Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

Task Force on Access to Information

Fifth meeting
Geneva, 10-11 October 2016

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening and adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the fifth meeting
To be held in Salle V, Palais des Nations, Geneva starting at 10 a.m. on Monday, 10 October 2016

I. Provisional agenda

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda.
2. Environmental information: scope and access.
3. Restrictions on access to environmental information in the Digital Age.
4. Effective dissemination of environmental information.
5. Activities under other international forums.
6. Other business.
7. Closing.
II. Annotations

The mandate of the Task Force on Access to Information under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was laid down by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention through decision IV/1 adopted at its fourth session (Chisinau, 29 June - 1 July 2011). It was further extended in time by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention through decision V/1 adopted at its fifth session (Maastricht, the Netherlands, 30 June and 1 July 2014). The work’s scope is also addressed in the Work Programme 2015-2017. Furthermore, the Strategic Plan 2015-2020 also outlines directions for the work in this area.

The meeting will continue the exchange of information, good practices and recent legislative, policy and practical developments on promoting public access to environmental information. In particular, the Task Force will continue focusing on the scope of environmental information and information on emissions; use of public registers and other electronic information tools; application of the restrictions; and the further development of the Aarhus Clearinghouse and national nodes.

The background material for the meeting includes relevant information derived from 2014 national implementation reports and the synthesis report as well as the Implementation Guide, relevant Compliance Committee findings of a systemic nature and jurisprudence database. The Task Force on Access to Information continues its work based on the outputs of the previous meetings.

Each session will feature brief introductory presentation(s) sharing experiences of the Parties to the Convention and stakeholders related to the agenda items followed by contributors’ interventions and interactive discussion. Delegates who are interested to make a presentation or statement at the meeting on the key developments, emerging issues or issues of a systemic nature regarding the implementation of the first pillar of the Convention are kindly invited to contact the secretariat (public.participation[at]unece.org) as soon as possible, preferably by 15 September 2016, briefly outlining its focus in relation to the agenda items. The list of speakers will be released shortly before the meeting.

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda

Timing: Monday, 10 October, 10–10.10 a.m.

The Task Force will be invited to adopt the agenda as set out in the present document.

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2 The text of decision is available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5_docs.html
3 The texts of decisions are available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5_docs.html
5 The synthesis report (ECE/MP.PP/2014/6) is available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5_docs.html#1 (Category II document)
6 The Implementation Guide is available from http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35869&L=0
7 Compliance Committee findings are available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/cc.html
8 The jurisprudence database is available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/tafaj/jurisprudenceplatform.html
9 All documentation for the meeting will be available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/tafai5.html
2. Environmental information: scope and access

*Timing: Monday, 10 October, 10.10 a.m. – 1 p.m.*

This session will focus on access to and scope of information to be provided in accordance with the Convention. Participants will be invited to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and to identify challenges and gaps with regard to such issues, inter alia, as: (a) definition of environmental information and access to specific types of information, their forms and formats, including information on emissions and the performance of public functions or the provision of public services relating to the environment; (b) types of public authorities generating, collecting and supplying environmental information; and (c) access to statistical, spatial and hydrometeorological information related to the environment. Participants will be also invited to identify further needs in relation to the subject.

3. Restrictions on access to environmental information in the Digital Age

*Timing: Monday, 10 October, 3 – 6 p.m.*

This session will continue the discussion on: (a) measures that are taken at the national level to ensure the legitimate application of the restrictions under the Convention; (b) recent developments in adapting domestic legislative, regulatory, institutional and technical frameworks to the modern digital environment; and (c) issues related to copyright and the public domain. Participants will be also invited to identify further needs in relation to the subject.

4. Effective dissemination of environmental information

*Timing: Tuesday, 11 October, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.*

This session will focus, inter alia, on innovative application of electronic information tools in support of the Convention and discuss the outcomes of the survey on the implementation of the recommendations in decision II/3. The session will discuss the ways to improve public access to environmental information through e.g. maintaining publicly accessible lists, registers or files, shared environmental information system, and e-Government and Open Government Data initiatives. The session will also address recent technological developments and establishing partnerships in relation to the subject matter. In addition, the session will discuss the role of the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy and national nodes in promoting access to environmental information. Participants will be also invited to discuss future work in relation to the subject.

5. Activities under other international forums

*Timing: Tuesday, 11 October, 3 – 4.30 p.m.*

Representatives of relevant international forums will be invited to inform about recent activities dealing with public access to environmental information.

6. Other business

*Timing: Tuesday, 11 October, 4.30 – 5 p.m.*

Delegates wishing to suggest issues under this item are requested to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.
7. Closing

*Timing: Tuesday, 11 October, 5 – 5.30 p.m.*

The Chair will summarize the key outcomes of the meeting and close it.