

**Involving the public in international forums dealing
with matters relating to the environment**

A meeting of representatives of international forums

Wednesday and Thursday, 20-21 June 2007, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Provisional annotated agenda

**Chair: Hanne Inger Bjurstrøm
Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention**

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

- 10:00-10:15 Welcome by the Chair.
- 10:15-11:15 Opening session on different conceptual approaches to what “involving the public in international forums” means and the challenges therein.
- 11:15-11:30 *Coffee break*
- 11:30-11:50 Overview of the consultation process on the Almaty Guidelines and the issues they address.
- 11:50-13:00 Discussions on the state of the art in involving the public in international forums.
- 13:00-15:00 *Lunch*
- 15:00-16:00 Exchange on good practice on overcoming challenges to involving the public in international forums, part I.
- 16:00-18:00 Discussion in smaller groups on issues identified in the written consultation process, with a particular focus on overcoming challenges, part I.

Thursday, 21 June 2007

- 09:00-10:00 Exchange on good practice on overcoming challenges to involving the public in international forums, part II.
- 10:00-12:30 Discussion in smaller groups on issues identified in the written consultation process, with a particular focus on overcoming challenges, part II.
- 12:30-14:30 *Lunch*
- 14:30-16:00 Reports to the plenary by the moderators of the discussion groups followed by a plenary discussion drawing together points of consensus, good practices, challenges, recommendations and innovations.
- 16:00-16:20 *Coffee break*
- 16:20-17:15 Panel discussion on where to from here and how to get there.
- 17:15-17:30 Closing session, including Chair’s summary.

ANNOTATED TIMETABLE:

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

10:00-10.15

Welcome by the Chair

Introductory remarks by Kaj Bärlund, Director, Division of Environment, Housing and Land Management, UNECE

10:15-11:15

Opening session

Different conceptual approaches to what “involving the public in international forums” means and the challenges of the same

Speakers:

1. Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General and CEO of Civicus World Alliance for Citizen Participation, former member of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (*to be confirmed*)
2. Tony Hill, Coordinator, United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service
3. Soledad Blanco, Director of International Affairs, Directorate General Environment, European Commission (*to be confirmed*)
4. Gordon Shepherd, International Policy Director, World Wildlife Fund

11:15-11:30

Coffee break

11:30-11:50

Overview of consultation process on the Almaty Guidelines and the issues they address

Presentation and discussion of results of consultation process to date

Speakers:

Professor Laurent Mermet (France)

Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums

Fiona Marshall

Consultant to the Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums

Background document:

Synthesis of responses received from international forums to the written questionnaire in the consultation process on the Almaty Guidelines

11:50-12:05

Report on the state of the art on involving the public in international forums

Presentation of report commissioned by France on the state of the art on issues raised by public participation in international forums

Speakers:

Professor Michel Prieur, Professor of International Environmental Law, University of Limoges

Armelle Guignier, University of Limoges

Background document:

Synthesis of report commissioned by France on the state of the art on issues raised by public participation in international forums

12:05-13:00

Discussion in plenary

Invitation for reactions to the presentations by keynote speakers, the outcomes of the consultation process to date and the findings of the report on the state of the art

13:00-15:00

Lunch break

15:00-16:00

Exchanges on good practice (part I):

Sharing lessons learnt by an MEA in overcoming challenges for the effective dissemination of information to the wider public

Representative of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (*to be confirmed*)

A business perspective on participation in international forums

Representative of the Commission on Energy and Environment, International Chamber of Commerce (*to be confirmed*)

Sharing lessons learnt by an MEA in identifying and contacting stakeholders

Representative of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification *(to be confirmed)*

Who are the public? A civil society perspective

Felix Dodds, Executive Director, Stakeholder Forum

Involving the public in the implementation of internationally funded projects

Charles di Leva, Chief Counsel, LEGEN, World Bank *(to be confirmed)*

16:00-18:00

Discussion groups (part I)

Discussion in smaller groups on issues identified in the written consultation process, with a particular focus on overcoming challenges. (Please see annex for the lists of questions to be discussed in each track).

(Coffee break to be taken during session)

**Track A:
Providing and disseminating information**

Speakers:
Representative of the International Whaling Commission *(to be confirmed)*

Olga Speranskaya,
International POPs
Elimination Network

*Moderator:
Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (to be confirmed)*

**Track B:
Involving the public in international forums:
Identifying, contacting stakeholders**

Speakers:
Federica Pietracci, Major Groups Programme Coordinator, United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

Representative of the United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan

*Moderator:
Magdolna Tothne Nagy, Head of Public Participation Programme, Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe*

**Track C:
Public participation in internationally funded projects**

Speakers:
Elizabeth Smith, Senior Environmental Advisor, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Petr Hlobil, Campaigns Coordinator, CEE Bankwatch

*Moderator:
Dr. Maartje van Putten, Vice Chair, European Centre for Development Policy Management, former member of the World Bank Inspection Panel, former Member of European Parliament*

Thursday, 21 June 2007

9:00-10:00

Exchanges on good practice (Part II)

Overcoming challenges to involving the public in international forums: a regional perspective

Representative of the Sustainable Development Division,
Organization of American States (*to be confirmed*)

Effective modalities for public participation: a civil society perspective

John Hontelez, Secretary-General, European Environmental
Bureau

Involving the public in promoting compliance

Veit Koester, Chair, Aarhus Convention Compliance
Committee, Chair, Compliance Committee of the Cartagena
Protocol on Biosafety

Building the capacity of the public to participate in international forum

Achim Halpaap, Principal Programme Coordinator, Chemicals,
Waste Management and Environmental Governance, United
Nations Institute for Training and Research

10:00-12:30

Discussion groups (Part II)

Discussion in smaller groups on issues identified in the written
consultation process, with a particular focus on overcoming
challenges. (Please see annex for the lists of questions to be
discussed in each track)

(Coffee break to be taken during session)

**Track B:
Involving the public in
international forums:
Modalities of participation**

Speakers:
Representative of the
World Trade
Organization's Committee
on Trade and Environment
(*to be confirmed*)

**Track C:
Public participation in
promoting
implementation and
compliance**

Speakers:
Stephan Michel,
Chair, Implementation
Committee, Convention on
Long-range Transboundary
Air Pollution

**Track D:
Capacity building,
resources and
infrastructure**

Speakers:
Dr. Yusup Khaidarovich
Rysbekov, Assistant
Director, Scientific
Information Center -
Interstate Coordination
Water Commission of

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| Dr. Minu Hemmati, author of “Multi-Stakeholder Processes for Governance and Sustainability - Beyond Deadlock and Conflict” | Donata Rugarabamu, Senior Legal Officer, Basel Convention | Central Asia Representative of the Caribbean Environment Programme |
| <i>Moderator: Professor Marc Pallemmaerts, former Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention</i> | <i>Moderator: Professor Attila Tanzi, Chair of the Legal Board of the Water Convention, former Chair of the Aarhus Convention’s Expert Group on Public Participation in International Forums</i> | <i>Moderator: Zaal Lomtadze, Chair of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy, Deputy Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources Protection, Georgia</i> |

12:30-14:30

Lunch break

14:30-16:00

Reporting from the discussion groups to the plenary and conclusions

Reports to the plenary by the moderators of the four discussion group tracks followed by discussion of how to best promote the effective involvement of the public in international forums, drawing together:

- Points of consensus
- Good practices
- Challenges
- Recommendations for implementation of specific provisions of the Almaty Guidelines
- Innovations that should be made, whether or not in the Guidelines

16:00-16:20

Coffee break

16:20-17:15

Panel discussion

Panel discussion on:

- Where do we go from here?
 - How do we get there?
1. Janos Pasztor, Director, United Nations Environment Programme Environment Management Group (*to be confirmed*)
 2. Richard Bissell, member of Asian Development Bank Compliance Review Panel, former Chair of the World Bank Inspection Panel

3. Norine Kennedy, Vice President, Environmental Affairs, United States Council for International Business (*to be confirmed*)
4. Jacob Werksman, Program Director, Institutions and Governance, World Resources Institute, Secretariat of Partnership for Principle 10

17:15-17:30

Closing session, including Chair's summary

Discussion group tracks

Track A:

Providing and disseminating information on the environment

- What are some good practices and challenges with dealing with information requests?
- What are some good practices and challenges with respect to passive transparency, including open/closed meetings?
- What are some good practices and challenges with respect to the proactive dissemination of environmental information?
- How to conquer the digital divide, particularly for developing countries and countries in transition?
- How to overcome language barriers as obstacles to access to information and public participation in decision-making?
- When should information be kept confidential? When does the issue of legal ownership of information arise?
- What characteristics might determine whether an international forum should have greater or less access to information?
- Should access to information be promoted through formal rules and procedures or informal practices or either or both?

Track B

Identifying, contacting and involving stakeholders

- Who should participate? What makes the participation of various representatives of the public in an international forum legitimate?
- What is the usefulness or legitimacy of targeting a particular group of the public, such as the “affected public” etc?
- What are some good practices and challenges for getting the public interested and engaged, in the context of low civil society interest?
- How can international forums promote effective public participation if there is limited or non-existent civil society at the national level?
- How can the media be used?
- How to promote the effective involvement of the affected public and/or special interest groups?

- How to promote effective participation in the context of high civil society interest, while maintaining an effective process?
- How to promote effective participation in the context of low civil society interest?
- How to balance divergent interests, including public interest vs. private sector interests; environmental, social, economic interests; and local vs. national/regional/global interests?
- How to deal with the possibility of disruptive civil society involvement?
- How may the public participate in decision-making? Should the public ever have voting rights?
- What characteristics might determine whether an international forum should have greater or less public participation in decision-making?
- Should public participation be promoted through formal rules and procedures or informal practices or either or both?
- Does accreditation help or hinder?

Track C

Public participation in projects and in promoting implementation

- How can the principles of:
 - i. access to environmental information;
 - ii. public participation in decision-making; and
 - iii. access to justice in environmental mattersbe incorporated into the projects and policies of international forums that develop and implement projects?
- How can the public be effectively involved in promoting compliance?
- What are the benefits and risks of:
 - i. The public being able to trigger a compliance review procedure?
 - ii. The public being present as observers during sessions of the compliance review body?
 - iii. The public being able to nominate members of the compliance review body?
- How can the public be effectively involved in improving national reporting?

**Track D:
Capacity-building, resources and infrastructure**

- How to provide effective access to information in the face of scarce financial, physical and human resources?
- How can international forums promote the development at the national level of the legislative, administrative and scientific infrastructure necessary to ensure access to information at the international level?
- What are some good practices for effective and resource-efficient capacity building to promote effective public participation?
- Should international forums or NGOs or both be responsible for capacity building for the public? If both, through what kind of partnerships?
- How can international forums promote the development at the national level of the legislative, administrative and scientific infrastructure necessary to ensure public participation at the international level?
- How to provide effective public participation in the face of scarce financial, physical and human resources?