



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE



REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

Lessons, Experiences and Remaining Challenges in Implementing the Aarhus Convention: Common Approaches and Best Practices.

Side-event at the Sixth Ministerial ‘Environment for Europe’ Conference

**Thursday, 11 October 2007
13.15 – 14.45**

Room 5/1, Sava Centre, Belgrade¹

Organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe

Chaired by Mr. Raimonds Vejonis, Minister for the Environment, Latvia

Developed in the latter half of the ‘90s under the auspices of UNECE and adopted at the Aarhus Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention) is the region’s successful attempt to further the implementation of the Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration through a legally-binding instrument.

The political success of the Convention and its relevance to parallel developments in environmental law and governance, in particular in the countries with economies in transition, ensured its smooth entry into force and initiated several active international processes within its framework, the most prominent of which resulted in the adoption at the Kiev Ministerial Conference in 2003 of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. However, as with many other MEAs, the implementation presents a number of challenges in the countries across the region. Some of these relate to lack of capacity and legislative gaps; others are linked to political will and prioritisation at the national level.

This side-event brings together representatives of governments, civil society and international organizations from a range of countries in the region to discuss both the successes and the remaining challenges in the implementation process. During the presentations and discussion, best practices and useful common approaches will be demonstrated to offer possible solutions for the difficulties. Further needs and steps will be identified where measures/actions could be taken and for which funding would be needed for more efficient implementation in the coming years.

¹ English/Russian interpretation will be available at the meeting

Agenda

13:15 Welcome and introduction to the discussion
Mr. Raimonds Vejonis, Minister for the Environment, Latvia

13.20 Keynote presentations

Implementing the Convention in the countries with economies in transition

Mr. Constantin Mihailescu, Minister for Ecology and Natural Resources, Moldova

Aarhus and the challenges for older democracies

Ms. Giuliana Gasparini, Vice-Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, Director, Department for Global Environment, International and Regional Conventions, Ministry for the Environment and Territory, Italy

Lack of capacity or lack of political will?

Mr. John Hontelez, Secretary-General, European Environmental Bureau

13.45 Panel discussion.

Panellists:

Ms. Jadranka Ivanova, Head of Department for European Union,
Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, FYR of Macedonia

Mr. Thomas Becker, Head of International Department, Ministry of Environment,
Denmark

Ms. Magda Toth Nagy, Head, Public Participation Programme, the Regional
Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

Mr. Jeremy Wates, Secretary to the Aarhus Convention, UNECE

Mr. Serhiy Vykhryst, Legal Expert, European ECO Forum

14.15 Plenary Discussion

14.40 Chair's summary

14.45 Close