

Economic Commission for Europe

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

Seventh session

Geneva, 18–20 October 2021

Excerpt from the addendum to the report of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1)*

Decision VII/6 on financial arrangements under the Convention

Adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters at its seventh session

The Meeting of the Parties,

Recalling article 10, paragraph 3, of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), which states that the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention may, as necessary, consider establishing financial arrangements on a consensus basis,

Recalling also its decisions I/13,¹ II/6,² III/7,³ IV/7,⁴ V/7⁵ and VI/6,⁶ through which an interim voluntary scheme of contributions, open to contributions from Parties, Signatories and other States having opted to participate therein, has been established and maintained,

Having considered the outcomes of the assessment of the current interim scheme of contributions (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2013/9), and recalling discussions and decisions at each of the previous sessions of the Meeting of the Parties on financial arrangements under the Convention about the need to establish financial arrangements based on the goals of stability, predictability and an equitable sharing of the burden,

Recognizing the need to:

- (a) Ensure that sufficient resources are available to implement the Convention's work programme for 2022–2025, adopted through decision VII/5,
- (b) Ensure a scheme of financial contributions that is transparent and accessible to all Parties, Signatories and other States and organizations wishing to contribute,

* Decisions were adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at the Joint High-level segment, held on 21 October 2021. For practical reasons, the adopted decisions are being issued in an addendum to the report of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1). The full text of addendum to the report of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties is available in English, French and Russian from https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/Aarhus_Convention_MoP7

¹ See ECE/MP.PP/2/Add.14.

² See ECE/MP.PP/2005/2/Add.10.

³ See ECE/MP.PP/2008/2/Add.15.

⁴ See ECE/MP.PP/2011/2/Add.1.

⁵ See ECE/MP.PP/2014/2/Add.1.

⁶ See ECE/MP.PP/2017/2/Add.1.

(c) Establish financial arrangements under the Convention based on the principles of an equitable sharing of the burden, stable and predictable sources of funding, accountability and sound financial management,

Expressing its serious concern that the financial burden has not been evenly distributed during the current intersessional period, with several Parties and Signatories not contributing at all,⁷

Believing that alternative options to the financial arrangements in place under the Convention should be considered by the Meeting of the Parties at its next session to ensure that the arrangements meet the goals of stability, predictability and an equitable sharing of the burden,

1. *Agrees* to continue to use the existing interim scheme of contributions as reflected in decision VI/6 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (ECE/MP.PP/2017/2/Add.1) aimed at covering the costs of activities under the work programme that are not covered by the United Nations regular budget, based on the following principles:

(a) The Parties should collectively ensure that the costs of the activities of the work programme that are not covered by the United Nations regular budget are covered through the financial scheme;

(b) No Party or signatory is expected to contribute less than 1,000 United States dollars for the Convention's work programme in its contribution for a given calendar year;

(c) Contributions shall be made in cash and shall not be earmarked for a particular activity;

(d) Additional contributions may be made in cash or in kind and may be earmarked for a particular activity;

(e) Contributions in cash shall be made through the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Trust Fund for Local Technical Cooperation (Aarhus Convention project);

(f) If allowed by the domestic budgetary procedures of the Parties, contributions for a given calendar year should be made by 1 October of the preceding year, or where this is not an option, it is recommended that contributions be made in the first six months of the calendar year, so as to secure payment of staff costs for the smooth functioning of the secretariat, as a priority, and the timely and effective implementation of the priority activities of the respective programme of work;

(g) To keep administrative costs related to fund management to a minimum, insofar as possible and subject to the internal budgetary procedures of the Parties, contributions should preferably be paid net, with possible charges at the expense of donors, concentrated as much as possible within the intersessional period, by, for example, making multiannual or annual contributions continuously (for every calendar year) and by merging contributions for the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol into one transfer, if appropriate;

(h) Parties pledge, where possible, prior to the adoption of a work programme by the Meeting of the Parties, their expected annual or multi-annual financial and in-kind contributions. Signatories, other interested States and organizations may also wish to indicate their expected contributions;

2. *Requests* Parties to contribute each year or to make multi-annual contributions towards the costs of activities under the work programme, in accordance with the scheme referred to in paragraph 1 above;

3. *Invites* Signatories, other interested States and public entities, as well as the private sector, in accordance with the 2015 Guidelines on a Principle-based Approach to the

⁷ This paragraph is to be verified closer to the adoption of the decision.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Sector,⁸ to contribute, in cash or in kind, towards covering the costs of the work programme;

4. *Calls upon* countries with economies in transition to finance, to the extent possible, their own participation in the activities;

5. *Calls upon* international organizations working in countries with economies in transition to support the participation of representatives of these countries and non-governmental organizations in the meetings and other activities;

6. *Encourages* Parties that have historically contributed generously to maintain, or return to, their previous levels of contribution;

7. *Requests* all Parties to ensure the equitable distribution of the financial responsibility for implementation of the work programme, and requests the Bureau to liaise with Parties where appropriate concerning the achievement of this goal;

8. *Requests* the secretariat, in accordance with the financial rules of the United Nations, to allocate in the Convention trust fund, by 1 October of each year, the sum required for the extension of the contracts of extrabudgetary staff of the secretariat for the upcoming year, as a priority, and also costs needed for implementation of activities in the first quarter of the upcoming year;

9. *Also requests* the secretariat, in accordance with the financial rules of the United Nations, to monitor the expenditure of the funds and to prepare annual reports specifically indicating contributions, and reflecting any changes to:

(a) The estimated costs of activities for the next calendar year;

(b) The composition of the Parties, for review by the Working Group of the Parties, in order to strive to ensure that the level of contributions matches the level of funding needed for the implementation of the work programme;

10. *Requests* the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, to provide an estimation of the operational costs needed for the effective functioning of the Convention, which should be clearly distinct from the cost of other activities which are subject to the availability of resources;

11. *Requests* the Working Group of the Parties to consider, in the light of these annual reports, whether changes would be required in the content or time frame of the work programme, in the event that the level of actual and/or pledged contributions does not match the level of funding needed;

12. *Requests* the secretariat to prepare a comprehensive report on financial matters for each session of the Meeting of the Parties, including information on how much Parties and other participating States and organizations have contributed to the budget of the Convention in cash and in kind, and how the contributions were spent;

13. *Agrees* to review the operation of the scheme of financial arrangements at its eighth session;

14. *Mandates* the Bureau and the Working Group of the Parties to explore, in the next intersessional period, options for more predictable, stable and equitably shared funding, and requests them to make the appropriate proposals for consideration by the Meeting of the Parties at its eighth session;

15. *Requests* the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to allocate more resources to support the work under the Convention, noting in this connection the positive evaluation of the Environment subprogramme during the 2013 review of the 2005 reform of the Commission,⁹ and considering, inter alia, the balance in the use of regular budgetary resources in the different subprogrammes.

⁸ United Nations, Global Compact, report, 2015 (revised). Available at www.unglobalcompact.org/library/3431.

⁹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2013, Supplement No. 17 (E/2013/37-E/ECE/1464, annex III, paras. 7 and 8).*