

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

Sixth meeting

Geneva, 3-4 October 2019

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening and adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the sixth meeting

To be held in Salle XXII, Palais des Nations, Geneva
starting at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 3 October 2019

I. Provisional agenda

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda.
2. Thematic focus: Active dissemination of environmental information:
 - (a) Effective provision of information in case of an imminent threat to human health and the environment;
 - (b) The use of modern technologies by the public;
 - (c) Update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools.
3. Stocktaking of recent and upcoming developments.
4. Activities under other international forums.
5. Other business.
6. Closing.

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)¹. It was further extended in time by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention through decision VI/1 adopted at its sixth session (Budva, Montenegro, 11-14 September 2017)². The work is also guided by the Strategic Plan 2015-2020³ and the Work Programme 2018-2021⁴.

The Task Force will promote the exchange of information, case studies and good practices and discuss recent and upcoming developments focusing on active dissemination of environmental information. In particular, the Task Force will discuss (a) effective provision of information in case of an imminent threat to human health and the environment; (b) the use of modern technologies by the public; and (c) the update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools. The Task Force is also expected to take stock of recent and upcoming developments with regard to public access to information related to: emissions; the application of restrictions on access to information; and the protection of whistle-blowers and other persons exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of the Aarhus Convention.

The outcomes of the meeting will support countries' efforts in implementing, monitoring and measuring environment-related Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 3 (Health), SDG 6 (Water), SDG 9 (Resilient Infrastructure), SDG 11 (Resilient and Sustainable Cities), SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land) and target 10 SDG 16 (Ensure Public Access to Information), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

The background material for the meeting includes relevant information derived from 2017 national implementation reports⁵ and the synthesis report⁶ as well as the Implementation Guide⁷, relevant Compliance Committee findings of a systemic nature⁸ and jurisprudence database⁹. The Task Force on Access to Information continues its work based on the outputs of the previous meetings.

Each session will feature brief introductory presentation(s) sharing experiences of the Parties to the Convention and stakeholders related to the agenda items followed by contributors' interventions and interactive discussion. Delegates who are interested to make a presentation or statement at the meeting on the key developments, emerging issues or issues of a systemic nature regarding the implementation of the first pillar of the Convention are kindly invited to contact the secretariat (public.participation[at]un.org) as soon as possible, preferably by **1 September 2019**, briefly outlining its focus in relation to the agenda items. The list of speakers will be released shortly before the meeting.

The meeting will take place back to back with the of the joint UNECE – EEA workshop “Open Data for the Environment” (Geneva, 2 October 2019)¹⁰.

¹ 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

² The text of decision is available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop6_docs.html

³ The texts of decisions are available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop6_docs.html

⁴ The text of decision is available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop6_docs.html

⁵ 2017 National implementation reports are available from <https://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/national-reports>

⁶ The synthesis report (ECE/MP.PP/2017/6) is available from http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop6_docs.html (Category II document)

⁷ The Implementation Guide is available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=35869&L=0>

⁸ Compliance Committee findings are available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/cc.html>

⁹ The jurisprudence database is available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/tfaj/jurisprudenceplatform.html>

¹⁰ More information about the event is available from: <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/public-participation/meetings-and-events/public-participation/2019/sixth-meeting-of-the-task-force-on-access-to-information-under-the-aarhus-convention/joint-unece-eea-workshop.html>

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda

Timing: Thursday, 3 October, 10–10.10 a.m.

The Task Force will be invited to adopt the agenda as set out in the present document.¹¹

2. Thematic focus: Active dissemination of environmental information

(a) Effective provision of information in case of an imminent threat to human health and the environment

Timing: Thursday, 3 October, 10.10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

This session will focus on the effective provision of information to the public in case of an imminent threat to human health and the environment, whether caused by human activities or due to natural causes (article 5 (1) (c) of the Convention). Participants will be invited to share good practices, case studies and recent policy and legislative developments with regard to (a) identification of imminent threat to human health and the environment; (b) information which could enable the public to take measures to prevent or mitigate harm arising from the threat; and (c) mechanisms and tools for disseminating this information immediately and without delay to members of the public who may be affected. The session will also explore synergies with other international forums dealing disaster risk reduction and industrial accidents. The discussion aims to identify existing challenges, possible further developments and contribute to the update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools.

(b) The use of modern technologies by the public

Timing: Thursday, 3 October, 3 – 4.30 p.m.

This session will focus on the use of modern technologies by the public for assembling, exchanging and using environmental data and information. Participants will be invited to share good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and case studies in relation to the subject. The discussion aims to identify existing challenges, possible further developments and contribute to the update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools.

(c) Update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools

Timing: Thursday, 3 October, 4.30 – 6 p.m. and Friday, 4 October, 9.30 – 11 a.m.

This session will focus on the update of the recommendations set out in decision II/3, taking into account the developments in the Shared Environmental Information System, geospatial information management, Earth observation data, e-government, open government data, reuse of public sector information and other relevant initiatives across the region and recent technical developments. Participants will be invited to share relevant good practices, case studies and initiatives in relation to the subject. The Task Force will discuss the outcomes of the consultation carried out in July-September 2019 prior to the meeting. The Task Force will also consider the indicative timeline for the update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools (AC/TF.AI-6/Inf.2), taking into account the outcomes of the joint UNECE – EEA workshop “Open Data for the Environment”.

¹¹ All documentation for the meeting will be available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50574>

3. Stocktaking of recent and upcoming developments

Timing: Friday, 4 October, 11 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. and 2.30 – 4 p.m.

This session will focus, inter alia, on take stock of recent and upcoming developments with regard to public access to information related to: (a) emissions; (b) the application of restrictions on access to information; and (c) the protection of whistle-blowers and other persons exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of the Aarhus Convention.

4. Activities under other international forums

Timing: Friday, 4 October, 4 – 5 p.m.

Representatives of relevant international forums dealing with environmental information will be invited to inform about recent activities to measure and monitor progress towards environment-related Sustainable Development Goals.

5. Other business

Timing: Friday, 4 October, 5 – 5.10 p.m.

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

6. Closing

Timing: Friday, 4 October, 5.10 – 5.30 p.m.

The Chair will summarize the key outcomes of the meeting and close it.