

**FIFTIETH 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)**

1 March 2023, Hybrid, Geneva and in Teams

REPORT OF THE MEETING¹

ATTENDANCE

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

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

I. Opening and adoption of agenda

1. Mr. Aurimas Saladžius, Chair, outlined the main objectives of the meeting, namely: (a) consider preparations for the 27th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties; (b) review any emerging issues and recent developments; and (c) look at the update of activities since the latest 26th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

2. The Chair then welcomed Ms. Kateryna Luchko, who has been appointed recently by Ukraine as the Bureau member.

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 amendment and the Protocol

4. The Bureau took note of the information provided by the secretariat on the status of ratifications of the Convention, its amendment on public participation in decisions on the deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market of genetically modified organisms, and the Protocol on PRTRs, noting that as of 24 October 2022 Belarus is no longer a Party to the Convention; submission of the instruments of ratification of the Convention by Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations Treaty Collection is still pending; and no changes in ratifications of the Convention's amendment and of the Protocol. The Bureau also took note of the information provided by Ukraine regarding its plans to ratify the Convention's amendment by end of 2023.

III. Update on implementation of the work programme for 2022-2025

5. The Chair brought to the attention of the Bureau the report on the implementation of the work programme 2022-2025 and overview of contributions received for 1 January 2022 – 31 January 2023, prepared by the secretariat.

6. The secretariat raised several issues regarding implementation of the work programme, including pending submission of national implementation reports and new regulations of the United Nations Office in Geneva conference services regarding handling of online and hybrid meetings. The secretariat also informed the Bureau that the UN Office of the Legal Affairs (OLA) notified the

¹ This document was not formally edited.

secretariat that OLA is of the view that the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention can be considered to perform a mission for the United Nations and hence to qualify as an Expert on Mission within the meaning of Article VI of the [1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations](#).

7. The Bureau took note of the above reports and asked the secretariat to update them, as required, and submit them to the upcoming 27th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties. The Bureau also took note of the information regarding financial matters, and agreed to prepare, with support of the secretariat, a letter to all Parties aimed at raising awareness about a need for the Parties to consider increasing their contributions in view of the expanded workload of the Compliance Committee and the introduction of the new Rapid Response Mechanism. The letter will be sent by the Chair on behalf of the Bureau prior to the 27th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

IV. Implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Ukraine: update on recent developments

8. The Bureau took note of the information shared by Ukraine about the country's current challenges associated with the implementation of the Convention in circumstances of the war launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The Bureau also took note of the report by the secretariat on the work of the Compliance Committee concerning the request of Ukraine for advisory support in that regard².

V. Agenda of the 27th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties

9. The Bureau: (a) provided its comments on the draft agenda of the 27th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties and approved it in the light of the comments provided; and (b) requested the secretariat to finalize it in consultation with the Chair for submission to that meeting and to inform the Bureau accordingly.

VI. Future meetings

10. The Bureau took note of the tentative calendar of meetings in 2023 presented by the secretariat.³ The Bureau agreed to consider at a later stage a possible need to hold its next meeting back-to-back with the 27th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

VII. 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/env/pp/cc/accc.a.2022.3_ukraine

³ See <https://unece.org/info/events/unece-meetings-and-events/environmental-policy/public-participation>