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in Decision-making and Access to Justice
in Environmental Matters

Working Group of the Parties

Twenty-third meeting

Geneva, 26–28 June 2019

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

Preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

Proposal on the future Strategic Plan for 2022–2030

Prepared by the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat

Summary

This document has been prepared pursuant to decision VI/5 on the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/2017/2/Add.1), adopted by 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) at its sixth session (Budva, Montenegro, 11–14 September 2017), through which the Meeting of the Parties requested the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, to develop a Strategic Plan for 2022–2030.



I. Introduction

1. The present proposal has been prepared pursuant to decision VI/5 on the work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/2017/2/Add.1), adopted by 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) at its sixth session (Budva, Montenegro, 11–14 September 2017), through which the Meeting of the Parties requested the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, to develop a Strategic Plan for 2022–2030. The note aims to facilitate consideration of the subject by the Working Group of the Parties at its twenty-third meeting (Geneva, 26–28 June 2019). The note includes information on the approach to drafting the future Strategic Plan and an indicative timeline for its preparation. It also highlights issues that could be taken into consideration when preparing the future Strategic Plan. A suggested draft Strategic Plan for 2022–2030 is contained in addendum 1 to the present document (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2019/7/Add.1). An initial overview of the implementation of the international dimension of the current Strategic Plan for 2015–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/2014/2/Add.1) is provided in document AC/WGP-23/Inf.1.¹

II. Approach to the drafting of the new Strategic Plan

2. Decision VI/5 specifies, among other things, that the new Strategic Plan should take into account the results of the implementation of the current Strategic Plan (ECE/MP.PP/2014/2/Add.1). The Convention's work programmes constitute an “operational” reflection of the Strategic Plans. In this regard, the following two documents provide background information on the implementation of the objectives and related activities of the current Strategic Plan:

(a) The report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the Convention's work programme for 2015–2017 (ECE/MP.PP/2017/4), which focuses on activities of the previous intersessional period that contributed to efforts to address the objectives of the current Strategic Plan;

(b) The work programme for 2018–2021 (ECE/MP.PP/2017/2/Add.1, decision VI/5, annex I), concerning activities of the current intersessional period that have contributed or will contribute to work to address the objectives of the current Strategic Plan.

3. In order to facilitate the work of the Bureau, the secretariat analysed the above-mentioned documents and prepared an initial overview of those objectives and related activities from the current Strategic Plan that were addressed among the activities during the previous and current intersessional periods and of those that were not.

4. It should be noted that, in addition to activities to be implemented primarily by the secretariat or bodies under the Convention, several objectives and related activities of the current Strategic Plan were expected to be implemented by Parties, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. Therefore, in addition to the above-mentioned reports, the following documents also served as sources for information on the implementation of the current Strategic Plan: the synthesis report on the status of implementation of the Convention (ECE/MP.PP/2017/6); and the report on capacity-building (ECE/MP.PP/2017/7).

5. With regard to the preparation of the new Strategic Plan, it has been proposed that the structure and key elements of the current Strategic Plan be maintained and its contents updated, as appropriate. In particular, the following issues should be addressed:

(a) Experience gained under the framework of the Convention's task forces, its Compliance Committee and capacity-building activities;

(b) The need to make use of recent developments in the field of information and communication technology and, at the same time, to address potential challenges associated with influencing public opinion through, for example, online media;

¹ Available at www.unece.org/index.php?id=50755.

- (c) The increasing importance of the Convention in the light of the general pressure on the principles of democracy around the world;
- (d) The need to address the alarming situation regarding environmental defenders;
- (e) Alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- (f) A stronger focus on the need to strengthen interdepartmental and cross-sectoral cooperation in promoting the Aarhus Convention and its principles in decision-making on a wide range of issues related to sustainable development;
- (g) A stronger focus on the need to strengthen cooperation with multilateral environmental agreements and bodies dealing with human rights matter.

III. Indicative Timeline

6. The below indicative timeline for preparing the Strategic Plan takes into consideration the need to: (a) provide Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the general public and other interested stakeholders with an appropriate time frame for consultations within their respective constituencies, organizations and networks; and (b) ensure that an advance draft of the document is ready for approval by the Working Group of the Parties at its twenty-fifth meeting in 2021, prior to the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties. This approach is based on previous experience and was welcomed by both Governments and stakeholders, including NGOs, which had the possibility to provide inputs and negotiate text well in advance of its formal adoption.

7. The indicative timeline is as follows:

- (a) A proposal regarding the preparation of the Strategic Plan will be submitted to the Working Group of the Parties for consideration (twenty-third meeting, 26–28 June 2019);
- (b) The revised draft of the Strategic Plan will be prepared, taking into account the comments received at the meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, and made available online to Parties, NGOs, the general public and other interested stakeholders for comments (October–December 2019);
- (c) A simple survey of Parties will be organized by the secretariat to gather complementary information on Parties' self-assessment of the implementation of the current Strategic Plan (October–December 2019);
- (d) Taking into account the responses received from the survey, the revised draft of the Strategic Plan will be prepared by the Bureau and submitted to the Working Group of the Parties for discussion and possible approval (twenty-fourth meeting, June 2020);
- (e) If need be, the draft can be revised by the Bureau after the twenty-fourth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties and made available online to Parties, NGOs, the general public and other interested stakeholders for comments prior to the twenty-fifth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, with a view to its approval by the Working Group of the Parties at that meeting (tentatively scheduled for February 2021).