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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 to the Convention

Eighth meeting
Geneva, 31 October–2 November 2007

**REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP OF THE PARTIES
ON ITS EIGHTH SESSION**

1. The eighth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention was held in Geneva from 31 October to 2 November 2007.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of 30 Parties, namely Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Community represented by the European Commission; one Signatory, Ireland; and two other States, Serbia and Uzbekistan.
3. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) and the Regional Environmental Center for Moldova were also represented.

4. The following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were represented: Earthjustice, GLOBE Europe, and within the framework of the European ECO-Forum, Environmental Ambassadors (Serbia), the European Environmental Bureau, Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), Biosfera-Centre for Education, Environment and Nature Protection (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Ecological Society Green Salvation (Kazakhstan), Environment-People-Law (Ukraine), OEKOBUERO (Austria), Mama-86 (Ukraine) and the Resource and Analysis Center “Society and Environment” (Ukraine). Interactive Health Ecology Access Links (Switzerland) and Public Research and Regulation Initiative (the Netherlands) were also present as observers.
5. Ms. Hanne Bjurstrøm (Norway), Chair of the Working Group, opened the meeting.

I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

6. The Working Group adopted the agenda for the meeting as set out in document ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/4.

II. STATUS OF RATIFICATION OF THE CONVENTION AND THE PROTOCOL ON POLLUTANT RELEASE AND TRANSFER REGISTERS

7. The secretariat drew the attention of delegations to an informal paper it had prepared giving an overview of the status of ratification¹ of the Convention, the amendment to the Convention, and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs).
8. No new ratifications of the Convention had occurred since the previous meeting of the Working Group.
9. Lithuania had ratified the amendment to the Convention, bringing the number of ratifications to four. Two countries, namely Moldova and Romania, expected to ratify the amendment by the end of 2007 or early in 2008.
10. Since the previous meeting of the Working Group, Estonia and Germany had ratified the Protocol, bringing the number of ratifications to five. Five Member States, namely Croatia, Romania, Slovakia, Tajikistan and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, informed the meeting that they planned to ratify the Protocol in 2008.

III. POLLUTANT RELEASE AND TRANSFER REGISTERS

11. The secretariat presented a written report submitted by the Chair of the Working Group on PRTRs, Mr. Michel Amand (Belgium), on the outcome of the fifth meeting of that Working

¹ The terms “ratification” and “ratified” are used in this report to encompass ratification, acceptance, approval and accession in accordance with article 19 of the Convention.

Group, held from 22 to 24 October 2007. Having concluded that it was very unlikely that there would be a sufficient number of ratifications in time to hold the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol back-to-back with the third meeting of the Parties to the Convention, the Working Group had concluded that it would be necessary to postpone the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol to the first half of 2009. The Working Group on PRTRs had agreed to give a mandate to its Bureau to discuss with Bureau of the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention and the host Government for the third meeting of the Parties to the Convention the possibility of organizing a special session during the high-level segment of that meeting and of adopting a statement at this special session. In addition, the Chair of the Working Group on PRTRs had invited delegations to consider who would host the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in 2009.

12. The Working Group on PRTRs had endorsed draft decisions on rules of procedure and a compliance review mechanism to the Protocol and agreed to present both draft decisions for adoption at the first session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. In addition, important progress had been made with respect to developing draft decisions on financial arrangements, work programmes, reporting requirements and the establishment of an intersessional body.

13. European ECO-Forum reiterated the view that it had expressed at the fifth meeting of the Working Group on PRTRs that in endorsing the draft decisions on rules of procedure and a compliance review mechanism, the Parties represented in the Working Group on PRTRs had failed to adhere to the principles of the Convention, specifically the obligations stated in article 3, paragraph 7. It also expressed similar concerns over the fact that in a draft decision on reporting on implementation, text that would require consultation with the public in the preparation of national implementation reports, in line with the current practice under the Convention, remained in square brackets.

14. The Working Group of the Parties took note of the activities of the Working Group on PRTRs. In order to keep up the momentum in the Protocol's ratification process, it supported having a special session on the Protocol during the high-level segment of the meeting of the Parties in Riga. It further welcomed the progress the Working Group on PRTRs had made on preparations for entry into force.

IV. GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS AND INTERPRETATION OF ARTICLE 14 OF THE CONVENTION

15. The Convention secretariat reported on the progress in development of a draft decision on the entry into force of amendments, according to the procedure agreed upon at the sixth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (5-7 April 2006) and further elaborated at its seventh meeting (2-4 May 2007). This had involved consultations between the Bureau, the legal expert group and the secretariat about a preliminary draft. The text had been amended by the secretariat and would be sent to the legal expert group for consideration before being transmitted for comments to the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, following which the secretariat would submit the draft decision to the Working Group for consideration at its ninth meeting.

16. The secretariat reported to the Working Group on steps taken to prepare a regional or international expert meeting on access to information, public participation and access to justice

in the field of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/2, paras. 18–23). The secretariat reported that informal contact had been made with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which was generally positive about the possibility of collaborating on such a workshop and had drawn attention to the fact that the topic of public participation was due to be discussed at the forthcoming fourth Conference of the Parties to the Convention acting as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol (CoP/MoP-4).

17. The secretariat also reported on the results of a questionnaire that had been sent to national focal points, GMO experts and non-governmental organizations seeking their views on the pressing issues to be covered in the workshop. The Bureau had agreed to circulate such a questionnaire at the suggestion of the Netherlands, as the country funding the workshop, in order to clarify what the main needs were and thus to help determine the scope of the proposed workshop.

18. The Chair invited the Working Group, and in particular the delegations representing the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), to share any further views on the most pressing issues to be covered in the workshop. There was broad support for addressing the information and participation pillars and some support for including access to justice. Most delegations were in favour of the workshop addressing deliberate release, including placing on the market, and some delegations were also in favour of contained use being covered. Several EECCA countries stated that the workshop should address all three pillars of the Convention, but that it should consider deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market, and should include best practices both in EECCA countries and non-EECCA countries regarding access to information, public participation and access to justice with respect to GMOs. It was important to consider synergies with other international instruments, particularly those dealing with trade, and that access to information in the context of the European Food Safety Authority was an additional issue that should be discussed. The view was also expressed that it was important to ensure a good balance of participants, including those involved in GMO decision-making and communication to the public.

19. The Working Group mandated the Bureau and the Netherlands as lead country to determine the scope and draw up the programme for the workshop taking into account the discussion that had taken place during the meeting. It agreed that the workshop should be held in or near Bonn, Germany, back-to-back and immediately following the Cartagena Protocol's COP/MOP-4.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS

20. The Chair of the Working Group reported on the outcome of the meeting of representatives of international forums dealing with matters relating to the environment, which was held in Geneva on 20 and 21 June 2007 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.8). The secretariat reported on the preparations for the third meeting of the Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums, to be held on 8 and 9 November 2007. That meeting was expected, inter alia, to review the outcome of the meeting of representatives of international forums and the comments received from Parties, Signatories, other interested States, NGOs and other relevant actors on their experience regarding the application of the Almaty Guidelines on the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus Convention in International Forums, pursuant to the procedure put in

place by the Working Group at its seventh meeting (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/2, paras. 27 and 30). The secretariat briefly reported to the Working Group on the comments on experience regarding the application of the Almaty Guidelines received to date.

21. Portugal, on behalf of the European Union (EU), expressed the view that there had not yet been sufficient time to gain broad practical experience with the application of the Guidelines and that there was no need to initiate a revision of the Guidelines at this stage. It emphasized the important role of internal consultations by the Parties and, recalling decision I/8 on reporting requirements, noted that comments relating to experience of the Parties with the application of article 3, paragraph 7, should be included in their national implementation reports.

22. On the basis of the outcome of the discussions at the next Task Force meeting in November 2007, the Working Group mandated the Bureau in collaboration with the secretariat, to prepare a draft decision on the future work on the topic.

VI. ACCESS TO JUSTICE

23. The Chair of the Task Force on Access to Justice, Mr. Håkan Bengtsson (Sweden), presented the outcomes of the second meeting of that Task Force, including the mini-conference "Opening the Doors to Justice: the Challenge of Strengthening Public Access" (10–12 September 2007, Geneva) (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.10). He also reported on the outcomes of the High-level Judicial Workshop on Access to Justice in Environmental Matters for the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus regions organized on 4 and 5 June 2007 in Kiev with the financial support of Sweden, and in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.11). A similar event was being planned for the second half of 2008 in the region of South-Eastern Europe with the financial support of the Government of France.

24. The Working Group took note of the reports and welcomed the work undertaken by the Task Force, including the capacity-building initiatives for the judiciary. There was broad support to continue the work of the Task Force after the third meeting of the Parties. Delegations which intervened emphasized, inter alia, the importance of continuing work on access to justice with a practical focus. Some delegations noted that the development of guidelines or guidance documents could be useful. Portugal, on behalf of the EU, indicated that the work of the Task Force should continue in accordance with its current mandate and also indicated that the Task Force was the appropriate body to continue the work on access to justice. The importance of focusing capacity-building activities on the judiciary as well as on administrative authorities and legal professionals such as prosecutors and attorneys at the subregional, national and local levels was also mentioned.

25. The Working Group mandated the Bureau to prepare, on the basis of the report of the Task Force, the text of a draft decision on access to justice for discussion at the Working Group's ninth meeting.

VII. ELECTRONIC INFORMATION TOOLS AND THE CLEARINGHOUSE MECHANISM

26. The secretariat informed the meeting of the relevant activities regarding electronic information tools and the clearinghouse mechanism that had taken place since the seventh meeting of the Working Group and on the preparations for the sixth meeting of the Task Force on Electronic Information Tools, scheduled to be held in Geneva on 13 and 14 December 2007. The secretariat had launched the redesigned central portal of the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy (<http://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org>) at a side-event to the annual session of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development, which had been organized jointly by the United Nations Regional Commissions on 21 May 2007 in Geneva.

27. The secretariat had participated in the second plenary meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on e-Democracy (CAHDE) of the Council of Europe held in Strasbourg, France, on 8 and 9 October 2007, and had provided input to the CAHDE e-democracy glossary. It further reported on a workshop on the Convention held on 19 October 2007 in The Hague at the annual meeting of the Green Spider Network, a European Environmental Communication network sponsored by the European Commission. The meeting had been hosted by the Ministry of Environment of the Netherlands. Fifteen national communication officers, including several experts of the Task Force had participated in the event. As an outcome, the Green Spider Network had agreed to establish an informal working group to share experience and ideas for developing national communication strategies for the Convention, identifying target audiences, key messages and communication channels. The Green Spider Network and the secretariat had further discussed the possibility of organizing a seminar on strategic communication as a side-event to the meeting of the Parties in Riga.

28. The secretariat also reported on the second subregional workshop "Capacity-building for the Aarhus Clearinghouse Mechanism and Electronic Information Tools", which had been held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 8 and 9 June 2007. The event had been co-organized by CAREC. CAREC informed the meeting of the follow-up activities to the workshop. It had partnered with the Environmental Action Network for Central Asia and Russia (CARNet) on a project to support digital information networks for dissemination of environmental information in Central Asia and to further develop the Aarhus Clearinghouse Mechanism. A second joint project aimed to prepare a manual for use by Clearinghouse national nodes for the Central Asia and Caucasus subregions in local languages.

29. The Working Group took note of these activities and gave the Bureau a mandate to develop, with the support of the secretariat, a draft decision for the future work of the Task Force on the basis of the report of the sixth meeting of the Task Force on its possible future activities.

VIII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

30. Austria reported on the preparations for the workshop on public participation in strategic decision-making scheduled to take place in Sofia on 3 and 4 December 2007. The workshop was being jointly hosted by Bulgaria and Austria and being organized together with the secretariat.

The Sofia workshop would focus on practical examples reflecting the implementation of articles 7 and 8 of the Convention. Experts on the Convention and the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Espoo Convention² had been invited to participate in the workshop.

31. The Working Group took note of the preparations and thanked Austria and Bulgaria for their work. It agreed to consider at its next meeting possible further steps in this field to be taken following the third meeting of the Parties, taking into account the experience gained from the Sofia workshop.

IX. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

32. The secretariat reminded the Working Group that national implementation reports were due to be submitted to the secretariat in electronic form as well as in signed hard copy in the national language and in one of the official UNECE languages by 15 December 2007. It emphasized the importance of respecting the deadline set out in decision II/10 of the Meeting of the Parties, as this was a prerequisite for effective preparation of the synthesis report and for distribution of the national reports as official input documents for the Meeting of the Parties in the three official languages.

33. The secretariat also drew the attention of the Parties to the guidance document on the implementation of the reporting requirements in decisions I/8 and II/10 with respect to the second reporting cycle (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.4) prepared by the Compliance Committee and endorsed by the Working Group at its sixth meeting (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/2, para. 55). Among other things, the guidance document emphasized the importance of a consultative and participatory process in the preparation of the national reports and provided a non-prescriptive checklist of issues for possible consideration in the reports in accordance with the specific situation in each country.

34. Delegations presented progress in preparation of their national implementation reports. Most indicated that the reports would be submitted to the secretariat within the deadline. Some indicated that there could be slight delays and one Party reported that there would be a significant delay in the submission of its report. All of those who intervened reported that the preparation process involved consultation with other relevant authorities and NGOs, inter alia, through Web-based consultation, electronic dissemination of draft reports and/or stakeholder meetings.

35. The European ECO-Forum informed the Working Group that it was monitoring the process of the national reports' preparation with a view to facilitating NGO involvement at the national level. It noted that there had been many positive developments, such as extensive public consultations and, in some cases, involvement of stakeholders during several different stages of the process. However, it expressed concern over the fact that in some countries the preparation of the reports had not yet started.

² The UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.

36. The Working Group took note of the information provided and encouraged all Parties to do their best to comply with the agreed procedures for preparation and submission of the reports.

X. COMPLIANCE MECHANISM

37. The secretariat reported on two meetings of the Compliance Committee which had taken place since the previous meeting of the Working Group of Parties (ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2007/4 and ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2007/6). At its sixteenth meeting, the Committee had finalized and adopted its findings and recommendations with regard to compliance by Albania (ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2007/4/Add.1). There were currently seven communications from members of the public at various stages of review by the Committee, out of a total of 21 communications brought before the Committee since 2004.

38. At its two forthcoming meetings (28–30 November 2007 and 5–7 March 2008), the Committee was expected to work on the preparation of its report to the Meeting of the Parties. This report, in accordance with the Committee's mandate, would address, inter alia, issues of compliance by individual Parties as well as overall compliance by Parties with the reporting requirements in the second reporting cycle.

39. The Working Group took note of this information.

XI. CAPACITY-BUILDING

40. The secretariat reported on its recent activities in the field of capacity-building. Some of these had been undertaken in the context of the work of the various task forces under the Convention, such as the High-level Judicial Workshop on Access to Justice in Environmental Matters for the Eastern Europe and South Caucasus regions (see para. 23) and the Workshop on the Clearinghouse Mechanism and Electronic Information Tools (see para. 28). It had also contributed to sessions on the Convention in the context of a workshop for the parliamentarians from the South-East European region organized by OSCE on 19 and 20 October 2007 in Prishtina, Kosovo/Serbia and the meeting of the Green Spider Network from 18 to 20 October 2007 in The Hague (see para. 27).

41. UNITAR reported that it was working on the development of a Public Participation Tool-Kit to provide an accessible, flexible and user-friendly instrument to support skills development of public officials responsible for preparing plans for public involvement in environmental decision-making processes. The Tool-Kit would also direct interested stakeholders to more specialized guidance and training materials (e.g. guidance on preparing public hearings, notice and comment, consensus conferences).

42. Furthermore, UNITAR presented information on an International Conference on Environmental Governance and Democracy, which would take place at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, United States, from 10 to 11 May 2008. The Conference would bring together international experts, including academic scholars and representatives from governments, inter-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector, to discuss stakeholder

engagement at various levels of governance and review research approaches addressing the interface between institutions, public participation and environmental sustainability.

43. The secretariat informed the Working Group that the fifth annual meeting of regional and international organizations in the context of the capacity-building framework would take place on 7 December 2007. In addition to the exchange of information and promotion of synergies between activities, the meeting would address the issue of the agenda item on capacity-building of the third meeting of the Parties.

44. Several capacity-building activities were presented by NGOs. European ECO-Forum reported that it would hold a training event from 27 to 30 November 2007 in Geneva within its project on NGO capacity-building on the use of compliance review mechanism under the Convention. The Foundation Environment-People-Law (Ukraine) presented its activities, including a project addressing issues of access to courts. CAREC reported on implementing PRTR and access to justice activities in Central Asia.

45. REC reported on a number of ongoing capacity-building initiatives, including trainings on access to justice for judges and prosecutors in Albania, public participation trainings for civil society in South-Eastern Europe, and capacity-building on European Pollutant Emission Register (EPER), E-PRTR and PRTR for authorities in that subregion. REC noted that there was a significant need for capacity-building, in particular with regard to national-level training on access to justice and capacity-building activities targeting officials of non-environmental agencies and local-level authorities.

46. The representative of the Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) pointed out that capacity-building activities, in particular judicial training on access to justice, were also important in the EU region.

47. The Working Group took note of this information.

XII. LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING

48. The Chair of the Working Group presented, on behalf of the Bureau, a draft of a long-term strategic plan for the Convention, drawn up on the basis of draft elements prepared by the Expert Group on Long-Term Strategic Planning (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.12). She expressed her gratitude to the Expert Group and its Chair, Professor Marc Pallemmaerts, for the excellent work carried out.

49. Following a first discussion of the draft, the Bureau prepared a revised draft in track changes mode and circulated it during the meeting. The Working Group endorsed the structure of the document. Some delegations expressed their full satisfaction with the draft text, some provided specific comments on it, while others indicated that they required more time to prepare their comments. One delegation indicated a preference for including focal areas II and III as subsections within a single focal area dealing with future development and expansion of the Convention. There were different views on how the issue of sustainable development should be addressed in the plan.

50. The Working Group agreed to invite delegations to provide specific comments on the new draft electronically by 30 November 2007. On the basis of the comments received, the Bureau would revise it as necessary for further consideration at the next meeting of the Working Group. The Chair expressed her concern that it had not been possible to make further progress on the issue and encouraged all delegations to come to the next meeting ready to discuss the specific elements in the text. The secretariat pointed out that this would pose problems with meeting the submission deadline for documents for the ninth meeting of the Working Group, but that it would do its best to ensure that all of the documents would be available in the three official languages in time to enable delegates to prepare for the meeting.

XIII. FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2007

51. The secretariat reported on the interim status of financial contributions received and the expenditures incurred to date in 2007. It noted that the figures were still unofficial and that a detailed breakdown of the costs according to work programme areas was not available yet. On the basis of the information available before the meeting, the expected income for 2007, adjusted to take account only of contributions earmarked for use in 2007, was expected to be in the order of US\$ 900,000. The forecast expenditures for 2007 would be approximately in the order of \$850,000.

52. The secretariat highlighted the positive developments regarding the Convention's financial status, especially compared to the low level of contributions noted at the fifteenth Bureau meeting on 19 June 2007. It thanked all the government officials who had worked to make these contributions possible. The income itself as well as its relation to expenditures was seen as very positive and the overall position as quite healthy, while possibly still not meeting the anticipated core requirements.

53. Following up on the invitation made at the seventh meeting of the Working Group to inform the secretariat of pledges for 2007 by 1 July 2007 and, if possible, to inform the secretariat about pledges for 2008 by 1 December 2008, delegations were invited to provide updated information on their contributions for the remainder of 2007 and for 2008. In this regard, the secretariat had sent out a reminder on 29 October 2007 to the National Focal Points. The consolidated information on the actual and anticipated contributions for 2007 and 2008 is set out in the annex.

54. The Chair noted that, considering the income received and expected for 2007 and the pledges made for 2008, the work programme could be carried out as planned. She expressed the hope that the contributions for 2008 would arrive earlier in the year to secure the work programme.

55. The Working Group took note of the report and its implications for the 2006–2008 work programme as reported by the secretariat and the Bureau.

XIV. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

56. The Chair presented a draft decision on financial arrangements (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.13) prepared by the Bureau pursuant to the request of the Working Group at its seventh meeting (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/2, para. 79) and explained the main features of the new draft.

57. Options 1A and 1B of the previous draft had been deleted and accordingly, the reference in the preamble to a “legally binding obligation” had been replaced by a reference to a “firm commitment”. A number of changes had been made to Option 2A, now renamed Option 1, in order to make the language more binding, even if from a legal point of view it was not legally binding. The Chair pointed out that the chosen language was drawn from precedents in the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, to which most of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention were already Parties. Option 2B, now renamed Option 2, had not been changed.

58. The Working Group was invited to discuss the draft and, if necessary, establish a contact group to further develop the draft (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.13). Some delegations expressed their support of Option 1 of the new draft. It was pointed out that only Option 1 would make a difference compared to the already existing scheme of financial arrangements. It was proposed by one delegation to delete the word “voluntary” in Option 1, since from a legal point of view financial contributions were voluntary anyway according to the language of the present draft. Furthermore, it was proposed to include language ensuring continuation of the existing practice of providing financial support for NGOs, as had been proposed with respect to the PRTR Protocol (ECE/MP.PP/AC.1/2007/4, para 26).

59. Portugal, on behalf of the European Union, thanked the Bureau and the secretariat for all the work done and emphasized the need for a reliable system of stable financial contributions. It recalled the need to discuss, within the Working Group, the results of the monitoring of the shares system provided for in decision II/6 adopted at the second meeting of the Parties in Almaty in 2005, in accordance with paragraph 7 (c) of that decision. Any proposed new options for future financial arrangements should be discussed in the light of these results and of the current financial status. It emphasized the close connection between financial needs and the established work programme, taking into account the need for more detailed prioritization in order to implement the core activities envisaged in the latter, particularly in the event that financial coverage may not be sufficient to cover these activities. A voluntary scheme of contributions, including the possible development of appropriate guidance on the level of contributions, should be further considered. It proposed to establish a contact group at the next meeting of the Working Group to further discuss the issue.

60. The Working Group agreed to resume its discussion on the issue at its next meeting where if necessary a contact group would be established to further develop the draft decision on financial arrangements. The Chair expressed her concern that it had not been possible to make further progress on the issue and encouraged all delegations to come to the next meeting prepared to discuss specific elements in the text.

XV. SIXTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE”

61. The secretariat reported on two side-events concerning the Convention and the PRTR Protocol organized at the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” held in Belgrade from 10 to 12 October 2007. The Convention side-event had been organized jointly by UNECE and REC. The PRTR side-event had been sponsored and chaired by Switzerland and organized by UNECE. The secretariat thanked the Swiss Government for its support and participation in the event.

62. The secretariat also reported that there had been a number of other side-events with relevance to the Convention. One of these, on Greening Information Technology, had been organized by the Association for Progressive Communications-ITES (Hungary) and had involved the secretariat in a live global webcast.

XVI. PREPARATIONS FOR THE THIRD ORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARTIES

63. The Chair, the representative of Latvia as the host country of the third ordinary meeting of the Parties and the secretariat reported on preparations for the meeting. The Chair and the secretariat had visited Riga and expressed their satisfaction with the venue and the arrangements being made.

64. The Working Group discussed the main elements for the provisional agenda of the meeting on the basis of draft elements prepared by the Bureau (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.14). Following some minor changes to the structure, it endorsed the elements and mandated the Bureau and secretariat to prepare a draft of an annotated provisional agenda for consideration at its next meeting.

65. Although the provisional agenda would only be finalized following the next meeting of the Working Group, the formal invitations to the third meeting of the Parties would be sent out in early 2008, giving an indication of the key themes to be discussed. The invitation would allow the registration process to begin.

66. The Working Group discussed the key themes for the high-level segment of the meeting of the Parties, taking note of the proposal to hold a special session on PRTR. The European ECO-Forum presented a number of specific proposals and circulated an informal paper listing these for consideration by the Working Group. Other delegations also presented various proposals, but some delegations indicated that they required more time to prepare their suggestions. Delegations were invited to provide comments to the Bureau, through the secretariat, by 30 November 2007. A question was raised about side-events and the secretariat informed the Working Group that a procedure for applying to hold side-events would be launched following issuing of the invitation.

67. The Working Group also discussed the procedure for preparing a draft declaration of the Meeting of the Parties. It mandated the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat to prepare a first draft for discussion at its next meeting, and as input to the Bureau’s preparation of the draft, it invited delegations to provide comments to the secretariat from delegations by 30 November 2007 on the content of the declaration.

XVII. ADOPTION OF REPORT AND CLOSURE OF MEETING

68. The Working Group adopted its report based on a draft and entrusted the chair and the secretariat with finalizing the text on the understanding that the French- and Russian-speaking delegates would reserve their positions until the report was available in French and Russian. The Chair thanked the interpreters, the secretariat and the delegates for their participation in the work, and closed the meeting.

Annex**OUTSTANDING PLEDGES OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO
THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2006-2008**

The following table contains information on pledges made during the eighth meeting of the Working Group. In addition, the table incorporates information on pledges made during the seventh meeting of the Working Group and during the intersessional period where, as of the date of the eighth meeting, the funds pledged had not arrived into the Trust Fund or otherwise been contributed. The table does not include information on contributions that had already been made by that date. That information will be included in an informal document for review at the ninth meeting of the Working Group and will be incorporated in the financial report to the third meeting of the Parties.

Country or delegation	Amount to be contributed
Armenia	Contribution for 2007 intended, amount to be clarified.
Austria	€10,000 for PPSD workshop in 2007. A further €10,000 for 2008.
Azerbaijan	Information to be provided at a later stage.
Belgium	Federal pledge of €21,000 outstanding for 2007. €32,000 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval.
Bulgaria	In-kind contribution for Public Participation in Strategic Decision-making (PPSD) workshop in 2007. \$6,000 for 2008.
Czech Republic	\$10,000 for 2008.
Estonia	\$10,000 for 2008.
Finland	€10,000 for 2008 will be ready to be paid in December 2007. Will clarify if further contribution for 2008 is possible, since it is a year with a meeting of the Parties.
France	€40,000 for subregional access to justice workshop in South-Eastern Europe. A further €60,000 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval.
Georgia	At least \$1,000 for 2008.
Germany	\$60,000 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval.
Greece	\$10,000 for 2007.
Hungary	\$3,000 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval.

Country or delegation	Amount to be contributed
Italy	Will make a contribution for 2008; exact amount is still being considered.
Kyrgyzstan	Contribution intended, amount to be clarified.
Latvia	In-kind contribution for 2008 as host of MoP-3.
Moldova	Will make contribution by end of year (invoice for \$1,000 requested).
Netherlands	\$1,584 remaining to be paid for 2006, \$31,680 for 2007, \$31,680 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval. In addition, funding for GMO workshop in 2008.
Norway	165,000 NOK for 2007 in the process of being sent. \$20,000 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval. Will contribute earmarked money to support participation of EECCA country representatives in meetings in 2008, exact amount to be determined.
Poland	Information on 2008 contribution to be provided at a later stage.
Portugal	Information to be provided at a later stage.
Romania	\$2,500 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval.
Slovakia	\$956 for 2008.
Slovenia	€3,500 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval.
Spain	€20,000 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval.
Sweden	210,000 SEK to support the meetings under the Task Force on Access to Justice. \$20,000 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval.
Switzerland	30,000 CHF for Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers work programme.
Tajikistan	\$200 for 2008.
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Contribution for 2007 and 2008 intended, amount to be clarified.
United Kingdom	Will contribute approximately £30,000 for 2007. Expects to contribute similar amount for 2008.
European Community	€100,000 for 2008, subject to budgetary approval.