

**FORTY-SEVENTH MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE
MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN
DECISION-MAKING AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS
(AARHUS CONVENTION)**

6 November 2020, virtual

REPORT OF THE MEETING¹

ATTENDANCE

Bureau members: Ms. Maia Bitadze (Georgia, Chair), Ms. Beate Berglund Ekeberg (Norway, Vice-Chair), Ms. Nicolette Bouman (Netherlands, Vice-Chair), Ms. Chiara Landini (Italy), Ms. Alla Loboda (Ukraine), Ms. Zsuzsanna Belenyessy (European Union).

Observers: Mr. Jeremy Wates (NGO Observer, European Environmental Bureau (EEB) representing European ECO Forum), Mr. Daniele Franzone (outgoing, European Union).²

Apologies: Ms. Malaj Enkelejda (Albania)

I. Opening and adoption of agenda

1. Ms. Maia Bitadze, Chair, welcomed Ms. Alla Loboda and Ms. Zsuzsanna Belenyessy, newly appointed Bureau members. The Chair also thanked Mr. Daniele Franzone for his valuable contributions to the Bureau work and wished him all the best for the next phase in his life. The Chair then outlined the main objectives of the meeting, namely: consideration of outcomes of the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties in relation to the preparations of the documents and hosting of the next session of the Meeting of the Parties; and sharing experiences with regard to virtual and hybrid formats of the meeting.

2. The Bureau took note of the information provided by the Chair and adopted the provisional agenda of the meeting.

II. Substantive preparations for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention

3. The Bureau requested the secretariat to: (a) prepare initial drafts of new decisions on substantive matters on the basis of the respective Chairs' Notes and comments received (on access to information; on public participation in decision-making; on access to justice; and on promoting the Convention's principles in international forums) and on accession by Guinea-Bissau; (b) revise draft documents considered by the Working Group of the Parties at its 24th meeting in the light of the comments received (draft work programme for 2022–2025; draft strategic plan for 2022–2030; draft note on a rapid response mechanism to deal with cases related to article 3 (8) of the Aarhus Convention; draft provisional agenda for the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties; and draft declaration). The Bureau agreed to review and finalise the above documents through electronic decision-making during November - December 2020. The draft documents will be thereafter circulated to Parties and stakeholders for comments prior to their finalization for the 25th meeting of the Working Group. The Bureau also agreed to prepare draft decision on reporting requirements closer to the next meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, noting that this a rather factual decision which will reflect the process of preparations of national implementation reports and status of their submission. In addition, the Bureau noted that no revisions are

¹ This document was not formally edited.

² The secretariat was informed by the European Commission that Ms. Angelika Wiedner will no longer serve as a Bureau member.

required for the draft elements of possible financial arrangements under the Convention and the document should be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Group of the Parties without substantive changes.

III. Hosting of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

4. Noting that due to a number of constraints linked to COVID-19 pandemic Georgia cannot confirm its commitment to host the upcoming sessions of the Convention's and Protocol's Meetings of the Parties, the Bureau agreed that in these circumstances the next session of the Convention's Meeting of the Parties should be held in Geneva unless any Party would confirm its willingness to host the session. The Bureau also agreed to proceed with the preparations for the session as was planned and reassess the situation in Spring 2021 as needed.

IV. Hybrid/virtual format of the meeting

5. The Bureau took note of the views and lessons learnt regarding hybrid/virtual format of the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties shared by the secretariat and participants and requested the secretariat to prepare a note for the Bureau's consideration outlining experiences of ECE MEAs (Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context) and of ECE Executive Committee regarding procedures for decision-making for virtual and hybrid meetings. The Bureau will consider this issue in January 2021.

V. Closing

6. The Chair thanked the Bureau for constructive work and the secretariat for its support and closed the meeting.

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