

Aarhus Convention: Recent and forthcoming developments

Maryna Yanush

UNECE Aarhus Convention Secretariat

Vienna

4 July 2013





Focus



- Roles of Parties and Aarhus Centres
- Roadmap to advance implementation
- Framework to address substantive issues
- General and specific tools
- Format of cooperation
- 2-way communication
- Issues of primary focus





Convention and its Protocol : Roles in implementation and compliance



- Parties
 - ✓ **Key responsibilities**
- Aarhus Centres
 - ✓ **Supporting responsibilities**
 - Act as informational multipliers
 - Promote and, as appropriate, directly contribute to the implementation
 - Assist in facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues to address the identified priorities and challenges





Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)





Road to MoP-5 and MoPP-2: international level



- Strategic Plan 2009-2014
 - ✓ Objectives: facilitating full implementation, expansion and development
 - ✓ New plan for 2015-2020 is being developed with indicators of progress and targets
- Work Programme 2012-2014
 - ✓ Main priority: compliance and implementation, including capacity-building
 - ✓ Particular priorities: access to justice, public participation, access to information
 - ✓ New programme for 2015-2017 is being developed
- Issues identified in the reports on the meetings of the Convention bodies and on the regional/subregional workshops





Road to MoP-5 and MoPP-2: National level



- National Action Plans
 - ✓ Need to be adjusted after MoP-5 and MoPP-2
 - ✓ Include issues related to public participation in international forums
- National Implementation Reports
 - ✓ Art. 10 of the Convention, decisions I/8 and IV/4 (new – GMOs, PPIF and compliance issues)
 - ✓ Multi-stakeholder participation
 - ✓ Reporting on practical implementation and challenges
 - ✓ Prepared by 1 December 2013
 - ✓ Online national reporting database
- Issues identified through review of compliance





General tools



- [Aarhus Convention Implementation Guide](#)
 - ✓ **Second edition released in 2013**
- [Simplified Guide “Your right to a healthy environment”](#)
 - ✓ **Currently under revision**
- [Website of the Convention](#)
 - ✓ **RSS feeds available for meetings and publications**
 - ✓ **Section with important deadlines**
- [Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy](#)
 - ✓ **RSS feeds available for news and resources**
 - ✓ [Quick Guidance](#)
 - ✓ **Contributors access granted by the secretariat**
 - ✓ **Upcoming upgrade**
- [Findings and recommendations of the Compliance Committee](#) with regard to individual Parties
- Aarhus Centres Guidelines 2009 (OSCE publication)



Access to Information

Focus area

- Raise awareness among the public about their rights
- Facilitate the dissemination of the priority types of information identified in Decision II/3
- Improve access to environment-related health information
- Promote the accessibility of information held by the private sector and by other bodies than environmental authorities

Framework

- [Task Force on Access to Information](#)
(2nd meeting – Geneva, 16-17 December 2013)

Specific tools

- [Recommendations on the more effective use of EIT](#)
(Decision II/3)
- Questionnaire on their implementation (to be disseminated)
- [Draft Guidance for National Nodes for Clearinghouse mechanism](#)





Public Participation in Decision-making

Focus area

- Capacity-building (training) activities to ensure effective public participation in decision-making with regard to:
 - Projects
 - Plans , programmes and strategies
 - Draft legislation, regulations and other generally applicable legally binding normative instruments
- Assist public authorities in carrying out public participation procedures under the Convention
 - disseminate notice of the public participation procedure
 - organize public hearings

Framework

- [Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making](#)

Specific tools

- [The Aarhus Convention's draft Recommendations on Public Participation](#) in Decision-making in Environmental Matters (
- [Case studies](#) (request for submission)





Public Participation in decision-making on GMOs

Focus area

- Raise awareness among the public about their rights under the Convention to participate in GMO decision-making
- Provide capacity-building/training to government officials about how to ensure effective public participation in this area
- Assist in preparing required documents for ratification of the GMO amendment

Framework

- [Working Group of the Parties](#)
- [Round table on GMOs under the Aarhus Convention](#) (Geneva, 16-17 October 2013)

Specific tools

- [Lucca Guidelines](#) on access to information, public participation and access to justice with respect to genetically modified organisms
- [GMO amendment to the Convention](#)



Access to Justice

Focus area

- Promote a multi-stakeholder dialogue at the national level
- Engage bar associations, public interest lawyers, law schools and judicial training institutions in capacity-building activities
- Substantive focus: standing, remedies and costs

Framework

- [Task Force on Access to Justice](#)
(7th meeting – Geneva, 3-4 March 2014)

Specific tools

- [Analytical studies](#)
- [Database of case law related to the Convention](#)





Public Participation in international forums

Focus area

- Assist the Government to more effectively promote the public's input to the Government's position to international forums
- Assist in developing the national action plan on PPIF
- Monitor review of policies and strategies by international financial institutions

Framework

- [Working Group of the Parties](#) (15th and 16th meeting)

Specific tools

- [Almaty Guidelines](#) promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums
- [List of international forums](#) (in Eng, Fre and Rus)
- [Compendium of the case studies](#) (in Eng)
- [Draft checklist of measures](#) to be borne in mind when developing national action plans on PPIF (in Eng)
- [3-minute survey](#) (in Eng)





Compliance with the Convention

Focus area

- Raise awareness and capacity among respective public authorities with respect to Committee's findings and recommendations
- Translate findings of the Compliance Committee into the national language and post on the websites
- Assist in implementing related decisions, as appropriate

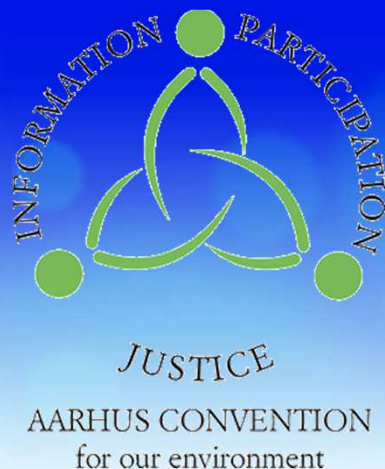
Framework

- [Meeting of the Parties \(MoP\)](#)
- [Compliance Committee](#)

Specific tools

- [MoP decisions on non-compliance](#)
- [Compliance Committee Findings and Recommendations](#)
- [Case law of the Compliance Committee](#) (publication of the European ECO Forum)
- [Guidance document](#) on the Aarhus Convention Compliance Mechanism





Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs)





Road to MoP5 and MoPP-2: international and national levels



- Strategic Plan
 - ✓ Currently is being developed for the period 2015-2020
- Work Programme 2011-2014
 - ✓ New programme for 2015-2017 is being developed
- National Implementation Reports
 - ✓ Art. 17 of the Protocol and decision I/5
 - ✓ Multi-stakeholder participation
 - ✓ Reporting on practical measures and challenges
 - ✓ To be prepared by 15 December 2013
 - ✓ Online reporting database is currently being developed





Focus area and framework

Focus area

- Support both the dissemination of information and raising awareness of local communities on PRTRs
- Provide information on available E-PRTR software
- Provide a linking node between academia, public authorities, business or industrial investors and local communities
- Developing PRTRs ensuring multi-stakeholder participation and consultations
- Assist in preparing the ratification or accession documents

Framework

- Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (MoPP-2)
- [Working Group of the Parties](#)
- [Compliance Committee](#)





PRTRs tools

- [Guidance to Implementation of the Protocol on PRTRs](#)
- [Simplified Guide “Your right to a healthy community”](#)
- [Website of the Protocol](#)
- [Aarhus Clearinghouse for Environmental Democracy](#)
- [E-PRTR software](#) for free download
- [PRTR cost-model](#)
- [PRTR.net](#)
 - ✓ **Maintained by OECD in cooperation with UNECE and UNEP / Grid-Arendal**
- [PRTR: learn](#)
 - ✓ **Supported by UNITAR**





Format of cooperation



- Advise on training material to be used for capacity-building or awareness raising events
- Advise on experts having the required expertise
- Advise on a substantive topic of particular interest
- Provide limited participation in capacity-building events
- Include in mailing lists as required
- Provide admin access to the Aarhus Clearinghouse
- Provide a platform for sharing capacity-building resources



2-way communication

Convention's Communication strategy

Follow UNECE on social media (twitter, youtube)

Promote activities and tools through the Aarhus Clearinghouse

Promote AC activities and tools through the work of the Task Forces

Keep the UNECE secretariat informed about communication plans

Aarhus Centres network

Exchange of good practices

Developing joint communication products

AC Communication plan

Align with the Communication strategy

Stay linked in with Convention's and Protocol's website and Clearinghouse mechanisms

Promote tools, meetings outcomes and communication products

Use social media/mobile sites/applications





Issues of primary focus



- Prepararion of 2014 national implementation reports for the Convention and its Protocol
- Provide annotations of existing tools for the Convention and the Protocol on the Aarhus Centres websites in national languages
- Make the text of the Convention, GMO amendment, PRTR Protocol and other tools available in national languages
- Upload regularly the available training material and information on capacity-building and awareness-raising projects on the Aarhus Clearinghouse and PRTR.net
- Submit case studies for PPDM and summaries of court cases
- Promote the development and adoption by the Parties of national action plans (including PPIF and GMO issues) as an outcome of relevant capacity-building projects





Questions for the groups

(1) How AC could better assist governments to make the tools and processes under the Convention widely known at the national level

(2) How AC could better promote good practices and lessons learned in national implementation to multilateral work under the Convention

(1) Как ОЦ могли бы лучше содействовать правительствам в повышении информированности на национальном уровне об инструментах и процессах в рамках Конвенции?

(2) Как ОЦ могли бы лучше содействовать продвижению хорошего опыта и практических уроков в национальном осуществлении Конвенции в рамках ее международной деятельности?

(1) Kako Aarhus centri mogu bolje pomoci organima uprave da omoguce vecu informisanost o dostupnim instrumentima i informacijama o procesima koje podrazumijeva Konvencija?

(2) Kako Aarhus centri mogu bolje promovisati dobre prakse i naucene lekcije u primjeni Konvencije u datoj zemlji na multilateralnom nivou





Thank you!

Contact: public.participation@unece.org

