



Council of the
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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Main recent international meetings

- Fifth Meeting of the Parties (MOP 5) to the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to Justice in Environmental matters (Maastricht, 30 June-2 July 2014)
- Second Meeting of the Parties (MOPP 2) to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Maastricht, 2-4 July 2014)
 - = Information from the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Presidency and the Commission on the above subject, which will be discussed under "Any other business" at the Environment Council meeting on 28 October 2014.

Fifth Meeting of the Parties (MOP 5) to the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to Justice in Environmental matters (Maastricht, 30 June-2 July 2014)

Second Meeting of the Parties (MOPP 2) to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Maastricht, 2-4 July 2014)

- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -

Introduction

1. The Fifth Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (MOP 5) and the Second Meeting of the Parties to the PRTR Protocol (MOPP 2) took place back-to-back in Maastricht on 30 June-4 July 2014, at the end of the Greek Presidency and the beginning of the Italian Presidency. EU Member States and most other Parties to the Convention and its Protocol participated, plus various UN agencies, NGOs and stakeholders.
2. For the first time, a Joint High Level Segment (JHLS) was held with ministerial participation for both the Aarhus Convention and the PRTR Protocol. The JHLS took place on 2 July and discussed, in two panels, the right to information and environmental democracy and the right to information and the use of social media. The JHLS adopted the "Maastricht Declaration" on "Transparency as a driving force for environmental democracy". In this Declaration, the Parties reiterated their commitment to furthering sustainable development through the promotion of the Convention and its Protocol. It is thus a significant political contribution towards the definition of the Post-2015 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. The Government of the Netherlands and the City of Maastricht provided the necessary logistic support as well as the appropriate setting to ensure a successful meeting.
4. The EU and its Member States, as well as the other Parties to and stakeholders of both the Convention and the Protocol, were broadly satisfied with the outcome of the two meetings, and in particular with the Maastricht Declaration and all decisions that were adopted.

5. Concerns persist, however, about the unpredictability of the interim financial mechanisms, which, for both instruments, are based on discretionary contributions. It is envisaged that options for a more stable and predictable scheme with equitable sharing of the financial burden among the Parties will be evaluated, including other types of voluntary schemes. Further discussions will need to be held at EU level on this issue.

Aarhus MOP 5

6. Compliance issues: Following some discussions, all compliance decisions prepared by the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee (ACCC) were adopted by the MOP. Serious concerns remain, however, on long-lasting situations of non-compliance by a few Parties, notably Ukraine and Belarus. New candidates for the ACCC were elected by the MOP, among them the candidates supported by the EU. In particular, Mr Jonas Ebbesson (SE) was reappointed as Chair and Mr Alistair McGlone (UK) and Ms Elena Fasoli (IT) joined as new members.
7. Access to information, public participation and access to justice: These topics coincide with the three pillars of the Convention. For each topic, a task force is in place. The respective mandates of the three task forces were renewed under the leadership of Moldova (access to information), Italy (public participation) and Sweden (access to justice).
8. Chairmanship of the Convention: Georgia agreed to provide a Chair for the Convention for the inter-sessional period up to MOP 6. Due to recent internal developments, the proposed candidate was, however, withdrawn and a new one has not yet been confirmed. For the first time, the Convention will thus be chaired by a country outside the EU or EFTA.
9. Strategic Plan: The new Strategic Plan for the Convention was adopted. The Plan will inspire and guide the work of the Convention until 2021.

PRTR MOPP 2

10. The main results of the meeting were:

- Implementation: a new decision on reporting requirements was adopted. The Parties welcomed the offer of the Compliance Committee to facilitate the implementation of the PRTR and to help in preparing informal guidance on reporting to assist the next reporting cycle.
- The new Strategic Plan for the Protocol was adopted. The Plan will inspire and guide the work of the Protocol until 2020.
- The new work programme for the Protocol for the period 2015-2017 was adopted.
- The MOP also endorsed the document on the promotion of the PRTR Protocol in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, which describes an overall framework for possible areas of bi- or multilateral cooperation.
- Chairmanship and Bodies of the Protocol: the MOP elected the new inter-sessional Compliance Committee members and the members of the PRTR Bureau; Sweden accepted the Chairmanship for the period up to MOPP 3. It is worth noting that for the first time in the history of the Protocol the Bureau has a member from a Party not belonging to the EU or to EFTA (Serbia).
