

**FORTY-SIXTH 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)**

25-26 February 2020, Geneva

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, remotely for some sessions).

Observers: Mr. Jeremy Wates (NGO Observer, European Environmental Bureau (EEB) representing European ECO Forum), Mr. Daniele Franzone (pending nomination of the Bureau member by the European Union).²

Apologies: Ms. Malaj Enkelejda (Albania), Ms. Maryna Shimkus (Ukraine).

I. Opening and adoption of agenda

1. Ms. Maia Bitadze, Chair, opened the meeting and outlined its main objectives, namely: (a) review the progress in implementing the current work programme and consider future planned activities; (b) pave the way for decisions to be taken by the Convention's Working Group of the Parties at its 24th meeting (Geneva, 1-3 July 2020) and (c) discuss items in preparation for the seventh ordinary session of the Convention's Meeting of the Parties.

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

3. The Bureau agreed that all documents prepared for the meeting, which are subject to decision-making, will be further considered and approved by the Bureau through electronic decision-making after the meeting. This would also allow other members of the Bureau not present at the meeting to provide their possible comments and conclude the decision-making jointly with all members of the Bureau.

II. Status of ratification of the Convention, its amendment and the Protocol

4. The Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the status of ratifications. Since the latest meeting of the Working Group of the Parties in June 2019 there have been no new ratifications of the Convention or the amendment on public participation in decisions on the deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

5. Kazakhstan ratified the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) on 24 January 2020. There are now 37 Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs.

III. Implementation of the work programme for 2018-2021, including financial matters

6. The Bureau took note of the report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018-2021 prepared by the secretariat, covering the activities carried out between 1 April 2019 and 31 January

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.

2020. It also took note of the Overview of contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the work programme for 2018-2021, and requested the secretariat to update and submit the reports to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

IV. Preparations for the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties

(a) Access to information

7. The Bureau considered a note on progress achieved in this work area and suggestions for the future work, prepared by the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Information. The Bureau expressed its appreciation to the Chair for such informative document and asked the secretariat to liaise with the Chair on its finalization with the view to submitting the note to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties. The Bureau also took note of the new possibilities created by digital technologies for providing consumers with environment-related product information such as through so-called 'product passports' and considered it could be interesting to explore how these new possibilities could be used to promote implementation of article 5.8 of the Convention. The possibility of developing a new instrument under that provision was raised but considered premature at this stage.

(b) Public participation in decision-making

8. The Bureau considered a note on progress achieved in this work area and suggestions for the future work, prepared by the Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making. The Bureau expressed its appreciation to the Chair for such informative document and asked the secretariat to liaise with the Chair on its finalization with the view to submitting the note to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

(c) Access to justice

9. The Bureau considered a note on progress achieved in this work area and suggestions for the future work, prepared by the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Justice. The Bureau expressed its appreciation to the Chair for such informative document and asked the secretariat to liaise with the Chair on its finalization with the view to submitting the note to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

(d) Genetically modified organisms

10. The Bureau considered GMO Amendment-related sections in the report on the implementation of the work programme for 2018-2021 and in the draft elements of the future work programme.

(e) Possible mechanism under the Convention to deal with issues related to article 3.8

11. The Bureau considered a draft note on a possible mechanism under the Convention to deal with issues related to the Convention's article 3.8. The Bureau agreed that the secretariat will prepare a second draft of the note on the basis of the comments and revisions made by the Bureau at the meeting and will send it to the Bureau for further comments and finalization through electronic decision-making. This would also allow other members of the Bureau not present at the meeting to provide their possible comments and conclude the decision-making jointly with all members of the Bureau. Upon the Bureau's approval, the secretariat would submit the revised document to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

12. Pursuant to the information provided by the secretariat, the Bureau noted with concern that no response was received from Kazakhstan to the Chair's letter regarding alleged non-compliance with

the Aarhus Convention due to harassment and persecution of a person exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of the Convention³.

(f) Promotion of the Convention's principles

13. The Bureau considered a note on progress achieved in this work area and suggestions for the future work, prepared by the Chair of the thematic session on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums. The Bureau expressed its appreciation to the Chair for such informative document and asked the secretariat to liaise with the Chair on its finalization with the view to submitting the note to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

(g) Future Strategic Plan

14. The Bureau considered the draft Strategic Plan for 2022-2030 and a note on self-evaluation of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 by the Parties. The Bureau agreed that the secretariat will prepare a second draft of the Strategic Plan for 2022-2030 on the basis of the comments and revisions made by the Bureau at the meeting and will send it to the Bureau for further comments and finalization through electronic decision-making. This would also allow other members of the Bureau not present at the meeting to provide their possible comments and conclude the decision-making jointly with all members of the Bureau. Upon the Bureau's approval, the secretariat would submit the revised document to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

(h) Future work programme

15. The Bureau considered the draft elements of the future work programme 2022-2025. The Bureau agreed that the secretariat will prepare a second draft of the document on the basis of the comments and revisions made by the Bureau at the meeting and will send it to the Bureau for further comments and finalization through electronic decision-making. This would also allow other members of the Bureau not present at the meeting to provide their possible comments and conclude the decision-making jointly with all members of the Bureau. Upon the Bureau's approval, the secretariat would submit the revised document to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

(i) Financial arrangements

16. The Bureau considered the draft elements of possible financial arrangements under the Convention. The Bureau agreed that the secretariat will prepare a second draft of the document on the basis of the comments and revisions made by the Bureau at the meeting and will send it to the Bureau for further comments and finalization through electronic decision-making. This would also allow other members of the Bureau not present at the meeting to provide their possible comments and conclude the decision-making jointly with all members of the Bureau. Upon the Bureau's approval, the secretariat would submit the revised document to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

(j) Agenda of the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties

17. The Bureau considered the draft provisional agenda of the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties and agreed on it at the meeting. To allow other members of the Bureau not present at the meeting to provide their possible comments, the document will be sent to the Bureau for possible feedback of those Bureau members. The Bureau agreed that upon its approval through electronic decision-making, the secretariat will submit the document to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

³ See tab "Correspondence": <https://www.unece.org/env/pp/bureau.html>

V. Preparation of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties

18. The Bureau was informed by the secretariat that the Government of Georgia reconfirmed its interest in hosting the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP-7) and the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on PRTRs (MOPP-4) during the week of 18 October 2021 in Tbilisi. The Bureau welcomed the offer of the Government of Georgia and requested the secretariat to keep it informed of the developments.

19. The Bureau considered the draft provisional agenda for MOP-7. The Bureau agreed that the secretariat will prepare its second draft on the basis of the comments and revisions made by the Bureau at the meeting and will send it to the Bureau for further comments and finalization through electronic decision-making. This would also allow other members of the Bureau not present at the meeting to provide their possible comments and conclude the decision-making jointly with all members of the Bureau. Upon the Bureau's approval, the secretariat will submit the revised document to the 24th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties. The Bureau agreed that a possible high-level segment could be organized jointly with MOPP-4, subject to the decision by the Protocol's Parties, and its themes should be attractive to high-level officials.

VI. Calendar of meetings

20. The Bureau took note of the calendar of planned activities under the Convention for 2020 as reported by the secretariat, available at [https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/public-participation/meetings-and-events.html#/.](https://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/public-participation/meetings-and-events.html#/)

VII. Closing

21. The Bureau agreed to hold its next meeting back-to-back following the 24th meeting of the Working Group. The Chair thanked the Bureau for constructive work and the secretariat for its support and closed the meeting.
