

**FORTY-NINTH 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)**

10 March 2022, virtual

REPORT OF THE MEETING¹

ATTENDANCE

Bureau members: Mr. Aurimas Saladžius (Lithuania, Chair), Ms. Nicolette Bouman (Netherlands, Vice-Chair), Nino Gokhelashvili (Georgia, Vice-Chair), Ms. Chiara Landini (Italy), Ms. Zsuzsanna Belenyessy (European Union).

Observers: Ms. Summer Kern (NGO Observer, European ECO Forum).

Apologies: Ms. Alla Loboda (Ukraine), Ms. Malaj Enkelejda (Albania).

I. Opening and adoption of agenda

1. Mr. Aurimas Saladžius, Chair, welcomed Ms. Nino Gokhelashvili, who along with the Chair, have been newly elected as Bureau members. The Chair also welcomed the appointment by the European ECO Forum of Ms. Summer Kern as NGO observer to the Bureau.

2. The Chair then outlined the main objectives of the meeting, namely: (a) consider preparations for the 26th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (WGP) and for the third Extraordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties (ExMoP); (b) review any emerging issues and recent developments; and (c) look at the update of activities since the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP7) (Geneva, 18-21 October 2021).

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

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

4. The Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the status of ratifications, noting that since MOP7 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) as well as of the Protocol on PRTRs, and also noting that submission of the instruments of ratification by Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations Treaty Collection is still pending.

III. Update on activities under the Convention

5. The Chair brought to the attention of the Bureau the report on the implementation of the work programmes and overview of contributions received since MOP7, prepared by the secretariat. The Bureau took note of the reports and asked the secretariat to update them, as required, and submit them to the upcoming meeting of WGP.

¹ This document was not formally edited.

IV. Agenda of the Extraordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties

6. The Bureau considered and approved the provisional agenda and requested the secretariat to finalize it in consultation with the Chair, as needed, for submission to ExMoP.

V. Agenda of the 26th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties

7. The Bureau considered and approved the provisional agenda and requested the secretariat to finalize it in consultation with the Chair, as needed, for submission to WGP. In this regard, the Bureau was informed that the Republic of Moldova nominated a new chair for the Task Force on Access to Information.

VI. Other emerging issues and recent developments

8. The Bureau discussed the recent letters concerning the military offensive against Ukraine and protection of environmental defenders, which were sent to Parties by the Chair of the Bureau² and by the Chair of the Compliance Committee³. The Bureau took note of the reply received from the Government of Hungary⁴ in response to the latter, confirming its support for the protection of environmental defenders. The Bureau encouraged all other Parties to send similar formal letters as soon as possible. Ms. Summer Kern, on behalf of the European ECO Forum, expressed appreciation to the Compliance Committee and the Bureau for their swift action in preparing their letters calling for the protection of environmental defenders affected by the war against Ukraine.

9. The Bureau took note of the outcomes of the Seminar on Good Practices and Lessons Learned on the Implementation of the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention (3-4 February 2022)⁵, presented by Ms. Nicolette Bouman. In this regard, the Bureau agreed to explore opportunities for strengthening linkages between the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents through, e.g., consideration of relevant subjects at the meetings of the Task Forces and of the Working Group of the Parties; enhancing cooperation between national focal points of both Conventions and promoting synergy in capacity building activities at a country level.

VII. Future meetings

10. The Bureau took note of the tentative calendar of meetings in 2022 presented by the secretariat. The Bureau agreed to hold next meetings, as needed, prior to and after the ExMoP.

VIII. Closing

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

² See: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/040_toParties_letter_fr_Chair_Aarhus_Convention_Ukraine1.03.2022.pdf

³ See: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/038_toParties_letter_from_ACCC_Chair_Ukraine_27.02.2022.pdf

⁴ See: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/frHungary_protection_Ukrainian_env_defenders_02.03.2022.pdf

⁵ See: <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/wgi-special-session-seminar-good-practices-and-lessons-learned>