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### Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

#### **Fifth session**

Maastricht, the Netherlands, 30 June and 1 July 2014

Item 5 (c) of the provisional agenda

**Procedures and mechanisms facilitating the implementation  
of the Convention: capacity-building**

### **Report on capacity-building**

**Prepared by partner organizations and the secretariat of the  
Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in  
Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters**

#### *Summary*

The present report on capacity-building activities and the accompanying document (AC/MOP-5/Inf.1) were prepared by partner organizations and the secretariat pursuant to the work programme for 2012–2014 for the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to Convention at its fourth session (Geneva, 29 June–1 July 2011) (see ECE/MP.PP/2011/2/Add.1).

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## Introduction

1. Through the work programme for 2012–2014 adopted at its fourth session, the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) decided to give general priority to the issue of compliance and implementation, including capacity-building (see ECE/MP.PP/2011/2/Add.1, decision IV/6, annex I).
2. The Convention's Strategic Plan 2009–2014 (ECE/MP.PP/2008/2/Add.16), adopted at the third session, reiterated the role of capacity-building activities in the implementation of the Convention. Parties and the secretariat in cooperation with other organizations were identified as partners in the implementation of capacity-building activities in accordance with objective I.5 of the Convention's Strategic Plan.
3. The present report on capacity-building was prepared by the secretariat jointly with the following partner organizations: the European Commission; the European Environmental Bureau (EEB)/European ECO Forum; the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC); the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia; the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus; the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).
4. The report provides an overview of the major capacity-building activities supporting the implementation of the Convention and Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (Rio Declaration) that were carried out in the intersessional period 2011–2014 and in connection with the Convention's Strategic Plan 2009–2014. It intends to facilitate a discussion on possible further work on capacity-building in the next intersessional period. The report provides limited information regarding capacity-building activities related to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (Protocol on PRTRs), as they are considered under the framework of the International PRTR Coordination Group.
5. Capacity-building activities reported by the partner organizations are detailed in the accompanying document to this report (AC/MOP-5/Inf.1).<sup>1</sup> In addition, an online database of capacity-building activities (matrix) related to PRTRs was maintained and made available from the Aarhus Clearinghouse and from PRTR.net.<sup>2</sup>
6. Information related to the capacity-building activities carried out by the secretariat during this period can be found in the report of the implementation of the work programme for 2012–2014 (ECE/MP.PP/2014/3).<sup>3</sup>
7. Capacity-building activities carried out by Parties, Signatories and other interested States were reported at the meetings of the Working Group of the Parties and task forces.

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<sup>1</sup> The accompanying document to this report can be accessed (under category II documents rubric) from [http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5\\_docs.html](http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5_docs.html)

<sup>2</sup> Information is available from <http://apps.unece.org/ehlm/pp/NIR/RLsearch.asp>

<sup>3</sup> The document can be accessed (under category II documents rubric) from [http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5\\_docs.html](http://www.unece.org/env/pp/aarhus/mop5_docs.html)

## I. Coordination framework for capacity-building

8. Capacity-building coordination meetings under the Convention and the International PRTR Coordination Group serve as an effective platform to discuss the progress in and plans for capacity-building activities regarding the implementation of the Aarhus Convention, Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration and the Protocol on PRTRs, respectively.

9. The Convention's secretariat convened the seventh and eighth meetings on capacity-building coordination in Geneva on 15 June 2012 and 16 December 2013, respectively.<sup>4</sup> The meetings addressed the activities carried out since the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and detailed future plans.

10. The International PRTR Coordination Group coordinates efforts related to the further development and implementation of pollutant release and transfer register (PRTR) systems, especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The sixth, seventh and eighth meetings of the Group were held on 6 October 2011, 12 September 2012 and 22 November 2013, respectively.<sup>5</sup> The Protocol's secretariat continued to serve as the secretariat for the Group.

## II. Supporting implementation of the Convention

### A. General observations

11. Partner organizations played a crucial role in promoting and assisting in implementation of the Convention in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region and beyond.

12. Several Aarhus-related projects were implemented by partner organizations through the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC), which is a partnership between UNDP, UNEP, OSCE, ECE, and REC with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as an associate partner.<sup>6</sup>

13. OSCE, through the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities and the OSCE field operations, in close cooperation with the secretariat, continued to support the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the region.

14. The Aarhus Centres constitute the major component of OSCE support in this respect. There is a wide network of 56 Aarhus Centres in 13 countries in South-Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), Eastern Europe (Belarus and the Republic of Moldova), South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan). The Aarhus Centres have been instrumental in providing a forum for Government officials, particularly from ministries of environment, to meet with members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to build cooperative approaches to tackle environmental issues. Working both in capital cities and in provinces, these Centres have been very active in

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<sup>4</sup> For details, see the reports on the seventh and eighth Aarhus Convention capacity-building coordination meetings (PP/WG-15/Inf.2 and PP/WG-17/Inf.3, respectively), available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/oa.html>

<sup>5</sup> For details, see the reports of the International PRTR Coordination Group available from <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/prtr/intlcgimages/about.html>

<sup>6</sup> More information is available from <http://www.envsec.org/index.php?lang=en>

promoting the implementation of the Aarhus Convention at the national and local levels, in helping Governments fulfil their respective obligations under the Convention and in involving the citizens in environmental decision-making. The establishment and functioning of most of these Aarhus Centres are supported mostly within the framework of ENVSEC. The host Governments and the OSCE field operations in the respective countries are also among the major supporters of these Aarhus Centres.

15. OSCE also organizes annual meetings of the Aarhus Centre stakeholders to exchange experiences and lessons learned. The third such meeting was held in January 2011 in Chisinau and the fourth in July 2013 in Vienna. These meetings were attended by representatives of Government and Aarhus Centres, NGOs and OSCE field operations in the respective countries and other relevant partner organizations, including the representatives of ENVSEC partner organizations. Attended by over 100 participants, the July 2013 Vienna meeting also celebrated the decade of partnership of Aarhus Centres in implementing the Aarhus Convention. This meeting also enabled the sharing of Austria's experience in implementation of the Aarhus Convention with the Aarhus Centres and other Aarhus Convention stakeholders from participating countries.

16. The Aarhus Centres were also able to share the good practices and lessons learned at the Convention task force meetings.

17. The European Commission continued supporting various Aarhus-related activities through the LIFE Programme,<sup>7</sup> the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX)<sup>8</sup> instrument and Twinning funds.<sup>9</sup> These activities pursued a general objective to contribute to the implementation, updating and development of European Union (EU) environmental policy and legislation (including Aarhus-related legislation) by co-financing pilot or demonstration projects with European added value.

18. REC implemented capacity-building activities for NGOs, enabling the practical implementation of the three pillars of the Aarhus Convention in Belarus and the Republic of Moldova under the "SECTOR" project supported by Sweden through grants, trainings and training modules.

19. NGOs, also within the framework of the European ECO Forum, continued supporting numerous capacity-building activities which served to promote the Convention and its Protocol.

## **B. Access to information, including through pollutant release and transfer registers and electronic information tools**

20. OSCE, REC, the European Environment Agency (EEA) and UNITAR supported the implementation of relevant projects dedicated to effective access to environmental information and its dissemination (see AC/MOP-5/Inf.1). More detailed information regarding PRTR-related activities is available through the reports of the International PRTR Coordination Group.

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<sup>7</sup> The LIFE programme is a European Union (EU) funding instrument for the environment.

<sup>8</sup> TAIEX supports partner countries with regard to the approximation, application and enforcement of EU legislation.

<sup>9</sup> The Twinning programme provides a framework for administrations and semi-public organizations in the beneficiary countries to work with their counterparts in EU member States to facilitate the transposition, enforcement and implementation of EU legislation.

21. The possible synergies with the activities related to the development and implementation of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS),<sup>10</sup> the INSPIRE Directive,<sup>11</sup> e-Government and open government data initiatives could be explored further.

22. A document on the review of SEIS-related developments with an impact on environmental assessment and reporting since the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference, with detailed information on capacity-building projects, was presented by EEA to the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy at its nineteenth session (Geneva, 22–25 October 2013).<sup>12</sup>

23. UNITAR continued the implementation of a Global Environment Facility-UNEP project focused on monitoring and reporting on persistent organic pollutants through PRTRs in seven countries. In addition, it carried out several projects under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) Quick Start Programme Trust Fund to design PRTRs systems.

24. REC has continued its support through the projects funded by Finland within ENVSEC and by Germany for the development of PRTRs in South-Eastern Europe. This support was provided in the form of assisting countries to prepare for ratification or to improve the implementation of the Protocol on PRTRs by awareness-raising; building the capacity of authorities, operators and NGOs on how to set up and operate PRTR systems in line with the Protocol on PRTRs and the European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (E-PRTR) system. The support included trainings, multi-stakeholder dialogues, meetings between public authorities and operators and developing local language guidance materials in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In the latter two countries, PRTR web portals were also developed to allow better access and dissemination of PRTR data and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia the free German software was adapted and installed to be used in the next reporting cycle.

25. To promote the implementation and ratification of the Protocol on PRTRs in South-Eastern Europe, ECE and OSCE organized a subregional workshop, “Get Your Right to a Healthy Community” (Sarajevo, 28–29 May 2013).<sup>13</sup>

26. In 2012, UNITAR in collaboration with ECE and the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals developed PRTR:Learn, an online training and knowledge sharing platform on PRTRs. The platform aims at facilitating capacity-building activities in countries through online courses and resources.<sup>14</sup>

27. OECD continued producing technical guidance documents which can help develop or implement a PRTR. They include documents to develop harmonized lists of pollutants and reporting sectors, how to use PRTR data and updated releases estimation techniques to produce PRTR data.

28. Further capacity-building activities in this area can be focused on active dissemination of environmental information and effective use of electronic information

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<sup>10</sup> Available from <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/seis/>

<sup>11</sup> Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community, available from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/NOT/?uri=CELEX:32007L0002>

<sup>12</sup> See document ECE/CEP/2013/18, available from <http://www.unece.org/env/cep/2013sessionoctober.html>

<sup>13</sup> See [http://www.unece.org/prtr\\_see2013.html](http://www.unece.org/prtr_see2013.html)

<sup>14</sup> See <http://prtr.unitar.org>

tools, without neglecting traditional means of communication to satisfy the information needs of citizens that do not have ready access to electronic information tools.

29. In this regard, trainings for public officials and members of the public, tools for dissemination of the priority types of information identified in decision II/3<sup>15</sup> adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and assistance in establishing Aarhus (web) national nodes could receive priority in the future activities. The activities should be carried out in the spirit of inter-agency and multi-stakeholder cooperation, including with the involvement of the national statistics bodies and other environmental information producers.

### C. Public participation in decision-making

30. OSCE, Regional Environmental Centres and other partner organizations supported the implementation of relevant projects dedicated to effective public participation in decision-making (see AC/MOP-5/Inf.1).

31. REC continued its activities on strengthening the institutional capacity for the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in South-Eastern Europe and improving public participation mechanisms at the national and local levels, supported by Germany and Finland through ENVSEC. A model participation process designed together with local decision makers, capacity-building trainings implemented by REC in six countries and practical public participation tool-kits published in four languages enabled competent public authorities and other important stakeholders (operators, local NGOs) to design and implement participatory processes effectively.

32. REC together with its partners in a project funded by the EU Seventh Framework Programme for Research carried out background research on key challenges in implementing the Aarhus Convention requirements in the field of radioactive waste management in five Central European countries. The challenges, existing gaps and barriers, as well as good practices and challenges, observed were reflected in the final report, *Decision Making for the Future: Applying the Aarhus Convention in Radioactive Waste Management*,<sup>16</sup> and presented during the series of the round tables dedicated to the Aarhus Convention and nuclear issues.

33. Aarhus Centres, supported by OSCE, in several countries provided assistance in organizing and monitoring procedures of public participation in decision-making relating to the environment.

34. The OSCE organized a subregional workshop on environmental mediation and conflict resolution for the countries of South-Eastern Europe in Podgorica in April 2013, which brought together representatives of governments, NGOs and Aarhus Centres from the countries of the region.

35. EEB works on a project to describe what public participation means in different areas, especially with regard to plans and programmes and draft legislation. It also followed public consultations at the EU level and changes in the EU law relevant to this area.

36. Further capacity-building activities in this area can be focused on trainings, improving legislation, implementing e-participation tools and improving access through the Internet to information related to decision-making procedures relating to the environment.

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<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/tfai.html>

<sup>16</sup> The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (December 2013), available from <http://www.rec.org/publication.php?id=428>

## D. Access to justice

37. Capacity development in the area of access to justice remained very important due to the difficulties in promoting the third pillar of the Convention and the need to enhance effective access to justice.

38. Capacity-building efforts at the EU level are supported by the European e-Justice Portal,<sup>17</sup> training modules for judges and prosecutors on EU environmental law and trainings for the judiciary and lawyers. The LIFE+ instrument provides possibilities to support relevant activities in this area, including activities involving public interest lawyers.

39. OSCE and REC supported the implementation of relevant projects dedicated to effective access to justice at the national level through organizing trainings for the judiciary, prosecutors and other legal professionals, as well as multi-stakeholder round tables (see AC/MOP-5/Inf.1).

40. In particular, REC reported on a number of projects in this area with a focus on South-Eastern Europe, the Republic of Moldova and Belarus funded by ENVSEC, Germany and Sweden. In South-Eastern Europe, these activities included a series of two-day trainings for judges and prosecutors on cooperation with judicial training centres, and one-day trainings for NGOs. The activities aimed at building knowledge on the implementation of the third pillar, application of national and EU legislation and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice and the Convention Compliance Committee. In addition, at the round-table meetings, representatives of public authorities, the judiciary and civil society discussed the access to justice situation and identified major barriers and possible ways to overcome them. In Belarus and the Republic of Moldova, the project activities included trainings for civil society activists on the implementation of the access to justice pillar, developing training modules and awarding grants to support NGO and public interest lawyer initiatives. Environmental mediation will be addressed through trainings in the Caucasus and Central Asia as well as in South-Eastern Europe.

41. At its fifth meeting, the Task Force on Access to Justice called on partner organizations to support the study on access to justice in South-Eastern Europe. The project is being implemented by REC, UNECE and OSCE through ENVSEC and supported by Austria.

42. ECE and OSCE in cooperation with the Government of Kazakhstan organized a subregional meeting for the high-level judiciary and public officials responsible for justice affairs from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan as well as from Mongolia<sup>18</sup> The meeting was also attended by Aarhus Centres and NGOs representatives from respective countries. The meeting was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on 22 and 23 May 2012, and hosted by OSCE.

43. Access to justice remains another focus for the capacity-building activities of EEB/European ECO Forum through its participation in the Convention's Task Force on Access to Justice activities, bringing knowledge in this area to its network and preparing the relevant analysis of case-law within the EU and the EU Court of Justice.

44. The activities in this area should assist in supporting national multi-stakeholder dialogues to remove existing barriers to access to justice, improving the relevant legislation and providing information to the public on access to judicial and administrative review, as well as to courts' and other review bodies' decisions.

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<sup>17</sup> See <https://e-justice.europa.eu/home.do?action=home>

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.unece.org/centralasianmeeting2012.html>



45. To facilitate the exchange of information and cooperation among the judiciary on Aarhus-related issues, the benefits of establishing and supporting a regional network of judges under the auspices of the Task Force on Access to Justice can be further explored.

## **E. Genetically modified organisms**

46. Ways to strengthen capacity-building development was discussed at the round table on access to information, public participation and access to justice regarding living genetically modified organisms/genetically modified organisms (Geneva, 16–17 October 2013), which was jointly organized by ECE and the secretariat of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity under the leadership of the Government of Austria.<sup>19</sup>

47. A session dedicated to the implementation of the Aarhus Convention with respect to genetically modified organisms (GMOs) was carried out within the national multi-stakeholder workshop, “Advancing the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Belarus” (Minsk, 29–31 January 2014), organized by OSCE and UNECE within the framework of ENVSEC and with the support of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus. The need to increase awareness-raising efforts, as well as to strengthen capacities not only of public officials but also of NGOs, was underlined.

48. No other specific activities in this focus area (i.e., GMOs) were reported by partner organizations. This focus area remained the least addressed through capacity-building activities under the Convention. A concern was raised that this could potentially hamper the progress in the ratification and implementation of the amendment to the Convention on public participation in decisions on deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market of GMOs (GMO amendment).

49. Capacity-building activities can be focused on the following priority areas: (a) strengthening coordination and cooperation between national focal points of the Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; (b) assisting in preparing documents for ratification of the GMO amendment; and (c) national round tables and trainings.

50. Priority countries for such activities include those Parties to the Convention whose ratification of the GMO amendment would count towards its entry into force.

## **F. Public participation in international forums**

51. A positive development in awareness-raising and capacity-building with regard to public participation in international forums is the continuous involvement of the international financial institutions in this area.

52. REC supported the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development in carrying out the public consultations on the Bank’s revised information, environmental and social policies in 2013 and 2014.<sup>20</sup>

53. Further to paragraph 88 of the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, “The Future We Want”,<sup>21</sup> UNEP has put in place a multi-stakeholder process involving civil society and governments. This process will

<sup>19</sup> See [http://www.unece.org/gmo\\_2013.html](http://www.unece.org/gmo_2013.html)

<sup>20</sup> See <http://ebrd-public-consultations.rec.org/>

<sup>21</sup> A/RES/66/288, annex; available from <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html>

culminate in a new UNEP Stakeholder Engagement Policy that will be presented to the United Nations Environment Assembly in June 2014 for endorsement. For the development of this policy, UNEP has held numerous consultations with major groups and the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives. Furthermore, UNEP carried out an analysis of current practices for stakeholder engagement in multilateral organizations, put in place an independent group of experts to advise UNEP and prepared a paper that presents options on possible elements of a new stakeholder engagement policy.<sup>22</sup>

54. The means of achieving effective public participation in international forums were also discussed within the national multi-stakeholder workshop, “Advancing the implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Belarus” mentioned above.

55. Partner organizations agreed to support the application of the Almaty Guidelines on Promoting the Application of the Principles of the Aarhus Convention in International Forums throughout the activities where they are involved, as appropriate. Future capacity-building activities could be focused on thematic trainings and on assisting Parties to develop action plans or other instruments aiming at facilitating public participation in international forums.

## **G. Compliance with the Convention**

56. Compliance with the Convention, including through capacity-building activities, remained a general priority for the work in accordance with the work programme for 2012–2014.

57. Partner organizations are encouraged to assist Parties in implementing recommendations of the Convention’s Compliance Committee and the relevant decisions of the Meeting of the Parties.

58. The capacity-building activities of EEB/European ECO Forum have been focused on the compliance mechanism under the Aarhus Convention. This included assistance to NGOs in the preparation of communications to the Compliance Committee and organization of trainings for NGOs and lawyers about the mechanism, including follow-up to the Compliance Committee’s findings and recommendations.

## **H. Supporting implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration**

59. Some activities dedicated to the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration were conducted by partner organizations, such as UNITAR, UNEP, REC and EEB/European ECO Forum outside the UNECE region.

60. Having commenced in 2013, a joint UNEP/UNITAR project aims at enhancing the capacity of governments, major groups and other concerned stakeholders in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to implement Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration and the Bali Guidelines for the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. The project is funded by the UNEP Environment Fund, the Government of Norway and the Government of Abu Dhabi. The project is also seeking additional funding for 2014 and beyond.

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<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.unep.org/civil-society/GetInvolved/MajorGroupsFacilitatingCommitteeMGFC/tabid/101084/Default.aspx>

61. The following activities took place within the project:
- (a) A regional workshop on the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration in the Caribbean Region (Trinidad and Tobago, 16–17 September 2013), organized in close cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the World Resources Institute, the Access Initiative and the Caribbean Academy for Law and Court Administration. Similar workshops are planned in 2014 for countries in the Middle East and North Africa, in other African subregions and in Asia and the Pacific;
  - (b) A regional workshop on the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration and application of the Guidelines for the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America (Lima, Peru, 28–29 October 2013) was organized in close cooperation with ECLAC, the World Resources Institute and the Peruvian Society for Environmental Law.
62. UNEP also coordinates the Eye on Earth Special Initiative, “Access for All”. This initiative is a partnership of UNEP, UNITAR, EEB, the World Resources Institute, the Access Initiative, REC and others. Funding for the activities under this Initiative has been provided by the Government of Abu Dhabi and other donors, and further fundraising efforts are expected.
63. Under the umbrella of the “Access for All” initiative, a joint project of REC and EEB “Building Bridges between Regions”, will be implemented in 2014 envisaging the sharing of experience between the ECE and ECLAC regions. In addition to the first virtual forum to exchange experiences between Aarhus and ECLAC stakeholders, held on 3 April 2014, several webinars and a second forum for experience sharing will be held during the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention. The activities aim to support the development of an instrument dedicated to Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration in the region of Latin America and Caribbean.
64. Another project under this initiative includes the development by the World Resources Institute of a legal index that will demonstrate how far advanced countries are with respect to implementing Principle 10. Such a legal index can be used to identify capacity-building needs and to develop capacity-building programmes.
65. Assistance was also provided by the World Resources Institute, EEB and REC in the form of cooperation and experience sharing with the Latin American NGO network to support the drafting of regional instrument implementing Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration.
66. Joint UNEP-UNITAR-UNDP collaboration on strengthening legal, institutional and implementing capacities in developing countries for rights-based, transparent and accountable environmental governance is at the fundraising stage and is expected to take place in the second half of 2014.

### **III. Trends and considerations**

67. The role of partner organizations has proved to be crucial for assisting the promotion and practical implementation the Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs on the ground.

68. Most of the projects were largely focused on supporting the general<sup>23</sup> implementation of the Convention in accordance with beneficiary countries' needs. Several projects were purely dedicated to specific areas, such as access to justice and public participation in decision-making. At the same time, access to information is often included in projects related to general implementation of the Convention and SEIS-related projects.

69. In the field of access to justice, many efforts are being made to provide training sessions for judges, other legal professionals and NGOs at the national and subregional levels, including the EU level. Greater involvement of public interest lawyers, bar associations, mediators, prosecutors and other legal professionals is needed. Such activities should support a multi-stakeholder dialogue aiming at removing any barriers to access to justice.

70. Capacity-building activities dedicated to the implementation of the Aarhus Convention with respect to GMOs and in international forums should receive wider support in the next intersessional period. These activities should be focused on raising awareness and building capacities of governmental officials and relevant stakeholders, including NGOs.

71. The capacity-building activities for the next intersessional period can be based on the country needs identified through the 2014 national implementation reports and through the compliance mechanism, as well as the outcomes of the meetings of the Working Group of the Parties and the task forces, various workshops, seminars, studies and surveys.

72. Further development of a regulatory framework, through systematically introducing Convention- and Protocol-related obligations into all relevant legislative and regulatory acts, continued to be important. In addition, future activities should aim to strengthen inter-agency and multi-stakeholder cooperation and dialogue.

73. Activities related to the promotion of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration beyond the ECE region provide a good opportunity for exchange of good practices and lessons learned and increase the visibility of the Convention and its Protocol outside the region. Further strengthening collaboration among international organizations mandated to work in this area is important.

74. Aarhus Centres provide a platform for cooperation between public authorities, civil society and other stakeholders, thereby fostering implementation of the Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs. They also make it possible to reach out to stakeholders in the provinces and help to raise awareness of a wider audience. The Aarhus Centres network enables exchange of experiences and best practices among them within and across borders. OSCE remains committed to supporting and strengthening the capacities of Aarhus Centres in addressing local environmental challenges, including those related to climate change and natural disasters. OSCE also aims to further advance gender mainstreaming in Aarhus Centre activities.

75. Many capacity-building projects reported to be of multi-stakeholder nature. Representatives of NGOs provided substantive input to the various capacity-building activities. Further strengthening the expert and technical capacities of NGOs will be a useful contribution to advance implementation of the Convention.

76. Wide dissemination of the outcomes of capacity-building activities through the Internet and by other electronic means should be an integral part of the projects and can substantially increase their visibility and contribute to raising awareness among other

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<sup>23</sup> Projects supporting general implementation of the Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs often address all the provisions of the treaties.

stakeholders. Regular use of the Aarhus Clearinghouse, PRTR:learn and PRTR.net for uploading information on capacity-building and awareness-raising activities can contribute to this objective and improve further coordination.

77. Aarhus- and PRTR-related capacity-building activities can assist countries not only to advance the implementation of both instruments, but also to contribute to a wider transformation towards green economy, good governance and the implementation of the post-2015 agenda/future sustainable development goals.

78. The secretariat will continue its efforts to build synergies through the regular capacity-building coordination meetings and the International PRTR Coordination Group, with the participation of all interested partners.

79. In addition to cooperation with capacity-building partners discussed above, joint activities with the secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements and forums (e.g., the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, the ECE Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, SAICM and others) has proven to be a useful way to maximize synergies while ensuring the efficient use of resources.

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