

**19th Meeting of the Working Group to the Aarhus Convention
(Geneva, 17-19. June 2015)
Agenda item 7(b): Future funding of the Convention**

Norway

Norway supports the proposal from the Bureau on the distribution of costs between operational costs needed for the effective functioning of the Convention and other costs pursuant to the request made by the Meeting of the Parties in paragraph 10 of Decision V/7 on financial arrangements.

Given the financial circumstances, with budget restraints both within the UNECE and parties, and a voluntary financial scheme with insufficient predictability, stability and equitable sharing of funding, it is of course necessary to take a focused and moderate approach when developing the work programme and deciding what activities and related costs should be considered as operational and what as non-operational. It is also important to find the most cost-effective ways to carry out the activities in the work-plan.

We consider the current work-programme and proposed distribution of costs to be sufficiently focused and moderate, leaving room for redistribution if need be due to unforeseen circumstances.

In our opinion there is limited room for considering Convention bodies and the activities they carry out in accordance with the work-programme, as non-operational. Although only the Meeting of the Parties and the Compliance mechanism are mandated by the Convention, its Article 10 also obliges Parties to establish any subsidiary bodies as they deem necessary. Pursuant to this provision the Working Group and the Task Forces have been established and consequently deemed necessary by the Parties.

Furthermore, Article 10 obliges the Parties to review the policies for and legal and methodological approaches to implement the three pillars of the Convention, with a view to further improve them. As we see it, the Task Forces are an important means of exchanging information on challenges, solutions and best practices. They provide the basis for the review mandated by the Convention. They contribute to implementation, compliance and capacity-building.

We therefore do not consider it as an option to give less priority to Task Forces by classifying them as non-operational. This does not mean that all the activities of the Task Forces would have to be considered as operational.

We are however open to discuss whether and how the meetings of the Convention bodies could be organized in an even more resource-efficient way and the activities of the work-programme could be even more focused and carried out even more resource-efficiently, without decreasing the output.

With regard to the meetings of the Task Forces, both their timing, number and content could be considered as part of such a discussion.

With regard to conduct of business in the Convention bodies we share the views expressed that further increased use of electronic tools could contribute to reduced costs without reducing the quality and output. We do however emphasize that such tools also have their limits and can only replace physical presence in certain, not all cases.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that we should not only focus on discussing where to draw the line between operational and non-operational costs, but also consider how to follow up on other, equally important parts of the decision V/7 on financial arrangements. In that decision, the Meeting of the Parties also stated that the Parties should collectively ensure that the costs of the activities of the programme that are not covered by the UN regular budget, are covered through the financial scheme. It furthermore adopted several principles for the financial scheme and mandated the Bureau and the Working Group to explore options for more predictable, stable and equitably shared funding.