

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

Task Force on Access to Information

Eighth meeting

Geneva, 9-10 November 2023

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening and adoption of the agenda

Annotated provisional agenda for the eighth meeting

To be held in Salle III, Palais des Nations, Geneva
starting at 9.30 a.m. on Thursday, 9 November 2023

I. Provisional agenda

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda.
2. International Workshop “Advancing Public Access to Environment-related Product Information: Challenges and Opportunities”
3. Public access to environmental information:
 - (a) The scope of environmental information;
 - (b) Access to information on emissions into the environment;
 - (c) The provision of information to the public authorities by third parties;
4. Stocktaking of recent and upcoming developments.
5. Activities under other international forums.
6. Other business.
7. Closing.

II. Annotations

The mandate of the Task Force on Access to Information under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was laid down by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention through decision IV/1 adopted at its fourth session (Chisinau, 29 June - 1 July 2011)¹. It was further extended in time by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention through decision VII/1 adopted at its seventh session (Geneva, 18-20 October 2021)². The work is also guided by the Strategic Plan 2022-2030³ and the Work Programme 2022-2025⁴.

The Task Force will feature an international workshop “Advancing public access to environment-related product information: challenges and opportunities” that will be organized in cooperation with partner organizations.

Furthermore, the meeting of the Task Force will promote the exchange of case studies, good practices and challenges and consider recent and upcoming developments in relation to strengthening public access to environmental information. In particular, the Task Force will discuss (a) the scope of environmental information in accordance with article 2 (3) of the Convention; (b) access to information on emissions into the environment; and (c) the provision of information to the public authorities by third parties both routinely and in case of an imminent threat to human health or the environment. The Task Force is also expected to take stock of the use of the updated Recommendations on electronic information tools and activities of other relevant international forums.

The outcomes of the meeting will support countries’ efforts in implementing, monitoring and measuring environment-related Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 3 (Health), SDG 6 (Water), SDG 11 (Resilient and Sustainable Cities), SDG 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land) and target 10 SDG 16 (Ensure Public Access to Information), and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

The background material for the meeting includes relevant information derived from 2021 national implementation reports⁵ and the synthesis report⁶ as well as the Implementation Guide⁷, relevant Compliance Committee findings of a systemic nature⁸ and the resources of the Aarhus Clearinghouse⁹ and its jurisprudence database¹⁰. The Task Force on Access to Information continues its work based on the outputs of the previous meetings.

Each session will feature brief introductory presentation(s) sharing experiences of the Parties to the Convention and stakeholders related to the agenda items followed by contributors’ interventions and interactive discussion. Delegates who are interested to make a presentation or statement at the meeting on the key developments, emerging issues or issues of a systemic nature regarding the implementation of the first pillar of the Convention are kindly invited to contact the secretariat (public.participation[at]un.org) as soon as possible, preferably by **1 October 2023**, briefly outlining its focus in relation to the agenda items. The provisional programme of the meeting will be released shortly before the meeting.

¹ The text of decision is available from <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/fourth-session-meeting-parties>

² The text of decision is available from https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/Aarhus_Convention_MoP7

³ The texts of decisions are available from https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/Aarhus_Convention_MoP7

⁴ The text of decision is available from https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/Aarhus_Convention_MoP7

⁵ 2021 national implementation reports are available from <https://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/national-reports/reports>

⁶ The synthesis report (ECE/MP.PP/2021/6) is available from <https://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/national-reports/reports>

⁷ The Implementation Guide is available from <https://unece.org/environment-policy/publications/aarhus-convention-implementation-guide-second-edition>

⁸ The Compliance Committee findings are available from <https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation/aarhus-convention/compliance-committee>

⁹ The Aarhus Clearinghouse is available from <https://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/>

¹⁰ The jurisprudence database is available from <https://unece.org/env/pp/tfaj-case-law-related-convention>

1. Opening and adoption of the agenda

Timing: Thursday, 9 November, 9.30–9.40 a.m.

The Task Force will be invited to adopt the agenda as set out in the present document.¹¹

2. International Workshop “Advancing Public Access to Environment-related Product Information: Challenges and Opportunities”

Timing: Thursday, 9 November, 9.40 a.m. –12.30 p.m. and 2.30–5.30 p.m.

A thematic workshop will be organized in cooperation with partner programmes and organizations in the format of panel presentations followed by an interactive discussion. The workshop will consider challenges and opportunities in advancing public access to environment-related product information, including legal and policy developments, the use of product passports and other digital tools, means to encourage operators to inform the public and measures against greenwashing. A separate programme for the workshop will be made available on the meeting web page in due course.

3. Public access to environmental information

(a) The scope of environmental information

Timing: Friday, 10 November, 9.30 – 10.30 a.m.

This session will focus on the scope of environmental information to be held and provided by public authorities in accordance with article 2 (3) of the Convention. Participants will be invited to share relevant good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and case studies. The discussion aims to identify existing challenges, possible further developments, and necessary measures in relation to this subject.

(b) Access to information on emissions into the environment

Timing: Friday, 10 November, 10.30 – 11.30 a.m.

This session will focus on public access to information on emissions into the environment from various sources in accordance with the Convention. Participants will be invited to share relevant good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and case studies. The discussion aims to identify existing challenges, possible further developments, and necessary measures in relation to this subject.

(c) The provision of information to the public authorities by third parties

Timing: Friday, 10 November, 11.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. and 2.30–3 p.m.

This session will focus on the provision of information to the public authorities by third parties both routinely and in case of an imminent threat to human health or the environment. Participants will be invited to share relevant good practices, recent policy and legislative developments and case studies. The discussion aims to identify existing challenges, possible further developments, and necessary measures in relation to this subject.

¹¹ All documentation for the meeting will be available from <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/eighth-meeting-task-force-access-information-under-aarhus-convention>

4. Stocktaking of recent and upcoming developments

Timing: Friday, 10 November, 3.00 – 4.30 p.m.

This session will take stock of recent and upcoming developments with regard to the updated Recommendations on the more effective use of electronic information tools (ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.2) adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its seventh session through decision VII/1.

5. Activities under other international forums

Timing: Friday, 10 November, 4.30 – 5.10 p.m.

Representatives of relevant international forums will be invited to inform about recent activities to promote public access to environmental information and the transparency of public authorities on environmental matters.

6. Other business

Timing: Friday, 10 November, 5.10 – 5.15 p.m.

Delegates wishing to suggest issues under this item are requested to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

7. Closing

Timing: Friday, 10 November, 5.15 – 5.30 p.m.

The Chair will summarize the key outcomes of the meeting and close it.