

**19th Meeting of the Working Group to the Aarhus Convention
(Geneva, 17-19. June 2015)**

Agenda item 5: Promotion of the Convention's principles in international forums

Norway

UNEP's access to information policy

We appreciate the work to establish stakeholder engagement policy and access to information policy. Norway actively engaged in both processes with the aim of securing as wide and easy as possible engagement and access to information. Norway provided comments to UNEP's access to information policy which were posted on [UNEP's website](#). The main points were that the policy should state

- a clear presumption in favour of information disclosure,
- that the exemptions are to be interpreted in a restrictive manner, taking into account the public interest in disclosure and whether the information requested relates to emissions into the environment, and
- that it should be considered if parts of the information could nevertheless be disclosed,
- that the main rule should be that information is made available free of charge, but that a fee may be charged depending on the volume of the information requested, the work necessary to collect and transmit it and the means by which it is provided,
- that reasons for denying any request for access to information and clear information about the right to appeal, including the applicable requirements, procedures and time-limits, should be provided.

Since the possibility of providing comments was provided and used by many others in addition to Norway, we would have expected the comments to be taken into account by UNEP. Like several other countries participating, we were surprised to hear at the UNEP's Open Dialogue session on its Access to Information Policy held on 26 May that this was not the case, and therefore requested UNEP to take comments into account and produce a new draft for further comments. We are pleased to hear that UNEP has decided to provide their reactions to the comments and a new draft, and to submit these for further comments. We request UNEP to take these comments into account.