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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

**Working Group of the Parties**

**Twenty-first meeting**

Geneva, 4–6 April 2017

Item 8 (c) of the provisional agenda

**Other substantive preparations for the sixth session of
the Meeting of the Parties: financial arrangements**
**under the Convention**

 Draft decision on financial arrangements under the Convention

 Prepared by the Bureau

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| *Summary* |
|  The present document contains draft decision on financial arrangements under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention). The current draft was prepared by the Convention Bureau pursuant to the request of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention at its fifth session (see ECE/MP.PP/2014/2/Add.1, decision V/7, para. 14).[[1]](#footnote-2)  Following the twentieth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Geneva, 15–17 June 2016), the draft decision was distributed to Parties and stakeholders on 27 September 2016, with a deadline of 7 November 2016 for comments. The Bureau took the comments received into account in preparing the present draft. The Working Group is invited to focus its discussion on the following issues upon which it was unable to reach consensus at its twentieth meeting: the scheme of contributions (e.g., mandatory or voluntary); the use of the United Nations scale of assessments; and an increase in the minimal level of contributions from 500 to 1,000 United States dollars.  The Working Group of the Parties is expected to consider and approve the draft decision for submission to the Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session (Montenegro, 11–14 September 2017) for consideration.  |
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 Decision VI/… on financial arrangements under the Convention

 *The Meeting of the Parties*,

 *Recalling* article 10, paragraph 3, of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), which states that the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention may, as necessary, consider establishing financial arrangements on a consensus basis,

 *Also recalling* its decisions I/13, II/6, III/7, IV/7 and V/7, through which an interim voluntary scheme of contributions, open to contributions from Parties, signatories and other States having opted to participate in it, has been established and maintained,

 *Having considered* the outcomes of the assessment of the current interim scheme of contributions (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2013/9), and recalling discussions at each previous session of the Meeting of the Parties on financial arrangements under the Convention,

 *Recognizing* the need to:

(a) Ensure that sufficient resources are available to implement the Convention’s work programme for 2018–2021, adopted through decision VI/…;

(b) Ensure a scheme of financial contributions that is transparent and accessible to all Parties, signatories and other States and organizations wishing to contribute;

(c) Establish financial arrangements under the Convention based on the principles of an equitable sharing of the burden, stable and predictable sources of funding, accountability and sound financial management,

 *Expressing its serious concern* that the financial burden has not been evenly distributed during the current intersessional period, with several Parties and signatories not contributing at all,

 1. *Agrees* to continue to use the existing interim scheme of contributions aimed at covering the costs of activities under the work programme that are not covered by the United Nations regular budget, based on the following principles:

(a) The Parties should collectively ensure that the costs of the activities of the work programme that are not covered by the United Nations regular budget are covered through the financial scheme;

 [(b)] No Party or signatory is expected – where a contribution is made - to contribute less than 1,000United States dollars for the Convention’s work programme in its contribution for a given calendar year;

[(c)] Contributions shall be made in cash and shall not be earmarked for a particular activity;

[(d)] Additional contributions may be made in cash or in kind and may be earmarked for a particular activity;

[(e)] Contributions in cash shall be made through the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Trust Fund for Local Technical Cooperation (Aarhus Convention project);

[(f)] If allowed by the domestic budgetary procedures of the Parties, contributions for a given calendar year should be made by 1 October of the preceding year, or where this is not an option, it is recommended that contributions are made in the first six months of the calendar year, so as to secure payment of staff costs for the smooth functioning of the secretariat, as a priority, and the timely and effective implementation of the priority activities of the respective programme of work;

[(g)] Parties pledge, where possible, prior to the adoption of a work programme by the Meeting of the Parties, their expected annual or multi-annual financial and in-kind contributions. Signatories, other interested States and organizations may wish to indicate their expected contributions as well;

 2. *Requests* Parties to contribute each year or to make multi-annual contributions towards the costs of activities under the work programme, in accordance with the scheme referred to in paragraph 1;

 3. *Invites* signatories, other interested States and public entities, as well as the private sector, in accordance with the 2009 Revised Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Sector,[[2]](#footnote-5) to contribute, in cash or in kind, towards covering the costs of the work programme;

 4. *Calls* *upon* countries with economies in transition to finance to the extent possible their own participation in the activities;

 5. *Calls upon* international organizations working in countries with economies in transition to support participation of representatives of these countries and non‑governmental organizations in the meetings and other activities;

 6. *Encourages* Parties that have historically contributed generously to maintain, or return to, their previous levels of contribution;

 7. *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;

 8. *Requests* the secretariat, in accordance with the financial rules of the United Nations, to allocate in the Convention Trust Fund by 1 October of each year the sum required for the extension of the contracts of extrabudgetary staff of the secretariat for the upcoming year, as a priority, and also costs needed for implementation of activities in the first quarter of the upcoming year;

 9. *Also requests* the secretariat, in accordance with the financial rules of the United Nations, to monitor the expenditure of the funds and to prepare annual reports specifically indicating contributions, and reflecting any changes to:

(a) The estimated costs of activities for the next calendar year;

(b) The composition of the Parties, for review by the Working Group of the Parties in order to strive to ensure that the level of contributions matches the level of funding needed for the implementation of the work programme;

 10. *Requests* the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, to provide 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;

 11. *Requests* the Working Group of the Parties to consider, in the light of these annual reports, whether changes would be required in the content or time frame of the work programme, in the event that the level of actual and/or pledged contributions does not match the level of funding needed;

 12. *Requests* the secretariat to prepare a comprehensive report on financial matters for each session of the Meeting of the Parties, including information on how much Parties and other participating States and organizations have contributed to the budget of the Convention in cash and in kind, and how the contributions were spent;

 13. *Agrees* to review the operation of the scheme of financial arrangements at its seventh session;

 14. *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, and requests them to make the appropriate proposals for consideration by the Meeting of the Parties at its seventh session;

 15. *Requests* the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to allocate more resources to support the work under the Convention, noting in this connection the positive evaluation of the Environmental subprogramme during the 2013 review of the 2005 reform of the Commission,[[3]](#footnote-6) and considering, inter alia, the balance in the use of regular budgetary resources in the different subprogrammes.

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1. Available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5_docs.html#/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Issued by the Secretary-General in November 2009. Available from <http://business.un.org/en/documents/6602>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
3. See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2013, Supplement No. 17* (E/2013/37–E/ECE/1464), annex III, chapter II.A, available from <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=31965#/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)