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КОМИССИЯECONOMIC 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

**Task Force on Access to Information****Fourth meeting**

Geneva, 8-10 December 2015

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

**Opening and adoption of the agenda****Annotated provisional agenda for the fourth meeting**

To be held in Salle XI, Palais des Nations, Geneva  
starting at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 8 December 2015

**I. Provisional agenda**

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda.
2. Environmental information: improving public access.
3. The application of certain restrictions on access to environmental information in accordance with the Convention's provisions.
4. Effective dissemination of environmental information.
5. Priority areas for action on emerging and systemic issues.
6. Activities under other international forums.
7. Other business.
8. 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 Matters (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)<sup>1</sup>. It was further extended by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention through decision V/1 adopted at its fifth session (Maastricht, the Netherlands, 30 June and 1 July 2014)<sup>2</sup>. The work's scope was also outlined in the Strategic Plan 2015-2020 and the Work Programme 2015-2017 adopted through decisions V/5 and V/6 respectively by the Meeting of the Parties<sup>3</sup>.

The present meeting will continue the exchange of information, challenges and good practices, as well as the discussion on possible further developments regarding public access to environmental information. The meeting will focus on the scope of information, its quality and associated costs, the application of certain restrictions on access to environmental information, dissemination of environmental information through electronic information tools and the further development of the Aarhus Clearinghouse and national nodes.

The background material for the meeting includes relevant information derived from 2014 national implementation reports<sup>4</sup> and the synthesis report<sup>5</sup> as well as the Implementation Guide<sup>6</sup>, relevant Compliance Committee findings of a systemic nature<sup>7</sup> and jurisprudence database<sup>8</sup>. The Task Force on Access to Information continues its work based on the outputs of the previous meetings.

### 1. Opening and adoption of the agenda

*Timing: Tuesday, 8 December, 10–10.10 a.m.*

The Task Force will be invited to adopt the agenda as set out in the present document.<sup>9</sup>

### 2. Environmental information: improving public access

(a) Scope of environmental information and its provision by different public authorities

*Timing: Tuesday, 8 December, 10.10 a.m. – 1 p.m.*

This session will focus on the scope of information to be provided in accordance with the Convention. Participants will be invited to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and to identify challenges and gaps with regard to such issues, inter alia, as: (a) types of information to be provided in accordance with the Convention; (b) types of public authorities generating, collecting and providing environmental information; (c) access to information on emissions, substances and wastes; and (d) access to statistical, spatial and hydrometeorological information related to the environment. Participants will be also invited to identify further needs in relation to the subject.

<sup>1</sup> The text of decision is available from [http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop4/Documents/ece\\_mp\\_pp\\_2011\\_2\\_add.1\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop4/Documents/ece_mp_pp_2011_2_add.1_eng.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The text of decision is available from [http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5\\_docs.html](http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5_docs.html)

<sup>3</sup> The texts of decisions are available from [http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5\\_docs.html](http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5_docs.html)

<sup>4</sup> 2014 National implementation reports are available from <http://apps.unece.org/ehlm/pp/NIR/index.asp>

<sup>5</sup> The synthesis report (ECE/MP.PP/2014/6) is available from [http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5\\_docs.html#/](http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5_docs.html#/) (Category II document)

<sup>6</sup> The Implementation Guide is available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35869&L=0>

<sup>7</sup> Compliance Committee findings are available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/cc.html>

<sup>8</sup> The jurisprudence database is available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/tfaj/jurisprudenceplatform.html>

<sup>9</sup> All documentation for the meeting will be available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/tfai4.html>

## (b) Quality of environmental information

*Timing: Tuesday, 8 December, 3–4 p.m.*

This session will continue the discussion on measures, tools and techniques that can be used by various stakeholders to assure and monitor quality of environmental information derived from various sources. Participants will be invited to share good practices, outcomes of relevant projects, recent policy and legislative developments and to identify challenges and gaps with regard to this issue. Participants will be also invited to identify further needs in relation to the subject.

## (c) Associated costs

*Timing: Tuesday, 8 December, 4–4.30 p.m.*

This session aims to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and to identify challenges and gaps with regard to the costs associated with public access to environmental information. Participants will be also invited to identify further needs in relation to the subject.

### **3. The application of certain restrictions on access to environmental information in accordance with the Convention's provisions**

#### (a) Proceedings of public authorities, international relations, national defence, public security and the course of justice

*Timing: Tuesday, 8 December, 4.30 – 6 p.m.*

This session will focus on the practice of application of these restrictions in accordance with article 4, paragraphs 4 (a), (b) and (c), of the Convention. Participants will be invited to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments, identify challenges and suggest measures to improve the application of the Convention with regard to these issues. Participants will be also invited to identify further needs in relation to the subject.

#### (b) Material in the course of completion or internal communication

*Timing: Wednesday, 9 December, 10–11 a.m.*

This session will focus on the practice of application of these restrictions in accordance with article 4, paragraph 3 (c), of the Convention. Participants will be invited to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments, identify challenges and suggest measures to improve the application of the Convention with regard to these issues. Participants will be also invited to identify further needs in relation to the subject.

#### (c) Commercial and industrial information, intellectual property rights and interests of a third party

*Timing: Wednesday, 9 December, 11 a.m. –12.30 p.m.*

This session will continue discussing the practice of application of these restrictions in accordance with article 4, paragraphs 4 (d), (e) and (g), of the Convention. Participants will be invited to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments, identify challenges and suggest measures to improve the application of the Convention with regard to these issues. Participants will be also invited to identify further needs in relation to the subject.

## (d) The environment to which information relates

*Timing: Wednesday, 9 December, 12.30–1 p.m.*

This session aims at discussing the practice of application of this restriction in accordance with article 4, paragraph 4 (h), of the Convention. Participants will be invited to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and to identify challenges and propose measures to improve the application of the Convention with regard to this issue. Participants will be also invited to identify further needs in relation to the subject.

## (e) Ensuring the legitimate application of the restrictions

*Timing: Wednesday, 9 December, 3–4.30 p.m.*

This session will continue the discussion on measures that are taken at the national level to ensure the legitimate application of the restrictions under the Convention and on the process of removing the confidentiality protection. Participants will be also invited to identify further needs in relation to the subject.

**4. Effective dissemination of environmental information**

*Timing: Wednesday, 9 December, 4.30–6 p.m.*

This session will focus, inter alia, on innovative application of electronic information tools in support of the Convention and the monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations in decision II/3. The participants will be expected to share good practices in improving dissemination of environmental information through shared environmental information system, e-government and Open Government Data initiatives, recent technological developments and establishing partnerships. The session will also discuss the role of the Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy and national nodes in promoting access to environmental information.

**5. Priority areas for action on emerging and systemic issues**

*Timing: Thursday, 10 December, 10–11.30 a.m.*

The participants will be invited to highlight any other emerging issues or issues of a systemic nature regarding public access to environmental information that are not covered by previous agenda items, including measures, tools and projects, to address these issues.

**6. Activities under other international forums**

*Timing: Thursday, 10 December, 11.30 a.m. –12.25 p.m.*

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

**7. Other business**

*Timing: Thursday, 10 December, 12.25–12.30 p.m.*

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

**8. Approval of the key outcomes of the meeting**

*Timing: Thursday, 10 December, 12.30–1 p.m.*

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