

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-fourth meeting

Geneva, 1–3 July 2020 (virtually/online) and 29-30 October 2020 (on-site at the Palais des Nations in Geneva)

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

Organisation of Work for the twenty-fourth meeting

**To be held at virtual meeting on 1-3 July 2020 and at in-person meeting
on 29-30 October 2020 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva***

Introduction

Due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic it will not be feasible to hold in-person meeting on 1-3 July 2020 as was planned originally. The Bureau held consultations and agreed that, in order to ensure smooth preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties and taking into consideration the availability of meeting rooms with interpretation at the Palais des Nations in 2020, the meeting of the Working Group of the Parties shall be held in two slots: (a) items of informational nature will be considered in a virtual format on 1-3 July with no decision-making and (b) items requiring decision-making will be considered at in-person sessions on 29-30 October 2020¹.

During the virtual sessions on 1-3 July the Working Group of the Parties will be expected to consider items that would require provision of information by the Chairs of subsidiary bodies and of the session on prompting the Convention's principles in international forums, the secretariat or other organizations. No decisions will be taken during the virtual sessions except adoption of the agenda for virtual sessions and of organisation of work. The sessions will result only in draft outcomes that will be considered at in-person meeting in October. However, Parties and stakeholders will be requested to submit written comments on documents that are subject to decision-making for the sessions in July as to progress with preparations and discussions at in-person meeting in October. Parties and stakeholders may also submit statements on items that are not subject to decision-making as to inform participants of any relevant developments. Considering different time zones and requirements for interpretation, the distribution of timing for virtual sessions will be as follow:

- 1 July: 10.00-13.00 (Geneva time)
- 2 July: 10.00-13.00 (Geneva time)
- 3 July: 10.00-13.00 (Geneva time)

The in-person sessions on 29-30 October will focus only on two thematic sessions (on access to justice and prompting the Convention's principles in international forums) and on items that are subject to decision-making, including the future work on access to information, public participation in decision-making, access to justice, promotion of the Convention and its principles etc, based on the Chairs' notes and outcomes of the

* This document was not formally edited. Information on documents, registration for the meeting and other practical arrangements will be made available on the meeting web page at www.unece.org/index.php?id=53323.

¹ The meeting of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making scheduled for 29-30 October 2020 will be moved to 2021.

sessions held in July (*these issues will be considered during the item on future work programme*). The below sections reflect distribution of items between virtual and in-person sessions:

- Part I: Organisation of Work with indication of items to be considered on 1-3 July at virtual sessions and on 29-30 October at in-person sessions
- Part II: Organisation of Work with indication of only those items that will be considered on 1-3 July at virtual meeting
- Part III: Organisation of Work with indication of only those items that will be considered on 29-30 October at in-person meeting

**Part I: Organisation of Work with indication of items
to be considered on 1-3 July at virtual sessions and on 29-30 October at in-person sessions**

- 1. Adoption of the agenda.**
 - *1-3 July: for organisation of work of the meeting and for sessions to be considered in a virtual format*
 - *29-30 October: for sessions to be considered in in-person format*
- 2. Status of ratification of the Convention.**
 - *1-3 July: report by the secretariat*
- 3. Substantive issues:**
 - (a) Access to justice;**
 - *1-3 July: report by the Chair of the Task Force*
 - *29-30 October: thematic session on access to justice*
 - (b) Access to information;**
 - *1-3 July: report by the Chair of the Task Force*
 - (c) Public participation in decision-making;**
 - *1-3 July: report by the Chair of the Task Force*
 - (d) Genetically modified organisms.**
 - *1-3 July: report on the work done and plans regarding subject matter*
- 4. Procedures and mechanisms:**
 - (a) Compliance mechanism;**
 - *1-3 July: report by the Chair of the Compliance Committee, update on relevant matters, as required*
 - (b) Reporting mechanism;**
 - *1-3 July: report by the secretariat*
 - (c) Capacity-building and awareness-raising.**
 - *1-3 July: update on relevant matters, as required*
- 5. Promotion of the Convention and relevant developments and interlinkages.**
 - *1-3 July: update on relevant matters, as required*

6. Implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021, including financial matters.

- *1-3 July: consideration of the reports on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 and on financial matters*

7. Preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties:**(a) Future work programme;**

- *29-30 October: discussion and consideration of the future work programme, including work areas on access to information, public participation in decision-making, access to justice, compliance mechanism, rapid response mechanism, promotion of the Convention and its principles etc, based on the Chairs' notes and outcomes of the sessions held in July*

(b) Future strategic plan;

- *29-30 October: discussion and consideration of the future Strategic Plan*

(c) Accession by States from outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region;

- *1-3 July: consideration of the note on subject matter, prepared by the secretariat, update on relevant matters, as required*

(d) Future financial arrangements;

- *29-30 October: discussion and consideration of the future financial arrangements under the Convention*

(e) Agenda of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties;

- *1-3 July: presentation of the agenda of the seventh session by the Chair*
- *29-30 October: discussion and consideration of the agenda of the seventh session*

(f) Hosting of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties.

- *1-3 July: update on the hosting matter*

8. Promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums.

- *1-3 July: report by the Chair of the thematic session on Promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums*
- *29-30 October: thematic session on Promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums*

9. Other business.

- *1-3 July and 29-30 October*

10. Adoption of outcomes.

- *1-3 July: presentation of draft outcomes of the sessions held virtually by the Chair*
- *29-30 October: adoption of outcomes of the meeting*

Part II: Organisation of Work: items to be considered on 1-3 July at a virtual meeting

1. Adoption of the agenda

Timing: Wednesday, 1 July, 10–10.10 a.m.

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 (Aarhus Convention) will be invited to adopt the organisation of work for the meeting and the agenda for the below sessions to be held virtually.

2. Status of ratification of the Convention

Timing: Wednesday, 1 July, 10.10–10.20 a.m.

The secretariat will provide the Working Group with an overview of the status of ratification, acceptance, approval and accession with respect to the Aarhus Convention. Delegations will be invited to report on any recent or anticipated developments in this regard. The Working Group is expected to take note of these developments.

3. Substantive issues

(a) Access to justice

Timing: Wednesday, 1 July, 10.20 a.m.– 10.45 a.m.

The Chair of the Task Force will report on the work done and will present its note. Delegations will be invited to share any relevant information.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

Note by the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Justice (AC/WGP-24/Inf.3)

(b) Access to information

Timing: Wednesday, 1 July, 10.45 a.m.— 11.45 a.m.

The Chair of the Task Force will report on the work done and will present her note and the next draft of the updated Recommendations on electronic information tools. Delegations will be invited to share any relevant information.

Documentation

Report of the sixth meeting of the Task Force on Access to Information (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/3)

Note by the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Information (AC/WGP-24/Inf.1)

Draft updated recommendations on the electronic information tools (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/14)

Accompanying document for the draft updated recommendations on the electronic information tools (AC/WGP-24/Inf.12)

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

(c) Public participation in decision-making

Timing: Wednesday, 1 July, 11.45 a.m.– 12.30 p.m.

The Chair of the Task Force will report on the work done and will present her note. Delegations will be invited to share any relevant information.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

Note by the Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making (AC/WGP-24/Inf.2)

(d) Genetically modified organisms

Timing: Wednesday, 1 July, 12.30–1 p.m.

The secretariat will inform the Working Group about the status of ratification, acceptance, approval and accession with respect to the amendment to the Convention providing for public participation in decisions on the deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market of genetically modified organisms. Delegations will be invited to report on any recent or anticipated developments in this regard. The Working Group will be informed about the outcomes of the third Joint Global Round Table on Public Awareness, Access to Information and Public Participation regarding Living Modified Organisms/Genetically Modified Organisms (Geneva, 16–18 December 2019).

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

Report on the third Joint Global Round Table on Public Awareness, Access to Information and Public Participation regarding Living Modified Organisms/Genetically Modified Organisms (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/6)

4. Procedures and mechanisms**(a) Compliance mechanism**

Timing: Thursday, 2 July, 10.00–10.50 a.m.

The Working Group will be informed about the outcomes of the recent meetings of the Compliance Committee and other relevant matters since the twenty-third meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Geneva, 26–28 June 2019). Delegations will be invited to share any relevant information.

Documentation

Report of the Compliance Committee on its sixty-fourth meeting (ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2019/5)

Report of the Compliance Committee on its sixty-fifth meeting (ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2019/8)

Report of the Compliance Committee on its sixty-sixth meeting (ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2020/2)

Note on the membership of the Compliance Committee (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/9)

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

(b) Reporting mechanism

Timing: Thursday, 2 July, 10.50–11.15 a.m.

The Working Group will be informed about the status of submission of national implementation reports since the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties and on the preparation of national implementation reports for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)s

(c) Capacity-building and awareness-raising

Timing: Thursday, 2 July, 11.15–11.45 a.m.

The Working Group will be informed about capacity-building activities carried out since the last meeting of the Working Group and to discuss the future work in this area.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

5. Promotion of the Convention and relevant developments and interlinkages

Timing: Thursday, 2 July, 11.45 a.m.–12.10 p.m.

The Working Group will be informed regarding promotion of the Convention in other regions and cooperation with other organizations on relevant subjects.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

6. Implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021, including financial matters

Timing: Thursday, 2 July, 12.10–12.30 p.m.

The Working Group is expected to consider the reports by the secretariat on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 and on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the work programme, taking into consideration the discussion under the preceding agenda items. Delegations will be encouraged to notify the Working Group of their planned financial contributions.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

Report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the Convention's work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/5)

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

(c) Accession by States from outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

Timing: Thursday, 2 July, 12.30–13.00 p.m.

The Working Group of the Parties is expected to consider a note on the expression of intention by Guinea-Bissau to accede to the Convention. Delegations will be invited to report on any recent or anticipated developments in this regard.

Documentation

Expression of intention by Guinea-Bissau to accede to the Convention (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/12)

(e) Agenda of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

Timing: Friday, 3 July, 10.00–10.40 a.m.

The Working Group of the Parties is expected to consider draft elements of the provisional agenda of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties.

Documentation

Draft elements of the provisional agenda of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/10)

(f) Hosting of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

Timing: Friday, 3 July, 10.40–11.00 a.m.

The Working Group will be informed about hosting matters.

8. Promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums

Timing: Friday, 3 July, 11.00–11.40 a.m.

The Chair of the thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums will report on the work done and will present her note.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

Note by the Chair of the thematic session on public participation in international forums (AC/WGP-24/Inf.4)

9. Other business

Timing: Friday, 3 July, 11.40–11.45 p.m.

Delegates wishing to propose points under this item are requested to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

10. Adoption of outcomes

Timing: Friday, 3 July, 12.15–12.45 p.m.²

The Chair will present draft outcomes of the above sessions held virtually.

Part III: Organisation of Work: items to be considered on 29-30 October at in-person meeting

1. Adoption of the agenda

Timing: Thursday, 29 October, 10–10.10 a.m.

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 (Aarhus Convention) will be invited to adopt the agenda for the below sessions to be held in-person.

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

(a) Future work programme

Timing: Thursday, 29 October, 10.10–1 p.m. and 5.30–6 p.m.

The Working Group is expected to consider: (a) a draft note on a rapid response mechanism to deal with cases related to article 3.8 of the Aarhus Convention; and (b) the future activities in different work areas, such as access to information, public participation in decision-making, access to justice, promotion of the Convention and its principles, compliance mechanism, including the priority issues for the work areas for the next intersessional period. Finally, the Working Group is expected to consider draft elements of the work programme for 2022–2025.

It is expected that the draft documents will be finalized, as appropriate, in the light of the comments to be provided at the meeting and thereafter, for submission and approval at the twenty-fifth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, with a view to their possible adoption at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties.

Documentation

Draft elements of the work programme for 2022–2025 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/7)

Draft note on a rapid response mechanism to deal with cases related to article 3.8 of the Aarhus Convention (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/13)

Overview of major relevant mechanisms that cover, or may potentially cover, the rights of environmental defenders under other treaties and organizations (AC/WGP-24/Inf.7)

Accompanying document for the draft elements of the work programme for 2022–2025 (AC/WGP-24/Inf.11)

Note by the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Information (AC/WGP-24/Inf.1)

Note by the Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making (AC/WGP-24/Inf.2)

Note by the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Justice (AC/WGP-24/Inf.3)

² The draft outcomes will be presented by the Chair verbally. There might be a coffee break (11.45–12.15 p.m.) to allow for finalization of draft outcomes, which will be distributed to participants by email after the meeting.

Note by the Chair of the thematic session on public participation in international forums (AC/WGP-24/Inf.4)

3. Substantive issues

(a) Access to justice

Timing: Thursday, 29 October, 3 –5.30 p.m.

The item will be comprised of a thematic session on access to justice. The thematic session will be organized in the format of panel presentations, followed by a general discussion. The subjects for discussion are based on decision VI/3 (ECE/MP.PP/2017/2/Add.1), adopted by the Convention's Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session (Budva, Montenegro, 11–14 September 2017), and the key outcomes of the work of the Task Force on Access to Justice. The Working Group will be invited to consider the role of public interest litigation. The topic will provide an opportunity to discuss achievements and barriers regarding the following key issues: (i) standing; (ii) scope of review; (iii) assistance mechanisms and costs; (iv) timeliness; (v) remedies; and (vi) protection against harassment and other forms of retaliation. The Working Group will also consider synergies with relevant activities under other international forums and cooperation between ministries of the environment and ministries of justice. Representatives of ministries of justice, judges, representatives of other judiciary and of environmental public interest lawyers will be invited to join the session. The detailed programme for the thematic session will be made available on the meeting web page in due course.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

Provisional programme of the thematic session on access to justice (AC/WGP-24/Inf.5)

7. Preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties (continued)

(b) Future strategic plan

Timing: Friday, 30 October, 10.00–10.45 a.m.

The Working Group is expected to consider the draft Strategic Plan for 2022–2030. It is expected that the draft document will be finalized, in the light of the comments to be provided at the meeting and thereafter, for submission and approval at the twenty-fifth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, with a view to its possible adoption at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties.

Documentation

Draft Strategic Plan for 2022–2030 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/11)

Self-assessment of Parties regarding implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2015–2020 (AC/WGP-24/Inf.8)

Accompanying document for the draft Strategic Plan for 2022–2030 (AC/WGP-24/Inf.9)

(d) Future financial arrangements

Timing: Friday, 30 October, 10.45–11.15 a.m.

The Working Group is expected to consider draft elements of possible financial arrangements under the Convention. It is expected that the draft document will be finalized, in the light of the comments to be provided at the meeting and thereafter, for submission and approval at the twenty-fifth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, with a view to its possible adoption at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties.

Documentation

Draft elements of possible financial arrangements under the Convention (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/8)

Accompanying document for the draft elements of possible financial arrangements under the Convention (AC/WGP-24/Inf.10)

(e) Agenda of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

Timing: Friday, 30 October, 11.15–12.00 a.m.

The Working Group of the Parties is expected to consider draft elements of the provisional agenda of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties. It is expected that the draft document will be finalized, in the light of the comments to be provided at the meeting and thereafter, for submission and approval at the twenty-fifth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, with a view to its possible adoption at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties.

Documentation

Draft elements of the provisional agenda of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/10)

8. Promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums

Timing: Friday, 30 October, 12.00 a.m.–1 p.m. and 3–4.40 p.m.

The item will be comprised of a thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums. The thematic session will be organized in the format of panel presentations, followed by a general discussion. The topics for discussion are based on decision VI/4, adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention at its sixth session (Budva, Montenegro, 11–14 September 2017) and the outcomes of the previous thematic sessions. The current session will focus on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international trade negotiations and in International Civil Aviation Organization processes. Additional topics will include: a relevant update on the processes under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the policy on stakeholder engagement of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme; and the Sustainable Development Goal-related processes. The detailed programme for the thematic session will be made available on the meeting web page in due course.

Documentation

Report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2020/4)

Provisional programme of the thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in international forums (AC/WGP-24/Inf.6)

9. Other business

Timing: Friday, 30 October, 4.40–4.45 p.m.

Delegates wishing to propose points under this item are requested to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

10. Adoption of outcomes

Timing: Friday, 30 October, 5.15–6.00 p.m.³

The Working Group is expected to consider and adopt the outcomes of its twenty-fourth meeting comprised of outcomes of both virtual and in-person sessions.

³ With a view to ensuring equal opportunities for English-, French- and Russian-speaking delegations and saving paper, the meeting will result in a list of decisions and outcomes that will be projected onto a screen before the close of the meeting. The decisions and outcomes will be presented by the Chair verbally, thereby allowing for interpretation. There will then be a coffee break (4.45–5.15 p.m.) to allow for finalization of the list of decisions, which will be distributed to participants by email after the meeting.