



## Environment and Human Settlements Division



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

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*"Although regional in scope, the significance of the Aarhus Convention is global. It is the most impressive elaboration of principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, which stresses the need for citizen's participation in environmental issues and for access to information on environmental issues held by public authorities. As such it is the most ambitious venture in the area of 'environmental democracy' so far undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations."*

*Kofi Annan  
Secretary-General of the United Nations*

### INTRODUCING THE AARHUS CONVENTION

[The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters](#) was adopted on 25th June 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus at the Fourth Ministerial Conference in the 'Environment for Europe' process.

The Aarhus Convention is a new kind of environmental agreement. It links environmental rights and human rights. It acknowledges that we owe an obligation to future generations. It establishes that sustainable development can be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders. It links government accountability and environmental protection. It focuses on interactions between the public and public authorities in a democratic context and it is forging a new process for public participation in the negotiation and implementation of international agreements.

The subject of the Aarhus Convention goes to the heart of the relationship between people and governments. The Convention is not only an environmental agreement but is also a Convention about government accountability, transparency and responsiveness. The Aarhus Convention grants the public rights and imposes on Parties and public authorities obligations regarding access to information and public participation and access to justice. More on the [content of the Convention](#) and [full text](#) of the Convention.

After the adoption of the Convention, [two meetings of Signatories](#) were held in 1999 and in 2000 and a Working Group to prepare for the first meeting of the Parties met three times in 2001 and 2002.

[The Convention entered into force on 30 October 2001](#) and [progress of ratification](#) relatively rapid. The [first meeting of the Parties](#) took place in Lucca, Italy on 21-23 October 2002. The Meeting adopted a number of decisions, thereby establishing two Working Groups on Genetically Modified Organisms and Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, respectively. The Meeting also agreed on an innovative compliance mechanism, on rules of procedure and on a number of other issues. Finally, the Meeting adopted the Lucca Declaration. For recent up-dates, please check

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