

**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**

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

**Professor Marc Pallemarts  
Former Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus  
Convention**

**Wednesday, 20 June 2007**

- 10:00-10:15 Welcome by the Chair, Hanne Inger Bjurstrøm, with introductory remarks by Kaj Bärlund, Director, UNECE/EHLM.
- 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*
- 16:20-17:10 Panel discussion on where to from here and how to get there.
- 17:10-17:30 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. Representative of the United Nations Environment Programme (*to be confirmed*)
2. Dr. Minu Hemmati, author of “Multi-Stakeholder Processes for Governance and Sustainability - Beyond Deadlock and Conflict”
3. 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 involving the public in its processes**

Gerardo Gunera-Lazzaroni, Legal officer, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

**A business perspective on participation in international forums**

Jacqueline Coté, Advocacy Officer, World Business Council for Sustainable Development (*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

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:

Stephen Nash, Chief,  
Capacity Building Unit,  
Convention on  
International Trade in  
Endangered Species of  
Wild Fauna and Flora

Olga Speranskaya,  
International POPs  
Elimination Network

*Moderator:*

*David Swalley, Economic  
and Environmental Affairs  
Officer, Organization for  
Security and Cooperation  
in Europe*

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

Speakers:

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

Luisa Colasimone,  
Information Officer,  
United Nations  
Environment Programme  
Mediterranean Action Plan

*Moderator:*

*Professor Eric  
Dannenmaier, Director,  
Tulane Institute for  
Environmental Law and  
Policy, Tulane University  
Law School*

**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, incoming  
member of the  
Independent Review  
Mechanism of the  
African Development  
Bank, former member of  
the World Bank  
Inspection Panel*

**Thursday, 21 June 2007**

9:00-10:00

**Exchanges on good practice (Part II)**

**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:  
María Pérez-Esteve,  
Counsellor, External  
Relations Division, World  
Trade Organization

Jan-Gustav Strandenaes,  
Senior Policy Advisor,  
Northern Alliance for  
Sustainability

*Moderator:*  
*Magdolna Tothne Nagy,*  
*Head of Public*  
*Participation Programme,*

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

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

Donata Rugarabamu,  
Senior Legal Officer, Basel  
Convention

*Moderator:*  
*Professor Attila Tanzi,*  
*Chair of the Legal Board*

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

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

Christopher Corbin,  
Caribbean Environment  
Programme

*Moderator:*  
*Zaal Lomtadze, Chair of*

*Regional Environmental  
Center for Central and  
Eastern Europe*

*of the Water Convention,  
former Chair of the Aarhus  
Convention's Expert  
Group on Public  
Participation in  
International Forums*

*the UNECE Committee on  
Environmental Policy,  
Deputy Minister of the  
Environment and Natural  
Resources Protection,  
Georgia*

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**

16:20-17:10

**Panel discussion**

Panel discussion on:

- Where do we go from here?
  - How do we get there?
1. Richard Bissell, member of Asian Development Bank Compliance Review Panel, former Chair of the World Bank Inspection Panel
  2. Representative of the United Nations Environment Programme (*to be confirmed*)
  3. Jacob Werksman, Program Director, Institutions and Governance, World Resources Institute, Secretariat of Partnership for Principle 10

17:10-17:30

**Chairs' closing session**

1. Closing comments by Professor Laurent Mermet, Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in International Forums
2. Presentation of the Chairs' summary regarding outcomes of the workshop by Professor Marc Pallemmaerts

## Discussion group tracks

### **Track A:**

#### **Providing and disseminating information on the environment**

- What are some good practices/possible innovations and challenges with dealing with information requests?
- What are some good practices/possible innovations and challenges with respect to passive transparency, including open/closed meetings?
- What are some good practices/possible innovations 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/possible innovations 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 and compliance**

- 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 to provide effective public participation in the face of scarce financial, physical and human resources?
- What are some good practices/possible innovations 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 access to information at the international level?
- 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?