

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

Seventh meeting

Geneva (online), 16-17 November 2020

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening and adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the seventh meeting

To be held virtually
starting at 10 a.m. on Monday, 16 November 2020

I. Provisional agenda

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda.
2. Access to environment-related product information.
3. Access to information with respect to genetically modified organisms.
4. Update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools.
5. Stocktaking of recent and upcoming developments.
6. Activities under other international forums.
7. Other business.
8. 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.

At its seventh meeting, the Task Force will promote the exchange of information, case studies and good practices and discuss recent and upcoming developments focusing on (a) access to environment-related product information; (b) access to information with respect to genetically modified organisms; 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 the public access to environmental information, including those related to COVID-19 pandemic and the application of restrictions in disclosure in accordance with the Convention. The Task Force will also address access to information on monitoring progress towards environment-related Sustainable Development Goals and their targets.

The outcomes of the meeting will support countries' efforts in promoting green and circular economy and zero waste approaches. They will also help countries to further a number of Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 3 (Health), SDG 6 (Water), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 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).

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 also bases its work on the outputs of the previous meetings and of the consultation on the update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools¹⁰.

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 as soon as possible, preferably by **2 November 2020**, briefly outlining its focus in relation to the agenda items. The list of speakers will be released shortly before the meeting.

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 See www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/public-participation/aarhus-convention/tfwg/task-force-on-access-to-information/consultation-on-the-recommendations-on-electronic-information-tools.html .

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda

Timing: Monday, 16 November, 10–10.10 a.m.

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

2. Access to environment-related product information

Timing: Monday, 16 November, 10.10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

This session will focus on access to environment-related product information (article 5 (6) and (8) of the Convention). Participants will be invited to share good practices, case studies and recent policy and legislative developments with regard to public access to environment-related product information and the development of respective labelling, product passports, environmental product declarations, certification, audit and other schemes or means in this regard. The discussion aims to identify existing challenges, possible further developments and contribute to the update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools.

3. Access to information with respect to genetically modified organisms

Timing: Monday, 16 November, 2 – 4 p.m.

This session will focus on access to information with respect to genetically modified organisms. Relevant outcomes of the third Joint Round Table on Public Awareness, Access to Information and Public Participation regarding Living Modified Organisms/Genetically Modified Organisms (Geneva, 16-18 December 2019) will be brought to the attention of delegates. 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.

4. Update of the Recommendations on electronic information tools

Timing: Tuesday, 17 November, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

This session will consider the progress in 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 2020 and the follow up work in this regard.

5. Stocktaking of recent and upcoming developments

Timing: Tuesday, 17 November, 2 – 3 p.m.

This session will focus, inter alia, on the stocktaking of recent and upcoming developments with regard to public access to information, including those related to COVID-19 pandemic and to the application of restrictions in disclosure, specifically in case of internal communication within the public administration (article 4 (3) (c) of the Convention).

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

6. Activities under other international forums

Timing: Tuesday, 17 November, 3 – 3.45 p.m.

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

7. Other business

Timing: Tuesday, 17 November, 3.45 – 3.50 p.m.

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

8. Closing

Timing: Tuesday, 17 November, 3.50 – 4.00 p.m.

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