Draft Decision VI/…on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Prepared by the Bureau**

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| The present document sets out a draft decision on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums. The Working Group of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters at its twentieth meeting (Geneva, 15-17 June 2016) requested the Bureau to prepare a draft decision on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums for the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Montenegro, 11-14 September 2017). It was agreed that the draft decision will be circulated to Parties and stakeholders for comments prior to its finalisation for the twenty-first meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Geneva, 4-6 April 2017).  The present document was prepared by the Bureau on the basis of the relevant outcomes of the twentieth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties; the outcomes of the work undertaken by the Working Group in the current intersession period; the Note by the Chair of the thematic session on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums (AC/WGP-20/Inf.5) submitted to the twentieth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties; and decision V/4 on the same subject matter, adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its fifth session (Maastricht, the Netherlands, 30 June-1 July 2014).  The draft decision is distributed to Parties and stakeholders for comments with the deadline to respond before 7 November 2016. The Bureau will consider the comments received and will finalise the draft decision for its submission to the twenty-first meeting of the Working Group of the Parties. The Working Group of the Parties is expected to consider and approve the draft decision and submit it to the Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session for consideration. |
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*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, IV/3 and V/4 on promoting the principles of the Convention in international forums, decision V/5 on the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 and decision VI/… on the Work Programme for 2018–2021,

*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 of 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

*Mindful* of major ongoing international processes, including those related to the sustainable development, climate change, international financial institutions, stakeholders participation and access to information policies of other agencies and programmes of the United Nations as well as international trade negotiations;

*Recognizing* that expert assistance is an important powerful tool for 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,

*Having reviewed* the reports on the thematic sessions on promoting the principles of the Convention in international forums of the Convention’s Working Group of the Parties (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2015/2, ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2016/2 and ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2017/…),

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;

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. *Invites* each Party to:

(a) Undertake further actions to promote public participation at 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 its 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 Almaty 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;

(f) Use as a guidance the checklist of measures, prepared under the auspices of the Convention, when developing action plans to systematically promote the principles of the Convention in all international forums dealing with matters relating to the environment

5. *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;

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, depending on the availability of resources;

(c) To focus on forums dealing with climate change, trade negotiations and biosafety, recognizing that other forums might be also considered, subject to decision by Parties;

(d) To continue addressing cross cutting issues (e.g. innovative practices; different modalities for engaging stakeholders; self-organization of stakeholders);

(e) To further monitor the progress achieved with regard to stakeholder engagement and access to information policy of the United Nations Environment Programme; the promotion of the Convention’s principles when implementating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in international financial institutions;

7. *Requests* the secretariat:

(a) 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;

(b) Subject to availability of resources, 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:

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

(ii) 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:

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

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

(c) By supporting 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 … to lead the work on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums.

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1. This document was not formally edited. The document will be formally edited prior to the twenty-first meeting of the Working Group of the Parties. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)