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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-eighth meeting

Geneva, 2–4 July 2024

Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Preparations for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties:
future work programme**

Draft elements of the work programme for 2026–2029*

Prepared by the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat

Summary

At its seventh session (Geneva, 18–21 October 2021), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters requested the secretariat to prepare a draft work programme for the intersessional period following the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties, including a detailed breakdown of estimated costs, for consideration and further elaboration by the Bureau and the Working Group of the Parties.^a The Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, was also requested to provide an estimation of the operational costs needed for the effective functioning of the Convention that was clearly distinct from the cost of other activities subject to the availability of resources.^b

In accordance with the above-mentioned decisions, the present document contains the draft elements of the future work programme for 2026–2029 (the basis for a future draft decision) and three tables: a draft work programme for 2026–2029 (annex I); draft estimated costs of activities for the work areas listed in the work programme for 2026–2029 (annex II); and an example of the possible distribution of different meetings under the Convention for the period 2026–2029 (annex III).

There will be opportunities for open-ended consultations among national focal points and stakeholders on the present draft document prior to and after the twenty-eighth meeting of the Working Group (Geneva, 2–4 July 2024). The Bureau is expected to revise the draft document thereafter in the light of the comments received and to submit it to the Working

* This document was scheduled for publication after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control, as more time was required to finalize it.



Group for consideration and approval at its twenty-ninth meeting (2025), with a view to its subsequent submission to the Meeting of the Parties for consideration at its eighth session.

^a ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1, decision VII/5, para. 10.

^b ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1, decision VII/6, para. 10.

Introduction

1. At its seventh session (Geneva, 18–21 October 2021), the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters requested the secretariat to prepare a draft work programme for the intersessional period following the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties, including a detailed breakdown of estimated costs, for consideration and further elaboration by the Bureau and the Working Group of the Parties (ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1, decision VII/5, para. 10). The Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, was also requested to provide an estimation of the operational costs needed for the effective functioning of the Convention that was clearly distinct from the cost of other activities subject to the availability of resources (ECE/MP.PP/2021/2/Add.1, decision VII/6, para. 10).
2. In accordance with the above-mentioned decisions, the present document contains the draft elements of the future work programme (the basis for a future draft decision), including three tables: a draft work programme for 2026–2029 (annex I); draft estimated costs of activities for the work areas listed in the work programme for 2026–2029 (annex II); and an example of the possible distribution of different meetings under the Convention for the period 2026–2029 (annex III).
3. The draft elements for the work programme document were prepared on the basis of the outcomes of the meetings of the Working Group of the Parties and information notes submitted by the chairs of the task forces and of the thematic session on promoting the principles of the Convention in international forums.
4. The draft suggests a similar approach to that taken under the current work programme in terms of allocating four years to the intersessional period and including a thematic discussion on different substantive issues at each meeting of the Working Group of the Parties. The outcomes of the work of the task forces and of the work area on genetically modified organisms will provide a basis for discussion at the thematic sessions. It is expected that, as in the current intersessional period, the Working Group will continue to focus its discussion on those issues (e.g., strategic policy) that require the particular attention of the Convention's focal points. Furthermore, the Working Group, within its mandate of overseeing the progress in implementing the Convention's work programmes (ECE/MP.PP/2/Add.15, decision I/14, paras. 1 and 2 (b)), will be given the opportunity, at each of its meetings, to hear more detailed reports on the implementation of decisions on compliance matters adopted by the Meeting of the Parties.
5. Thanks to the diverse working structure under the Convention (i.e. three task forces on the three Convention pillars; the Compliance Committee, with meetings taking place an average once every five weeks; ongoing advisory support from the secretariat; and cooperation with numerous partners), the four-year intersessional period, combined with annual thematic policy discussions and a thorough review of the progress achieved in implementing the work area on compliance by the Working Group of the Parties, did not have a negative impact on the work under the Convention. On the contrary, the extension of the intersessional period allowed more time for the substantive preparation of meetings and increased the capacity of Parties to participate in the different meetings. On average, one meeting of a subsidiary body or one capacity-building activity for the Convention still took place every month.

Major elements of the work programme

6. Based on experience in implementing the current work programme, it is proposed to maintain the same work areas in the future work programme as in the current work programme. Also, similarly to the current work programme, it has been suggested that the following work areas should continue to be strengthened with advisory assistance: capacity-building; awareness-raising and promotion; and promotion of the “Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus Convention in International Forums” (ECE/MP.PP/2005/2/Add.5, annex) and other interlinkages with relevant international bodies and processes. It should be noted that the work area on compliance,

which is comprised of the activities of the Compliance Committee and of the Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders, significantly contributes at the same time to the work area on capacity-building. With regard to staff requirements, the only new suggestion is to increase legal support to the Compliance Committee. Thus, the work areas are as follows (see additional explanation underlined in table below):

Work area

Substantive issues

- I. Access to information, including electronic information tools
- II. Public participation
- III. Access to justice
- IV. Genetically modified organisms

Procedures and mechanisms

- V. Compliance mechanism
 - V.1 Compliance Committee (strengthened with additional legal assistance)
 - V.2 Rapid response mechanism - Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders (as in the current work programme, includes legal assistance)
- VI. Capacity-building (as in the current work programme, includes advisory assistance from legal staff working on compliance mechanism under work area V)
- VII. Reporting mechanism
- VIII. Awareness-raising and promotion of the Convention (as in the current work programme, includes advisory support from a dedicated staff member)
- IX. Promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums, promotion of the Almaty Guidelines and other interlinkages with relevant international bodies and processes (as in the current work programme, includes advisory support from a dedicated staff member)

Coordination, Meeting of the Parties and horizontal support

- X. Coordination and oversight of intersessional activities
 - XI. Ninth ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties
 - XII. Horizontal support areas
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V.1 Compliance Committee

7. It should be noted that the secretariat's workload in assisting the Compliance Committee has significantly increased due to the considerably higher number of decisions and requests of the Meeting of the Parties concerning the compliance of individual Parties requiring the Committee's follow-up in the current intersessional period (20 in this intersessional period compared with 11 in the past intersessional period), as well as the increasing number of requests received from Parties for advice and assistance. In addition to preparing a very large number of legal documents, correspondence and analytical material, the secretariat devotes significant time to responding to Parties' and communicants' enquiries and to providing advisory support to Parties concerned to assist them in better understanding the Committee's procedures and/or what may be needed from them in order to come into compliance. The advisory support that the secretariat provides to Parties regarding the compliance mechanism has a double added value since it not only assists the Compliance Committee in carrying out its work but also contributes significantly to capacity-building for those Parties (at present, 29 of 47 Parties are subject to compliance review, consisting of 65

cases (21 follow-ups on seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties decisions/requests and post-seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties findings of non-compliance, three requests for advisory support and assistance, and 41 pending communications). Should sufficient staff resources not be provided for this work area, there is a genuine risk that the Compliance Committee will cease to function. Consequently, the Parties concerned will no longer be provided with assistance to bring their legislative frameworks and practice into compliance with the Convention.

V.2 *Rapid response mechanism - Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders*

8. Similarly, the same is true for the work of the Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders. There is an urgent and growing need to address the harassment of environmental defenders and to offer them protection under the Convention. This is demonstrated by the reports (see the outcomes of the twenty-seventh meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (Geneva, 26–28 June 2023)) and numerous statements by the Special Rapporteur.¹ Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur has received 30 complaints to date. The complaints have concerned the alleged persecution, penalization and harassment of members of the public seeking to: gain access to environmental information; participate in environmental decision-making; and gain access to justice regarding a wide range of environmental matters, including mining, deforestation, dams, pollution, genetically modified organisms and climate change. The complaints related to a range of Aarhus Convention Parties with different legal frameworks, regarding private natural or legal persons, with documents available in different languages, addressing different forms of repression (verbal and physical threats and assaults, intimidating lawsuits, harassment, interference with professional life, criminalization, disproportionate criminal and civil sanctions). The Special Rapporteur submitted detailed legal submissions in relation to several international processes, including revision of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct,² a joint written submission from the secretariat of the Aarhus Convention and the Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in relation to the Request for an advisory opinion by the Republic of Chile and the Republic of Colombia regarding the Climate Emergency and Human Rights, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Recommendation on Countering Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation,³ the European Union Directive on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings (“Strategic lawsuits against public participation”)⁴ and the European Union Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence). He also prepared a detailed position paper entitled “State repression of environmental protest and civil disobedience: A major threat to human rights and democracy”⁵ and issued four statements regarding specific Parties, as well as several other statements on specific occasions (e.g., Vision for the mandate,⁶ statement at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 30 November–13 December 2023),⁷ seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). He has also issued a number of press releases regarding the above-mentioned work.

9. There is a critical need to continue addressing this issue effectively in order to respond to the increase in persecution and harassment of environmental defenders. The secretariat continued to play several roles in this area by organizing and substantively servicing meetings (e.g., sessions of the Working Group of the Parties and task forces, country visits); acting as a “help desk” to respond to numerous requests from countries and organizations regarding

¹ Available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/public-participation/press-releases-and-public-statements>.

² See www.oecd-ilibrary.org/finance-and-investment/oecd-guidelines-for-multinational-enterprises-on-responsible-business-conduct_81f92357-en.

³ See <https://rm.coe.int/msi-slp-revised-draft-recommendation-on-slapps/1680abaf88>.

⁴ See <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1069/oj>.

⁵ See https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/UNSR_EnvDefenders_Aarhus_Position_Paper_Civil_Disobedience_EN.pdf.

⁶ See https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Vision_for_mandate.pdf.

⁷ See https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/SR_EnvDefenders_Aarhus_Statement_COP28_02.12.2023.pdf.

human rights in the field of the environment and providing substantive input to documents and material. It should be noted that the secretariat is also required to carry out extensive background legal analysis, outreach and correspondence to support the work of the Special Rapporteur. This work area also requires close cooperation and liaison with relevant bodies and special procedures of the Human Rights Council, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, national and regional human rights institutions, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and human rights and environmental organizations, as appropriate.

VIII. Awareness-raising and promotion and IX. Promotion of the Almaty Guidelines and other interlinkages with relevant international bodies and processes

10. There is a real need to strengthen cooperation with other relevant organizations, multilateral environmental agreements and processes dealing with human rights and the environment and to devote more effort to promoting the Convention among non-United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) countries and in other international forums (e.g., international forums dealing with climate change, chemicals, biodiversity, minerals, sea/oceans or health and international financial institutions). There has been a substantial increase in demand from countries, multilateral environmental agreement secretariats and international organizations for advisory expert support from the secretariat on the above-mentioned issues. Usually, these requests are made on an urgent basis, for example, immediately before and often during the other multilateral environmental agreements' Meeting of the Parties sessions or Implementation/Compliance Committee meetings. Support by the secretariat is pursued through providing substantive inputs to numerous reviews and documents prepared under other forums, liaising with those forums, delivering presentations and training sessions at relevant meetings and acting as a "help desk" to respond to the many requests from countries and organizations. It should be noted that no funds were received in the current intersessional period for the staff foreseen in the work programme to support these activities. Due to lack of capacity, the secretariat turns down the vast majority of such requests. Only the most critical tasks are absorbed by the current staff as much as possible. The heavy workload and the continuous demand for the secretariat's input put staff under great strain and lead to serious frustration among the countries and organizations concerned.

11. Due to their nature (e.g., preparation of complex legal documents, provision of expert advisory support, liaising and coordinating) the above-mentioned assignments are particularly human resource intensive. Therefore, funds will be required to meet the demand for increased assistance to Parties, in particular to implement Meeting of the Parties decisions on compliance, support the work of the rapid response mechanism and provide legal support to the Compliance Committee; and to support work to strengthen synergies with other bodies and processes and for promotion of the Convention and its principles.

12. The above-mentioned work areas are closely linked to the implementation of a number of regional and global commitments made by Parties and other States Members of the United Nations. Notably, improved legislative frameworks and authorities' capacities to effectively provide access to information and to justice and ensure inclusive and meaningful public participation are critical for the success of such initiatives as, for example:

- (a) A new European Green Deal,⁸ which sets a path for a transition that is "green", just and socially fair;
- (b) Pledges made under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP;
- (c) A number of Human Rights Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 37/8 on human rights and the environment,⁹ 40/11 on recognizing the contribution of environmental human rights defenders to the enjoyment of human rights, environmental protection and sustainable development,¹⁰ 42/21 on protection of the rights of workers

⁸ See https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.

⁹ A/HRC/RES.37/8.

¹⁰ A/HRC/RES/40/11.

exposed to hazardous substances and wastes,¹¹ and processes such as universal periodic reviews¹² and special procedures¹³ with direct relevance to environmental matters;

(d) Pledges made under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to pursue mitigation and adaptation measures through participatory processes, including through implementation of article 6 of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and of the Paris Agreement;

(e) Open government and open data initiatives,¹⁴ which are key to furthering transparency and preventing corruption across different sectors;

(f) The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework¹⁵ and strategies and action plans aimed at protecting biodiversity requiring the full engagement of the population, in particular local communities;¹⁶

(g) The Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction;

(h) Commitments under the International Seabed Authority;

(i) The firm determination of States Members of the United Nations to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through participatory processes;

(j) The Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the right to a clean and safe environment.

13. The Convention is thus a powerful horizontal tool for furthering environmental democracy across different sectors and processes. Owing to its cross-cutting nature, the Convention plays an important role in the achievement of all of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), by empowering the public with the right to participate effectively in decision-making on a wide range of issues addressed by the Goals, such as: health protection (Goal 3); water and sanitation management (Goal 6); clean energy (Goal 7); green economy (Goals 8, 9 and 12); the reduction of inequalities (Goal 10); climate action (Goal 13); tourism (Goals 8, 12, 14 and 15); urban planning (Goals 11 and 13) and disaster risk reduction (Goals 9 and 11). References to the respective Goals have been added to the explanatory text contained in annex I.

Financial requirements

14. The proposed cost allocation for all work areas is the same as in the current work programme and reflects the above-mentioned explanations. The only additional increase is for staff to support the Compliance Committee (work area V.1); travel expenditures for the Special Rapporteur (work area V.2) and for the charges associated with office rent, information technology and administrative services provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva (work area XII). Baseline staff costs were also aligned with current United Nations rates.¹⁷

¹¹ A/HRC/RES/42/21.

¹² See www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/uprmain.aspx.

¹³ See www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx.

¹⁴ See <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/ict4d>; www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/; www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/open-government-data.htm; and <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/open-data>.

¹⁵ See www.cbd.int/gbf.

¹⁶ See www.cbd.int/nbsap/.

¹⁷ In addition, it should be noted that allocation of general temporary assistance funding for the rapid response mechanism on environmental defenders was adopted by the General Assembly for 2024 through resolution 78/253 on special subjects relating to the proposed programme budget for 2024 (sect. X, para. 3). This funding includes the following items (annual expenditures): P-3 Legal Affairs Officer; consultancy (\$15,000) and travel of staff (\$17,500). The above funding will be included in the annual United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) budget proposals to be submitted

15. In order to ensure sustainable allocation of funds for the implementation of the work programme, Parties may wish to explore different ways to provide the required funds. They could increase their regular contribution to the Convention. Alternatively, they could make additional multi-year earmarked contributions (minimum for two years, considering time required for staff recruitment), ideally for the period of the entire work programme. As activities would address human rights-related issues and will also target non-ECE countries (in particular in the Mediterranean region, Africa and Asia), funds might be allocated not only by ministries of the environment, but also by ministries/agencies responsible for foreign affairs and for development issues. Parties may also identify areas that are in line with their countries' priorities and make commitments (either individually or jointly) for those areas.

16. The costs are redistributed between "operational" and "other" costs by each work area (see annexes I and II). Operational costs, as opposed to other costs, are the minimum funds needed to ensure the effective implementation of mandated activities in the different work areas in a balanced way. The same approach was applied to the current work programmes of the Convention and of its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

to the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly for consideration each year. Please note that there is an ongoing liquidity crisis at the United Nations due to the lack of payment of regular contributions thereto by several Member States, which creates serious challenges for the use of United Nations regular budgetary resources. The liquidity crisis implied a freeze of recruitment on this post as well as consultancy- and travel-related expenditures. The secretariat is currently holding internal consultations regarding time frames related to receiving funds, establishing the above post and initiating a recruitment process. Considering the growing need in the work area on rapid response mechanism and the unstable situation with general temporary assistance funds, it is suggested that the current extrabudgetary post (P-3 Legal Affairs Officer) supporting the rapid response mechanism be maintained also in the work programme for 2026–2029. Also, Germany offered to support a Junior Professional Officer for two years, who is expected to join the secretariat as of end 2024/early 2025.

Annex I

Draft work programme for 2026–2029

<i>Work area</i>	<i>Objective and expected outcome</i>	<i>Lead country, body or organization</i>	<i>Method of work</i>	<i>Average annual subtotal (US dollars)^a</i>
Substantive issues				
I. Access to information, including electronic information tools	The work area will be implemented in accordance with decision VIII/... on promoting effective access to information (mainly supports SDGs 3, 11, 12 and 17 and SDG target 16.10)	Task Force on Access to Information Thematic session at meetings of the Working Group of the Parties Secretariat, enlisting technical support as necessary	Task Force meetings and workshops; survey(s); participation in other relevant regional initiatives, as appropriate, through development of sector-based partnership approaches; pilot projects and capacity-building activities at subregional and national levels, which are expected to be funded by partners Management of Aarhus Clearinghouse ^b and promotion through online social media; provision of advice to and coordination of national information nodes of Clearinghouse mechanism; information-sharing and promotion of electronic tools through maintaining online databases for jurisprudence, good practices and national implementation reports, and maintaining online case studies on: (a) electronic information tools; (b) public participation at national level; and (c) public participation in international forums	83 200 (6 500)
II. Public participation	The work area will be implemented in accordance with decision VIII/... on promoting effective public participation in decision-making	Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making	Task Force meetings; workshops; the use of the Aarhus Clearinghouse, its good practice database and collection of case studies to facilitate exchange of information on good practices; exploring synergies and possibilities for cooperation	86 200 (8 500)

<i>Work area</i>	<i>Objective and expected outcome</i>	<i>Lead country, body or organization</i>	<i>Method of work</i>	<i>Average annual subtotal (US dollars)^a</i>
	(mainly supports SDGs 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 and SDG target 16.7)	Thematic session at meetings of the Working Group of the Parties Secretariat, enlisting expert support as necessary	with relevant bodies under other multilateral environmental agreements and partner organizations Participation in other relevant regional initiatives as appropriate; pilot projects and capacity-building activities at subregional and national levels, which are expected to be funded by partners	
III. Access to justice	The work area will be implemented in accordance with decision VIII/... on promoting effective access to justice (mainly supports SDG target 16.3)	Task Force on Access to Justice Thematic session at meetings of the Working Group of the Parties Secretariat, enlisting expert support as necessary	Task Force meetings, if feasible back-to-back with other relevant events, to be organized in liaison with partner organizations active in access to justice, and through the development of sector-based partnership approaches, where appropriate Strengthen the network of judiciary, judicial training institutions and other review bodies in pan-European region and cooperation with other existing networks of judges and other legal professionals, and other international forums; use of Aarhus Clearinghouse, its jurisprudence and good practice databases to facilitate exchange of information on good practices; exchange information and support capacity-building Develop analytical and training materials Pilot projects and capacity-building activities at subregional and national levels, which are expected to be funded by partners	111 000 (10 500)

<i>Work area</i>	<i>Objective and expected outcome</i>	<i>Lead country, body or organization</i>	<i>Method of work</i>	<i>Average annual subtotal (US dollars)^a</i>
IV. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)	Support implementation of decision II/1 on GMOs (GMO amendment) and relevant provisions of the Convention in this area, as well as the application of the Guidelines on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice with Respect to Genetically Modified Organisms (MP.PP/2003/3), inter alia, by promoting exchange of information on common difficulties in and the main obstacles to the implementation, as well as good practices to address said difficulties and obstacles (mainly supports SDGs 15 and 16)	Secretariat, in close cooperation with other stakeholders Thematic session at meetings of the Working Group of the Parties	Workshop(s), round table(s); survey(s); advisory support to, and cooperation with, relevant bodies under Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity; advisory support to countries upon request; and use of Aarhus Clearinghouse and its good practice database to facilitate exchange of information on good practices	25 100 (2 000)
Procedures and mechanisms				
V. Compliance mechanism				922 400
V.1 Compliance Committee	Monitor and facilitate implementation of and compliance with Convention Increased support to individual Parties in following up on decisions on compliance (mainly supports SDG targets 16.6 and 16.10 and SDGs 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15)	Compliance Committee Secretariat	Compliance Committee to review submissions, referrals, requests and communications on cases of possible non-compliance, prepare findings and reports and undertake fact-finding missions Compliance Committee to explore possible synergies with other relevant forums Secretariat to assist Committee as required, including with legal support, publicize compliance mechanism and manage Committee's web page	

<i>Work area</i>	<i>Objective and expected outcome</i>	<i>Lead country, body or organization</i>	<i>Method of work</i>	<i>Average annual subtotal (US dollars)^a</i>
			Secretariat to prepare background material on relevant issues of systemic nature identified through work of Compliance Committee to support discussion at meetings of the task forces and respective thematic sessions of the Working Group of the Parties	
V.2 Rapid Response Mechanism - Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders	The work area will be implemented in accordance with decision VII/9 on a rapid response mechanism to deal with cases related to article 3 (8) (mainly supports SDG target 16.10)	Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders Secretariat	Special Rapporteur to examine, monitor, advise, undertake fact-finding missions and prepare decisions and reports on matters related to article 3 (8) Secretariat to assist Special Rapporteur as required, including with legal support, publicize mechanism and manage dedicated web page The use of Aarhus Clearinghouse library on the protection of environmental defenders. Preparation of training material for different target groups such as officials of public authorities, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, members of the judiciary, private security service providers and developers	
VI. Capacity-building	Capacity-building activities to assist countries in effective implementation of Convention; implementation of capacity-building measures at regional and subregional levels	Secretariat, in close cooperation with other relevant stakeholders	Capacity-building linked to work of Compliance Committee and Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders; inter-agency coordination meetings; maintaining Convention web pages with information on capacity-building activities; the use of the Aarhus Clearinghouse, its databases and other capacity-building	202 000 (17 000)

<i>Work area</i>	<i>Objective and expected outcome</i>	<i>Lead country, body or organization</i>	<i>Method of work</i>	<i>Average annual subtotal (US dollars)^a</i>
	Advisory support to Parties, in particular, with regard to implementation of obligations under article 3 (8) and decisions on compliance matters (All relevant SDGs, mainly SDG 16)	Secretariat, in close cooperation with Compliance Committee, Special Rapporteur and relevant stakeholders	material to facilitate exchange of information on good practices; training workshops and technical assistance, mostly separately funded under other substantive work areas; capacity-building activities at national and subregional levels, which are expected to be funded by partners Secretariat to assist Parties as required	
VII. Reporting mechanism	Production of national implementation reports and a synthesis report	Secretariat, enlisting expert and administrative support as necessary Compliance Committee	Preparation of the synthesis report and processing of national implementation reports Analysis of reports and preparation of a synthesis report Use of national implementation reports to identify relevant topics for the work of the task forces and other activities	7 500
Awareness-raising and promotion				
VIII. Awareness-raising and promotion of the Convention, including through: VIII.1. Communication Strategy VIII.2. Support to non-ECE States to accede to the Convention	The work will focus on: (a) Raising public awareness of Convention throughout ECE region and beyond; (b) Increasing number of Parties to Convention; (c) Supporting regional and global initiatives on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development Activities should be carried out in synergy with relevant activities of work programme of the Protocol on	Secretariat Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties Working Group of the Parties	Participation in key regional and international events and processes; use of bilateral, regional and international cooperation arrangements to raise interest in Convention, e.g., European Neighbourhood Policy; feed into international processes that closely relate to Convention, including special procedures under Human Rights Council (depending on mandate), United Nations Environment Programme, international financial institutions and other relevant international forums Expert assistance to regional and global initiatives on Principle 10 of the Rio	126 700 (34 500)

<i>Work area</i>	<i>Objective and expected outcome</i>	<i>Lead country, body or organization</i>	<i>Method of work</i>	<i>Average annual subtotal (US dollars)^a</i>
VIII.3. Support to regional and global initiatives on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration	Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers Work area VIII will be implemented in synergy with work area IX (mainly supports SDGs 4, 12, 16 and 17)		Declaration; support to relevant events organized by others; missions and assistance to countries organized at request of host Governments, with focus on States that have expressed formal interest in becoming Parties to Convention Implementation of Communication Strategy; Aarhus Clearinghouse and website management; preparation of leaflets, publications, news bulletins, articles and other information materials	
IX. Promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums, promotion of the Almaty Guidelines and other interlinkages with relevant international bodies and processes	The work area will be implemented in accordance with decision VIII/... on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums. (mainly supports SDG targets 16.7 and 17.14)	Secretariat, in close cooperation with other relevant stakeholders Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties Working Group of the Parties	Thematic sessions, as needed, at meetings of the Working Group of the Parties to oversee progress in promoting application of principles of Convention in international forums and to address challenges encountered in implementation of art. 3 (7) of Convention Surveys regarding experiences gained in implementation of art. 3 (7) and Almaty Guidelines; online networks; capacity-building and expert assistance to relevant international forums and to Parties upon request and use of Aarhus Clearinghouse, its good practice database and collection of case studies to facilitate exchange of information on good practices on establishing effective processes for public to participate in international forums; cooperation with Signatories and future Parties to Escazú Agreement, ^c as well as its secretariat and the engaged stakeholders; joint activities with other treaties and multilateral processes; concrete actions by	134 900 (3 000)

<i>Work area</i>	<i>Objective and expected outcome</i>	<i>Lead country, body or organization</i>	<i>Method of work</i>	<i>Average annual subtotal (US dollars)^a</i>
			Parties at national and international levels to promote principles of Convention in international forums and Almaty Guidelines	
Coordination, horizontal support and Meeting of the Parties				
X. Coordination and oversight of intersessional activities	Coordination and oversight of activities under Convention. Preparation of substantive documents for ninth session of Meeting of the Parties (e.g., drafting decisions, including future work programme, and reviewing implementation of current work programme and Strategic Plan)	Working Group of the Parties Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties	Working Group meetings, meetings of Bureau and consultations among Bureau members electronically	104 600
XI. Ninth ordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties	See art. 10 of Convention	Meeting of the Parties	Session of the Meeting of the Parties	15 000 ^d
XII. Horizontal support areas	Overall support that covers multiple substantive areas of work programme	Secretariat	Secretarial support, staff training, equipment	269 700
Total (including costs for all work areas and 13% programme support costs)				2 359 779 (92 660)

Abbreviations: DSA, daily subsistence allowance; ECE, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; GMO, genetically modified organism; SDG, Sustainable Development Goal.

^a Estimation of the cost includes operational and other costs as presented in annex II. Figures between brackets refer to “other costs”.

^b Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy, available at <https://aarhusclearinghouse.unece.org/>.

^c Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean.

^d Costs for travel and DSA for eligible participants are reported under work area X.

Annex II

Draft estimated costs of activities of the work areas listed in the work programme for 2026–2029

		<i>Average estimated costs in US dollars per year^a</i>									
		2026		2027		2028		2029		2026–2029 annual average	
<i>Work area</i>	<i>Cost description</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>
I.	Professional staff support, ^c one P–3 staff member at 30 per cent of FTE	57 300	—	57 300	—	57 300	—	57 300	—	57 300	—
Access to information ^b	Consultancy (e.g., maintenance of Aarhus Clearinghouse and Aarhus Good Practice database)	2 000	3 000	2 000	3 000	2 000	3 000	2 000	3 000	2 000	3 000
	Travel, DSA of eligible participants (2 meetings)	—	—	40 800	—	40 800	—	—	—	20 400	—
	Travel, DSA (staff missions) ^d	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500
	Subtotal	62 800	6 500	103 600	6 500	103 600	6 500	62 800	6 500	83 200	6 500
II.	Professional staff support, one P–3 staff member at 30 per cent of FTE	57 300	—	57 300	—	57 300	—	57 300	—	57 300	—
Public participation											

		<i>Average estimated costs in US dollars per year^a</i>									
		2026		2027		2028		2029		2026–2029 annual average	
<i>Work area</i>	<i>Cost description</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>
	Consultancy (e.g., preparation of required materials)	5 000	5 000	5 000	5 000	5 000	5 000	5 000	5 000	5 000	5 000
	Travel, DSA of eligible participants (2 meetings)	40 800	—	—	—	40 800	—	—	—	20 400	—
	Travel, DSA (staff missions)	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500
	Subtotal	106 600	8 500	65 800	8 500	106 600	8 500	65 800	8 500	86 200	8 500
III.	Professional staff support, one P–3 staff member at 35 per cent of FTE	66 900	—	66 900	—	66 900	—	66 900	—	66 900	—
Access to justice	Consultancy (e.g., preparation of required materials)	10 000	7 000	10 000	7 000	10 000	7 000	10 000	7 000	10 000	7 000
	Travel, DSA of eligible participants (3 meetings)	40 800	—	40 800	—	—	—	40 800	—	30 600	—
	Travel, DSA (staff missions)	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500	3 500
	Subtotal	121 200	10 500	121 200	10 500	80 400	10 500	121 200	10 500	111 000	10 500
IV.	Professional staff support, one P–3 staff member at 5 per cent of FTE	9 600	—	9 600	—	9 600	—	9 600	—	9 600	—
GMOs											

		Average estimated costs in US dollars per year ^a									
		2026		2027		2028		2029		2026–2029 annual average	
Work area	Cost description	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other
	Consultancy (e.g., preparation of required material)	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000	2 000
	Travel, DSA of eligible participants to event (e.g., workshop, round table)	—	—	40 000	—	—	—	—	—	10 000	—
	Travel, DSA (staff missions)	3 500	—	3 500	—	3 500	—	3 500	—	3 500	—
	Subtotal	15 100	2 000	55 100	2 000	15 100	2 000	15 100	2 000	25 100	2 000
V. Compliance mechanism	Professional staff support, one P–4 at 80 per cent of FTE, three P–3 staff members (one at 100 per cent, one at 70 per cent of FTE and one at 55 per cent of FTE) and one P–2 staff member at 50 per cent of FTE	687 300	—	687 300	—	687 300	—	687 300	—	687 300	—
	Consultancy (e.g., translation outside United Nations, preparation of required material)	30 000	—	30 000	—	30 000	—	30 000	—	30 000	—
	Travel, DSA of Compliance	91 800	—	91 800	—	91 800	—	91 800	—	91 800	—

		Average estimated costs in US dollars per year ^a									
		2026		2027		2028		2029		2026–2029 annual average	
Work area	Cost description	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other
	Committee members, other participants (4 Committee meetings per year)										
	Travel, DSA of Special Rapporteur	91 500	—	91 500	—	91 500	—	91 500	—	91 500	—
	Travel, DSA (staff missions) ^e	21 800	—	21 800	—	21 800	—	21 800	—	21 800	—
	Subtotal	922 400	—	922 400	—	922 400	—	922 400	—	922 400	—
VI.	Professional staff support, two P–3 staff members (one at 40 per cent of FTE, one at 20 per cent of FTE) and one P–2 staff member at 50 per cent of FTE	193 000	—	193 000	—	193 000	—	193 000	—	193 000	—
Capacity-	Consultancy (e.g., capacity-building activities, materials, studies)	3 000	5 000	3 000	5 000	3 000	5 000	3 000	5 000	3 000	5 000
building ^f	Travel, DSA of eligible experts (e.g., annual meeting of capacity-building partners, capacity-building activities)	3 000	3 800	3 000	3 800	3 000	3 800	3 000	3 800	3 000	3 800

		Average estimated costs in US dollars per year ^a									
		2026		2027		2028		2029		2026—2029 annual average	
Work area	Cost description	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other
	Travel, DSA (staff missions)	3 000	8 200	3 000	8 200	3 000	8 200	3 000	8 200	3 000	8 200
	Subtotal	202 000	17 000	202 000	17 000	202 000	17 000	202 000	17 000	202 000	17 000
VII. Reporting mechanism	Consultancy (processing of national implementation reports, preparation of synthesis report, translation)	—	—	—	—	10 000	—	20 000	—	7 500	—
	Subtotal	—	—	—	—	10 000	—	20 000	—	7 500	—
VIII. Awareness- raising and promotion of the Convention ^g	Professional staff support, one P-4 staff member at 5 per cent of FTE and one P-3 staff member at 50 per cent of FTE	106 700	—	106 700	—	106 700	—	106 700	—	106 700	—
	Consultancy (e.g., publications, promotion materials)	5 000	9 000	5 000	9 000	5 000	9 000	5 000	9 000	5 000	9 000
	Travel, DSA for participation in events and country missions to promote Convention and its principles; support to non-ECE States to accede to Convention; support	5 000	18 000	5 000	18 000	5 000	18 000	5 000	18 000	5 000	18 000

		<i>Average estimated costs in US dollars per year^a</i>									
		2026		2027		2028		2029		2026–2029 annual average	
<i>Work area</i>	<i>Cost description</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Other</i>
	to regional and global initiatives on Principle 10 of Rio Declaration on Environment and Development										
	Travel, DSA (staff missions), participation at relevant events where no other funding is available	10 000	7 500	10 000	7 500	10 000	7 500	10 000	7 500	10 000	7 500
	Subtotal	126 700	34 500	126 700	34 500	126 700	34 500	126 700	34 500	126 700	34 500
IX.	Professional staff support, one P–4 staff member at 10 per cent of FTE and one P–3 staff member at 50 per cent of FTE	117 900	—	117 900	—	117 900	—	117 900	—	117 900	—
Promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums, promotion of the Almaty Guidelines and other interlinkages with relevant international bodies and processes	Consultancy (expert studies)	2 000	3 000	2 000	3 000	2 000	3 000	2 000	3 000	2 000	3 000
	Travel, DSA (expert missions)	5 000	—	5 000	—	5 000	—	5 000	—	5 000	—
	Travel, DSA (staff missions)	10 000	—	10 000	—	10 000	—	10 000	—	10 000	—
	Subtotal	134 900	3 000	134 900	3 000	134 900	3 000	134 900	3 000	134 900	3 000

		Average estimated costs in US dollars per year ^a									
		2026		2027		2028		2029		2026–2029 annual average	
Work area	Cost description	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other	Operational	Other
	staff member at 70 per cent of FTE										
	Technical and other operational support costs ¹ (including rent for office space, UNOG charges for HR- and IT-related services, stationary, external printing, financial administration, hospitality, hybrid meetings with remote interpretation)	163 500	—	163 500	—	163 500	—	163 500	—	163 500	—
	Training of staff ^m (training activities to enhance staff skills)	4 000	—	4 000	—	4 000	—	4 000	—	4 000	—
	Subtotal	269 700	—	269 700	—	269 700	—	269 700	—	269 700	—
	Total	2 052 400	82 000	2 092 400	82 000	2 062 400	82 200	2 146 000	82 000	2 088 300	82 000
	Programme support costs (13%)	266 812	10 660	272 012	10 660	268 112	10 660	278 980	10 660	271 479	10 660
	Grand total	2 319 212	92 660	2 364 412	92 660	2 330 512	92 660	2 424 980	92 660	2 359 779	92 660

Abbreviations: ECE, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; DSA, daily subsistence allowance; FTE, full-time equivalent; GMO, genetically modified organism; HR, human resources; IT, information technology; UNOG, United Nations Office at Geneva.

^a The estimated costs shown here are limited to those intended to be covered by voluntary contributions made under the Convention's scheme of financial arrangements, either through its trust fund or in kind. They do not include costs that are expected to be covered by the United Nations regular budget or other sources. Figures are rounded up. They may change in accordance with the United Nations administrative regulations. Expenditures related to national reporting and preparations for and servicing of the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties are forecasted for 2029 only.

^b Meetings of the Task Forces on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice will provide a forum to discuss key outcomes of the activities and identify good practices and challenges in implementation. Experts involved in the work of the Task Forces will be invited to provide substantive support to the activities through commenting on documents and participating in training sessions, workshops, pilot projects, as relevant.

^c Professional staff costs for all areas of the work programme are estimated by multiplying expected staff time in each activity area by the projected annual salary costs of staff hired at the level indicated. Staff costs are considered to be operational as they are essential for ensuring effective and balanced implementation of all work areas. In addition, the necessary funds for staff contracts must be secured at least one year in advance.

^d Operational costs for staff missions for all areas of the work programme refer to the cost of travel for secretariat staff members to service or participate in meetings, workshops or other events related to this work area that are not held in Geneva.

^e The secretariat may be required to conduct official missions in relation to the work of the compliance mechanism. Such costs are therefore considered to be operational.

^f This work encompasses activities that build capacity in areas that relate to the Convention as a whole, as well as capacity-building linked to the work of the Compliance Committee and the Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders. Capacity-building activities relating to other work areas under the Convention (e.g., access to information, public participation in decision-making, access to justice) are covered under those activity areas. In order to increase the effectiveness of capacity-building and synergies, the secretariat carries out such activities in collaboration with all key capacity-building actors in the region. Furthermore, the secretariat services a regionwide capacity-building coordination mechanism aimed at ensuring that the projects implemented by partner organizations match the requirements of decisions by the Meeting of the Parties. Most travel and consultancy costs are normally covered by other sources: either by partner organizations or specific donor contributions. These synergies also lead to a considerable reduction of the financial burden, as Parties to the Convention are required to contribute a small amount in relation to the final impact of activities.

^g Awareness-raising includes promotional work in the region and beyond. Such work serves as the Parties' "ambassador". The secretariat, representatives of bodies of the Convention and Aarhus experts are regularly invited to international meetings and processes across the world to share their experiences and expertise. Where possible, promotion of the Convention is carried out through the use of electronic tools. The secretariat is making every possible effort to ensure that these activities have the minimum financial implications possible.

^h Including provision of general legal advice and general tasks.

ⁱ This staff member is required in order to provide the necessary support to preparations for the sessions of the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and to the Protocol, in particular, the joint High-level Segment, communication activities and participation process. The staff costs would be split between the Convention and its Protocol (50 per cent for the Aarhus Convention and 50 per cent for the Protocol).

^j Costs for travel and DSA for eligible participants are reported under work area X.

^k This staff member is required in order to provide the necessary administrative support to activities under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol, including administrative arrangements for the meetings of the governing and subsidiary bodies of the two treaties. The staff costs would be split between the Convention and its Protocol (70 per cent for the Aarhus Convention and 30 per cent for the Protocol).

^l Technical equipment and other operational support costs (including, office rent, HR- and IT-related services, financial administration) were normally provided by the United Nations regular budget funds also to extrabudgetary staff. However, this practice has been discontinued. Since 2020, the secretariat has been requested to gradually cover operational costs and administrative charges of UNOG and these are thus included in the operational costs of the work programme. These expenditures have been increasing substantially over the last three years.

^m All United Nations staff members are expected to develop their skills and attend training. Continuous training and development of new skills is essential in order for the staff to maintain a high level of professionalism and to adapt to new competency requirements. As a result, training of staff is considered to be operational costs.

Annex III

Example of the possible distribution of different meetings under the Convention for the period 2026–2029 (the same as in the current work programme 2022–2025)

Type of meeting	2026	2027	2028	2029
Task Force on Access to Information (AI)	—	x	x	—
Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making (PP)	x	—	x	—
Task Force on Access to Justice (AJ)	x	x	—	x
GMO Round Table (GMO)	—	x	—	—
Thematic sessions at Working Group of the Parties meetings	AI	PP	AJ	GMO
Meeting of the Parties	—	—	—	x

Note: The substantive preparation of the thematic sessions of the Working Group of the Parties is based on the outcomes of the work of a specific task force and other activities in the relevant work areas.