



FOURTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE

Århus, Denmark
23 - 25 June 1998

**RESOLUTION ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AND ACCESS TO
JUSTICE IN ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS**

submitted by

the Ad Hoc Preparatory Working Group of Senior Officials



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Fourth Ministerial Conference
"Environment for Europe"
Århus, Denmark, 23-25 June 1998

**RESOLUTION ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN
DECISION-MAKING AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS**

We, the Signatories to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters,

Resolve to strive for the entry into force of the Convention as soon as possible and to seek to apply the Convention to the maximum extent possible pending its entry into force, and to continue to cooperate in gradually developing policies and strategies related to matters within the scope of this Convention;

Recommend that the ECE Guidelines on Access to Environmental Information and Public Participation in Environmental Decision-making endorsed at the Third Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 25 October 1995, should be taken into account in the application of the Convention pending its entry into force;

Emphasize that, besides Governments, parliaments, regional and local authorities and non-governmental organizations also have a key role to play at the national, regional and local level in the implementation of the Convention;

Acknowledge that the Convention is an important element in the regional implementation of Agenda 21 and that its ratification will further the convergence of environmental legislation and strengthen the process of democratization in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE);

Emphasize the importance of capacity building to maximize the effectiveness of officials, authorities and non-governmental organizations in implementing the provisions of this Convention;

Call upon each Government to promote environmental education and environmental awareness among the public, particularly in relation to the opportunities that this Convention provides;

Call upon public, private and international fund providers to give high priority to projects that aim to further the objectives of this Convention;

Call for close cooperation between ECE, other bodies involved in the "Environment for Europe" process and other relevant international governmental and non-governmental organizations on the issues of this Convention, for example in the implementation of national environmental action plans and national environmental health action plans;

Recognize that the successful application of the Convention is linked to adequate administrative and additional financial resources being made available to support and maintain the initiatives necessary to achieve this goal and call upon Governments to make voluntary financial contributions to this process so

that sufficient financial means are available to carry out the programme of activities of the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy related to the Convention;

Request the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy actively to promote and keep under review the process of ratification of the Convention pending its entry into force by, inter alia:

(a) Establishing the Meeting of the Signatories to the Convention, open to all members of ECE and to observers, to identify activities that need to be undertaken pending the entry into force of the Convention, to report to the Committee on progress made in respect of the ratification of the Convention; and to prepare for the first meeting of the Parties;

(b) Giving full recognition to the activities identified by the Meeting of the Signatories within the Committee's work programme and when the Committee considers the allocation of ECE resources provided for the environment;

(c) Encouraging Governments to make voluntary contributions to ensure that sufficient resources are available to support these activities;

Consider that, pending the entry into force of the Convention, the necessary authority should be given to ECE and its Executive Secretary to provide for a sufficient secretariat and, in the framework of the existing budgetary structure, for appropriate financial means;

Urge the Parties at their first meeting or as soon as possible thereafter to establish effective compliance arrangements in accordance with article 15 of the Convention, and call upon the Parties to comply with such arrangements;

Commend the international organizations and non-governmental organizations, in particular environmental organizations, for their active and constructive participation in the development of the Convention and recommend that they should be allowed to participate in the same spirit in the Meeting of the Signatories and its activities to the extent possible, based on a provisional application of the provisions of article 10, paragraphs 2 (c), 4 and 5, of the Convention;

Recommend that non-governmental organizations should be allowed to participate effectively in the preparation of instruments on environmental protection by other intergovernmental organizations;

Recognize the importance of the application of the provisions of the Convention to deliberate releases of genetically modified organisms into the environment, and request the Parties, at their first meeting, to further develop the application of the Convention by means of inter alia more precise provisions, taking into account the work done under the Convention on Biological Diversity which is developing a protocol on biosafety;

Invite the other member States of ECE and any other State that is a Member of the United Nations and/or of other regional commissions to accede to this Convention;

Encourage other international organizations, including other United Nations regional commissions and bodies, to develop appropriate arrangements relating to access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, drawing, as appropriate, on the Convention and to take such other action as may be appropriate to further its objectives.