

**16th Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (WGP 16)
Geneva, 19 –21 June 2013)**

**Statement by the European ECO Forum on the agenda item 3 (b): Substantive issues:
Public participation in decision-making (delivered by Jeremy Wates)**

General support for Chair's paper.

We are concerned that the **Public Participation in Sustainable Development (SD)**, one of nine activity areas (IX) under the current Work Programme, is now proposed to be subsumed as a minor element in an activity area on key sectors (IV). SD is not a sector but a concept covering virtually all sectors. We should not limit the interpretation of this concept to the preparation of decisions that are explicitly refer to SD (e.g. national SD strategies).

Recommendations: seek clarification on their eventual status.

Sectoral approach: Combination of the Task Force meetings with key sectoral issues has been useful and should continue but it should not become the only way that the Task Force works. Question regarding the outcome: anything more than meeting report? Some kind of guidelines or recommendations for further measures would be useful.

Capacity building: important, including in Task Force mandate useful because needs a supranational push in many countries.

Research: Task Force should not devote too much time to research but needs to base its work on the latest knowledge in this field, thus if what is proposed is keeping an overview of research being done in the field rather than spending a lot of time or money on primary research, we support this. As we read the proposal, it should not cost money.

Development of Arts. 6, 7 and 8: This is a crucial component of the present and any future work plan of this task force. Disappointed that under its current mandate the Task Force had little time to address these issues. Such further development, in one form or another, is necessary to address the problems that have emerged during more than a decade of implementation of the Convention. Just to give a couple of examples, we have some new technologies that were not around on a significant scale when the Convention was being negotiated, e.g. nanotechnology and shale gas exploration. 6.1b is too discretionary to provide definite help. We have an expedited procedure for amending annexes. We want to see a work plan for this Task Force where it is at least possible to discuss this kind of thing. Also what about PP in decisions to finance? These are not quite permitting decisions but they can determine, even more than the permitting decision, whether or not a project goes ahead.