



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

Sixty-first meeting
 Geneva, 2 – 6 July 2018

Report of the Compliance Committee on its sixty-first meeting

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Introduction

1. The sixty-first 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 2 – 6 July 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland.

A. Attendance

2. All nine Committee members were present throughout the entire meeting. Members who had declared a conflict of interest with respect to particular cases did not participate in closed sessions deliberating on those cases.

3. Representatives of the Party concerned and the communicant of communication PRE/ACCC/C/2018/158 (Poland) took part by audio conference in the open session on preliminary admissibility held on 2 July 2018.

4. Representatives of Belarus, Slovakia and Earthjustice participated in the open session on the review of developments on the morning of 2 July 2018. A representative of Earthjustice also participated in the open sessions on the Committee's modus operandi and preparation of the revised Guide to the Committee held on 2 and 4 July 2018. A representative of Austria, on behalf of the European Union and its member States, and representatives of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland participated by audio conference in the open session on 2 July 2018 on the Committee's modus operandi and preparation of the revised Guide to the Committee.

5. Representatives of the Party concerned and the communicant participated in the hearing to discuss the substance of communication ACCC/C/2016/137 (Germany) held on 4 July 2018. In addition, a representative of the Independent Institute for Environmental Issues (Germany), a representative of European ECO Forum, a representative of the National Aviation University (Ukraine) and students from the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, participated as observers during the hearing on 4 July 2018.

B. Organizational matters

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

7. The Committee adopted its agenda as set out in document ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2018/3.

I. Submissions, referrals and requests under the Convention

8. Regarding request ACCC/M/2017/2 (Turkmenistan), the Chair reported that the Committee was currently preparing questions to send the Party concerned for its reply by 1 October 2018.

9. With respect to request ACCC/M/2017/3 (European Union), on 26 June 2018, the communicant of communication ACCC/C/2010/54 had submitted a written statement to the Committee. The Committee requested the secretariat to send a reminder to the Party concerned that it was expected to provide a progress report to the Committee by 1 October 2018, describing the progress it had by that date made with respect to request ACCC/M/2017/3. Committee member Peter Oliver declared a conflict of interest in the case. The Committee agreed that Mr. Oliver would henceforth participate in the proceedings on the communication as an observer only and would not participate in any deliberations on the

communication in closed sessions or in the preparation or adoption of any findings, measures or recommendations.

II. Communications from members of the public

10. The Committee agreed that the deadline for the receipt of new communications to be considered for preliminary admissibility at its sixty-second meeting would be 1 October 2018.

11. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2013/90 (United Kingdom), the Committee continued its deliberations on its draft findings in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.

12. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2013/96 (European Union), the Committee continued its deliberations on its draft findings in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.

13. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2013/98 (Lithuania), the Committee had continued its deliberations on its draft findings in closed session at its virtual meetings on 18 May and 13 June 2018. The Committee resumed its deliberations in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.

14. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/100 (United Kingdom), the Committee continued its deliberations on its draft findings in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.

15. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2014/104 (Netherlands), the Committee had continued its draft findings at its virtual meeting on 18 May 2018 and had completed them through its electronic decision-making procedure on 25 May 2018. The draft findings had then been forwarded to the Party concerned and the communicant on 25 May 2018 for their written comments by 4 July 2018. The communicant's comments on the draft findings had been received on 22 June 2018, and the comments of the Party concerned on 3 July 2018. The Committee continued its deliberations in closed session, taking into the account the comments received, and agreed to continue those deliberations with a view to finalizing and adopting its findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.

16. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/105 (Hungary), the Chair reported that the Committee was preparing questions to the Party concerned and that it would continue its deliberations taking into account the replies received, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.

17. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/106 (Czechia), the Committee had continued its deliberations in closed session at its virtual meeting held on 13 June 2018 and had agreed to continue its deliberations with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations through its electronic decision-making procedure.

18. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2013/107 (Ireland), the Chair reported that the Committee was preparing questions to the Party concerned and that it would continue its deliberations taking into account the replies received, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.

19. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/112 (Ireland), the Committee agreed to defer its deliberations on its draft findings until its sixty-second meeting.
20. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2014/113 (Ireland), the Committee agreed to defer its deliberations on its draft findings until its sixty-second meeting.
21. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/118 (Ukraine), the Committee had received the Party's response to the communication on 24 April 2018. In the light of that response, the Committee had sent questions to the communicant on 23 May 2018 and had received the communicant's reply to those questions on 5 June 2018. The Committee agreed to send questions to the Party concerned in the light of the communicant's reply of 5 June 2018 and to decide how to proceed taking into account the information received from the parties by the stated deadlines.
22. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2014/119 (Poland), the Chair reported that the Committee was preparing questions to the Party concerned and that it would continue its deliberations taking into account the replies received, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.
23. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/120 (Slovakia), the Committee agreed to defer its deliberations on its draft findings until its sixty-second meeting.
24. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2014/121 (European Union), the Committee continued its deliberations in closed session and agreed to continue its deliberations with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations. Committee member Peter Oliver declared a conflict of interest in the case. The Committee agreed that Mr. Oliver would henceforth participate in the proceedings on the communication as an observer only and would not participate in any deliberations on the communication in closed sessions or in the preparation or adoption of any findings, measures or recommendations.
25. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2014/122 (Spain), the Committee continued its deliberations in closed session and agreed to continue those deliberations with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.
26. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2014/124 (Netherlands), the Committee agreed to defer its deliberations on its draft findings until its sixty-second meeting.
27. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2015/126 (Poland), the Chair reported that the Committee was preparing questions to the Party concerned and that it would continue its deliberations taking into account the replies received, with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.
28. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2015/128 (European Union), on 26 March 2018 the Committee had sent questions to the Party concerned for its written reply by 7 May 2018. At the request of the Party concerned, the Chair had granted an extension for its reply until 26 June 2018 and its reply was duly provided on that date and an annex to the reply provided on 2 July 2018. At the request of the communicant, the Chair had also granted an extension for its comments on the Party's reply until 20 July 2018.
29. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2015/130 (Italy), on 9 April 2018 the Party concerned had provided its reply to the Committee's questions and on 30 April 2018, the communicant had submitted comments thereon. On 12 June 2018, the Party concerned had provided the texts in Italian of various legislation. After reviewing the information received, the Committee agreed to request the Party concerned to provide the texts of other legislation referred to in its submissions and to reply to questions regarding its legislation, and to request each party to provide English translations of legislation and court decisions relevant to their submissions.
30. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2015/131 (United Kingdom), the Chair reported that the Committee was preparing questions to the communicant and that it would decide how to proceed with the communication taking into account the information received.

31. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2015/132 (Ireland), the Chair reported that the Committee was preparing questions to the communicant and that it would decide how to proceed with the communication taking into account the information received.

32. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2015/133 (Netherlands), the communicant had provided its reply to the Committee's questions on 3 April 2018. At the request of the Party concerned, the Chair had agreed to grant an extension to the deadline for the Party's reply to the Committee's questions from 3 until 15 April 2018, and the Party's reply had been received on 13 April 2018. On 18 April 2018, the Party concerned had submitted comments on the communicant's reply to the Committee's questions. At the request of the communicant, the Chair had agreed to grant an extension to the deadline for it to comment on the Party's reply to the Committee's questions until 14 May 2018 and the communicant's comments had been received on 12 May 2018. After taking into account the information received, the Committee confirmed its earlier determination that the communication was admissible on a preliminary basis and agreed to decide how to proceed with the communication at its next meeting.

33. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2015/134 (Belgium), additional information had been received from the Party concerned on 1 March 2018, and from the communicant on 6 March and 23 April 2018. The Committee provisionally scheduled to hold a hearing to discuss the substance of the communication at its sixty-second meeting.

34. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2015/135 (France), on 23 May 2018 the Committee had written to the Party concerned and the communicant seeking their views on whether they considered a hearing was needed and on 31 May and 8 June 2018 the communicant and the Party concerned had respectively each replied indicating that they considered that it was not. In reply to the Committee's invitation to provide any further written submissions by 27 June 2018, in his reply of 31 May 2018, the communicant had indicated he had no further submissions to make. The Party concerned had provided additional written submissions on 25 June 2018. The Committee commenced its deliberations on the substance of the communication in closed session and agreed to continue its deliberations with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.

35. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2015/137 (Germany), the Committee held a hearing to discuss the substance of the communication in open session with the participation of the Party concerned and the communicant. The Party concerned challenged the admissibility of the communicant's allegations concerning article 9, paragraph 3, of the Convention. After hearing the views of both the Party concerned and communicant as well as the observers present, the Committee discussed in closed session the admissibility of the communicant's allegations concerning article 9, paragraph 3 and announced its decision in open session at the start of the afternoon session. The Committee found the allegations concerning article 9, paragraph 3, to be inadmissible on the grounds of procedural fairness since the communicant had raised them for the first time only in its reply of 17 April 2018 to the Committee's questions. The Committee confirmed the admissibility of the communicant's allegations concerning article 2, paragraph 5, article 3, paragraph 4 and article 9, paragraph 2 of the Convention. Following the hearing, the Committee commenced its deliberations on its draft findings in closed session and agreed to continue its deliberations with a view to completing its draft findings and, as appropriate, recommendations.

36. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2016/138 (Armenia), on 23 May 2018 the Committee had written to the Party concerned and the communicant seeking their views on whether they considered a hearing was needed prior to the Committee commencing its deliberations on the substance of that case. On 8 June 2018, the communicant had replied that it did not consider that a hearing was required. Despite several reminders, no official reply had been received from the Party concerned. The Committee agreed to decide how to proceed with the communication at its next meeting.

37. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2016/139 (Ireland), at the communicant's request, the Chair had agreed to extend the deadline from 3 April 2018 to 20 April 2018 for its reply to the Committee's questions dated 12 March 2018. On 19 April 2018, the communicant had provided its reply to the Committee's questions and an observer, Environmental Pillar, had submitted a statement regarding the Committee's questions on the same date. After taking into account the replies received, the Committee agreed to request the secretariat to inform the parties that it would only examine allegations concerning the permits referred to in the communication that were issued after the entry into force of the Convention for the Party concerned. It agreed to request the communicant to provide additional information to clarify which of the permits listed in its reply to the Committee's questions of 5 September 2016 were subject to article 6 of the Convention. The Committee agreed to decide how to proceed with the communication in the light of the information received.
38. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2016/140 (Romania), the Committee agreed to decide how to proceed with the communication at its sixty-second meeting.
39. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2016/141 (Ireland), the Committee provisionally scheduled to hold a hearing to discuss the substance of the communication at its sixty-second or sixty-third meeting.
40. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2016/142 (United Kingdom), the Committee agreed to decide how to proceed with the communication at its sixty second meeting.
41. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2016/143 (Czechia), the Committee agreed to decide how to proceed with the communication at its sixty-second meeting.
42. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2016/144 (Bulgaria), the Committee agreed to decide how to proceed with the communication at its sixty-second meeting.
43. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2017/146 (Poland), the Committee agreed to decide how to proceed with the communication at its sixty-second meeting.
44. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2017/147 (Republic of Moldova), at the request of the Committee, the Director of the ECE Environment Division had written to the State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment conveying the Committee's serious concern at the failure by the Party concerned to provide its response to the communication due on 19 September 2017.
45. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2017/148 (Greece), the Committee agreed to decide how to proceed with the communication at its sixty-second meeting.
46. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2017/149 (Greece), the Party concerned had provided its response to the communication on 29 May 2018 on time. The Committee agreed to decide how to proceed with the communication at its sixty-second meeting taking into account the information received.
47. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2017/150 (United Kingdom), the Committee noted that the Party concerned had failed to submit its response to the communication by 5 June 2018, which was the deadline prescribed in paragraph 23 of the annex to decision I/7 for it to do so. On 6 June 2018, the communicant had written to the Committee in this respect. The Party concerned had provided its response to the communication on 28 June 2018, after the deadline, challenging inter alia the admissibility of the communication. The Committee agreed to invite the communicant to comment on the submissions on admissibility made by the Party concerned in its response to the communication and to decide how to proceed with the communication at its sixty-second meeting taking into account the comments received.
48. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2016/151 (Poland), the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 22 March 2018 for its response. The deadline of 22 August 2018 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

49. Concerning communication ACCC/C/2017/153 (Spain), the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 22 March 2018 for its response. The deadline of 22 August 2018 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

50. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2017/154 (Poland), the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 22 March 2018 for its response. The deadline of 22 August 2018 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

51. With respect to communication ACCC/C/2017/156 (United Kingdom), the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 22 March 2018 for its response. The deadline of 22 August 2018 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

52. Regarding communication ACCC/C/2017/157 (United Kingdom), the communication had been forwarded to the Party concerned on 22 March 2018 for its response. The deadline of 22 August 2018 for its response had not yet expired and the Party's response had not yet been received.

53. Regarding communications received between 5 February 2018 (the deadline for receipt of communications for the sixtieth meeting) and 28 May 2018 (the deadline for receipt of communications for the sixty-first meeting), the Chair reported that he and the Vice-Chairs Mr. Kodjabashev and Ms. Ryall had held a telephone conference on 7 June 2018 to determine which of the communications received during that period sufficiently met the required format to be forwarded to the Committee for consideration as to their preliminary admissibility. In that regard, the Chair and the Vice-Chairs had decided that communication PRE/ACCC/C/2018/158 (Poland) should be forwarded to the Committee for consideration of preliminary admissibility at its sixty-first meeting and had requested the secretariat to post that communication on the Committee's website.

54. Communication PRE/ACCC/C/2018/158 (Poland) had been submitted on 22 May 2018 by Stowarzyszenie Pracownia na rzecz Wszystkich Istot, an environmental non-governmental organisation in Poland. The communication alleges systemic non-compliance with article 7 of the Convention concerning public participation in the preparation of hunting plans, and a general failure by the Party concerned to implement article 9, paragraph 3 of the Convention due to a lack of standing for non-governmental organisations, and very limited standing for individuals, to challenge plans and programmes relating to the environment. Committee member Jerzy Jendroska declared a conflict of interest in the case. The Committee agreed that Mr. Jendroska would henceforth participate in the proceedings on the communication as an observer only and would not participate in any deliberations on the communication in closed sessions. On 29 June 2018, the Party concerned had submitted a statement concerning the preliminary admissibility of the communication. During the meeting, the Committee heard the views of the Party concerned and communicant by audio conference, as well as observers present, on the preliminary admissibility of the communication. At the invitation of the Chair, the Committee also heard the views of the parties on whether they would be agreeable to the merging of the communication with other similar communications before the Committee concerning the Party concerned, should the communication be found preliminarily admissible and the Committee consider merging to be appropriate. Both parties agreed in principle to such an approach. After considering in closed session the information received, the Committee decided to defer its determination of preliminary admissibility to its next meeting in order to request the communicant to more clearly specify the types of plans within the scope of its communication. On 6 July 2018, the Party concerned submitted an email expressing concern that the communicant's legal representative was a partner of Mr. Jendroska's law firm. The Committee requested the Chair to write to the Party concerned to make clear that: (i) the fact that one member had a professional relationship with the legal representative of a party to a case and thus had declared a conflict of interest had no flow-on implications for the other members of the

Committee; and (ii) that the Committee had long-standing experience and procedures in place to ensure its independence and credibility in such circumstances. The independence of each member had to be assessed in that member's own right.

III. Reporting requirements

55. The Committee noted that the Meeting of the Parties, at its sixth session, had urged Parties that had not yet submitted their national implementation reports — i.e., Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Netherlands, the Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom — to do so in the required format by 1 November 2017 at the latest.¹ Notwithstanding this, none of the aforementioned Parties had submitted their national implementation reports to the secretariat by 1 November 2017. The secretariat reported that Bosnia and Herzegovina had submitted its report on 8 June 2018. None of the other aforementioned Parties had yet submitted their reports.

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

56. The Committee took note of the developments since its sixtieth meeting with respect to decisions VI/8a–e and g–k of the Meeting of the Parties, in particular the information received from the Parties concerned regarding the measures they had taken to implement the decisions concerning their compliance and the comments received from the communicants and observers on those measures.

57. With respect to decision VI/8a (Armenia), there had been no developments on this matter since the Committee's sixtieth meeting.

58. Regarding decision VI/8b (Austria), there had been no developments on this matter since the Committee's sixtieth meeting.

59. Concerning decision VI/8c (Belarus), on 21 March 2018 the communicant in communication ACCC/C/2014/102 had submitted information related to paragraph 7 of the decision concerning further alleged incidents of penalization, persecution or harassment contrary to article 3, paragraph 8, of the Convention, including the alleged detention of environmental activists opposing the construction of a battery plant in Brest. On 28 March 2018, at the Chair's request, the secretariat had forwarded the communicant's correspondence to the Party concerned for its comments by 4 May 2018. On 2 April 2018, the Party concerned had provided an update on measures it had by that date taken to implement decision V/8c generally and on 3 May 2018 it had submitted comments on the communicant's letter of 21 March 2018. A representative of the Party concerned participated in the open session on decision VI/8c held during the meeting. During the session, Earthjustice informed the Committee of the report published in June 2017 by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus² and noted that several other United Nations human rights bodies and procedures, particularly those focusing on civil and political rights, had addressed the issue of harassment and detention of activists in the Party concerned. Earthjustice submitted that such reports provided important context for the Committee's ongoing review of decision VI/8c. After taking into account the information received, the Committee agreed to write to the Party concerned seeking further clarification about the circumstances of the alleged detentions of environmental activists opposing the Brest battery plant and to thereafter forward both the comments submitted by the Party concerned on 3 May 2018 and the further clarification to be requested from the Party concerned to the communicant for its written comments. Recalling paragraph 25 (a) of the annex to decision I/7, the Committee also requested the secretariat to collate relevant information from the

¹ Report of the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties, ECE/MP.PP/2017/2, para. 46.

² A/HRC/35/40, available at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/35/40

reports of pertinent UN bodies, including the UN Special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus, to provide context to assist the Committee in its review of paragraph 6 of decision VI/8c.

60. With respect to decision VI/8d (Bulgaria), on 21 March 2018 the communicant of communications ACCC/C/2011/58 and ACCC/C/2012/76 had submitted a written statement.

61. Concerning decision VI/8e (Czechia), on 26 March 2018, the communicant of communication ACCC/C/2012/71 had submitted a short written statement.

62. With respect to decision VI/8g (Kazakhstan), there had been no developments on this matter since the Committee's sixtieth meeting.

63. With respect to decision VI/8h (Romania), on 16 May 2018 the Party concerned had submitted information regarding various measures it had by that date taken to implement decision VI/8h. In response to the request by the Party concerned dated 2 February 2018 for advice on possible measures it might take to fulfil the requirements of decision VI/8h, the Committee had at its virtual meeting on 13 June 2018 continued the preparation of its written advice to the Party concerned in accordance with paragraph 36(a) of the annex to decision I/7, taking into account the information received on 16 May 2018. The Committee continued the preparation of its advice to the Party concerned and agreed to finalize its advice through its electronic decision-making procedure after the meeting.

64. Regarding decision VI/8i (Slovakia), there had been no developments on this matter since the Committee's sixtieth meeting.

65. Concerning decision VI/8j (Spain), on 15 March 2018 the Party concerned had written seeking the Committee's advice on whether the text of a draft administrative measure proposed by the Catalanian administration would fulfil the requirements of paragraph 7 of decision VI/8j. On 5 June 2018, the communicant of communication ACCC/C/2008/24 had provided an update on a proposed legislative amendment to improve the eligibility of environmental non-governmental organisations to receive legal aid. With respect to the Party's request for advice of 15 March 2018, the Committee prepared in closed session written advice to the Party concerned in accordance with paragraph 36(a) of the annex to decision I/7 and agreed to finalize its advice through its electronic decision-making procedure after the meeting.

66. With respect to decision VI/8k (United Kingdom), there had been no developments on this matter since the Committee's sixtieth meeting.

V. Programme of work and calendar of meetings

67. Subject to the availability of meeting rooms and services, the Committee agreed to hold its sixty-second meeting from 5 to 9 November 2018, its sixty-third meeting from 4 to 8 March 2019 and its sixty-fourth meeting from 1 to 5 July 2019, all in Geneva. It also agreed that it would hold two virtual meetings to continue its deliberations on draft findings in closed session prior to its sixty-second meeting.

VI. Other business

A. Modus operandi

68. The Chair presented a proposal entitled "Ensuring a fair and effective compliance mechanism with an increasing caseload" which proposed that in each case, prior to scheduling a hearing, the Committee would first consider whether a hearing was in fact

needed in order for it to commence its deliberations.³ The Chair noted that the Committee had already agreed such a procedure at its fifty-fourth meeting (Geneva, 27-30 September 2016)⁴ and reported on it in its report to the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties,⁵ but to date it had been applied on an ad hoc basis. His proposal was that, rather than being applied in an ad hoc manner, the procedure agreed at the fifty-fourth meeting should become a routine step in the Committee's management of each case. Austria, on behalf of the European Union and its member States,⁶ and Earthjustice, on behalf of European ECO Forum made statements on the Chair's proposal. While not disagreeing with the proposal as a whole, both the European Union and its member States and European ECO Forum submitted that if, at the point that the Committee seeks the views of the parties as to whether or not a hearing is needed, either party considers a hearing is needed, they took the view that a hearing should indeed be held. Committee members supported the Chair's proposal in general and some Committee members suggested that further elements might be added to assist the Committee in coming to a view as to whether in a particular case a hearing was needed. After hearing the comments from Committee members, Parties and observers, the Committee agreed to continue its deliberations on the Chair's proposal in open session at its sixty-second meeting. The Chair stated in that in advance of that meeting, an updated version of the proposal would be published on the meeting webpage, taking into account the comments made during the present meeting.

69. With respect to the finalization of the revised Guide to the Committee, the Chair informed the meeting that the draft revised Guide was at a very advanced stage. However, in order to ensure that the Guide when finally adopted accurately reflected all aspects of the Committee's procedures, he proposed that it be finalized after the Committee's discussion of his proposal on the effective use of hearings (see para. 68 above) had concluded. The Committee agreed to proceed in this manner.

B. Other matters

70. The Chair reported on his participation in an anniversary event to celebrate 20 years of the Convention held in Rome 15-16 May 2018. The event had been organised by the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea in cooperation with the European Environmental Bureau and the secretariat of the Convention.

71. The Chair also reported on his participation in a special segment on the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention held during the twenty-second meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, which took place in Geneva from 19 - 21 June 2018.

72. The Chair informed the meeting that by letter of 8 June 2018, the Secretary General of the International Ombudsman Institute, Günther Kräuter, had invited him and the Vice Chairs to participate in a high-level meeting to explore possible cooperation between the Committee and the Institute. The Committee expressed its willingness to explore possible cooperation to the extent appropriate and subject to available resources.

73. Committee member Áine Ryall informed the meeting of the upcoming seminar "Celebrating and reflecting on the Aarhus Convention on the 20th anniversary of its adoption" to be held in Dublin on 14 July 2018. The event was organized by the Irish Environmental Network and Ms. Ryall had been invited to give an opening address and to chair the closing session.

³ Available on the meeting webpage, <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48282>.

⁴ ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2016/7, para. 69.

⁵ ECE/MP.PP/2017/31, para. 22.

⁶ Available on the meeting webpage, <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48282>.

74. Committee member Marc Clement reported on his participation on behalf of the European Union Forum of Judges at the ninth meeting of the InforMEA Steering Committee (Montreaux, Switzerland, 5-8 June 2018), at which he had made a presentation on the Convention. The secretariat also reported on its participation at that meeting. One issue discussed at the meeting was the need to increase the use of electronic tools and modern technologies to improve the implementation of each of the Convention's three pillars.

75. Committee member Heghine Grigoryan reported on the development of Armenia's national strategy for water management and relevant national legislation in which principles of transparency and public participation are incorporated.

76. Committee member Jerzy Jendrośka reported that several months ago his law firm Jendrośka Jerzmański Bar & Partners had been approached by a media outlet in Belarus enquiring as to whether the firm was providing financial support to environmental activists opposing an industrial development in Brest, Belarus. The media outlet had forwarded to Jendrośka Jerzmański Bar & Partners a copy of a letter purporting to be signed by the firm's Vice President and falsely stating that the firm had contributed 6,500 Euro to a Belarusian non-governmental organisation. Jendrośka Jerzmański Bar & Partners had informed the media outlet that the letter was a forgery and that it had provided no financial support to the non-governmental organisation named in the letter. The Committee took note of the information provided by Mr. Jendroska and expressed its concern at the incident, while noting that there did not seem to be a clear link between the forged letter and any case pending before the Committee.

77. The secretariat reported on its participation in an information-sharing session held on 29 May 2018, back-to-back with the first meeting of the Implementation and Compliance Committee under the Minamata Convention on Mercury (Geneva, 29-30 May 2018). The aim of the information-sharing session had been to share with members of the Implementation and Compliance Committee the experience gained by implementation and compliance mechanisms of other multilateral environmental agreements prior to the Implementation and Compliance Committee elaborating its own rules of procedure during its first meeting. The joint secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the secretariat of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer had also taken part in the session.

78. The Chair informed the meeting that, on 7 May 2018, the Committee had submitted comments on draft terms of reference for possible guidance being developed under the Espoo Convention on the applicability of that Convention to the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants. The secretariat reported on its participation at the seventh meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Geneva, 28-30 May 2018), during which the draft terms of reference had been discussed. At the seventh meeting, several Parties to the Espoo Convention as well as several non-governmental observers, had commended the comments submitted by the Committee.

79. The secretariat reported on the twenty-second meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Convention which had taken place from 19 – 21 June 2018 in Geneva. The meeting had included thematic sessions on access to information and on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums. There had also been a special segment to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Aarhus Convention comprising a storytelling session looking back at the history of the Convention and a session focused on the future with active participation of youth.

80. The secretariat provided an update on the accession to the Convention by Guinea-Bissau, which had completed all formal procedures, and was ready to submit its application to the next session of the Meeting of the Parties.

81. The secretariat reported on its involvement in the preparations for an event on environmental democracy for sustainable societies to be held on 11 July 2018 on the side line

of the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (New York, 9-18 July 2018).

82. A representative of Earthjustice reported on developments at the Human Rights Council, including the impending adoption of a resolution on human rights and climate change and that in the coming year the Council would focus in particular on the impact of climate change on the rights of women.

VII. Report and closure of the meeting

83. The Committee agreed to adopt its report through its electronic decision-making procedure after the meeting. The Chair then officially closed the sixty-first meeting.

Advance unedited