



**Fourth Joint Aarhus Convention and Convention on Biological Diversity
Roundtable on Public Awareness, Education, Access to Information, Public Participation and
Access to Justice regarding Living Modified Organisms/Genetically Modified Organisms¹**

11-12 December 2023, Geneva, Switzerland

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

Background

1. The roundtable is organized under the auspices of the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The roundtable aims to contribute to strengthening countries' capacities by sharing knowledge, experiences and lessons learned in promoting public awareness, education, access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice regarding living modified organisms/genetically modified organisms (LMOs/GMOs) and developing suggestions for concrete future actions.
2. The roundtable is expected to take stock of successes and challenges, and identify synergies in relation to the promotion of effective implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the context of LMOs/GMOs, its amendment on public participation in decisions on deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market of GMOs (Almaty Amendment on GMOs), the guidelines on access to information, public participation and access to justice with respect to GMOs (Lucca Guidelines) to the Aarhus Convention, and the provisions of Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, regarding public awareness, education and participation.
3. The roundtable is organized under the leadership and with the support of the Government of Austria and will be chaired by Mr. Helmut Gaugitsch.
4. The outcomes of the event are intended to facilitate the ratification and implementation of the Aarhus Convention in the context of LMOs/GMOs, its Almaty Amendment on GMOs and the implementation of Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety as well as Targets 17 and 22 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), in the context of LMOs/GMOs, thereby also contributing to the achievement of relevant Sustainable Development Goals.
5. The results of the round table will be reported to the twenty-eighth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (Geneva, July 2024) and the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (2025) and shared with the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (21 October 2024–1 November 2024, tentative).

¹ This document was not formally edited.

6. The joint roundtable is organized pursuant to Decision II/1 and Decision VII/5 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, which call for cooperation between the Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety with a view to maximizing synergies and avoiding duplication of effort, and in accordance with decision 15/4 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP) and decisions CP-10/4, CP-10/3, VIII/6, BS-II/6 and BS-II/13 of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP).

7. The roundtable will feature several panel discussions on the following topics: (a) challenges and good practices in ratifying and implementing the Aarhus Convention's Almaty Amendment on GMOs and in implementing Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; (b) access to information; (c) public awareness and education; (d) public participation and (e) access to justice. There will also be a training session on access to justice.

8. Participants will be provided with a "learning journal" prior to the meeting to take notes of the discussions and reflect on key points from the roundtable to bring back to their countries.

9. Rapporteurs for each panel discussion will be designated by the Chair. They will be invited to report at the final session of the meeting highlighting the key outcomes of the discussions.

10. The outcomes of the panel discussions will be used as a basis for future actions to assist Parties, other interested Governments and stakeholders in furthering efforts on access to information, awareness raising, public participation, education and access to justice.

11. Background material to be made available for the meeting includes²:

- The [GMO amendment \(Almaty Amendment on GMOs\)](#) of the Aarhus Convention);
- The components on Article 23 of the Implementation Plan for the Cartagena Protocol and the Capacity-Building Action Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;
- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Targets 17 and 22);
- A compilation of needs and of other relevant matters based on surveys and national implementation reports related to the Aarhus Convention;

As well as the following material, available online³:

- Joint CBD/Aarhus Convention Pocket Guide Promoting Effective Access to Information and Public Participation regarding LMOs/GMOs;
- The Checklist of Key Measures for the Ratification and Implementation of the Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in the Context of LMOs/GMOs;
- Summaries of Tools and Resources to Support Implementation of the Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in the Context of LMOs/GMOs;
- The Guidelines on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice with Respect to Genetically Modified Organisms Implementation (Lucca Guidelines of the Aarhus Convention);

² Documents, registration and other information about the meeting will be made available online on this web page in due course: <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Public-Participation/events/375497>

³ See: <https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation/key-guidance-and-other-material-related-gmos>.

- Maastricht Recommendations on Promoting Effective Public Participation in Decision-making in Environmental Matters.

12. Lunch breaks will take place between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Coffee breaks will be organized at the discretion of the Chair during morning and afternoon sessions.

| Monday, 11 December 2023 | |
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| 10 – 10.20 a.m. | <p>I. Opening</p> <p><i>Welcoming statements by ECE and CBD secretariats</i></p> <p><i>Introductory statement by the Chair</i></p> |
| 10.20 a.m. – 1 p.m. | <p>II. Ratification and implementation of the Aarhus Convention’s Almaty Amendment on GMOs and implementation of Article 23 on public awareness, education and participation under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety: challenges and good practices</p> <p><i>Presentations on the status of ratification and implementation of the Aarhus Convention and of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety</i></p> <p><i>Panel presentations followed by discussion</i></p> |
| 1 – 3 p.m. | Lunch |
| 3 – 4 p.m. | <p>III. Access to information</p> <p><i>Introduction to provisions on access to information of the Aarhus Convention and of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety</i></p> <p><i>Panel presentations followed by discussion</i></p> |
| 4 – 5 p.m. | <p>IV. Public awareness and education</p> <p><i>Panel presentations followed by discussion</i></p> |
| 5 – 6 p.m. | <p>V. Public participation</p> <p><i>Introduction to provisions on public participation of the Aarhus Convention and of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety</i></p> <p><i>Panel presentations followed by discussion</i></p> |

| Tuesday, 12 December 2023 | |
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| 10 – 10.45 a.m. | V. Public participation (<i>discussion continued</i>) |
| 10.45 a.m. – 3.45 p.m. incl. lunch break 1 – 3 p.m. | VI. Access to Justice <i>Introduction to provisions access to justice of the Aarhus Convention and of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety</i> <i>Training on procedures on access to justice related to LMOs/GMOs, including presentation of experiences/case studies</i> |
| 3.45 – 4.45 a.m. | VII. Reports by Rapporteurs |
| 4.45 a.m. – 5.30 p.m. | VIII. The way forward <i>Based on the outcomes of the discussions under the previous agenda items, participants will be invited to discuss a number of issues, including opportunities for improving access to information, public awareness, education, public participation in decision-making and access to justice at national, subregional, regional and international levels; and opportunities for synergies for future cooperation in this regard between the secretariats of the Aarhus Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and other international organizations.</i> |
| 5.30 – 6 p.m. | IX. Closure of the roundtable <i>The Chair will summarize key points derived from the discussions and will close the meeting.</i> |
