

**Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums
(Fifth meeting, Geneva, 29 June 2010)
Agenda item 5**

Outline proposal for workshop

Prepared by the Chair

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| Title | “Involving the public in international forums dealing with matters relating to the environment” |
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To build upon the Task Force’s previous work in this area by providing a forum in which Aarhus Parties, representatives of other international forums, civil society and academia can exchange good practices and challenges with respect to involving the public in international forums dealings with matters relating to the environment. The Almaty Guidelines will be a key background document. |
| Date | February – March 2011 |
| Duration | 2 days |
| Venue | Geneva |
| Chair | Etienne Ballan, Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums |
| Participants | 50-80 participants to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aarhus Convention Parties (including both Aarhus focal points and focal points for other international forums dealing with the environment and/or those involved in intra-and inter-ministry coordination)• PPIF Task Force experts• Representatives of civil society• Representatives of academia• Representatives of other international forums dealing with matters relating to the environment that have expressed interest in being involved in further collaboration on this issue and/or international forums identified as a priority for collaboration by Aarhus Convention Parties and other stakeholders. |
| Format | A mixture of presentations and discussion groups |
| Languages | English, French and Russian |
| Documentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decision II/4 on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums (Almaty Guidelines)• Decision III/4 on promoting the application of the |

- principles of the Convention in international forums
- Report of the meeting of representatives of international forums dealing with matters relating to the environment, Geneva, 20-21 June 2007 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.8)
- Synthesis of responses received from international forums to the written questionnaire in the consultation process on the Almaty Guidelines and addenda (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.2, ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.2.Add.1, ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.2.Add.2, ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.2.Add.3, ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.2.Add.4, ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.2.Add.5)

Outcome

Report of workshop, including Chair's summary

Annex: Indicative themes and issues for discussion

Theme I: Providing and disseminating information

Sample issues:

- What are the most pressing issues regarding the provision and dissemination of information facing the international forums in which workshop participants are involved?
- Where do matters currently stand for the international forums represented at the workshop with respect to formal procedures/informal practices on access to information?
- Are there any particular characteristics which might mean that an international forum should provide greater or less access to information, and if so, what might these characteristics be?
- What are some good practices for providing effective access to information in the face of scarce financial, physical and human resources?
- When does the issue of legal ownership of information arise?
- How can the media be better used to disseminate information regarding international forums dealing with matters relating to the environment?
- What are some good practices for providing access to information regarding the projects and work programmes of international forums dealing with matters relating to the environment?
- How can international forums promote the development at the national level of the mechanisms (legislative, administrative and scientific) and capacities necessary to provide better access to information at the international level?

Theme II: Identifying, contacting and involving stakeholders

Sample of issues for discussion:

- What are the most pressing issues regarding identifying, contacting and involving stakeholders with respect to the international forums in which workshop participants are involved?
- Where do matters currently stand with respect to formal procedures/informal practices for public participation regarding the international forums represented at the workshop?
- Are there any particular characteristics which might mean that an international forum should provide greater or less public participation in its processes, and if so, what might those characteristics be?
- How divergent interests be balanced in the decision-making of international forums (e.g. environmental/social/economic interests; local/national/regional/global interests; private /public interests)?

- What are some good practices for providing effective public participation in the face of scarce financial, physical and human resources?
- What are some good practices for effective public participation in the context of high civil society interest? What are some good practices for averting the possibility of disruptive civil society involvement?
- What are some good practices regarding providing public participation with respect to the projects and work programmes of international forums?
- What are some good practices for public participation in decisions involving multiple stages of decision-making?
- How can international forums promote the development at the national level of the mechanisms (legislative, administrative and scientific) and capacities necessary to ensure better public participation at the international level? How can effective public participation be promoted if there is limited or non-existent civil society at the national level?
- What are some good practices for capacity building to promote effective public participation?

Theme III: Involving the public in reviewing implementation and compliance

- Where do matters currently stand for the international forums represented at the workshop (or in which participants at the workshop are involved) with respect to involving the public in national reporting? How might this be improved and what obstacles might there be to doing so?
- Where do matters currently stand for the international forums represented at the workshop (or in which participants at the workshop are involved) with respect to involving the public in promoting member states' compliance? Do the international forums concerned have a compliance review procedure, and if so:
 - Are the public able to submit information to the compliance review procedure?
 - Are the public able to trigger the compliance review procedure?
 - Are documents regarding cases before the compliance review procedure available to the public and are meetings of the compliance review procedure held in open session?
 - Are the public able to nominate members of the compliance review procedure?
 - Are the public involved in the implementation and follow-up regarding decisions of the compliance review procedure?

For those international forums represented at the workshop (or in which participants at the workshop are involved), how might the public's involvement

in promoting compliance be improved and what obstacles might there be to doing so?

Theme IV: Where to from here and how to get there?

- What are the implications of the discussions at the workshop for the implementation of article 3, paragraph 7 of the Convention and the Almaty Guidelines?
- What should be considered as the priorities in moving forward in the future?