth ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties.

10. The indicative timeline below was prepared taking into consideration the above requirements and, specifically, the following: (a) Governments and stakeholders should be provided with adequate time for consultations within their respective constituencies, organizations and networks; and (b) an advance draft of the document should be ready for revision and approval by the Working Group of the Parties at its seventeenth meeting, prior to its meeting to be held back to back with the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The latter proved to be an effective approach during the preparation of the documents for the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties and one that was appreciated by both Governments and stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, which had the possibility to provide inputs and negotiate documents well in advance of their formal adoption.

⁵ Available from http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop4/Documents/ece_mp.pp_2011_7_eng.pdf.

⁶ Available from http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop4/Documents/ece_mp.pp_2011_8_eng.pdf.

⁷ Available from: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop4/Documents/ece_mp.pp_2011_2_add.1_eng.pdf.

⁸ Available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/reports_implementation_2011.html.

⁹ Available from http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop4/Documents/ece_mp.pp_2011_2_add.1_eng.pdf.

Timeline

- Draft proposal to be submitted by the Bureau to the Convention's Working Group of the Parties for discussion and approval (*fifteenth meeting, 3–5 September 2012*).
 - The first draft of the strategic plan to be prepared by the Chair, with the assistance of the secretariat, and distributed to the Bureau for comments (*by early December 2012*).
 - The second draft to be prepared for the Bureau's revision (*at the meeting planned for mid-February 2013*).
 - The third draft will be distributed to National Focal Points and stakeholders for comments after the meeting of the Bureau, and submitted to the Working Group of the Parties (*sixteenth meeting, tentatively scheduled for June 2013*) for its consideration.
 - The third draft to be further revised by the Bureau (*at the meeting planned for October/November 2013 or through e-mail consultations/phone conference*) after the sixteenth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.
 - The fourth draft is prepared for distribution to National Focal Points and stakeholders and for submission to the Working Group of the Parties (*seventeenth meeting, tentatively scheduled for February 2014*) for its consideration, revision and approval.
 - Submission of the final draft for the consideration of the Meeting of the Parties at its fifth session (*tentatively scheduled for summer 2014*).
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