



**Eighteenth meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention
(Maastricht, 29 June 2014)
Agenda item 3 (b) (ii): Financial Arrangements**

Contribution by the EU and its Member States.

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau for preparing the draft decision on financial arrangements and the Contracting Parties and other participants in the 17th WGP for the constructive dialogue on the issue.

Taking this opportunity, we would also like to express our gratitude to the organisers of this Meeting as well as our hosts, the government of the Netherlands, for taking the initiative to support and host the 5th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention.

We have had thorough internal discussions on the matter and have taken into consideration the opinion of all the Parties as it was expressed during the 17 WGP. We recognise that there is a necessity for financial arrangements based on the principles of a fair sharing of the burden, predictable sources of funding, accountability and sound financial management. At the same time we have to be aware of the budget constraints of the Parties in the current financial situation that have led us to support the maintenance of the current interim voluntary scheme of contributions.

Furthermore, we believe that the discussion on how to ensure a long-term sustainable and predictable financing should not solely focus on how to generate a more predictable financial flow, but also on more creative ways of achieving our goals as well as on how to increase cost efficiency. To this end, it would be desirable to clearly distinguish the operational costs (which are absolutely necessary for the effective operation of the Convention, such as staff costs not covered by the UN regular budget and the cost of mandatory meetings) from the costs of non-operational activities (which the Parties may agree to undertake pursuant to the Convention's objectives and subject to the availability of resources). This distinction, that should be evident in the workplan, would allow Parties to better understand the operational costs of the Convention and would promote savings by more precisely differentiating between required expenses and possible expenses. In this regard, we propose the inclusion of a paragraph in the draft decision in order to request the Secretariat and the Bureau to introduce this distinction for the following budgetary and financial term.

Regarding specifically the EU contribution and in accordance with standard practice, the European Union notes its general commitment to contribute at a level of 2.5% of the operational costs not covered by the UN regular budget. However, in order to support

financial sustainability and predictability as well as the effective implementation of the 2015-2017 work programme, the EU confirms its intention to maintain its annual contributions of €100,000 during this period. This is of course subject to the annual endorsement by the budgetary authorities of the European Union and is without prejudice to the arrangements for State Parties. We would be grateful if this statement could be reproduced in the minutes of this Meeting of the Parties.

We request the UNECE to consider the balance in the use of regular-budgetary resources between the different sub-programmes and to explore the possibility to allocate more resources to the Aarhus Convention.

We suggest that if the work programme continues to lead to budget deficits, further efforts should be made to prioritise activities within the work programme, to maximise efficiencies and /or explore other funding mechanisms, to provide a sustainable basis for the work programme.

In this regard, we request the following substantive amendments:

- In paragraph 4, subparagraph (b) of the recital we suggest the replacement of the word “establish” with the word “ensure”.
- In paragraph 1, we request the replacement of the phrase “*establishes a mandatory*” with the phrase “*continue to use the existing interim*”. We believe that this is a gradual process which would require work during the intersessional period to foster the predictability, sustainability and fair sharing of the burden in line with Decision IV/7. Therefore, while supporting the principle of an equitable sharing of the burden and recognising the necessity for stable and predictable sources of funding, EU and its MS cannot at present support the establishment of a mandatory scheme of contributions.
- Additionally, we request the deletion of paragraphs 1 (b) to 1(d), as well as the annex including relevant footnotes and renumbering accordingly.
- We request the amendment of paragraph 7 to read as follows : “Requests all Parties to ensure the equitable distribution of the financial responsibility for implementation of the work programme and requests the Bureau to liaise with Parties where appropriate concerning the achievement of this goal”
- We request the deletion of subparagraph 8 (c) in line with our request for maintaining the current interim voluntary system of contributions.
- We reiterate our suggestion on the addition of paragraph 11: “Requests from the Bureau with the assistance of the Secretariat an estimation of the operational costs needed for the effective functioning of the Convention, which should be clearly distinct from the cost of other activities which are subject to the availability of resources” .
- We request the addition of the following new paragraph (new14 bis): «Mandates the Bureau and the Working Group of the Parties to explore in the next intersessional period options for more predictable, stable and equitably shared funding»
- We request the amendment of paragraph 15 to read as follow: “Requests the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to allocate more resources to support the

work under the Convention considering, inter alia, the balance in the use of regular budgetary resources in the different subprogrammes. ”
