



**Joint Aarhus Convention/Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety  
second round table on public awareness, access to information and public participation  
regarding living modified organisms/genetically modified organisms<sup>1</sup>**

**15-17 November 2016, Geneva, Switzerland**  
(Palais des Nations, Salle V)

organised under the leadership of the Government of Austria

Chair: Mr. Helmut Gaugitsch

**PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME**

**Background**

1. The round table is organised 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 build countries' capacities through sharing knowledge, experiences and lessons learned in promoting public awareness, access to information and public participation regarding living modified organisms/genetically modified organisms (LMOs/GMOs) and to make recommendations for future action at the national, regional and international levels. The meeting is expected to showcase the Protocol's and the Aarhus Convention's success stories and will further contribute to sustainable development and protecting biodiversity. It will assist Parties, other interested Governments and stakeholders in furthering the relevant sustainable development goals. It is expected to involve a wide range of stakeholders, such as Governments, media, academia, business and non-governmental organisations.

2. The round table is expected to take stock of successes and challenges, and identify synergies in relation to the promotion of effective ratification and implementation of the Aarhus Convention's amendment on public participation in decisions on deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market of genetically modified organisms (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 Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Participants will be invited to identify the priority areas for furthering public awareness, education, access to information and public participation in relation to LMOs/GMOs that would allow for the development of concrete national, regional and international activities.

3. The outcomes of the event are intended to facilitate the ratification and implementation of the Aarhus Convention's Almaty Amendment on GMOs and to contribute to the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety's programme of work on public awareness, education and

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<sup>1</sup> This document was not formally edited.

participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs (2011-2015). The outcomes of the event will be presented at the upcoming sessions of both the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (11-14 September 2017) and of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol (4 -17 December 2016 - Cancun, Mexico). Thus, Parties to both treaties will consider these outcomes in their future work.

4. The joint roundtable is organized pursuant to Decision II/1 and Decision V/6 of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and decisions 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), 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.

5. The round table will have the following format: The invited panellists will make short presentations (up to 7 minutes each), followed by an open discussion on the topics covered. During the discussions, panellists will have the opportunity to react to presentations of their fellow panellists and to respond to statements or questions from the floor. To allow for more time for discussion, the number of panellists and the time for opening statements will be limited. For each thematic session, the Chair will nominate one participant to act as a rapporteur. The rapporteurs will be invited to make a short presentation at the final session (3-5 minutes each), highlighting the key challenges, needs, potential synergies and priority areas. Participants will use these summaries as the basis for the discussion on future actions at national and international levels. The last day of the meeting will also contain a session for networking and bilateral discussions. Lunch breaks will take place between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. on the first and third days and between 12.30 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. on the second day. Coffee breaks might be organised at the discretion of the Chair during morning and afternoon sessions.

6. The Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety secretariats have developed recently a checklist of key measures to assist Parties in ratifying and implementing the Aarhus Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in the context of living modified (LMOs)/genetically modified (GMOs) organisms and a note that describes different tools and resources for the provision of technical assistance to support implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Aarhus Convention in the context of LMOs)/GMOs. Both documents along with the Almaty Amendment on GMOs, the Lucca Guidelines, and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety text (Article 23) will provide background material for the event. In addition, compilation of needs based on national reports will be prepared for the event<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Documents for the meeting will be made available from this webpage:  
[http://www.unece.org/env/pp/grt\\_lmo\\_gmo\\_2016#/](http://www.unece.org/env/pp/grt_lmo_gmo_2016#/)

<p><b>Tuesday, 15 November 2016</b>  10 a.m.-6 p.m.  Lunch 1 p.m.-3 p.m.</p>	
<p><b>I. Opening</b></p>	<p><i>A representative of the UNECE and a representative of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity will deliver welcoming statements.  The Chair will deliver an introductory statement.</i></p>
<p><b>II. Ratification and implementation of the Aarhus Convention's Almaty Amendment on GMOs and Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety: challenges and good practices</b></p>	<p><i>Status of ratification and implementation of the two treaties and progress in Aarhus Convention/CBD collaborative work.</i></p>
<p><b>III. Access to information</b></p>	<p><i>Legislative framework, institutional arrangements and implementation efforts.</i></p>
<p><b>Wednesday, 16 November 2016</b>  9.30 a.m.-5.30 p.m.  Lunch 12.30 p.m.-2.30 p.m.</p>	
<p><b>IV. Awareness raising and education</b></p>	<p><i>Methods and tools for providing effective awareness raising and education.</i></p>
<p><b>V. Networking and bilateral discussions</b></p>	<p><i>Participants will be invited to exchange views in groups and hold follow-up bilateral discussions regarding the selected priority topics in order to lay the foundation for a possible future cooperation.</i></p> <p><i>Format: participants will be invited to join one of the 3-4 thematic groups placed in different parts of the room to discuss the key priority issues in a more informal setting.</i></p>
<p><b>V. Networking and bilateral discussions – continued</b></p>	<p><i>Participants will be invited to express their opinion on the value of this activity and possible outcomes of their discussions.</i></p>
<p><b>VI. Public participation</b></p>	<p><i>Legislative framework, institutional arrangements and implementation efforts.</i></p>
<p><b>Thursday, 17 November 2016</b>  10 a.m.-4 p.m.</p>	

<i>Lunch 1 p.m.-3 p.m.</i>	
<b>VII. International cooperation</b>	<i>Examples of international cooperation and synergies.</i>
<b>VIII. Reports on the thematic sessions</b>	<i>Rapporteurs will report on the outcomes of the three thematic sessions (access to information, awareness raising/education and public participation).</i>
<b>IX. The way forward</b>	<i>Based on the outcomes of the discussions under the previous agenda items, participants will be invited to discuss, a number of issues, including priority areas/activities and opportunities for integration/mainstreaming to improve access to information, public awareness/education and participation at national level; priority areas/activities and opportunities for integration/mainstreaming in relation to capacity building at national, subregional, regional and international levels; priority areas/activities and opportunities for synergies -for future cooperation between the secretariats of the Aarhus Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and other international organizations, in carrying out activities at national, regional and international level.</i>
<b>X. Closure of the round table</b>	<i>The Chair will summarise key points derived from the discussions and will close the meeting.</i>

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