

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### **Self-evaluation on the activities serviced by UNECE under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) (2018-2021)**

#### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess whether activities serviced by ECE under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs) were implemented in a coherent, effective and efficient way and whether these activities were relevant for advancing intergovernmental efforts towards improved public participation in decision-making and access to information and to justice in environmental matters.

The results of the evaluation are expected to contribute to a longer-term vision for the intergovernmental work under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol and to raise awareness on these activities. The outcomes of the evaluation can be used to enhance outreach to policymakers and other major stakeholders to strengthen their engagement in intergovernmental processes and to improve the methods and processes of intergovernmental work that support the Aarhus Convention and Protocol on PRTRs objectives.

#### **II. Scope of activities for evaluation**

The evaluation will explore the activities under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol in line with their adopted work programmes during the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2021. The activities are serviced by the secretariat, within the ECE Environment subprogramme.

The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of the evaluation, in compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group's revised gender-related norms and standards. Therefore, the evaluation will assess how the activities under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the realization of human rights, with an emphasis on 'leaving no one behind' and, if needed, it will make recommendations on how these considerations can be better addressed in future activities.

#### **III. Background**

The [Aarhus Convention](#) and its [Protocol on PRTRs](#) aim to empower public with the rights to access information, participate in decision-making in environmental matters and to seek justice. They are the only legally binding global instruments on environmental democracy open for accession by any UN Member State. Their powerful twin protections for the environment and human rights can help us respond to many challenges facing our world: from climate change and the loss of biodiversity, air and water pollution to poverty eradication and security. They provide a solid framework for governments to engage the public effectively in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs.

In its role of the secretariat, it services activities under the Convention and its Protocol in line with the adopted work programmes.

The secretariat cooperates and coordinates the activities with other United Nations agencies, international governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the fields of public participation, human rights and the environment, as to promote synergy and avoid duplication.

#### **IV. Issues**

The evaluation will answer the following questions:

##### ***Relevance***

1. Are the activities serviced by UNECE under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol relevant for advancing intergovernmental efforts towards improved public participation in decision-making and access to information and to justice in environmental matters?
2. How relevant have the activities of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol been to attaining major UN global commitments, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris agreement?
3. To what extent have the activities of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol contributed to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the realization of human rights, with an emphasis on "leaving no one behind"?

##### ***Coherence***

4. How coherent is the collaboration with other entities (United Nations, other international organizations, civil society, academia, etc.) in delivering the activities?
5. To what extent has the collaboration with other entities allowed identifying synergies and avoiding duplications?
6. What outcomes have been achieved through the collaboration with partners (expected/unexpected, positive/negative) in the implementation of the activities? Could this engagement with partners and various stakeholder groups be improved?

##### ***Effectiveness***

7. To what extent do the activities under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol contribute to member States' attainment of their commitments under the 2030 Agenda and Paris agreement?
8. How effective was the support of the secretariat in servicing the activities?
9. What were the challenges/obstacles to implementing the activities and expected accomplishments set forth?

##### ***Efficiency***

10. Were there sufficient resources to achieve the intended outcomes, including in a timely manner?
11. Have the available resources been used efficiently to deliver expected outputs?

#### **V. Methodology**

The evaluation will adopt a theory-driven, utilization-focused and gender and human rights responsive approach. The evaluator is required to use a mixed-method approach, including qualitative as well as quantitative data gathering and analysis as the basis for a triangulation exercise of all available data to draw conclusions and findings.

The evaluation will be conducted on the basis of:

1. A desk review of all relevant documents over the period including:
  - All relevant documents including materials developed in support of the activities (agendas, plans, participant lists, background documents, final reports and publications)
  - Reports prepared under the Convention/Protocol and its Bureau; Reports on annual work programme implementation
  - Proposed programme budgets covering the evaluation period
  - Relevant UN and ECE resolutions on the matter.

2. A tailored questionnaire will be developed by evaluator in consultation with ECE to assess the views of stakeholders: Parties, experts, staff from ECE, other regional commissions and relevant counterparts in the United Nations System and other international organizations.
3. The questionnaire will be followed by interviews of selected stakeholders (methodology to be determined by the evaluator in consultation with ECE). These will be carried out via phone or other electronic means of communication. Results of the survey will be disaggregated by gender.

The report will summarize the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation. An executive summary (max. 2 pages) will sum up the methodology of the evaluation, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

All material needed for the evaluation, will be provided to the consultant. In addition to the documents mentioned above in 1), the Programme Manager will provide the list of persons to be interviewed by telephone. ECE will provide support and further explanation to the evaluator as needed.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the [ECE Evaluation Policy](#). A gender-responsive methodology, methods and tools, and data techniques will be selected. The evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations will reflect a gender analysis.

## **VI. Evaluation schedule<sup>1</sup>**

April 2022	ToR finalized
July 2022	Evaluator selected
August 2022	Contract signed. Evaluator starts the desk review
end-August 2022	Evaluator submits inception report including survey design
September 2022	Launch of data gathering and conduct of interviews, as needed
October 2022	Evaluator submits draft report
November 2022	Evaluator submits final report

## **VII. Resources**

The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will manage the evaluation and will be involved in the following steps: Selection of the evaluator; Preparation and clearance of the Terms of Reference; Provision of guidance to the Secretary, Aarhus Convention and to the evaluator as needed on the evaluation design and methodology; Clearance of the final report after quality assurance of the draft report.

The Secretary, Aarhus Convention, in consultation with the Division Director, will be involved in the following steps: Provide all documentation needed for desk review, contact details, support and guidance to the evaluation consultant as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation; Advise the evaluator on the recipients for the questionnaire and for follow-up interviews; Process and manage the consultancy contract of the evaluator, along the key milestones agreed with PMU.

## **VIII. Intended use / Next steps**

The evaluation will be consistent with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. The results of the evaluation will be used in the planning and implementation of future activities of the Environment subprogramme in support of the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Paris agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> Final timetable to be agreed following engagement of the evaluator

Following the issuance of the final report, the Secretary, Aarhus Convention, in consultation with the Division Director, will develop a management response for addressing the recommendations made by the evaluator. The final evaluation report, the management response and the progress on implementation of recommendations will be publicly available on the UNECE website.

## **IX. Criteria for evaluation**

The evaluator should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant disciplines, with specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management and social statistics.
- Knowledge of and experience in working with intergovernmental processes, environmental policy and/or human rights.
- Relevant professional experience in design and management of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, project planning, monitoring and management, gender mainstreaming and human-rights due diligence.
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations.
- Fluency in written and spoken English. Knowledge of another language may be an advantage.

Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to ECE before embarking on an evaluation project, and at any point where such conflict occurs.