

**Statement by Ms. Iordanca-Rodica Iordanov**  
**Chair of the Task Force on Access to Information**  
**Aarhus Convention Working Group of the Parties**

**Twenty-eighth meeting**  
Geneva, 2–4 July 2024

**Wednesday, 2 July, 4— 4.45 p.m.**

(see the [Chair's Note](#) )

Good afternoon, distinguished Colleagues!

I am pleased to introduce my Note. I will focus on (i) the outcomes of the work undertaken by the Task Force on Access to Information up to date; (ii) preparations for the ninth meeting of the Task Force; and (iii) possible directions of the future work in this area.

**On the first item**, the work of the Task Force in the current intersessional period focused on the areas identified in decision VII/1 of the Meeting of the Parties on promoting effective access to information and was built on the outcomes of the respective thematic session of the Working Group of the Parties at its twenty-sixth meeting in June 2022.

At the eighth meeting in October last year, the Task Force continued promoting the exchange of information, case studies and good practices focusing on access to environment-related product information and active dissemination of environmental information.

The meeting featured an international workshop entitled “Advancing public access to environment-related product information: Challenges and opportunities”, which was organized in cooperation with UN/CEFACT, UNEP, the One Planet Network and EEA.

The workshop considered 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.

The workshop helped to identify several legislative and practical measures required in this area, such as continuing awareness-raising and education, establishing digital product passports and other digital tools, adjusting nationwide digital environmental information systems, promoting eco-labelling, eco-audit and green public procurement schemes, introducing legal requirements for green claims, strengthening legal sanctions, investigating unfair competition, promoting collective redress and adopting other measures against greenwashing.

Furthermore, the Task Force discussed: (a) the scope of environmental information; (b) access to information on emissions into the environment; and (c) the provision of information to public authorities by third parties, both routinely and in case of an imminent threat to human health or the environment.

In the ensuing discussion, the Task Force identified:

- (a) an increased demand for environmental information in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity protection, disaster risk reduction and energy-related matters;
- (b) measures needed to improve timely access to environmental information in the context of decision-making procedures and to establish effective review mechanisms when access to information is denied;
- (c) the need to further strengthen public access to environmental information regarding radioactive substances, biocides, lead, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and other chemicals of emerging concern, and carbon and ammonia emissions;
- (d) the need to guarantee the availability of environmental information in child-friendly formats, including call for Parties to develop a child-friendly version of the Convention.

The Task Force also called for: (a) the establishment of clear legal obligations for third parties, including foreign investors, to provide environmental information to public authorities; and (b) the promotion of effective enforcement mechanisms, sanctions and incentives to encourage provision of information to public authorities and the public about environmental impacts of third parties' activities and products throughout their life cycles.

Moving to **the second item, the preparations for the next meeting of the Task Force in November** this year has already started. The meeting will focus on two main issues (a) active dissemination of environmental information using new and emerging digital technologies by public authorities and by the public; and (b) follow up on **access to environment-related product information**. Building on our previous work, the Task Force will also take stock of recent developments regarding (a) the transparency of public authorities on environmental matters and the application of restrictions on access to information; and (b) the protection of whistle-blowers and other persons exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of the Aarhus Convention.

**On the third item**, in the light of the above mentioned outcomes, I suggest that the Task Force will continue to provide a multi-stakeholder platform for sharing experiences, challenges and good practices and identifying priority measures to support countries' efforts in promoting active dissemination of reliable environmental information, supporting digital inclusion, modernizing environmental information systems and promoting transparency of public authorities and businesses in environmental matters. In the time of multifaceted planetary crisis, these measures remained crucial to ensure evidence-based decision-making and policy development, support measuring and reporting of progress achieved; identify emerging environmental risks and vulnerabilities; support a multi-hazard early warning system; and promote environmental awareness among the public and other stakeholders.

The substantive issues for the next intersessional period could include:

(a) Active dissemination of environmental information with focus on:

- Implementation of the updated Recommendations on electronic information tools. The discussion under this topic can address the data quality, reliability and interoperability of different information systems, the ethical use of big data, artificial intelligence, remote sensing, digital twins, augmented reality and other new and emerging digital technologies as well as cybersecurity;
- Use of modern technologies by the public, including citizen science and crowdsourcing of environmental information;
- Provision of information on the performance of public functions or the provision of public services relating to the environment (e.g., in the context of environmental monitoring, reporting, compliance and enforcement);
- Collection of information by public authorities, both routinely and in case of an imminent threat to human health and the environment (*to be continued in a wider context of article 5(1)*).

(b) Public access to environmental information with focus on:

- Access to information by groups in vulnerable situations, including children, youth, persons with disabilities and migrants;
- Access to information upon request;
- The transparency of public authorities on environmental matters and the application of restrictions on access to environmental information in accordance with the Convention, including during the armed conflicts;
- Access to environment-related product information, including measures against greenwashing;
- Access to information related to the quality of the environment and emissions into the environment, climate, biodiversity, hazardous substances and wastes.

It would be also important to continue developing and updating national nodes for the Aarhus Clearinghouse and updating the collection of case studies on electronic information tools so we can accelerate knowledge sharing and scale up capacity-building in the Convention's implementation.

Finally, I would like to express my deep appreciation to all experts from Parties, partner organizations and stakeholders that support the work of the Task Force throughout these years in improving our knowledge and actions. I look forward to meeting you again at the Task Force meeting in November this year.

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