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## Economic 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

### Compliance Committee

#### Fiftieth meeting

Geneva, 6–9 October 2015

## Report of the Compliance Committee on its fiftieth meeting

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## Introduction

1. The fiftieth meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was held from 6 to 9 October 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland.

### A. Attendance

2. All the Committee members were present throughout the meeting with the exception of Ms. Elena Fasoli, who had indicated in advance that she would not be able to attend. Members having declared a conflict of interest with respect to particular cases did not participate in closed sessions deliberating on those cases.

3. Representatives of the Governments of Belarus and Slovakia took part in the open session on 6 October 2015 on the review of developments regarding communications. Representatives of the Governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland also took part in that session by audio conference.

4. Both the communicants of communications ACCC/C/2014/102 (Belarus), ACCC/C/2014/104 (Netherlands) and ACCC/C/2014/105 (Hungary) and representatives of the respective Parties concerned took part in the discussions in open session on 7, 8 and 9 October 2015 concerning those communications.

5. Both the communicants of communications PRE/ACCC/C/2015/129 (Ireland) and PRE/ACCC/2015/131 (United Kingdom) and representatives of the respective Parties concerned took part by audio conference in the open session on preliminary admissibility on 6 October 2015. The communicants of communication PRE/ACCC/C/2015/129 (Ireland) and the Government of the United Kingdom also took part by audio conference in the open session on preliminary admissibility on 9 October 2015.

6. A representative of the Government of Ukraine took part in an audio conference with the Committee on 6 October 2015 to discuss the draft questions that the Committee proposed to send with respect to Government's outstanding response to communication ACCC/C/2013/87, which had been due on 26 December 2013, as well as the implementation of decision V/9m of the Meeting of the Parties concerning compliance by Ukraine.

7. Also participating as observers during all open sessions of the meeting were members of the public and representatives of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Earthjustice (Switzerland) and Resource and Analysis Center "Society and Environment" (Ukraine), both of which participated on behalf of the European ECO Forum.

### B. Organizational matters

8. The Chair of the Compliance Committee, Mr. Jonas Ebbesson, opened the meeting.

9. The Committee adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2015/6.

10. The Committee welcomed a new member, Ms. Áine Ryall, who had been appointed by the Bureau in accordance with paragraph 10 of the annex to decision I/7 of the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.PP/2/Add.8) following the resignation of Ms. Zhandaeva, and whose appointment had been approved by the Committee at its forty-ninth meeting. To fulfil the requirements of paragraph 11 of the annex to decision I/7, Ms. Ryall signed a declaration in which she undertook to perform her duties as a member of the Committee impartially and conscientiously. The Committee congratulated Ms. Ryall on her appointment.

11. The Chair reported on the outcomes of the Committee's virtual meeting held in closed session via Skype on 25 September 2015, in which all the Committee members had taken part. During the virtual meeting, the Committee had continued its deliberations on communication ACCC/C/2012/71 (Czech Republic), ACCC/C/2013/88 (Kazakhstan) and ACCC/C/2013/93 (Norway) and had agreed to continue its deliberations on those draft findings at its fiftieth meeting.

## **I. Submissions, referrals and requests under the Convention**

12. With respect to submission ACCC/S/2015/2 (Belarus) submitted by Lithuania, the Committee noted that on 10 July 2015 Belarus had indicated that, in accordance with paragraph 15 of the annex to decision I/7, it would send its response to the submission no later than six months from the date it had received it, namely 8 October 2015. The Committee also took note of the response of Belarus to the submission, which had been received on time on 8 October 2015.

13. The Chair informed the Committee that no submissions had been made by Parties concerning problems with their own compliance since the Committee's forty-ninth meeting (Geneva, 30 June–3 July 2015).

14. No referrals had been made by the secretariat since the Committee's forty-ninth meeting.

15. With respect to request ACCC/M/2014/1 (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) from the Meeting of the Parties, the Committee took note of the letter from the Minister of Environment and Physical Planning of the Party concerned dated 26 June 2015 and received by e-mail on 20 July 2015, which stated that a report for the period 2012–2013 had been prepared and was currently in a process of public consultation to be finalized by 20 July 2015. Following a short period for integrating comments and then translation into English, the report would be finalized and forwarded to the secretariat of the Convention by the end of July 2015. The letter also indicated that a report for the period 2013–2014 would be completed and forwarded to the secretariat by the end of November 2015. The secretariat reported that the 2012–2013 report had not been received.

16. The Committee discussed in open session the statement by Belarus at the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties, requesting interpretation of certain provisions of the Convention, as well as the procedure agreed by the Meeting of the Parties with respect to such requests (ECE/MP.PP/2014/2, para. 53). The Committee decided that the request for advice of Belarus would be given the reference ACCC/A/2014/1. It was agreed that the secretariat's draft response to the request would be posted on the Committee's web page four weeks in advance of its fifty-first meeting (Geneva, 15–18 December 2015). The Committee further agreed to discuss the secretariat's draft in open session at its fifty-first meeting, taking into account comments received from observers, and to thereafter prepare its recommendations in closed session in accordance with paragraph 33 of the annex to decision I/7.

## **II. Communications from members of the public**

17. The Committee decided that the deadline for the receipt of new communications to be considered for preliminary admissibility at its fifty-first meeting would be 10 November 2015.

18. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2008/32 (European Union), Ms. Áine Ryall declared a conflict of interest. The Committee agreed that Ms. Ryall would henceforth

participate in the proceedings of the communication as an observer only, and would not participate in any deliberations on the communication in closed sessions. The Committee continued its deliberations in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations at its fifty-first meeting, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations, which would then be sent for comment to the Party concerned and the communicant.

19. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2012/71 (Czech Republic), the Committee completed its draft findings in closed session, save for some minor points which it agreed to finalize using its electronic decision-making procedure. It requested the secretariat to send the draft findings to the Party concerned and the communicants for comment in accordance with the procedure set out in paragraph 34 of the annex to decision I/7. The Committee would take into account any comments when finalizing the findings at its fifty-first meeting.

20. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2012/76 (Bulgaria), the Committee adopted its findings, taking into account the comments received from the Party concerned and the communicant on 2 October 2015. It instructed the secretariat to prepare an official version of the adopted findings as a formal pre-session document for its fifty-second meeting (Geneva, 8–11 March 2016), and to ensure their availability in the three official languages of ECE. The Committee also requested the secretariat to send the adopted findings to the Party concerned and the communicant.

21. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2013/81 (Sweden), the Committee continued its deliberations in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations at its fifty-first meeting, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations, which would then be sent for comment to the Party concerned and the communicant.

22. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2013/87 (Ukraine), the Committee noted that it had still not received the response to the communication, originally due on 26 December 2013. The last update from the Party concerned was the statement at the Committee's forty-eighth meeting (Geneva, 24–27 March 2015) in which the Party had stressed, *inter alia*, that it was making all possible efforts to ensure the submission of its response to the communication. The Committee discussed in open session the draft questions it proposed to send to the Party concerned in order to move forward with the communication. Both the Party concerned and the communicant had been invited to take part in the open session and to provide their input on the draft questions. The communicant had informed the secretariat that he would not be able to participate, but would send his input electronically. The Party concerned took part in the session by audio conference, and indicated that it would make its best efforts to fully address the questions. The Committee agreed to consider how to further proceed after receiving the response of the Party concerned.

23. On communication ACCC/C/2013/88 (Kazakhstan), the Committee agreed to request the secretariat to send questions to the parties to clarify certain factual matters, and to continue its deliberations at its fifty-first meeting with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations, which would then be sent for comment to the Party concerned and the communicant.

24. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2013/89 (Slovakia), the Committee continued its deliberations in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations at its fifty-first meeting, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations, which would then be sent for comment to the Party concerned and the communicant.

25. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2013/90 (United Kingdom), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 29 June 2015. It further noted that the deadline of 29 November 2015 for a response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

26. With regard to communication ACCC/C/2013/91 (United Kingdom), the Committee agreed to defer its deliberations until its fifty-first meeting, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations, which would then be sent for comment to the Party concerned and the communicant.
27. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2013/92 (Germany), the Committee continued its deliberations in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations at its next virtual meeting, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations, which would then be sent for comment to the Party concerned and the communicant.
28. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2013/93 (Norway), the Committee continued its deliberations in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations at its fifty-first meeting, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations, which would then be sent for comment to the Party concerned and the communicant.
29. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2013/94 (Denmark), the Committee noted that on 5 October 2015 the communicant had informed the Committee that its claims had been resolved through domestic procedures and had requested the Committee to close the communication. The Committee accordingly agreed to close the case.
30. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2013/96 (European Union), the Committee noted that the Party concerned had been requested to provide examples of the costs for cases on access to information at all instances before the courts of the European Union by 2 November 2015, and the communicant had been invited to comment on the information provided by 9 November 2015. The Committee provisionally scheduled that it would discuss the substance of the communication at its fifty-first meeting.
31. On communication ACCC/C/2013/98 (Lithuania), the Committee continued its deliberations in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations at its fifty-first meeting, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations, which would then be sent for comment to the Party concerned and the communicant.
32. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2014/99 (Spain), the Committee agreed to defer its deliberations until its next virtual meeting, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations, which would then be sent for comment to the Party concerned and the communicant.
33. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/100 (United Kingdom), the Committee noted that by letters of 29 August and 2 September 2015, the Party concerned had informed the Committee that its counsel had an unchangeable court commitment during the week of the Committee's fifty-first meeting and had therefore asked if the Committee's discussion of the case could be scheduled for the Committee's fifty-second meeting. By letter of 30 August the communicants had objected to the request by the Party concerned to defer the hearing, in particular because they wished the discussion to be held without delay. By letter of 5 October 2015, the communicants reiterated their objection to the deferral, but confirmed that their counsel could be available during the week of the Committee's fifty-second meeting. After taking into account the views and of both parties, the Committee provisionally scheduled that it would discuss the substance of the communication at its fifty-second meeting.
34. On communication ACCC/C/2014/101 (European Union), bearing in mind that the communicants were the same communicants as for communication ACCC/C/2014/100 (United Kingdom), as well as the related subject matter, the Committee provisionally scheduled that it would discuss the substance of the communication at its fifty-second meeting.
35. The Committee entered into open discussion on communication ACCC/C/2014/102 (Belarus) with the participation of the Party concerned and the communicant. The Chair

informed the parties that prior to the meeting he had requested the secretariat to inform the relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council that the Committee would discuss the communication at the fiftieth meeting and to send them the Committee's draft findings for their information once adopted. He also indicated that he would request the secretariat to inform the Council of Europe of the communication and to send it the Committee's draft findings once adopted. Following the discussion, the Committee commenced deliberations on its draft findings and agreed to continue its deliberations at its fifty-first meeting with a view to their finalization. At the end of the discussion, the parties were invited to address some additional questions in writing.

36. The Committee entered into open discussion on communication ACCC/C/2014/104 (Netherlands) with the participation of the Party concerned and the communicant. Following the discussion, the Committee commenced deliberations on its draft findings and agreed to continue its deliberations at its fifty-first meeting with a view to their finalization. At the end of the discussion, the parties were invited to address some additional questions in writing.

37. The Committee entered into open discussion on communication ACCC/C/2014/105 (Hungary) with the participation of the Party concerned and the communicants. Following the discussion, the Committee commenced deliberations on its draft findings and agreed to continue its deliberations at its fifty-first meeting with a view to their finalization. At the end of the discussion, the parties were invited to address some additional questions in writing.

38. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2013/106 (Czech Republic), the Committee noted that the Party concerned had provided its response to the communication on time on 24 July 2015 and that on 16 September 2015, the communicant had provided comments on the Party's response. The Committee requested the secretariat to ask the Party concerned to identify which of the issues raised in the communication had already been considered by the Committee in the context of communication ACCC/C/2010/50 and to clarify the extent to which the Party's new legislation impacted upon the communicant's allegations. The Committee provisionally scheduled that it would discuss the substance of the communication at its fifty-first meeting.

39. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2013/107 (Ireland), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 29 June 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 29 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

40. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2014/109 (Hungary), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 29 June 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 29 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

41. On communication ACCC/C/2014/111 (Belgium), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 5 June 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 5 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

42. With regard to communication ACCC/C/2014/112 (Ireland), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 29 June 2015. It further noted that the deadline of 29 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

43. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/113 (Ireland), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 15 April 2015 with a deadline for its response of 15 September 2015. On 26 August 2015, the Party concerned had requested a six-week extension to the deadline for its response. The Chair of the Committee had requested the secretariat to seek the view of the communicant on the request by the Party

concerned. By letter of 27 August 2015, the communicant had indicated that he would be willing for the Party concerned to be granted a two-week extension until 29 September 2015, but had objected to the possibility of a longer extension as that would mean the Party's response to the communication could not be considered by the Committee at its fiftieth meeting. Taking into account the communicant's response, the Chair had asked the secretariat to inform the Party concerned that it should provide its response by no later than 29 September 2015. The Party concerned had provided its response on 29 September 2015, the extended deadline. Having received the Party's response to the communication, the Committee provisionally scheduled that it would discuss the substance of the communication at its fifty-first meeting.

44. On communication ACCC/C/2014/115 (United Kingdom), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 29 June 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 29 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

45. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2014/118 (Ukraine), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 29 June 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 29 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

46. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/119 (Poland), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 5 October 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 5 March 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

47. On communication ACCC/C/2014/120 (Slovakia), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 28 June 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 28 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

48. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/121 (European Union), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 28 June 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 28 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

49. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2014/122 (Spain), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 28 June 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 28 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

50. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2014/123 (European Union), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 28 June 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 28 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

51. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/124 (Netherlands), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 28 June 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 28 November 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

52. On communication ACCC/C/2015/128 (European Union), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 5 October 2015 for its response. It further noted that the deadline of 5 March 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

53. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2015/130 (Italy), the Committee noted that the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 5 October 2015 for its

response. It further noted that the deadline of 5 March 2015 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

54. With respect to communications received since 26 May 2015 (the deadline for receipt of communications for consideration at the forty-ninth meeting), the Chair and Vice-Chair reported that they had held a telephone conference on 10 September 2015 to determine which materials received by the secretariat between 26 May and 2 September 2015 (the deadline for receipt of communications for the fiftieth meeting) should be forwarded to the Committee for consideration as to their preliminary admissibility. The Chair and the Vice-Chair had decided that communication PRE/ACCC/C/2015/131 (United Kingdom) should be forwarded to the Committee for consideration of its preliminary admissibility at its fiftieth meeting. They had also requested the secretariat to post the communication on the Committee's website together with the communications which had previously been deferred for consideration of preliminary admissibility.

55. In accordance with the above, the Committee considered the preliminary admissibility of three communications deferred from its forty-ninth meeting and one communication received since that meeting (as set out below). It agreed to defer its preliminary determination of admissibility on two communications to its fifty-first meeting (also set out below).

56. Communication PRE/ACCC/C/2015/126 (Poland) had been submitted on 26 January 2015 by an NGO, Healthy Municipality Association (Poland). The communication alleged non-compliance with article 6 of the Convention with respect to the construction of overhead power lines. The Committee noted that the communicant had been asked to provide further information, by 10 November 2015, regarding the case pending before the Supreme Administrative Court and to clarify how that proceeding related to the allegations made in the communication and had also been invited to redraft its communication in line with the Committee's format for communications by the same date. The Committee agreed to consider the preliminary admissibility of the communication at its fifty-first meeting in the light of the information received.

57. Communication PRE/ACCC/C/2015/127 (Belgium) had been submitted on 6 February 2015 by members of the public, Mr. Henry Maquoi and Mrs. Clare Dalemans. The communication alleged non-compliance with respect to article 9, paragraphs 3 and 4, of the Convention concerning the cost of access to justice. The Committee noted that the communicants had been asked to further substantiate their allegations regarding the following issues by 10 November 2015: (a) how the communication concerned provisions of national law relating to the environment within the scope of article 9, paragraph 3, of the Convention; and (b) the extent to which regulation of judicial costs under the Coordinated Laws on the Conseil d'Etat (Council of State) was applicable to cases within the scope of article 9, paragraph 3, of the Convention, supporting that answer with relevant statistics and case law. The Committee agreed to consider the preliminary admissibility of the communication at its fifty-first meeting in the light of the information received.

58. Communication PRE/ACCC/C/2015/129 (Ireland) had been submitted on 26 April 2015 by members of the public, Mr. Jim Redmond and Mrs. Mary Redmond. The communication alleged non-compliance with article 6, paragraphs 1 (b) and 2, and article 9, paragraphs 4 and 5, of the Convention with respect to the sale of forestry land. Mr. McGlone and Ms. Ryall declared conflicts of interest on the case. The Committee agreed that Mr. McGlone and Ms. Ryall would henceforth participate in the proceedings on the communication as observers only, and would not participate in any deliberations on the communication in closed sessions. After hearing the views of the Party concerned and the communicants by audio conference, as well as those of the observers present, the Committee determined that the communication was admissible on a preliminary basis and agreed to send questions to the communicants prior to forwarding the communication to the Party concerned for its response. It requested the secretariat to forward the communication to the Party



concerned once the communicants' reply to the Committee's questions was received. Mr Kodjabashev was provisionally confirmed as curator for the case.

59. Communication PRE/ACCC/C/2015/131 (United Kingdom) had been submitted on 1 September 2015 by a member of the public, Ms. Tracy Breakall. It alleged non-compliance with articles 3, 5, 6 and 9 of the Convention with respect to the planning consent for the redevelopment of a former hospital site. After hearing the views of the Party concerned and the communicant by audio conference, as well as those of the observers present, the Committee determined that the communication was admissible on a preliminary basis. It requested the secretariat to forward the communication to the Party concerned. Ms. Ryall was confirmed as curator for the case.

### III. Reporting requirements

60. The Committee noted that, at its fifth session (Maastricht, the Netherlands, 30 June–1 July 2014), the Meeting of the Parties had urged those Parties that had not yet submitted their national implementation reports — i.e., Portugal, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkmenistan — to do so by 1 October 2014.<sup>1</sup> To date, only Portugal and Turkmenistan had submitted their reports. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had notified the secretariat that it was currently working to finalize its report by the end of November 2015 (see para. 15 above).

### IV. Follow-up on specific cases of non-compliance

61. Regarding decision V/9l (Turkmenistan), the Committee noted that the draft of the statement provided on 27 June 2015 by the Ministry of Nature Protection of the Party concerned with a view to meeting the requirements of paragraph 6 of decision V/9l had been forwarded on 21 August 2015 to the communicant of communication ACCC/C/2004/5, and that the communicant had been invited to provide possible substantive comments on the draft statement by 4 September 2015. No comments had been received from the communicant on the draft statement. The Committee therefore instructed the secretariat to inform the Party concerned that it might wish to proceed with submitting an official statement from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Committee also underlined that the official statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs should be made public throughout the territory of the Party concerned, as it would be important to inform both members of the public and officials of the Party concerned that the Law on Nature Protection and the Act on Public Associations were to be applied in practice in accordance with the statement. The Committee also recalled that the Party concerned was expected to submit its report on the meetings it had organized to fulfil the requirements of paragraph 7 of decision V/9l by 30 November 2015. The Committee agreed to review the official statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding paragraph 6 and the Party's report regarding paragraph 7 at its fifty-first meeting.

62. With respect to decision V/9m (Ukraine), the Committee held an audio conference with the Party concerned to discuss its progress in implementing that decision. The Committee took note of the draft legislation which the Party concerned had provided on 2 October 2015.

63. The Committee reviewed and adopted its first progress reviews on the implementation of decisions V/9a-k and V/9m-n on compliance and instructed the secretariat to send those progress reviews to the Parties concerned so that they might take them into account during the preparation of their second progress reports. The Committee also requested that its first

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<sup>1</sup> See ECE/MP.PP/2014/2, para. 26.

progress reviews be forwarded to the communicants and registered observers concerning decisions V/9a-k and V/9m-n for their information.

## **V. Programme of work and calendar of meetings**

64. The Committee's fifty-first to fifty-fifth meetings would be held in Geneva, as follows: 15–18 December 2015; 8–11 March 2016; 21–24 June 2016; 26–29 September 2016; and 6–9 December 2016.

## **VI. Other business**

### **A. Modus operandi**

65. The Committee discussed its procedure on new communications, and in particular draft paragraph 22 of the procedure, which was now available on the web page for communications.<sup>2</sup> The Committee agreed its procedure, including paragraph 22, except for minor editing points to be agreed through the Committee's electronic decision-making procedure.

### **B. Other matters**

66. The secretariat informed the Committee that at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015 more than 150 world leaders had adopted the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals which were to be a priority for all countries. The secretariat invited Committee members to promote the link between the Aarhus Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals in their work in various sectors.

67. The secretariat also informed the Committee of the upcoming "International PRTR<sup>3</sup> Week" (Madrid, 23–27 November 2015). This would include the Global Round Table on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (24–25 November), the fourth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (26 November) and the ninth meeting of the Bureau of the Protocol's governing body (27 November).

68. The secretariat also drew attention to the upcoming fourth meeting of the Task Force on Access to Information (Geneva, 8–10 December 2015) where the application of restrictions on access to information would be discussed.

69. The secretariat reported that the Working Group on the Development of the Convention under the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) had finalized its draft text for a proposed amendment to article 9 of that Convention. The amendment was intended to further elaborate the Convention's requirements regarding, inter alia, access to information and public participation in order to bring it into line with the Aarhus Convention.

70. Ms. Hakhverdyan reported on her participation in the Eighth Seminar of Cooperation on the Espoo Convention<sup>4</sup> in the Baltic Sea Region (Vilnius, 28–29 September 2015) at which

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/cc/com.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Pollutant release and transfer register (PRTR).

<sup>4</sup> Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context.

she had given a presentation on the implementation of articles 6 and 7 of the Aarhus Convention in the transboundary context.

71. Mr. Jendroška informed the Committee that a closing meeting and international workshop of the European Union-China Environmental Governance Programme would be held in Beijing on 13 October 2015, to mark the conclusion of the five-year project, which had focused on four themes: public access to environmental information; public participation in environmental planning and decision-making; access to justice in environmental matters; and corporate social responsibility.

72. Mr. Jendroška also informed the Committee that he was involved in a legislative initiative to develop modern legal frameworks on environmental impact assessment and strategic impact assessment in a number of countries, including Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation. He noted that Azerbaijan and Georgia had already prepared legislative drafts providing for mandatory public participation.

73. Mr. McGlone informed the Committee about his participation in the “Meeting of senior government officials expert in environmental law on the midterm review of the fourth Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law” (Montevideo, 7–11 September 2015). He noted that one of the central issues of the discussion had been capacity-building activity at the national level.

## **VII. Adoption of the report and closure of the meeting**

74. The Committee presented the report in open session and agreed to adopt it through the electronic decision-making procedure after the meeting, taking into account the comments received on the report at the meeting. The Chair then officially closed the fiftieth meeting.

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