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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

**Task Force on Access to Information**

**First meeting**

Geneva, 7 and 8 February 2013

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

**Key outcomes of the meeting**

**KEY OUTCOMES<sup>1</sup>**

as agreed by the Task Force on Access to Information at its first meeting

**Item 1. Opening and adoption of the agenda**

1. The Task Force adopted the agenda as set out in the document AC/TF.AI/Inf.1.

**Item 2. Public access to environmental information: key messages from the region**

2. The Task Force:

(a) Took note of the presentations by the Chair, representatives of the European Environmental Bureau / European ECO-Forum and the Yerevan State University and written statement by the United Kingdom<sup>2</sup>;

(b) Took note of the priorities for the work provided in the document AC/TF.AI/Inf.3 and the comments received at the meeting;

(c) Agreed that the following issues, which were supported by vast majority of participants, should receive a particular priority for the future work of the Task Force:

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<sup>1</sup> This document was not formally edited.

<sup>2</sup> The presentations and the written statement can be found on the following webpage: <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/treaties/public-participation/meetings-and-events/public-participation/public-participation/2013/envpptfaifirst-meeting/docs.html>.

- (i) The scope of environmental information and public access to environment-related information hold by public authorities other than responsible for environmental protection;
- (ii) Provision of sufficient environmental information with regard to products;
- (iii) Access to raw data and primary statistical data related to environmental information;
- (iv) Improving dissemination of priority categories of information in accordance with decision II/3 adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its second session.

3. The following issues, which were supported by many participants, should receive also priority for the future work:

- (a) Access to environmental information in relation to copyright protection;
- (b) Protection of a legitimate economic interest through protected by law confidentiality and of commercial and industrial information related to the environment and of the public interest served by disclosure of such information.
- (c) The Task Force requested the Chair to prepare a note on possible future directions for the work in the area on access to information on the basis of the document AC/TF.AI/Inf.3 and the agreed outcomes.

### **Item 3. Effective use of electronic information tools: addressing challenges and sharing good practices**

4. The Task Force:

- (a) Requested the secretariat in consultation with the Chair to update as necessary and circulate the questionnaire (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2007/L.3/Add.1) to collect updated information regarding the implementation of decision II/3 and to report at the second meeting of the Task Force (Geneva, 16-17 December 2013) on the results of the survey;
- (b) Agreed that Parties and Signatories should provide the secretariat with the contact details of persons responsible for posting resources and news in the Aarhus Clearinghouse in order to receive the administrative access to the Aarhus Clearinghouse, and requested the secretariat to explore the possibility of linking national nodes to the Aarhus Clearinghouse;
- (c) Encouraged non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders to contribute to populating of the Aarhus Clearinghouse;
- (d) Requested the secretariat in consultation with the Chair to update as necessary the draft Guidance for National nodes of the Clearinghouse (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2006/5/Add.1) and to submit its revised version for consideration by the Task Force at its next meeting;
- (e) Took note of the presentations by the secretariat, the Aarhus Centre Georgia, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and of other initiatives reported by participants;
- (f) Requested the secretariat to explore the possible linkages of the Convention's website and the Aarhus Clearinghouse with the United Nations Information portal on multilateral environmental agreements (Infornea).

### **Item 4. Building capacities in providing access to environmental information: regional, subregional and national activities and their coordination**

5. The Task Force:

- (a) Took note of the capacity-building needs and initiatives taken place at the regional, subregional and national levels, as presented by the secretariat and Zoi Environment Network and other delegations;

(b) Encouraged Parties and organizations to share the training material and the outcomes of the capacity-building projects through the Aarhus Clearinghouse to allow for their wider use.

#### **Item 5. Activities under other international forums dealing with access to environmental information**

6. The Task Force:

(a) Took note of the information provided by the representatives of United Nations Environment Programme, European Environmental Agency, World Health Organization, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and EarthJustice;

(b) Agreed to consider what contribution, in relation to the access to environmental information, can be made through the work of the Task Force to the post Rio +20 process and the process of developing new sustainable development goals;

(c) Encourages establishing coordination mechanisms or using existing means in countries to strengthen the coordination between national focal points for various forums dealing with access to environmental information with effective engagement of non-governmental organizations, Aarhus centres and other stakeholders.

#### **Item 6. “Environmental information on products: making public access work” International workshop under the auspices of the Task Force on Access to Information under the Aarhus Convention**

7. The Task Force:

(a) Took note of the information provided by the representatives of Belarus, European Commission, Georgia, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Environment Programme, ClientEarth, European Environmental Bureau, Women in Europe for a Common Future, European Chemical Industry Council, Center for International Environmental Law, Environment Institute SYKE, Finland, and Independent Ecological Expertise;

(b) Took note of the following issues that could be considered by the Task Force:

(i) the scope of the definition of environmental information on products, criteria for sufficiency of environmental information, as discussed by the groups, to contribute to understanding and implementation of article 5, paragraphs 6 and 8, of the Aarhus Convention;

(ii) Preparing an overview of the practice of the Parties, Signatories and other countries in order to identify gaps, best practices and the further work to be done;

(c) Encourages the Parties to provide more detailed information on the implementation of article 5, paragraphs 6 and 8, of the Aarhus Convention through national implementation reports.

#### **Item 7. Approval of the key outcomes of the meeting**

8. The Task Force:

(a) Thanked the speakers for their presentations;

(b) Agreed on outcomes presented by the Chair at the meeting and requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, to finalize the meeting report and incorporate these outcomes.

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