

Second meeting of the Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums Geneva, 9-10 November 2006

**CHAIR'S PAPER
FURTHER STEPS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PLAN**

1. The PPIF consultation process has now been underway since June 2006. Under the work plan for the PPIF Task Force adopted by the Working Group of the Parties at its meeting on 5-7 April 2005, the PPIF consultation process was to be carried out over a thirteen month period between June 2006 and July 2007. The purpose of this paper is to briefly take stock of where the consultation process currently stands, and to set out some possible future directions for discussion by the PPIF Task Force at its second meeting on 9-10 November 2006.

Written consultation phase

2. In keeping with the Work Plan, the emphasis in the first few months of the consultation process has been on the written consultation. The extended deadline for forums to respond to the written questionnaire was 23 October 2006. A draft synthesis paper on the questionnaire responses has been prepared by the Secretariat and is a key background document for discussion by the Task Force at its second meeting. Following the meeting, the secretariat will incorporate the comments of the Task Force, possibly together with some further late responses, and then finalize the paper. The finalized paper will then go forward as one of the outcomes of the consultation process to be presented to the Working Group of the Parties.
3. It is proposed that the written consultation phase be concluded once the synthesis paper is finalized.

Direct dialogue consultation phase

4. The Work Plan envisages that, in addition to the written consultations, the consultation process may involve various types of consultation through direct dialogue, including:
 - a. Personalized consultations with the secretariats of key international forums;
 - b. Presentations at sessions of key international forums;
 - c. Presentations at meetings of the Task Force by representatives of key international forums.
5. Despite the high level of interest from international forums in the consultation process, given limited funds available, the direct dialogue phase of the

6. consultation process must be conducted on the basis of agreed priorities. At its second meeting, the Task Force should consider and agree on these priorities.
7. The overriding consideration in inviting any forum to engage in further consultation is the level of interest that forum has expressed in the consultation process. In this regard, the depth and nature of a forum's responses to the questionnaire should be taken into account.
8. In addition, the Task Force may wish to consider identifying which interested forums to invite to engage in further consultation through direct dialogue based on a choice among the following priorities:
 - a. Most important international forums (this could either be forums considered most important globally or those most important to the Aarhus Parties, whether global or not);
 - b. Most important international forums focused solely on the Aarhus region;
 - c. International forums with the most interesting practices that promote the principles of the Aarhus Convention;
 - d. International forums that engage in projects. This priority would aim to ensure that the consultation process includes an appropriate balance of consultation on the issues addressed by the Guidelines as they relate to the implementation of projects funded or undertaken by the forums as well as forum processes;
 - e. International forums with which it may be particularly useful to consult in order to realize the possible future directions in paragraph 8 below.
9. At its second meeting the Task Force should consider the possible future directions of the direct dialogue phase, for instance:
 - a. Deepening consultation on particular themes identified in the forums' written responses, inter alia, to gather further background information to enhance the relevance of the workshop;
 - b. Furthering consultation on issues addressed by the Guidelines that the Task Force considers are not sufficiently addressed in the forums' written responses.
 - c. Making a closer link between the consultation process and Parties' implementation of article 3, paragraph 7 of the Convention.
10. The Task Force should also consider ways to support Parties' ongoing internal consultations in furtherance of paragraph 12 of the Work Plan. Experience with the consultation process to date suggests that awareness of and support for the Almaty Guidelines and the consultation process by Aarhus Parties' representatives in other forums cannot be taken for granted.

11. It may be expected that a significant part of the direct dialogue phase will be connected in various ways with the organisation of the workshop. In accordance with the work plan, information gathered through the direct dialogue consultations will be reported upon. However, it may be practical to consider consolidating the substance of the outcomes of these consultations with those of the workshop.

Workshop

12. The PPIF Work Plan proposes to reinforce the consultation process by holding an international workshop with a number of key international forums and their stakeholders. It is proposed to hold the workshop in Geneva in June 2007 and that invitations be extended to all forums that have expressed an interest to attend or to participate in the consultation process. In respect of invited international forums, possible participants may include representatives from secretariats, member governments and academics and non-governmental organizations engaged in the international forum's processes. PPIF Task Force members and interested Aarhus Parties' representatives would be welcome to attend. An outline proposal for such an international workshop is attached to this paper for the Task Force's consideration. In addition to the principle and outline of the workshop, the Task Force may wish to discuss the proposed sessions and to identify suitable themes for the discussion groups proposed in Section IV. Such themes may be drawn from the synthesis paper of responses received from the international forums to the written questionnaire and from academic literature (for instance, France has commissioned a report on the state of the art on the topics covered by the PPIF consultation). The Task Force may also wish to consider the appropriate languages for the workshop.
13. It is envisaged that the workshop would produce a number of outcomes to go forward for consideration by the Task Force at its third meeting in autumn 2007. Proposed outcomes include a report of the workshop, a Chair's summary, and a paper to be drawn from the substance of the discussion groups on various themes, to be annexed to the Chair's summary.

Looking forward

14. In accordance with the work plan, the consultation process will end in July 2007. At the third meeting of the Task Force in autumn 2007, the Task Force will need to prepare its report on the consultation process for submission to the meeting of the Working Group of the Parties in winter 2008. It is proposed that the major outcomes to be considered by the Task Force in preparing its report be the finalized synthesis paper of responses received from international forums to the written questionnaire, together with the outcomes from the workshop discussed above and from the direct consultations conducted before the workshop. The report could address, inter alia, the ways in which the outcomes of the consultation process could be used by Parties to support and inform their efforts to implement Article 3, paragraph 7.

15. The Working Group of the Parties has been requested by the Meeting of the Parties to make recommendations for consideration by the Parties at their third Meeting (Decision II/4, paragraph 8). With a view to facilitating the Working Group of the Parties in its preparation of those recommendations, the Task Force may wish to seek clarification from the Working Group of the Parties at its seventh meeting (May 2007) on the extent to which the Task Force's report should identify options for further work based on the outcomes of the consultation process.

**PPIF CONSULTATION PROCESS:
OUTLINE PROPOSAL FOR WORKSHOP**

Title	“Involving the Public in International Forums”
Purpose	To provide a forum within which Aarhus Parties and stakeholders and representatives of other international forums (from governments, secretariats and other stakeholders) may meet together to exchange experiences of the forums’ practices with respect to the themes of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice. The Almaty Guidelines will be a key background document.
Date	June 2007
Duration	2.5 days
Venue	Geneva
Chair	Hanne Inger Bjurstrom, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention.
Keynote speakers	Possible candidates: Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former President of Brazil and Chair of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on UN-Civil Society. Edith Brown-Weiss, Chair, World Bank Inspection Panel, Professor, Georgetown School of Law
Participants	Approximately 100 participants. To include participants from 20-30 international forums including representatives from Secretariats, interested Member governments, non-governmental organizations and academics engaged in the international forum’s processes. Also PPIF Task Force members and interested Aarhus Parties’ representatives.
Format	A mixture of presentations and discussion groups
Languages	English (and possibly French, Russian, and Spanish)
Documentation	Almaty Guidelines.

Paper on results of written consultation process.

Indicative programme

- I. High level-opening session:
Philosophical underpinnings for involving civil society in international forums, including discussion of different conceptual approaches to what “involving civil society in international forums” means.
- II. Presentation of results of PPIF consultation process to date.
- III. Presentations of best practice by 4-6 international forums, including the Aarhus Convention.
- IV. Discussion groups on various themes identified in written consultation process.
- V. Closing session on promoting the involvement of the public in international forums.

Outcomes

- Report of workshop.
- Chair’s Summary.
- Annex to Chair’s Summary: Paper to be drawn from the discussion groups on various themes.

It is intended that these documents will form an important part of the direct consultation phase of the consultation process, and will be considered by the PPIF Task Force at its third meeting in late 2007.