



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
11 March 2016

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Working Group of the Parties

Twentieth meeting

Geneva, 15–17 June 2016

Item 8 (c) of the provisional agenda

**Preparations for the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties:
agenda of the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties**

Draft outline of the agenda of the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention

Prepared by the Bureau

Summary

The outline contained herein, prepared by the Convention Bureau, presents a draft of an agenda for the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, as well as a proposal for the organization of work of the session. As the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention might be held back to back with the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention's Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, the Bureau of the Protocol will also be consulted on the proposed organization of work (see section II), prior to its consideration by the Working Group.

The document was prepared in accordance with the work programme for 2012–2014 (see ECE/MP.PP/2014/2/Add.1, decision V/6, annex I, sect. X)¹ adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention at its fifth session.

¹ Available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5_docs.html#/



The outline aims to facilitate the Working Group's discussion on the organization of work and agenda for the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties. There will be an opportunity for an open-ended consultation among national focal points and stakeholders on the agenda prior to and after the twentieth meeting of the Working Group. The Bureau is expected to revise the draft document thereafter in the light of the comments received and to submit it to the Working Group at its twenty-first meeting for consideration, approval and subsequent submission to the Meeting of the Parties.

The Protocol's Bureau will submit the suggested organization of work for the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, to be prepared in the light of the outcomes of the meeting of Convention's Working Group of the Parties, and the provisional agenda for third session to the Protocol's Working Group of the Parties at its fifth meeting, to be held in November 2016, for consideration, approval and subsequent submission to the Protocol's Meeting of the Parties.

I. Dates and venue

1. Pursuant to previous experience, it is suggested that the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers should be held back to back. It is further suggested that the events be organized during the week of 11 September 2017.²
2. Parties were invited to inform the secretariat of their interest in hosting the events.

II. Organization of Work

3. The proposed allocation of time for the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers and the associated meetings are set out in the table below.

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Convention/Protocol body</i> |
|---|---|
| Sunday, 10 September (full day) | Convention Compliance Committee (could continue in parallel with the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention , as required) |
| Monday, 11 September (9–11 a.m.) | Convention Bureau |
| Monday, 11 September (11.30 a.m.–1 p.m. and 3–5.30 p.m.) | Sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (preparatory segment) ^a |
| Tuesday, 12 September (10 a.m.–6 p.m.) | Sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (general segment) |
| Wednesday, 13 September (10 a.m.–6 p.m.) | Sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (general segment) |
| Thursday, 14 September (3–6 p.m.) | Joint high-level segment of the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers ^b |
| Friday, 15 September (10 a.m.–6 p.m.) | Third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (general segment) |

^a The purpose of the preparatory segment is to finalize any pending documents that may be required. Late afternoon/evening is reserved for the finalization and translation of possible revised documents, as well as for possible coordination meetings.

^b Subject to the decision of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol, a thematic high-level segment could be organized jointly by both Meetings of the Parties. If there is no high-level segment,

² The seventy-second regular session of the United Nations General Assembly will convene at United Nations Headquarters on Tuesday, 12 September 2017. The General Debate will open on Tuesday, 19 September 2017.

the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers could take place on Thursday, 14 September.

III. Elements of the agenda

4. For the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention it is suggested that: (a) the agenda should be, in general, similar to the agenda for the fifth session; (b) the agenda should cover all substantive areas of work under the Convention; and (c) discussions should address good practices, achievements, lessons learned, challenges and obstacles in relation to implementing the Convention. Representatives of Governments and stakeholders could be invited to deliver keynote addresses under specific agenda items, as was done at the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties. If Parties decide to hold a high-level segment, they may wish to consider organizing a thematic session on a subject which would both attract high-level participation and be linked to emerging issues in a global context (e.g., the role of the Convention and its Protocol in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals). A concise (no longer than two-and-a-half pages), theme-specific joint declaration (i.e., with the Protocol's Parties) could be developed for consideration by high-level officials at the segment.

5. Thus, the agenda of the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention could include the following items:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Status of ratification of the Convention, the amendment to the Convention and the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.
4. Substantive issues:
 - (a) Access to information, including electronic information tools;
 - (b) Public participation in decision-making;
 - (c) Access to justice;
 - (d) Genetically modified organisms;
5. Procedures and mechanisms facilitating the implementation of the Convention:
 - (a) Implementation reports;
 - (b) Compliance mechanism;
 - (c) Capacity-building.
6. Promotion of the Convention and relevant developments and interlinkages:
 - (a) Accession to the Convention by States from outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region;
 - (b) Promotion of the Convention's principles;
 - (c) Synergies between the Convention and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements;
 - (d) Global and regional developments on issues related to Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development;

- (e) Update on United Nations Environment Programme initiatives on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters.
- 7. Programme of work and operation of the Convention:
 - (a) Implementation of the work programme for 2015–2017;
 - (b) Future work programme;
 - (c) Financial arrangements.
- 8. Report on credentials with regard to the Convention's Parties.
- 9. Election of officers and other members of the Bureau.
- 10. Date and venue of the seventh ordinary meeting.
- 11. Any other business.

Joint High-level Segment (subject to the decision of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol)

- 1. Opening.
 - 2. Report on credentials with regard to the Protocol's Parties.
 - 3. Thematic session (e.g., on the role of the Convention and its Protocol in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, subject to the decision of the Parties).
 - 4. Discussion and adoption of the Declaration (subject to the decision of the Parties).
 - 5. Review and adoption of decisions of by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention.
 - 6. Closure of the Joint High-level Segment.
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