

## **Call for Submission: UN Freedom of Information Policies - UNEP's submission**

### **1. United Nations Environment Programme Policy on Access to Information**

The United Nations Environment Programme Access to Information Policy (UNEP Access to Information Policy) was adopted on 28 January 2016. The Policy can be accessed using this link:

<http://www.unep.org/environmentalgovernance/UNEPsWork/AccessToInformationPolicy/Revised2015/tabid/1060867/Default.aspx>.

The Standard Operating Procedure for the implementation of the UNEP Access to Information Policy was adopted in September 2016. For ease of reference, please find attached a copy of the Policy and the Standard Operating Procedure.

### **2. Process for the adoption of the UNEP Access to Information Policy**

The UNEP Access to Information Policy was put in place in response to paragraph 17 of the Governing Council decision 27/2 of the United Nations Environment Programme, which requested UNEP to establish a written access-to-information policy that will enhance transparency and openness of its work.

Subsequently, the Executive Director approved an interim UNEP Access-to-Information Policy on 6 June 2014. A revised and final version of the policy was adopted by the Executive Director on 28 January 2016. Drafts of both, the interim policy and the revised version, were published on UNEP's website during two months for inputs and comments from member States, observers and the general public. These comments were carefully reviewed by UNEP and introduced to the final text of the policy. Furthermore, in May 2015, UNEP held a hearing for member States and observers in its headquarters in Nairobi to present and discuss comments on the draft text of the policy (See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Nh0p02Yf-o>). This hearing was live streamed with the opportunity for the general public and others to take part once again in the process. The revised version of the policy has been widely welcomed by Member States and observers.

It is also worth mentioning that as part of the UNEP's intention to involve other stakeholders in the Access to Information Policy implementation, it was decided that one of the members of the Access to Information Panel, which reviews appeals of decisions denying access to information, would be an individual who is not a UNEP staff member. Ms. Carole Excell, who is the Project Director at the Access Initiative, World Resources Institute, has been appointed one of the members of the Panel. She actively participated during the drafting of the Standard Operating Procedure for the Access to Information Policy.

### **3. Relevant arrangements**

1) The Standard Operating Procedure sets out practical steps and procedures for the request for information from UNEP and for appealing the decision denying access to information.

According to the Access to Information Policy and the Standard Operating Procedures, the Access-to-Information Desk (located within the UNEP's Communications Division) receives all requests for information and appeals; acknowledges receipt of such requests and appeals; coordinates the consideration of and response to the request or appeal with the respective UNEP Offices, including the Access-to-Information Panel; and provides this information to the Requestor. All requests for information are centrally channeled through the Access-to-Information Desk. Other officers within UNEP can consult the Access-to-Information Desk regarding any requests in order to obtain relevant guidance about the Policy since the Desk is the Organisation's focal point on Access to Information matters.

As mentioned above, the Access-to-Information Desk is located in the Communications Division, which is the UNEP's Office responsible for responding to public enquiries. The head of the Access-to-Information Desk is the Chief, Digital Strategy, at the Communications Division or any other staff to whom the Communications Division shall assign this position.

#### **4. Implementation of the UNEP Access to Information Policy**

Following the adoption of the Access to Information Policy, UNEP has received one request for information (June 2016) from the International Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Elimination Network (IPEN) -an organization comprised of 700 participating organizations in 116 countries, primarily in low and middle-income countries- whose mandate is to establish and implement safe chemicals policies and practices that protect human health and the environment. IPEN requested information on two Memoranda of Understanding signed between UNEP and the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA). UNEP consulted with the International Council of Chemical Associations in line with the Access to Information Policy and the legal instruments were shared accordingly with IPEN.