

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

Working Group of the Parties

Twenty-second meeting

Geneva, 19-21 June 2018

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of outcomes

**LIST OF DECISIONS AND MAJOR OUTCOMES OF THE MEETING
as adopted by the Working Group at its twenty-second meeting¹**

Item 1. Adoption of the agenda

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by the Chair regarding the meeting's proceedings.
- ii. Adopted the provisional agenda of the meeting.

Item 2. Status of ratification of the Convention and the amendment to the Convention

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information on the status of ratification of the Convention, its amendment and the Protocol on PRTRs, provided by the secretariat.
- ii. Welcomed the ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs by Montenegro.

Item 3. Substantive issues

(a) Thematic session on access to information

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Welcomed the exchange of information, experiences, challenges and good practices provided by the representatives of Parties and stakeholders with regard to the scope of environmental information, its dissemination and provision by different public authorities meeting the needs of different users, timeliness and the application of grounds of refusals in accordance with the Convention;
- ii. Noted an increasing focus on the implementation of article 5 of the Convention and the need to match the Convention's obligations with opportunities provided by modern technologies;

¹ This document was not formally edited.

- iii. Noted the importance of facilitating effective public access to environment-related product information and its linkages with the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals;
- iv. Reiterated that effective public access to environmental information supports the achievement of target 16.10 of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and underpins the implementation of other relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets (for example, SDGs 3 (health), 6 (water), 12 (sustainable consumption and production) and others);
- v. Welcomed the initiatives of the Parties and stakeholders to promote active dissemination of environmental information and use of new technologies and called on Parties, partner organizations and other stakeholders to undertake similar initiatives;
- vi. Noted the importance of keeping under review any restrictions in access to environmental information and encouraged Parties to continue taking the necessary measures to address existing challenges and further promote the effective access to environmental information in accordance with the Convention;
- vii. Encouraged Parties and stakeholders to continue the submission of case studies on electronic information tools and population of the Aarhus Clearinghouse with the relevant resources.

(b) Public participation in decision-making

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by the secretariat, on behalf of the Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making, and by delegations on recent developments related to public participation in decision-making;
- ii. Reiterated that effective public participation in decision-making that relates to environmental matters supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and in particular, target 16.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

(c) Access to justice

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Justice and by delegations on recent developments related to access to justice.
- ii. Reiterated that effective access to justice in environmental matters supports the achievement of target 16.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and underpins the implementation of other relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

(d) Genetically modified organisms

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by delegations on recent developments related to the subject area.
- ii. Called upon the following Parties, whose ratification of the GMO amendment would count towards its entry into force: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan and Ukraine, to take serious steps towards ratification and requested the above Parties to report at the next meeting of the Working Group on the progress achieved.

Item 4. Procedures and mechanisms

(a) Compliance mechanism

The Working Group of the Parties took note of the information provided by the Chair of the Compliance Committee on the outcomes of the Compliance Committee fifty-seventh, fifty-eighth, fifty-ninth and sixtieth meetings (ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2017/6, ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2017/10, ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2017/23 and ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2018/2) and by delegations on recent developments and other issues related to the subject area.

(b) Reporting mechanism

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by delegations.
- ii. Expressed its serious concern over the continuing failure of Armenia, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to submit a report on the implementation of the Convention.
- iii. Urged these Parties to submit their reports without any further delay.

(c) Capacity-building and awareness-raising

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by delegations.
- ii. Expressed its appreciation for the continuing cooperation of the secretariat on capacity building activities with other partners.

Item 5. Accession to the Convention by States from outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region and other relevant developments and interlinkages related to the promotion of the Convention and its principles

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Congratulated countries and civil society from Latin American and the Caribbean and ECLAC on the adoption of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazu Agreement) and reiterated its support in promoting ratification and implementation of this critically important for the region legally binding instrument.
- ii. Took note of the information provided by the secretariat and Guinea Bissau regarding the formal written expression of intention to accede to the Convention.
- iii. Welcomed the progress achieved by Guinea-Bissau and invited the Government of Guinea-Bissau to proceed with accession in accordance with decision IV/5 of the Meeting of the Parties at the next seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties.
- iv. Welcomed initiatives taken by Parties or stakeholders to promote the Convention beyond the ECE region and called upon the secretariat and other relevant organizations to continue cooperation and further promote synergy in the area of environmental rights.

Item 6. Implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021, including financial matters

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/4); and the information provided by the secretariat on financial resource situation of the secretariat, and the Report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the Convention's work programmes for 2015–2017 and 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2018/5).
- ii. Welcomed the synergies with partner organizations that helped to effective implementation of the work programme.
- iii. Also took note of information on the pledges provided by the secretariat and delegations on expected financial contributions; called upon the Parties to proceed with making financial contributions as soon as possible and expressed its concern over the fact that contributions are still arriving late in the year.
- iv. Expressed appreciation for the work done by the secretariat and recognized the difficulties posed by limited and unpredictable funding.

Item 7. Preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of preliminary dates for the seventh ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties—second part of June 2021.
- ii. Called on Parties to inform the secretariat by January 2019 about their possible interest in hosting, also taking into consideration that the session, will be organized back to back with the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs, and mandated the secretariat to liaise with potentially interested Parties on the hosting matter.
- iii. Mandated the Bureau to take the decision on the hosting prior to the next meeting of the Working Group, as appropriate, and to report to the next meeting of the Working Group accordingly.

Item 8. Any other business

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information by the EU about its intended statement regarding the compliance mechanism, which was made available to delegations on the same day and its updated version was delivered at agenda item 13, along with the statement of the European ECO Forum on the same subject matter.
- ii. Took note of information provided by Iceland regarding a national symposium on access to justice that it organised in April 2018.

Items 9 - 11 Special segment on the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention

Opening of the special segment

The Working Group of the Parties thanked Ms. Martine Rohn-Brossard, representative of Switzerland, and Ms. Maria Kolesnikova, representative of the NGO MoveGreen, for their key note statements.

Aarhus Storytelling

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Thanked Ms. Eva Juul Jensen for moderating this session.
- ii. Thanked Mr. Massimo Cozzone for delivering the key messages from the Rome Anniversary Event and expressed its appreciation to Italy for organizing the Event.
- iii. Thanked speakers and took note of stories shared by Mr. Jit Peters, Mr. Jerzy Jendrośka, Mr. Jonas Ebbesson, Mr. Jeremy Wates, Mr. Jan Dusik, Mr. Etienne

- Ballan, Mr. Luc Lavrysen, Mr. Andriy Andrushevych that illustrated their thoughts and involvement in the negotiations and implementation of the Convention.
- iv. Reaffirmed the important role of the Convention demonstrated through statements in the context of its global significance, impact on other international processes and regions, promotion of environmental rights, safeguarding environmental activists, the rule of law and the achievement of SDGs.
 - v. Took note of statements by Finland, the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Justice, and representatives of Guta Association, and OEKOBUEO (Justice and Environment Austria).

Youth, Aarhus and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Thanked Ms. Dafina Peci for moderating this session.
- ii. Thanked speakers and took note of the statements and presentations by Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, the Dutch Youth Delegate on Sustainable Development to the United Nations, the representatives of the Aarhus Centre Khujand and U-report Ukraine / UNICEF Ukraine.
- iii. Acknowledged the potential offered by the Convention which was demonstrated through the statements in the context of the Youth involvement in environmental decision-making and its vision for creating a sustainable future.
- iv. Took note of statements by Bulgaria, Finland, Guinea-Bissau, the Belgium UN Youth Delegates for Sustainable Development, a former Swiss UN Youth Delegate as well as representatives of the European Investment Bank, European Youth Parliament Switzerland, Terre des Hommes and Young Sustainable Impact.

Takeaways from Special Segment - Reflections on Discussions

The Working Group of the Parties took note of the reflections on discussions during the segment as presented by the rapporteurs.

General segment (continued)

Item 12. Thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Thanked Parties that participated in the session's survey on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international decision-making on chemicals and waste and noted good examples shared through the survey.
- ii. Expressed its appreciation to the representatives of Albania, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Secretariats of the BRS Conventions, Minamata Convention on Mercury and SAICM, and European ECO Forum for their presentations.
- iii. Took note of the background documents prepared by the secretariat on the compatibility of the rules of procedure and practices of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions (AC/WGP-22/Inf.7), the rules of procedure and practices of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (AC/WGP-22/Inf.8) and the rules of procedure and practices of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) (AC/WGP-22/Inf.9) with the Almaty Guidelines.
- iv. Noted the need for strengthening cooperation between national focal points of the Aarhus Convention and BRS Conventions, Minamata Convention on Mercury and SAICM as to promote the principles of the Aarhus Convention in the respective processes effectively.
- v. Expressed its appreciation to the UNFCCC secretariat for its continuous cooperation.
- vi. Expressed its appreciation to the UNEP secretariat, ECE secretariat, AIIB and EIB for the written updates (that were made available on the meeting's webpage).
- vii. Encouraged Parties to continue promoting the Convention's principles in chemical, waste, UNEP and IFI-related processes, climate-related negotiations, and when implementing the SDGs.
- viii. Welcomed the progress made in promoting the Convention's principles in international forums, but recognized that more efforts should be done to further transparency and effective public participation in international environment-related decision-making.
- ix. Encouraged Parties to continue fulfilling their obligations under article 3, paragraph 7, of the Convention and to consider the results achieved at the next meeting of the Working Group.

- x. Reiterated that promotion of transparency and effective public participation in international decision-making on environmental matters is key for achievement of SDGs, in particular Goals 16 and 17.

Item 13. Adoption of outcomes

The Working Group took note of the reports by facilitators of the capacity building networking event. The Working Group adopted the major outcomes and decisions presented by the Chair at the meeting (as contained in this document) and requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, to finalize the report and incorporate these adopted outcomes and decisions.
