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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Working Group for the preparation  
of the first meeting of the Parties to  
the Convention on Access to Information,  
Public Participation in Decision-making and  
Access to Justice in Environmental Matters  
(First meeting, 28-30 November 2001)

**REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING**

1. The meeting of the Working Group for the preparation of the first meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters took place in Geneva, Switzerland, from 28 to 30 November 2001.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Governments of Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan and Yugoslavia.
3. The Commission of the European Communities was represented.
4. The United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for Europe (UNEP/ROE) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) were represented.

5. The following regional and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were represented: Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund, European ECO Forum, GLOBE Europe, the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and World Resources Institute.

6. At the invitation of the secretariat, the Chairperson of the Advisory Board to the Aarhus Convention, Mr. Willem Kakebeeke (Netherlands), also attended the meeting.

7. Mr. Kaj Bärlund, Director of the UNECE Environment and Human Settlements Division, opened the meeting. He stressed the significance of the entry into force of the Convention and cited the many congratulatory statements sent by more than 20 environment ministers from the ECE region as well as by many leading figures from international organizations and NGOs. These messages were a source of encouragement in the challenges faced by the Working Group and served as a reminder of the importance of the work that it was engaged in and of the responsibility to make effective progress in that work. The entry into force of such a convention within little over three years was a great achievement. He particularly welcomed the large number of ratifications in Central and Eastern Europe and the newly independent States and urged other countries, particularly those in Western Europe, that were not yet Parties to step up their efforts to ratify or accede to the Convention in time for the first meeting of the Parties.

#### **I. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND BUREAU**

8. Mr. Francesco La Camera was unanimously elected as Chairperson of the Working Group. It was agreed that the Bureau established by the Meeting of the Signatories had performed an essential role and it was agreed to establish a Bureau along the same lines which would serve up to the first meeting of the Parties, again with the proviso that the inclusion of a representative of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the new Bureau should not be seen to set a precedent which could prejudice the discussion on the draft rules of procedure. The members of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Signatories, with one exception, were elected to serve in the new Bureau, namely Mr. Veit Koester (Denmark) and Mr. Jerzy Jendroska (Poland) as Vice-Chairpersons, together with Ms. Nevenka Preradovic (Croatia), Ms. Tatiana Shakirova (Kazakhstan) and Ms. Irene Bauer (Norway). The NGO representative on the former Bureau, Ms. Fe Sanchis Moreno, was unable to continue in such a capacity for professional reasons and Ms. Mary Taylor was elected in her place.

#### **II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

9. The provisional agenda for the meeting (CEP/WG.5/2001/1) was adopted without amendment.

#### **III. ACTIVITIES PROMOTING THE RATIFICATION OF THE CONVENTION AND ITS EFFECTIVE APPLICATION**

10. The secretariat provided an overview of the status of ratification, acceptance, approval and accession. On 1 August 2001, Armenia had been the sixteenth country to deposit its instrument of ratification with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, thereby triggering

the entry into force on 30 October 2001 in accordance with article 20 of the Convention. A total of 17 countries – Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine – had ratified, approved or acceded to the Convention.

11. Representatives of States not being Parties to the Convention were invited to inform the Meeting of their targets for ratifying or acceding to the Convention. The representative of Poland stated that the ratification bill had been adopted by parliament in June 2000, and so the internal process had been completed; however, the instrument of ratification had not yet been deposited. The representative of Austria informed the Meeting that it would strive to ratify in time for the first meeting of the Parties but that a definite statement as to the exact timing was not possible at this stage. The delegate from Uzbekistan indicated that it expected to ratify by the end of the year 2001. Belgium, France, Slovenia and Sweden expected to ratify in the first half of 2002. In France, the elections in spring 2002 might affect the timing. The Netherlands aimed at ratifying by mid-2002. Croatia, Norway and the United Kingdom expected to do so in the second half of the year 2002. The Czech Republic, Finland and Latvia expected to ratify some time in 2002. Spain expected to do so by the end of 2002 or in the beginning of 2003. Yugoslavia expected to do so in the first half of 2003. Germany and Switzerland expect to ratify in 2003-2004. The European Community expected to ratify at the earliest by 2003. Bulgaria and Portugal were unable to give specific target dates. The United States stated that it had no plans to accede to the Convention.

12. The secretariat reported on activities undertaken to support the implementation of the Convention and to promote awareness of it. All delegations were then invited to inform the Working Group of their activities to promote the effective implementation of the Convention. The delegations were encouraged to submit to the secretariat written statements summarizing their activities carried out in relation to the Convention. It was agreed that these reports should be placed on the Convention's web site so that the information would be available to members of the public with Internet access.

13. The representative of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe emphasized the high priority that UNEP attached to the successful implementation of the Convention. She referred to a number of specific initiatives being undertaken in close cooperation with the secretariat, including joint UNEP and ECE awareness-raising workshops in the ECE region, efficient dissemination of information encouraging public participation in environmental decision-making processes and the promotion of the Convention through a series of publications.

14. The European ECO Forum reported on the role that it had played in the promotion and implementation of the Aarhus Convention. It had participated actively in the work of all task forces and working groups and had established eight electronic discussion networks covering each of these. It had either prepared or contributed to the preparation of several publications under the Aarhus Convention, and had worked hard for the ratification and implementation of the Convention at the national level in several countries.

15. The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) reported on its activities focused on promoting the early ratification and implementation of the Convention in Central and Eastern Europe. Several projects run by the REC were related to the Aarhus Convention, involving contributing to the task forces and working groups, facilitating the implementation of the Convention and capacity-building initiatives.

16. The World Resources Institute informed the Working Group about activities undertaken within the framework of the Access Initiative, a global coalition established to promote public access to information, participation and justice in environmental decision-making. By proposing and assessing benchmarks of performance in the above areas, the Access Initiative aimed to establish them as good practices and common standards for all countries.

17. GLOBE Europe informed the Meeting of its keen interest in promoting the Convention, emphasizing the important role of parliamentarians in ensuring effective implementation.

#### **IV. ORGANIZATIONAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIRST MEETING OF THE PARTIES**

##### **Dates and venue**

18. The Vice-Chairperson of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Signatories to the Convention, Mr. Veit Koester (Denmark), presented the results of the Bureau's discussion on setting a date for the first meeting of the Parties.

19. The Working Group agreed that the meeting should be held in October 2002. The secretariat and the Bureau of the Convention should fix the exact date of the meeting in consultation with the host country.

20. Italy offered to host the meeting. The Working Group indicated its acceptance of the Italian offer by enthusiastic applause.

21. Regarding the level of the meeting, it was agreed that the meeting, or at least a segment of it, should be at the ministerial level.

22. The Working Group decided to hold a second meeting in Geneva during the period of 21-24 May 2002.

##### **Programme of events**

23. The secretariat proposed that, to raise the profile of the first meeting of the Parties, an international conference on principle 10 of the Rio Declaration could be held immediately before the meeting. Key representatives of governments and NGOs from other regions of the world could be invited to attend the conference to share their experiences and hopefully draw

inspiration from the model of the Aarhus Convention. The Conference could end with a high-level session, immediately followed by the opening of the meeting of the Parties.

24. Some delegations felt that October 2002 might be too soon after the World Summit on Sustainable Development for such an event, but in any case wanted more time to reflect on the idea. A number of other ideas for an event to accompany the meeting of the Parties were put forward, notably a round-table session between NGOs and Ministers, as had taken place at the Aarhus Ministerial Conference; a pre-conference focusing on certain topical subjects such as pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs), genetically modified organisms (GMOs) or compliance; and panel sessions similar to those held during the ECE Regional Ministerial Conference for the World Summit.

25. Recognizing that such an event would require sufficient preparation, it was agreed that a meeting of the Bureau, open to any interested delegation, would be held in late January or February 2002 in order to explore various ideas for an event accompanying the meeting of the Parties. The secretariat was requested to prepare an informal document for the meeting setting out some options. The meeting would take place in English only. The conclusions of the meeting would be transmitted to the next meeting of the Working Group, which would make a final decision. Italy offered to either host the meeting or else to support the organization of the meeting in a Central or East European country.

## **V. SUBSTANTIVE PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIRST MEETING OF THE PARTIES**

### **Possible elements for the provisional agenda of the first meeting of the Parties**

26. The secretariat presented a provisional list of elements for possible inclusion in the provisional agenda for the first meeting of the Parties. It would modify the list in the light of the outcome of the meeting. The secretariat would also prepare, in consultation with the Bureau, a provisional agenda and a list of documentation for consideration by the Working Group at its second meeting.

### **Compliance and rules of procedure**

27. The Chairperson of the Working Group on Compliance and Rules of Procedure, Mr. A. McGlone (United Kingdom), presented the results of its second meeting, which had taken place on 26-27 November 2001. Although the Working Group had made good progress, it had not been able to finalize the draft decisions to present to the Parties at their first meeting. The issues which remained to be solved were, in particular, the following three:

- (a) Concerning the draft rules of procedure, whether representatives of non-governmental organizations should be present in the Bureau and, if so, in what capacity;
- (b) Concerning compliance, whether the proposed compliance committee should be made up of Parties to the Convention or of independent experts serving in a personal capacity, and if the latter, whether NGOs as well as Parties should be entitled to nominate the experts for election; and

(c) Whether the opt-out possibility concerning communications from the public with respect to a Party's compliance with the Convention should be indefinite in time or limited to a specific time period of, for instance, four years.

Other outstanding issues were considered to be drafting points.

28. The Working Group on Compliance and Rules of Procedure had recommended that the ad hoc Working Group preparing for the meeting of the Parties should commence preparatory work on a draft decision on reporting (see para. 40 below).

29. It was agreed that it would not be justified to reconvene the Working Group on Compliance and Rules of Procedure, and that the outstanding issues should rather be addressed at the second meeting of the Working Group preparing for the first meeting of the Parties.

### **Pollutant release and transfer registers**

30. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the progress made by the Working Group on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers in the preparation of a draft instrument on PRTRs with a view to its adoption at the Kiev Ministerial Conference. Among other things, the Working Group on PRTRs had mandated the preparation of a draft decision for the Parties for consideration by the Working Group preparing for the first meeting of the Parties. The secretariat had prepared the requested draft decision, which would effectively mandate the continuation, under the authority of the Meeting of the Parties, of the work undertaken up to that point under the authority of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

31. The Working Group welcomed the progress made by the Working Group on PRTRs and invited it to continue. It agreed to carry out further work on the draft decision.

### **Genetically modified organisms**

32. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the outcome of the first meeting of the Working Group on Genetically Modified Organisms. That Working Group had decided to work in parallel on two tracks; the first track involving the preparation of guidelines on GMOs, the second involving a possible amendment to the Convention.

33. It was agreed to recommend to the Working Group on GMOs to concentrate on the work on guidelines rather than carrying out further work on an amendment to the Convention before the first meeting of the Parties. A draft decision on the issue on the occasion of the meeting of the Parties could consider further work on a legally binding approach. Greater participation of GMO experts in that Working Group should be encouraged. A third meeting of that Working Group would be required in order to complete work on a draft decision on guidelines in time for the first meeting of the Parties.

### **Financial arrangements**

34. In accordance with article 10, paragraph 3, of the Convention, the Meeting of the Parties may establish financial arrangements on a consensus basis. On the basis of a presentation by the secretariat on the key elements for financial arrangements and the extent of funds which had passed through the trust funds for work on the Aarhus Convention over the past two years, the Working Group had a first exchange of views on the possible content of a draft decision for the first meeting of the Parties.

35. The representative of United Kingdom presented a proposal for a scheme of voluntary contributions on the basis of equal shares to provide for funding for the activities as set out in the work programme under the Convention. Some delegations spoke in favour of a mandatory system, which would oblige all Parties to ensure the financing of the core activities, such as handling the forthcoming compliance mechanism and other resource-demanding tasks that the Meeting of the Parties may decide upon, or of a combination of mandatory and voluntary schemes.

36. The Working Group requested the secretariat to prepare a document providing more elements for a draft decision on financial arrangements to be presented at its next meeting. The document should also include an overview of financial arrangements under different UNECE instruments and other comparable instruments. In preparing the document, the underlying principles of financial arrangements, such as stability, certainty, transparency, predictability and a fair sharing of the burden, should be taken into account. Furthermore, the secretariat should be guided by the following elements: in the short term, the scheme should be based on voluntary contributions, as legally binding financial arrangements would be very difficult to negotiate in the short time available before the first meeting of the Parties. The main objective of such arrangements would be to cover the costs of core activities arising from the work programme (see para. 37). The work programme would be decided upon by the Meeting of the Parties, which would therefore be the decisive body over the funds. Other activities would not necessarily be covered by the financial mechanism, and countries would contribute to these on a case-by-case basis. The arrangements should allow for contributions both by Parties and by non-Parties, even if they were not necessarily to be covered by the same conditions.

### **Work programme**

37. The Working Group discussed the possibility of developing a programme for the work to be undertaken under the Convention. The purpose of such a work programme would be to provide a clear sense of purpose and a mechanism for identifying and setting priorities for the activities. The programme would provide for a clear and transparent framework of activities, described with clear objectives, cost estimates, time frames and expected outcome. It could also include medium- and long-term objectives.

38. The Working Group requested the secretariat to start preparing a draft decision on a work programme. It welcomed the offer by some delegations to contribute to this work and agreed to return to this issue at its second meeting.

### **Intersessional activities and/or intersessional body**

39. Article 10, paragraph 1, of the Convention requires that meetings of the Parties shall be convened at least once every two years, unless the Parties decide otherwise. To oversee the implementation of the work programme under the Convention between these meetings, the Working Group considered the possibility of an inter-sessional body as well as other options. It was agreed that a draft decision for the first meeting of the Parties reflecting the option of establishing an inter-sessional body, taking into account the preparation of a draft decision on a work programme (see paras. 37 and 38), should be prepared for discussion at the next meeting of the Working Group.

### **Reporting**

40. Following the recommendation of the Working Group on Compliance and Rules of Procedure, it was agreed to commence preparatory work on a draft decision setting out a reporting mechanism as envisaged in article 10, paragraph 2, of the Convention on reporting and to establish a task force for this purpose. A task force would meet back to back with the second meeting of the Working Group during the week of 21-24 May 2002. The secretariat was requested to prepare a draft, taking into account the objective of a simple, concise and not excessively burdensome reporting mechanism. The example of a multiple-choice questionnaire used in other contexts was put forward. Delegations were invited to submit comments to the secretariat if they so wished, preferably by the end of January 2002.

### **Clearing house**

41. The secretariat informed the Working Group of its preliminary idea of establishing a clearing-house mechanism in the secretariat. In the first place the clearing house would aim at facilitating the match between project proposals and potential financing possibilities. This could also include proposals developed by non-governmental organizations. Secondly, the mechanism could be used to collect and distribute all types of information linked to the Aarhus Convention. This would include national strategies for implementation and relevant national legislation as well as reports and results of previous actions. Finally, the secretariat had recently initiated discussions with UNEP and UNEP/GRID-Arendal on the establishment of a capacity-building service which could provide training, expert advice and other types of services.

42. The Working Group agreed that it would come back to the issue at its next meeting and requested the secretariat to prepare a proposal for a draft decision on the establishment of a clearing-house mechanism.

### **National focal points**

43. The secretariat was requested to prepare a draft decision encouraging the designation of national focal points for the Convention.

### **Electronic information tools**

44. The Chairperson of the Task Force on Electronic Tools, Mr. Johannes Mayer (Austria), informed the Meeting of the activities of the Task Force since its establishment. The Task Force had held a workshop in Norway in March 2001 on the use of electronic tools in the implementation of the Convention at the invitation and with the financial support of the Norwegian Government. The workshop had been organized by GRID-Arendal. The REC had prepared a number of case studies which provided valuable reference material as well as being a basis for discussion at the workshop. The main outcome of the workshop was a list of possible actions to further the use of electronic tools in the implementation and promotion of the Convention. These could be supported inter alia through the proposed clearing-house mechanism. The Working Group was invited to consider the report of the workshop (CEP/WG.5/2001/4) and the Task Force's future activities.

45. The Working Group welcomed the work undertaken by the Task Force and agreed that it had fulfilled its mandate. The Working Group also welcomed the collection of case studies by the REC in support of the Task Force and urged that this should continue. It decided that the report of the workshop with the annexed list of possible actions should be drawn to the attention of the Meeting of the Parties. Austria was invited to support the secretariat in preparing a draft decision for the Meeting of the Parties identifying possible future actions and a possible new mandate for the Task Force, for consideration at the next meeting of the Working Group. The possibility of a side-event at the first meeting of the Parties demonstrating the use of electronic tools could be discussed at the proposed open-ended Bureau meeting being organized to discuss all side-events.

### **Access to justice**

46. The Chairperson of the Task Force on Access to Justice, Ms. Rita Annus (Estonia), presented the work carried out under its auspices. In accordance with its clear mandate, given at the second meeting of the Signatories, the Task Force had been concentrating on gathering information on good practices of access to justice. The preparation of a draft handbook had been coordinated by the REC with the participation of governments and NGOs (American Bar Association's Central and East European Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI), European ECO Forum, Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (E-LAW) and Environmental Law Association of Central and Eastern European and the Newly Independent States (GUTA Association)), and with funding provided by the United Kingdom and ABA/CEELI. The draft handbook had provided useful information, including 35 case studies, for a workshop which had taken place in Tallinn in September 2001, with the financial support of Finland and the Netherlands. The report of the workshop contains more detailed information on the outcome and the findings of the workshop (CEP/WG.5/2001/5).

47. The Working Group welcomed the work done by the Task Force. It agreed that it would be useful to extend the mandate of the Task Force until the first meeting of the Parties to allow for the finalization of the draft handbook, which could then be presented for consideration by the Meeting of the Parties. It also welcomed the proposal by the lead country to do a survey on the different legal systems throughout the ECE region to facilitate the use of the handbook and its

case studies. It recognized that probably more work could be done, in particular to address particular target groups. The secretariat was requested to prepare a draft decision for the Meeting

of the Parties identifying possible future activities in this field, for consideration at the next meeting of the Working Group.

**VI. OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE WORKPLAN OR ARISING  
FROM THE SECOND MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES OR THE SEVENTH AND  
EIGHTH SESSIONS OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

**Workshops promoting the implementation of the Convention**

48. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the workshop activities and plans for future workshops undertaken by the secretariat in close cooperation with UNEP/ROE and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Since the second meeting of the Signatories, two subregional workshops in the South Caucasus region had taken place in December 2000 and November 2001. The workshops had been highly appreciated by the participants, who fully used the opportunity to meet and strengthen the cooperation across borders and between NGOs and government officials. For 2002, the secretariat intended to organize a second workshop for the five Central Asian countries, and one for Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, jointly with partner organizations.

49. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) informed the Working Group of a joint project to develop a guidance document to assist countries to document and assess their national policies, programmes and capacity related to the implementation of the Convention. The self-assessment should be prepared in a multi-stakeholder process with the aim of documenting the strengths and weaknesses of the national implementation of the Convention. It could also be used as a basis for identifying priorities for policy changes and capacity building related to the Aarhus Convention. A draft document would be prepared during the first half of 2002 and, on this basis, pilot projects would be carried out in selected countries.

**Strategic environmental assessment (SEA)**

50. The Vice-Chairperson of the Espoo Convention's Working Group on the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, Mr. Jerzy Jendroska, reported on the progress of that Working Group in preparing a legally binding instrument on SEA in time for adoption at the Kiev Ministerial Conference.

51. The Working Group expressed its support for the preparation of a protocol on SEA and urged that the provisions of the Aarhus Convention should be fully reflected in the instrument. The importance of greater participation of delegates having expertise in the Aarhus Convention was emphasized.

**Interlinkages between the Convention and other instruments and application of its principles in international environmental forums**

52. The secretary to the Committee on Environmental Policy, Ms. Christina von Schweinichen, informed the Meeting of the outcome of the discussions on interlinkages between the ECE multilateral environmental agreements at its eighth session. Recognizing the importance of the issue, the Committee had agreed to continue the work on interlinkages and had identified compliance as a possible topic.

53. Given the cross-sectoral importance of the Aarhus Convention, the Committee had also agreed that an in-depth legal analysis of the links between the Aarhus Convention and the other ECE environmental conventions and protocols should be undertaken by the secretariat. In addition, it had agreed that the secretariat or a consultant commissioned by the secretariat should undertake an analysis of good practices of public participation in international forums and potential problems. On the basis of this analysis, the Committee would decide whether to develop guidelines on public participation in international forums for possible adoption at the Kiev Conference. This proposal was further reflected in the report of the informal meeting on public participation in the context of the other ECE environmental agreements, which had taken place in June 2001 (CEP/2001/6). It was mentioned that it could be useful to incorporate subregional conventions in the analyses and the possible guidelines.

54. The Working Group welcomed the initiative by the Committee to prepare the two legal analyses. It was agreed that it would be useful to wait for the result of the work before deciding on whether to prepare a draft decision on the application of the Convention's principles in international forums for the first meeting of the Parties.

#### **Funding of activities under the Convention**

55. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the establishment of a new section within the ECE Trust Fund on Local Technical Cooperation dedicated to the promotion and implementation of the Aarhus Convention. This would ease the administration of contributions for Aarhus-related activities, as the Fund would be managed from Geneva rather than United Nations headquarters in New York and as it would cover only activities under the Aarhus Convention and not under the entire ECE as was the case with the Trust Fund for Assistance to Countries in Transition (TFACT). The intention was therefore that, in the future, contributions to the Aarhus Convention would as far as possible not be channeled through TFACT but rather through the Trust Fund for Local Technical Cooperation.

56. The Working Group welcomed this development and pointed out that it would be useful if the secretariat could bring this issue to the attention of the countries by a formal letter. Governments were invited to consider contributing to the Fund.

#### **Strengthening linkages with the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development**

57. There was general recognition that the Aarhus Convention could provide a valuable example in the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Working Group was reminded of the ECE Regional Ministerial Statement for the World Summit which in its paragraph 22 drew attention to the possibility for States in other regions to accede to the Aarhus Convention (ECE/AC.22/2001/2), as well as the expected UNEP report on the implementation of principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (ref. the UNEP Governing Council's decision 21/24). The NGOs and the REC expressed their interest in seeing the initiation of negotiations towards a global convention on principle 10 issues. The secretariat mentioned the possibility of side-events on these issues, either in the preparatory process for the World Summit or in Johannesburg itself, and invited delegations interested in cooperating to prepare or participate in any such side-event to coordinate with it. It was agreed to re-visit the issue of linkages between the Convention and the World Summit at the next meeting of the Working Group.

## **VII. FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP**

58. The Working Group was invited to consider whether it should hold a second meeting to prepare for the first meeting of the Parties. The secretariat proposed two alternative dates for such a meeting: 17-19 April 2002 and 21-24 May 2002. The Working Group agreed to hold a meeting back to back with the meeting of the Task Force on Reporting in Geneva during the period of 21-24 May 2002. The week of 8-12 July was identified as a possible date for a third meeting, if it were to be considered necessary at a later stage.

## **VIII. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT AND CLOSURE OF MEETING**

59. The Working Group considered the draft report of its meeting, made amendments as necessary and adopted it, subject to finalization of the text by the Chairperson and the secretariat.

60. The Chairperson thanked all the participants for their active and constructive participation and the secretariat and the interpreters for their support, and closed the meeting.