
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

Working Group of the Parties

Twenty-sixth meeting

Geneva, 22-23 June 2022

Item 10 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of outcomes

**LIST OF DECISIONS AND MAJOR OUTCOMES OF THE MEETING
as adopted by the Working Group at its twenty-sixth meeting¹**

Item 1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by the Chair and delegations;
- ii. Took note of the statements highlighting the gravity of the situation in the region linked to the war in Ukraine by the Russian Federation;
- iii. Adopted the provisional agenda of the meeting (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2022/1).

Item 2. Status of ratification

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information on the status of ratification of the Convention, its amendment and the Protocol on PRTRs, provided by the secretariat.

Item 3. Substantive issues

(a) Thematic session on access to information

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Expressed appreciation to the representatives of Finland, Serbia, the European Environment Agency, the International Trade Centre, the UN Economic Commission for Europe, and the European ECO Forum for their presentations and welcomed the achievements, good practices and initiatives provided by the representatives of Parties, partner organizations and stakeholders regarding public access to environment-related product information in accordance with article 5, paragraphs 6 and 8, of the Convention;
- ii. Recognized that environmental awareness and education among the public, especially children and youth, and access to sufficient product information in this regard are critical to enable consumers to make informed environmental choices and support sustainable consumption and production;

¹ This document was not formally edited.

- iii. Reiterated that the effective implementation of article 5, paragraphs 6 and 8, of the Convention remained essential for attaining the Sustainable Development Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production and supporting the transition towards green and circular economy;
- iv. Called on Parties, partner organizations and stakeholders to continue implementing or supporting as relevant such tools as ecolabelling, energy labelling, product passports, product declarations, warning labels, green public procurement, code of conduct and purchasing mechanisms and pollutant release and transfer registers as reported by the speakers to promote the disclosure of information by operators to the public;
- v. Urged Parties to promote more effective use of electronic information tools in accordance with Decision VII/1 (ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1) and the recommendations (ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.2) to improve transparency and public access to product information;
- vi. Encouraged Parties to support multi-stakeholder dialogue, including through financial means, bringing together various actors such as suppliers, manufacturers, retailers, consumers and environmental NGOs to promote transparency, traceability and accountability in consumer products and involvement of youth and other groups with special needs in attaining sustainable consumption;
- vii. Requested the Task Force on Access to Information in cooperation with the Parties and stakeholders to continue the expert exchange of information and good practices of and possible means to improve access to product information and promote cooperation with the ECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, One Planet network, other relevant international initiatives and processes dealing with product information.

(b) Public participation in decision-making

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by the Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making, and by delegations on recent developments related to public participation in decision-making;
- ii. Called on Parties to support effective public participation in decision-making, in particular for marginalized groups and persons in vulnerable situations and in the context of war and conflict;
- iii. Encourages Parties and stakeholders to continue to share experiences in the application of the Maastricht Recommendations, including through the collection and dissemination of good practices in public participation in decision-making through the Aarhus Clearinghouse and its Good Practice online database;
- iv. Reiterated that effective public participation in decision-making in environmental matters supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and targets, and

in particular target 16.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 16 (responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels);

- v. Welcomed initiatives by Parties, stakeholders and partner organizations to implement measures set out in decision VII/2 (ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1) up to date and encourage its continued implementation.

(c) Access to justice

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Justice, by the representative of the Supreme Court of Ireland and by delegations on recent developments related to access to justice;
- ii. Reiterated that effective access to justice in environmental matters supports the achievement of target 16.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and underpins the implementation of other relevant Sustainable Development Goals and targets;
- iii. Welcomed the organization of the Judicial Colloquium “Adjudication of cases related to climate change and air quality” (Geneva, 26-27 April 2022) and other work undertaken to promote judicial cooperation on environmental matters in the pan-European region and expressed appreciation to partner organizations for supporting this work;
- iv. Welcomed initiatives of the Parties and stakeholders to implement measures set out in decision VII/3 up to date and encourage its continued implementation.

(d) Genetically modified organisms

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by Armenia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan on the status of ratification of the GMO amendment and by other delegations on recent developments related to the subject area;
- ii. Reiterated its serious concern that the GMO amendment of the Convention has to be approved by a sufficient number of Parties to enter into force;
- iii. Reiterated its call upon the following Parties, whose ratification of the GMO amendment would count towards its entry into force: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine, to take serious steps towards ratification and requested the above Parties to report at the next meeting of the Working Group on the progress achieved.

Item 4. Procedures and mechanisms

(a) Compliance mechanism

The Working Group of the Parties took note of the information provided by the Chair of the Compliance Committee on the outcomes of the Compliance Committee seventy-second, seventy-third, seventy-fourth and seventy-fifth meetings and by delegations on recent developments and other matters related to the subject area.

(b) Reporting mechanism

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by the secretariat and delegations;
- ii. Expressed its concern over the failure of the Netherlands and Tajikistan to submit a report on the implementation of the Convention for the 2021 cycle. The Working Group urged these Parties to submit their reports without any further delay.

(c) Capacity-building and awareness-raising

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by delegations;
- ii. Expressed its appreciation to Parties, Aarhus Centres, partner organizations, and stakeholders for the continuing cooperation with the secretariat on capacity building activities at the regional, national and local levels;
- iii. Recognised once again the important role that Aarhus Centres played for providing a neutral platform for authorities, NGOs and other stakeholders to support the Convention's implementation in countries with economies in transition, and to promote multi-stakeholder dialogue on Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, ensuring the sustainability of these Centres remains crucially important;
- iv. Encouraged national focal points to reach out to authorities responsible for development assistance and technical cooperation to explore the possibility of integrating the Aarhus Convention in these programmes as cross-cutting instrument supporting attainment of Sustainable Development Goals.

Item 5. Accession to the Convention by States from outside the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region and other relevant developments and interlinkages related to the promotion of the Convention and its principles

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information provided by Guinea-Bissau regarding status of accession to the Aarhus Convention;
- ii. Took note of the information provided by delegations on recent developments in this work area;
- iii. Welcomed initiatives taken by the secretariat, Parties or stakeholders to promote the Convention beyond the UNECE region and in other relevant processes, such as the Escazu Agreement. It calls upon the secretariat and other relevant organizations to continue cooperation and further promote synergy in the area of environmental rights.

Item 6. Next ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the information shared by the secretariat regarding the next session of the Meeting of the Parties;
- ii. Encouraged Parties to express interest in hosting of the next session of the Meeting of the Parties.

Item 7. Implementation of work programmes for 2018–2021 and for 2022–2025, including financial matters

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Took note of the Report on the implementation of the work programmes for 2018–2021 and 2022–2025 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2022/4) and the Report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the Convention's work programmes for 2018–2021 and 2022–2025 (ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2022/5);
- ii. Welcomed the synergies with partner organizations that helped to effective implementation of the work programme;
- iii. Also took note of information on the recent contributions provided by the secretariat and on statements by delegations;
- iv. Called upon the Parties to proceed with making financial contributions as soon as possible and expressed its concern over the fact that contributions are still arriving late in the year;
- v. Expressed appreciation for the work done by the secretariat.

Item 8. Thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums

The Working Group of the Parties:

- i. Expressed its appreciation to the representatives of France, Portugal, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the European ECO Forum for their presentations and took note of the information provided;
- ii. Welcomed achievements and good practices as presented by Parties and stakeholders;
- iii. Took note of the issues, challenges, especially for NGOs, and opportunities for public participation in international decision-making on legally binding instruments on plastic pollution and on business and human rights as raised by Parties and stakeholders during the discussion;
- iv. Urged Parties to continue promoting the Convention's principles in international forums and processes related to legally binding instruments on plastic pollution and on business and human rights;
- v. Welcomed the progress made in promoting the Convention's principles in international forums but recognized that more efforts should be done to further transparency and effective public participation in international environment-related decision-making, including in processes under Convention on Biological Diversity; in processes related to climate and nuclear matters; and in COVID-19 context;
- vi. Called on Parties to take action to improve public participation in the International Seabed Authority processes in accordance with article 3 (7) of the Convention;
- vii. Urged Parties to continue fulfilling their obligations under article 3 (7) of the Convention and to consider the results achieved at the next meeting of the Working Group;
- viii. Reiterated that promotion of transparency and effective public participation in international decision-making on environmental matters is key for achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

Item 9. Other business

No issues were discussed.

Item 10. Adoption of outcomes

The Working Group adopted the major outcomes and decisions presented by the Chair at the meeting (as contained in this document) and requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair, to finalize the report and incorporate these adopted outcomes and decisions.
