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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

Second meeting

Geneva, 16 and 17 December 2013

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening and adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the second meeting

To be held in Salle VIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva
starting at 3 pm on Monday, 16 December 2013

I. Provisional agenda

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda.
2. Public access to environmental information in the specific sectors: sharing good practices, identifying gaps and overcoming challenges.
3. The current use of electronic information tools in the Convention's implementation: taking stocks of experiences.
4. The Aarhus Clearinghouse: the role of national nodes in its development.
5. Activities under other international forums dealing with access to environmental information.
6. Building capacities in providing access to environmental information: identifying needs and looking for synergies.
7. Future work on access to information.
8. Other business.
9. Approval of the key outcomes of the meeting.

II. Annotations

The mandate of the Task Force on Access to Information under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental matter (Aarhus Convention) was laid down by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention through decision IV/1 adopted at its fourth session (Chisinau, 29 June - 1 July 2011)¹, and pursuant to the Strategic Plan 2009-2014 adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its third session (Riga, 11-13 June 2008)².

At its first meeting (Geneva, 7-8 February 2013), the Task Force considered possible priorities for the work, shared information and identified challenges regarding the effective use of electronic information tools, discussed capacity-building needs in providing public access to environmental information and the relevant activities under other international forums. A particular focus of the first meeting was on public access to environmental information on products where participants took stock of good practices, needs and challenges in this area.

While considering possible priorities for the future work of the Task Force, the participants agreed, *inter alia*, that issues such as the clarification of the scope of environmental information, improving dissemination of priority categories of information in accordance with decision II/3 of the Meeting of the Parties, and restrictions in access to information should be given particular priority for the future work. The existing challenges were stressed in such sectors as land management and spatial planning, agriculture and water.³

At its second meeting, the Task Force is expected to follow up on the outcomes of the previous meeting as to continue assisting Parties, Signatories and other interested States in improving public access to environmental information, including through electronic information tools.

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda

Timing: Monday, 16 December, 3–3.10 p.m.

The Task Force will be invited to adopt the agenda as set out in the present document.⁴

2. Public access to environmental information in the specific sectors: sharing good practices, identifying gaps and overcoming challenges

(a) In the area of land management and spatial planning

Timing: Monday, 16 December, 3.10–5.00 p.m.

This session aims at sharing good practices, identifying gaps in and addressing challenges of public access to environmental information in the area of land use and spatial planning. The participants will be invited to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and to identify challenges and gaps with regard to such issues as: (a) what information to be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Convention; (b) what are the public needs in access to information; (c) establishing an adequate flow of information to public authorities; (d) inter-agency cooperation to facilitate data creation, adequate flow, management, access upon request and active dissemination; (e) overcoming urban-rural divide in access to

¹ The text of decision is available at: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop4/Documents/ece_mp_pp_2011_2_add.1_eng.pdf

² The text of decision is available at: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop3/ODS/ece_mp_pp_2008_2_add_16_e_StPI.pdf

³ See report of the Task Force on Access to Information on its first meeting available from:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/wgp/WGP_16/ece.mp.pp.wg.1.2013.5.e.pdf (paragraphs 13 and 15).

⁴ All documentation for the meeting will be available at <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/tfai2.html>

environmental information; (f) access to maps; (g) application of restrictions in public access to environmental information; and (h) the associated costs.

(b) In the agriculture sector

Timing: Monday, 16 December, 5.00–6.00 p.m.

This session aims at sharing good practices, identifying gaps in and addressing challenges of public access to environmental information in the agriculture sector. The participants will be invited to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and to identify challenges and gaps with regard to such issues as: (a) what information to be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Convention; (b) what are the public needs; (c) establishing an adequate flow of information to public authorities; (d) inter-agency cooperation to facilitate data creation, adequate flow, management, access upon request and active dissemination; (e) application of restrictions in public access to environmental information; and (f) the associated costs.

(c) In the water supply and waste water treatment sector

Timing: Monday, 17 December, 9.30–10.30 a.m.

This session aims at sharing good practices, identifying gaps in and addressing challenges of public access to environmental information in the water supply and waste water treatment sector. The participants will be invited to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and to identify challenges and gaps with regard to such issues as: (a) what information to be provided in accordance with the requirements of the Convention; (b) what are the public needs; (c) establishing an adequate flow of information to public authorities; (d) inter-agency cooperation to facilitate data creation, adequate flow, management, access upon request and active dissemination; (e) application of restrictions in public access to environmental information; and (f) the associated costs.

3. Effective use of electronic information tools: taking stocks of experiences

Timing: Tuesday, 17 December, 10.30 a.m. –12.00 p.m.

This session will address, inter alia, recent developments in the use of electronic information tools for the Convention's implementation. The participants will be invited to consider a report on the outcomes of the survey carried out at the request of the Task Force at its second meeting. Afterwards, the participants will be expected to share good practices in improving access to environmental information through shared environmental information system, e-government and Open Government Data initiatives and recent technological developments.

4. The Aarhus Clearinghouse: the role of national nodes in its development

Timing: Tuesday, 17 December, 12.00– 12.30 p.m.

Following the outcomes of the first meeting, the secretariat in consultation with the Chair, updated the draft Guidance for National Nodes of the Clearinghouse (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2006/5/Add.1). The Task Force will be invited to consider the draft guidance.

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

Timing: Tuesday, 17 December, 2.30–3.30 p.m.

Representatives of different international forums will be invited to inform about recent activities dealing with public access to environmental information and with promotion of electronic information tools.

6. Building capacities in providing access to environmental information: identifying needs and looking for synergies

Timing: Tuesday, 17 December, 3.30–4.10 p.m.

The Task Force is expected to take note of the information provided by participants about the capacity-building needs. Partner organisations will be invited to inform about their capacity-building activities carried out since the last meeting of the Task Force.

7. Future work on access to information

Timing: Thursday, 17 December, 4.10–4.55 p.m.

The Chair will inform participants about the progress in preparing a draft decision on access to information for the fifth session of the Convention's Meeting of the Parties (Maastricht, the Netherlands, 30 June – 2 July 2014). The draft decision prepared by the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat was circulated for comments to Parties and stakeholders to be received by 10 November 2013. The Bureau is expected to finalize the draft decision, taking into account comments received, for the seventeenth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention (Geneva, 5-7 March 2014). Participants will be invited to express their views on the draft decision.

8. Other business

Timing: Tuesday, 17 December, 4.55–5.00 p.m.

Delegates wishing to propose issues under this item are requested to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

9. Approval of the key outcomes of the meeting

Timing: Tuesday, 17 December, 5.00–5.30 p.m.

The Task Force is expected to approve the key outcomes of the meeting. The Chair will close the meeting.