

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

Nineteenth meeting

Geneva, 17–19 June 2015

Item 11 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the outcomes

LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND OUTCOMES¹
as adopted by the Working Group at its nineteenth meeting

Item 1. Adoption of the agenda

The Working Group of the Parties took note of the information provided by the Chair. The Working Group of the Parties adopted the provisional agenda of the meeting.

Item 2. Status of ratification of the Convention and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs)

The Working Group took note of the information on the status of ratification of the Convention, its amendment and its Protocol on PRTRs, provided by the secretariat.

Item 3. Substantive issues

(a) Access to information

The Working Group took note of:

- i. The report on the third meeting of the Task Force on Access to Information (ECE/M. PP/WG.1/2015/3) presented by the representative of the Republic of Moldova, on behalf of the Chair of the Task Force, and welcomed the work of the Task Force.
- ii. Recent developments related to access to information provided by delegations.

¹ This document was not formally adopted.

(b) Public participation in decision-making

The Working Group took note of:

- i. The report by the Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making on its fifth meeting (ECE/MR.PP/WG.1/2015/4) and welcomed the work of the Task Force.
- ii. Information provided by delegations on recent developments related to public participation in decision-making.

(c) Access to justice

The Working Group took note of:

- i. The report by the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Justice on key outcomes of its eighth meeting and welcomed the work of the Task Force.
- ii. The information provided by delegations on recent developments related to access to justice.

(d) Genetically modified organisms

The Working Group:

- i. Welcomed the secretariat's cooperation with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.
- ii. Took note of the information provided by delegations on recent developments related to the subject area.
- iii. Called upon the following Parties, whose ratification of the GMO amendment would count towards its entry into force: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, France, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malta, 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 took note of:

- i. Information provided by the secretariat on the outcomes of the Compliance Committee forty-fifth, forty-sixth, forty-seventh and forty-eighth meetings (ECE/MR.PP/C.1/2014/7, ECE/MR.PP/C.1/2014/11, ECE/MR.PP/C.1/2014/14 and ECE/MR.PP/C.1/2015/2) and expressed its strong support for the work of the Committee.
- ii. Information provided by delegations on recent developments related to the subject area.

(b) National implementation reports

The Working Group expressed its serious concern over the continuing failure of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to submit its reports on the implementation of the Convention and urged it to submit the reports without any further delay.

(c) Capacity-building and awareness-raising

The Working Group:

- i. Took note of the report of the ninth capacity-building coordination meeting (AC/WGP-19/Inf.1) and of information provided by the secretariat and delegations.
- ii. Expressed its appreciation for the continuing cooperation of the secretariat on capacity building activities with other partners.

Item 5. Promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums

The Working Group:

- i. Expressed its appreciation to representatives of Albania, France, Georgia, the European Commission, the Danish Board of Technology, European ECO-Forum, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Trade Organization for their presentations.
- ii. Took note of the information provided by the representatives of the UNFCCC secretariat, Parties, and other stakeholders regarding good practices, innovative initiatives and challenges in promoting access to information and public participation in the UNFCCC processes.
- iii. Welcomed the progress in promoting Aarhus Convention principles in UNFCCC processes and expressed its appreciation to France for implementing these principles in the lead up to COP 21.
- iv. Invited UNFCCC Parties to consider organising a joint formal session between civil society and Ministers/high-level officials at COP-21.
- v. Encouraged Parties to promote public participation in the text of the future Paris agreement and to address outcomes of the WWViews consultations in formal documents.
- vi. Took note of the updates provided by UNEP and comments provided by Parties and stakeholders on UNEP's stakeholder engagement and access to information policies and expressed its concern that the current drafts are not in line with the Convention's principles.
- vii. Took note of information provided by WTO, Parties and other stakeholders on good practices and challenges regarding transparency and public participation in international trade negotiations
- viii. Took note of information provided by UNECE, Parties and stakeholders on practices that promote the Convention's principles, when developing or implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ix. Encouraged Parties to continue promoting the Convention's principles in UNEP processes, and climate and trade - related negotiations

- x. Encouraged Parties to promote the Convention's principles and to continue to be guided by these principles when implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.
- xi. Welcomed the progress achieved by Parties in fulfilling their obligations under article 3, paragraph 7 and encouraged them to continue their efforts to address remaining challenges.
- xii. Encouraged Parties to join their efforts in promoting the Convention's principles also with non-Parties, considering that a number of countries from outside the ECE-region demonstrated their support to greater public engagement in international forums.
- xiii. Invited Parties to report on the results achieved to the next meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

Item 6. Implementation of the work programmes for 2012–2014 and 2015–2017

The Working Group:

- i. Took note of the Report on the implementation of the Convention's work programmes for 2012–2014 and 2015–2017 (ECE/MR.PP/WG.1/2015/5) and of the information on the human resources situation in the secretariat.
- ii. Expressed its appreciation to the secretariat for its effective and efficient work.
- iii. Took note of the information provided by the Vice-Chair of the Bureau regarding the sixth informal meeting between representatives of the governing bodies of the ECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the Committee of Environmental Policy.
- iv. took note of the information provided by the secretariat of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents regarding possible amendments to the Industrial Accidents Convention to strengthen its provisions on public participation and urged Parties to liaise with the focal points to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents as to align the amendments with the Aarhus Convention.
- v. expressed its appreciation to partner organisations for their support and welcomed the progress made in building synergies that help the implementation of the work programme.

Item 7. Financial matters

(a) Contributions and expenditures

The Working Group:

- i. Took note of the information provided by the secretariat and of the report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the Convention's work programmes for 2012–2014 and 2015–2017 (ECE/MR.PP/WG.1/2015/6).
- ii. Took note of the pledges provided by delegations of their planned financial contributions.
- iii. Recognized the urgent need for allocating more resources from the United Nations regular budget to support the work of the Aarhus Convention and expressed its concern with regard to the shortage of contributions and low number of pledges, also recalling decision V/7 on financial arrangements adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its fifth session (Maastricht, 30 June-1 July 2014).

- iv. Expressed particular concern over the fact that contributions are arriving late in the year, which further hinders the implementation of the work programme.
- v. Was also alarmed by the decision by some Parties that have traditionally supported the activities under the Convention with generous contributions to drastically cut these contributions and expressed concern over the potential impact of this decision on the implementation of the Convention's work programme.
- vi. Expressed concern regarding the expected discontinuation of funding of one administrative staff member by 13% programme costs and requested written clarification from the responsible United Nations body on this matter.

(b) Future funding of the Convention

The Working Group considered the draft proposal, prepared by the Bureau at the request of the Meeting of the Parties, on the estimation of the operational costs needed for the effective functioning of the Convention (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2015/7) and entrusted the Bureau to revise the proposal with the support of the secretariat in light of the comments received and submit it to the next meeting of the Working Group for its consideration.

Item 8. Promotion of the Convention and relevant developments and interlinkages

The Working Group:

- i. Expressed its appreciation to the Government of Chile and ECLAC for the information provided and welcomed the progress made in the development of a regional instrument on the application of Principle 10 in Latin America and the Caribbean and reiterated its support over the process of establishing a legally binding instrument in the region.
- ii. Took note of the information provided by the secretariat and delegations regarding promotion of the Convention in other regions.
- iii. Welcomed progress achieved in promoting the principles of the Convention in Japan and welcomed this initiative.
- iv. Welcomed initiatives taken by Parties and stakeholders to promote the Convention beyond the ECE region.

Item 9. Preparations for the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties

The Working Group:

- i. Took note of possible dates for the sixth ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties.
- ii. Welcomed the preliminary interest expressed by Montenegro to host the sixth session and requested the secretariat to further liaise with Montenegro on this matter.
- iii. Called on other interested Parties to inform the secretariat by January 2016 about their potential interest in hosting, also taking into consideration that the session might be organised back to back with the third 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.

- iv. Mandated the Bureau to take the decision on the hosting and timing prior to the next meeting of the Working Group, as appropriate, and to report to the next meeting of the Working Group accordingly.

Item 10. Other business

No items were discussed.

Item 11. Adoption of outcomes

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 meeting report and incorporate these adopted outcomes and decisions.
