

**25th Meeting of the Working Group to the Aarhus Convention
(Virtual, 7-8 June 2021)**

**Agenda item 9 (a): Access to Information (including updated
recommendation on the electronic information tools**

Norway

Thank you Chair,

Norway would like to thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for the draft decision on access to information and the draft updated recommendations on the electronic information tools. We thank the Republic of Moldova for their willingness to continue leading the work on this issue.

Norway supports the draft decision and recommendations as originally proposed.

We have the following comments to the amendments proposed by ECO Forum:

Draft decision

Paragraph 9: Adding specific references to operators in specific fields is in our opinion not necessary or appropriate. We believe that energy facility and waste management operators is covered by the reference to inter alia suppliers, as they are suppliers of energy and waste management services. However, if considered necessary to clarify that operators in different fields are covered, we could add the words "*facility operators*" after "*producers*".

Paragraphs 9 bis and 15 litra (c) bis: Norway is not able to support the proposed additional text on the IAEA in paragraphs 9 bis and 15 litra c) bis. As stated by the EU and its Member States we do not think it is appropriate to single out particular organisations in this decision. The proposal is of a general nature and without an accompanying explanation. We believe any concerns with regard to access to information and participation in the work of the IAEA should be addressed within the framework of the IAEA first. On participation, we note that some non-governmental organisations have consultative status with IAEA and several other such organizations are invited to the annual Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference. Norway has expressed support for inclusive and broad participation in relevant fora.

Draft recommendation

Proposed additional paragraphs 7(bis) & (ter): We do not believe that the proposed additional paragraphs 7(bis) and (ter) are necessary. It follows from the previous paragraphs that the aim is to make more efficient use of electronic tools for the benefit of both public administration and the public, while securing the rights provided for under the Convention. The purpose is not to make recommendations with regard to existing, conventional methods to provide for access to information and participation. The purpose of the recommendations is not to add to, restrict or diminish the rights under the Convention. We therefore do not see the need to include in this recommendation additional measures to enhance conventional methods in parallel with developing electronic tools. With regard to public involvement in the development of measures, we believe that this is sufficiently covered in the Convention.

Should other parties or stakeholders consider it necessary to make this clearer, one way could be to add the following in paragraph 4 of the recommendation:

"In developing and implementing strategies and measures, ensure participation by the public as provided for in the Convention and address barriers that may restrict public access to information and participation through electronic means, in order to ensure that such access and participation is maintained or enhanced, and not diminished;"

Paragraph 9: For similar reasons as expressed concerning the proposed paragraph 7(bis), we do not see the need for the proposed amendment to paragraph 9. However if no other Parties object to the proposed changes by ECO Forum, we can accept them.

Paragraph 22 (b): For similar reasons as expressed concerning the other proposed amendments, and because charges for provision of information is regulated in some, although not all the Articles of the Convention referred to in paragraph 22 litra b). We therefore do not believe the proposed amendments are necessary and appropriate. We noted however the changes proposed by EU and its Member States to the ECO Forum proposal, and we can support the ECO Forum proposal with the changes proposed by the EU and its Member States.

Thank you Chair.