



Council of the  
European Union

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#### INFORMATION NOTE

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Third Extraordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties (ex-MOP 3) to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) (Geneva, Switzerland, 23-24 June 2022) - Information from the Presidency and the Commission

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Delegations will find in the Annex, for information, a report from the Presidency and the Commission on the outcome of the abovementioned meeting.

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**Third Extraordinary session of the Meeting of the Parties (ex-MOP 3) to the Convention on  
Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in  
Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)  
(Geneva, Switzerland, 23-24 June 2022)**

**- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -**

The EU and its Member States and most other Parties to the Convention participated, as well as various UN agencies, NGOs and stakeholders. The EU and its Member States were satisfied with the outcome of the meeting and the decision adopted.

**Election of the Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders:**

Ex-MOP 3 elected Mr Michel Forst as the Convention's first Independent Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders, following the establishment of the Rapid Response Mechanism at the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties last October (MOP 7). The decision was adopted by consensus.

The Rapid Response Mechanism is intended to give persons who are harassed, penalised or persecuted for exercising their rights under the Convention, a quick and easily accessible complaint procedure.

This is the first such mechanism specifically safeguarding environmental defenders to be established within a legally binding framework either under the United Nations system or another intergovernmental structure. This is a major step to counter persecution of environmental human rights defenders in the UNECE region, whose protection against harassment is enshrined under Article 3(8) of the Convention.

The work will be done by a Special Rapporteur with the initial funding to be provided by Austria and Ireland. The first Special Rapporteur under the Convention, elected at the ex-MOP 3, will play a key role in shaping the new mechanism and ensuring its effectiveness.

Mr Michel Forst previously served as UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders and was considered to have experience that would enable him to become quickly operational for this new post.

In the presence of several qualified candidates, the EU played a key role in ensuring the election of the Special Rapporteur by consensus. In particular, the EU interviewed all four candidates in a transparent and open process and reached out to other Parties to the Convention in order to exchange views and to help build consensus. This broad support will help ensure the legitimacy of the mandate of the newly elected Special Rapporteur.

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