

AARHUS MOP5, Maastricht

PPIF Report, Etienne Ballan, Agenda item 6b

Distinguished delegates

1. From a task force to WGP sessions

Three years ago, the MOP decided to discontinue with a dedicated task force on PPIF, but to carry on with dealing with this area of the convention at a more political level, the Working group of Parties.

The task force had indeed achieved a heavy work, in promoting the Almaty guidelines towards all international forums, and had started looking at how Parties could implement article 3-7 at national level during the preparation of international negotiations. By sharing experiences and drawing lessons from various forums, the task force had set the bases for Parties to promote actively the principles of the convention in all forums.

The decision to organise a thematic session in the WGP was taken to make sure the issue is discussed at a more political level. The way Parties commit themselves on art 3-7, in forums but also in consulting the public when preparing negotiations seemed not to be a practical issue, but more related to a political will. Especially, if Aarhus NFP were convinced, they would find many difficulties in convincing their government counterparts in other ministries to put pp at the top of the agenda.

2. What happened in these thematic sessions ?

We mainly focused our debates on two areas :

- reviewing the main forums and international negotiations and informing Parties and Stakeholders when one of these forums would establish or revise its policy,
- looking at a forum or a number of comparable forums, in a more detailed manner, in order to echo this forum experience, and to share its experience with Parties and Stakeholders

The assistance to Parties on the methods and tools for ppif at national level was not dropped though. And the guide for establishing a national plan was distributed, after having consulted with Parties on the existence of national plans.

During these 3 years, the secretariat was increasingly asked for comments and advises by UN and non UN forums, and this is why is mentioned explicitly this role in the draft decision.

During these years, we had many opportunities to implement Art 3-7. First, with a number of forums revising their policies through a submission process where Parties could submit their proposals drawing from the Almaty GL and more recent PPIF related recommendations.

We also had the opportunity to play our role in advocating for PP in the Rio+20 process and outcomes. Some Parties did play their part in Rio for the recognition of PP in the future international bodies decided in Rio. UNEP process, UNEA...

We also could alert Parties when a forum was considering going backwards on PP. I believe that the role of the WGP should remain as it is on this point : in a number of forums recently, some decisions

were going backwards on the rights of NGOs to speak, or on the closing of meetings. The WGP should remain very much reactive on these issues, and propose to the Parties to take initiatives on these issues.

When looking at the results of our common efforts, I think we can say we were able to raise opportunities for Parties who were willing to promote PPIF, but I would not be sure the political support for PPIF has spread to a greater number of Parties, and to be more precise, to a greater number of international negotiators in the Parties governments. The Convention should increase its efforts to help NFP to advocate more efficiently for PPIF among the various Ministries involved in their countries.

Of course, this political will for supporting PPIF will not only come from our small amount of efforts; it will only be achieved if citizens are expressing their expectations for decisions to be made with them. And indeed, these expectations are still increasing : I'm afraid there is no way PPIF could become a secondary issue, when environment issues are more and more visible to citizens all over the world.

That means that we need to strengthen our push for NGOs to be able to voice these expectations in forums, while making more feasible for the greater public to be listened to by government when negotiating. On this issue, the draft decision mentions the possibility to help host countries for practically establish these citizens participations schemes in the negotiations : this field is to be explored. By that way, the Convention remains ahead and pioneering in the area of public participation in IF.

Last but not least, one obstacle for PPIF is that Parties find themselves isolated in their efforts for supporting the Convention principles. The good news is that Europe and Central Asia are no longer alone in this effort: with the latin American initiative, and other countries, even among the G77, Aarhus Parties can now rely on other partners for promoting PPIF. It would be interesting to look at the PPIF issue in this broad manner and to associate these States and civil society representatives to our works. I believe PPIF is increasingly needed for establishing and improving the standards of a global democracy, be it implemented in various manners in the different regions of the world.