**Draft decision on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums**

**Prepared by the Bureau**

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| *Summary* |
| The present document sets out a draft decision on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums. The document was prepared on the basis of decision IV/3 on the same subject matter, adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its fourth session and the outcome of the work undertaken under the auspices of the Working Group of the Parties on this work area in the current intersessional period. The document takes into consideration the note by the Chair of the Thematic Session on Promoting the Principles of the Convention in International Forums submitted to the sixteenth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Geneva, 19-21 June 2013) and also addresses comments by delegations made at the meeting. The Working Group requested the Bureau to prepare a draft decision on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums for consideration, revision and approval and subsequent submission to the Meeting of the Parties for consideration at its fourth session (June/July 2014). The draft decision will be circulated to Parties and stakeholders for comments prior to its finalisation for the seventeenth meeting of the Working Group. |

*The Meeting of the Parties,*

*Recalling* article 3, paragraph 7, of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters,

*Recalling also* its decisions II/4, III/4 and IV/3 on promoting the principles of the Convention in international forums, decision V/… on the Strategic Plan 2015–2020 and decision V/… on the Work Programme 2015-2017,

*Mindful* ofthe importance of increasing understanding of the challenges faced, and the good practices employed, by international forums with respect to public participation, through further sharing experience gained under the Convention with international forums;

*Welcoming* the increasing number of requests from interested international forums seeking expert assistance from the secretariat and Parties on this topic;

*Acknowledging* the progress made by Parties, international organisations, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizatons and other stakeholders in promoting the application of the Convention’s principles;

*Recognizing* that expert assistance is a powerful tool through which to promote the principles of the Convention and to share the considerable experience accumulated under the Aarhus Convention in an efficient and direct manner,

*Considering* that significant work still remains to be done to implement article 3, paragraph 7, of the Convention,

1. *Notes with appreciation* the work undertaken under the auspices of the Working Group of the Parties, which provided a true multistakeholder platform for addressing effectively a number of important issues;

2. *Expresses its gratitude* to France for its ongoing leadership of this work area;

3. *Reiterates its commitment* to continue to apply the Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus Convention in international forums (contained in decision II/4) within the activities and subsidiary bodies established under the Convention;

4. *Decides* to continue the work on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums under the authority of the Working Group of the Parties;

5. *Requests* each Party to:

(a) Undertake concrete actions to promote public participation at the national level regarding international environmental decision-making processes and within the framework of international organizations in matters relating to the environment, bearing in mind relevant provisions of the Almaty Guidelines;

(b) Coordinate within and between its ministries on a regular basis to inform officials involved in other relevant international forums about article 3, paragraph 7, of the Convention and the Almaty Guidelines;

(c) Consider innovative ways to improve its own public’s access to information and participation in international forums, evaluate those practices’ effectiveness, and share the evaluations with other Parties;

(d) Take steps, either individually or in collaboration with other Parties, Signatories or likeminded governments, to promote the principles of the Convention in the procedures of other international forums and in the work programmes, projects, decisions, instruments and other substantive outputs of those forums whose practices do not presently reflect the Guidelines or the principles of the Convention;

(e) Consider providing expert assistance to other interested Parties, Signatories or governments on possible good practices to facilitate the public to participate more effectively in international forums, including when hosting important international events,

6. *Requests* the Working Group of the Parties:

(a) To convene regularly, on a needs basis, a thematic session on promoting the principles of the Convention in international forums as an item in the agenda of its meetings;

(i) To provide an opportunity for Parties, Signatories and stakeholders to raise concerns and exchange good practices and challenges in the context of promoting the application of the principles of the Convention with respect to those international forums identified by Parties or stakeholders to be of particular priority, including through electronic consultations and surveys;

(ii) To oversee the progress made and challenges encountered by individual Parties in implementing article 3, paragraph 7;

(b) If it considers that one or more specific issues merit more in-depth consideration, to convene, on an ad hoc basis, a workshop or other event on that theme, and/or mandate a consultant or group of experts to examine the subject matter and to report on their findings to the Working Group of the Parties,

(c) To oversee the collection and dissemination of good practices and innovative initiatives to promote the principles of the Convention through the Aarhus Good Practice online database;

(d) Subject to available resources, undertake a global review of the state-of-the-art with respect to participatory tools and mechanisms for consulting the public on international decision-making and to share the outcomes of the review with Parties, stakeholders and interested international forums.

7. *Requests* the secretariat to provide upon request expert assistance, including as appropriate, commenting on draft documents, expert participation at meetings or events organized by international forums, training sessions, workshops, learning centres or other platforms:

(a) To interested international forums seeking to make their processes more transparent and participatory,

(b) To individual Parties interested to put in place tools or mechanisms to assist the public to participate more effectively in international forums, including when hosting an important conference of any international forum,

8. *Invites* Parties, Signatories, international and other organizations to allocate sufficient funds:

(a) At the national level, to support the participation of the public before, during and in the follow-up to meetings and events of international forums;

(b) At the international level, to support international forums to promote more effective public participation in their projects, processes and policies

(c) To the Convention’s work programme, to support its activities on this topic, including the secretariat’s expert assistance and capacity-building work, in order that it may respond usefully to the expected ongoing demand,

9. *Welcomes* the offer of […] [to continue] to lead the work on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums.

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