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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Meeting of the Parties to the
Convention on Access to Information,
Public Participation in Decision-making and
Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

(First meeting, Lucca, Italy, 21-23 October 2002)
(Item 1 (a) of the provisional agenda)

RATIFICATION STATUS OF THE CONVENTION

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. The present document sets out the ratification status of the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. As of 18 October 2002, 22 ECE member countries are Parties to the Convention; 39 countries as well as the European Community have signed the Convention.
2. Declarations made by States and regional economic integration organizations upon signature, ratification, accession, acceptance or approval are included in the annex to this document.

**Ratification Status of the UNECE Convention on Access to Information,
Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters as
of 18 October 2002**

COUNTRY	SIGNATURE	RATIFICATION, ACCEPTANCE (A), APPROVAL (AA), ACCESSION (a)
ALBANIA	25 June 1998	27 June 2001
Andorra		
ARMENIA	25 June 1998	1 August 2001
Austria	25 June 1998	
AZERBAIJAN		23 March 2000 (a)
BELARUS	16 December 1998	9 March 2000 (AA)
Belgium	25 June 1998	
Bosnia and Herzegovina		
Bulgaria	25 June 1998	
Canada		
Croatia	25 June 1998	
Cyprus	25 June 1998	
Czech Republic	25 June 1998	
DENMARK <u>1/</u>	25 June 1998	29 September 2000 (AA)
ESTONIA	25 June 1998	2 August 2001
Finland	25 June 1998	
FRANCE <u>2/</u>	25 June 1998	8 July 2002 (AA)
GEORGIA	25 June 1998	11 April 2000
Germany	21 December 1998	
Greece	25 June 1998	
HUNGARY	18 December 1998	3 July 2001
Iceland	25 June 1998	
Ireland	25 June 1998	
Israel		
ITALY	25 June 1998	13 June 2001
KAZAKHSTAN	25 June 1998	11 January 2001
KYRGYZSTAN		1 May 2001 (a)
LATVIA	25 June 1998	14 June 2002
Liechtenstein	25 June 1998	
LITHUANIA	25 June 1998	28 January 2002
Luxembourg	25 June 1998	
MALTA	18 December 1998	23 April 2002
Monaco	25 June 1998	
Netherlands	25 June 1998	
Norway	25 June 1998	
POLAND	25 June 1998	15 February 2002
Portugal	25 June 1998	

COUNTRY	SIGNATURE	RATIFICATION, ACCEPTANCE (A), APPROVAL (AA), ACCESSION (a)
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	25 June 1998	9 August 1999
ROMANIA	25 June 1998	11 July 2000
Russian Federation		
San Marino		
Slovakia		
Slovenia	25 June 1998	
Spain	25 June 1998	
Sweden	25 June 1998	
Switzerland	25 June 1998	
TAJIKISTAN		17 July 2001 (a)
THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA		22 July 1999 (a)
Turkey		
TURKMENISTAN		25 June 1999 (a)
UKRAINE	25 June 1998	18 November 1999
United Kingdom	25 June 1998	
United States		
Uzbekistan		
Yugoslavia		
European Community	25 June 1998	
TOTAL	40	22

Notes

1/ Excluding the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

2/ Excluding New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna.

Annex

Declarations

Denmark

Upon signature:

Declaration:

"Both the Faroe Islands and Greenland are self-governing under Home Rule Acts, which implies *inter alia* that environmental affairs in general and the areas covered by the Convention are governed by the right of self-determination. In both the Faroe and the Greenland Home Rule Governments there is great political interest in promoting the fundamental ideas and principles embodied in the Convention to the extent possible. However, as the Convention is prepared with a view to European countries with relatively large populations and corresponding administrative and social structures, it is not a matter of course that the Convention is in all respects suitable for the scarcely populated and far less diverse societies of the Faroe Islands and of Greenland. Thus, full implementation of the Convention in these areas may imply needless and inadequate bureaucratization. The authorities of the Faroe Islands and of Greenland will analyse this question thoroughly.

Signing by Denmark of the Convention, therefore, not necessarily means that Danish ratification will in due course include the Faroe Islands and Greenland."

France

Upon approval:

Declaration:

Interpretative declaration concerning articles 4, 5 and 6 of the Convention:

"The French Government will see to the dissemination of relevant information for the protection of the environment while, at the same time, ensuring protection of industrial and commercial secrets, with reference to established legal practice applicable in France."

Germany

Upon signature:

Declaration:

"The text of the Convention raises a number of difficult questions regarding its practical implementation in the German legal system which it was not possible to finally resolve during the period provided for the signing of the Convention. These questions require careful consideration, including a consideration of the legislative consequences, before the Convention becomes binding under international law."

The Federal Republic of Germany assumes that implementing the Convention through German administrative enforcement will not lead to developments which counteract efforts towards deregulation and speeding up procedures.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Upon signature:

Declaration:

“The United Kingdom understands the references in article 1 and the seventh preambular paragraph of this Convention to the "right" of every person "to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being" to express an aspiration which motivated the negotiation of this Convention and which is shared fully by the United Kingdom. The legal rights which each Party undertakes to guarantee under article 1 are limited to the rights of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters in accordance with the provisions of this Convention.”

European Community

Upon signature:

Declaration:

"The European Community wishes to express its great satisfaction with the present Convention as an essential step forward in further encouraging and supporting public awareness in the field of environment and better implementation of environmental legislation in the UN/ECE region, in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. Fully supporting the objectives pursued by the Convention and considering that the European Community itself is being actively involved in the protection of the environment through a comprehensive and evolving set of legislation, it was felt important not only to sign up to the Convention at Community level but also to cover its own institutions, alongside national public authorities.

Within the institutional and legal context of the Community and given also the provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam with respect to future legislation on transparency, the Community also declares that the Community institutions will apply the Convention within the framework of their existing and future rules on access to documents and other relevant rules of Community law in the field covered by the Convention.

The Community will consider whether any further declarations will be necessary when ratifying the Convention for the purpose of its application to Community institutions."