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United Nations Institute for Training and Research

## **Submission by the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Concerning the Amended New Delhi Work Programme**

The six categories in the amended New Delhi Work Programme - while closely related - include distinctive topics which may benefit from separate, coordinated work streams and action plans at the national level. For example, while *Education* mainly concerns primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions and the public, the *Training* category mainly relates to knowledge transfer and skills development in the professional sector, including government, the private sector and other professional organizations (e.g. vocational training centers).

This submission focuses on the *Public Access to Information* and *Public Participation* categories of the amended New Delhi Work Programme.<sup>i</sup> It draws upon information generated, and lessons learned through UNITAR-supported activities in countries to implement Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration and the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)<sup>ii</sup>, as well as the recently organized 2<sup>nd</sup> UNITAR-Yale Conference on Environmental Governance and Democracy: *Strengthening Institutions to Address Climate Change and Foster a Green Economy*, New Haven, USA 17-19 September 2010.<sup>iii</sup>

Taking the above into account, UNITAR offers the following observations to the SBI for consideration:

- It is becoming increasingly evident that the active and effective participation of civil society in climate change decision-making and implementation is crucial in order to achieve climate change objectives at the national, sub-national and local levels. Yet, the design and implementation of effective stakeholder engagement processes is a relatively new area of governance. It requires resources, as well as new capacities and skills sets in government, e.g. trained civil servants that can design and manage effective public participation and stakeholder processes. The experience gained through country projects reveals that governments are interested in developing capacity in this area. Yet, an effective international support and training programme to strengthen these aspects of climate change governance is lacking.
- Similarly, capacity constraints may impede the effective implementation of the *Access to Information* dimension. Access to information on climate change initiatives, policies and results is essential to allow the public to effectively participate in decision-making processes. Important governance topics to effectively address *Access to Information* include, for example, development of policies on data confidentiality, or putting an IT capacity in place for notice and comment processes.

- There are other potential benefits in developing open and accountable structures in the area of climate change governance. For example, countries that are advanced in this area may be in a good position to attract external donor resources that are subject to tight accountability rules.
- Taking the above into account, linking the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration and the Aarhus Convention – which both promote transparency and participatory environmental governance - to activities under the UNFCCC may create a number of synergies.
- In order to better understand national, sub-national and local governance structures engaged in climate change, the idea of developing National Climate Change Governance Profiles has been generated. These Profiles could be prepared through country-driven processes and include information on institutional structures and processes for various levels and sectors of governance, including public participation opportunities. Putting such information in a single document may be of value for the public and it could support horizontal and vertical coordination within countries.
- Concerning *International Cooperation*, the recent Yale-UNITAR Conference on Climate Change Governance revealed a growing interest of governance practitioners and academic scholars to share knowledge concerning climate change governance, including public participation opportunities and practices. As a follow-up, UNITAR and Yale are interested to explore with interested partners how a governance focused knowledge sharing mechanism that has a practical value for policy makers can be taken forward at the international level.

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<sup>i</sup> The submission on UN CC:Learn made by UNITAR on behalf of 22 UN CC:Learn partner agencies specifically deals with the Training category. It summarizes CC:Learn services in support of national efforts to strengthen human resources, learning and skills development in the vocational and professional sectors.

<sup>ii</sup> UNITAR has collaborated with a number of pilot countries in assessing and strengthening capacities to implement the Aarhus Convention and Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. The country-driven four-step process consists of i) the preparation of a National Profile, ii) the organization of a National Priority Setting Workshop, iii) the development of an Action Plan, and iv) the implementation of selected capacity development interventions. Partner countries include to date: Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama (Principle 10) and Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Serbia (Aarhus Convention). For further information, please consult <http://www.unitar.org/egp/>.

<sup>iii</sup> The Yale-UNITAR Conference brought together some 160 academic scholars, governance practitioners and civil society representatives from more than 20 developed and developing countries to explore opportunities of strengthening effective governance to address climate change and foster a green economy. It was organized in partnership with UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UN-HABITAT, the World Bank, OECD, the Earth System Governance Project, the World Resources Institute, and the Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future. For further information, please consult <http://conference.unitar.org/yale/>.