

United Kingdom comments on draft documents for the seventh session of the Aarhus Convention Meeting of the Parties (October 2021):

The United Kingdom would like to thank both the Bureau and the Secretariat for the preparation of draft documents following the twenty-fourth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, and ahead of its twenty-fifth meeting. The UK could not provide a response to the previous Working Group documents as it was still a member state of the European Union and bound by the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement.

Prior to the formation of our position, which we will complete in due course, we request a small number of clarifications and some further information regarding the draft documents.

UK comments on draft decision on the future work programme for 2022–2025:

1. Noting the estimated funding information included in the draft decision paper, and cognisant of the voluntary nature of Aarhus Convention funding by member states, are there contingencies in place should the estimated funding for the rapid response mechanism not materialise? Are the options listed in the future work programme scalable in these circumstances?
2. It would be helpful to understand whether the anticipated increased costs for Compliance mechanisms are entirely related to the proposed rapid response mechanism. The estimated annual costs represent a significant increase in funding in relation to the existing annual budget, and it would be useful to understand in more detail what specific measures are envisaged in the expansion of the Compliance mechanism.
3. We note the additional estimated funding towards awareness-raising and promotion of the Convention and appreciate the breakdown of proposed participation events and processes. As a significant increase in Aarhus funding in its own right, we seek clarification on whether the focus of promotion will be solely Article 3 (8) of the Convention and the protection of persons exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of the Convention, or will it be used to promote the broader aims and objectives of the Convention as a whole?

UK comments on draft decision on access to information:

4. In paragraph 6 of the 'Draft decision on access to information' document, we suggest that a comma be placed between 'Urges Parties and signatories to ensure that the scope of environmental information is interpreted broadly' and 'in line with the requirements of the Convention when executive regulations, legislative and policy documents relating to access to environmental information are prepared'. This is to ensure that the statement is clear and unambiguous.
5. Also, at the end of paragraph 6, we request clarification on the final lines 'and in the process of taking decisions on the disclosure of such information, and to engage the relevant environmental expertise in these processes for this purpose'. We ask for further detail as we are unsure of what the phrasing of this sentence means.