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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) Twenty-ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (WGP 29) (Geneva, 2-4 July 2025) - Statements by the EU and its Member States

Delegations will find in the [Annex](#), for information, a compilation of statements by the EU and its Member States delivered during the 29th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (WGP 29).

Aarhus Convention
Twenty-ninth meeting of the Working Group of the Parties (WGP 29)
(Geneva, 2-4 July 2025)

– Statements by the EU and its Member States –

Agenda item 1: Opening the meeting and adoption of the agenda

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues, I have the pleasure to take the floor on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Since this is our first intervention at this meeting, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Secretariat for the preparation of the Twenty Ninth meeting of the Working Group on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. We also wish to thank the interpreters, without you there would be no meeting. The European Union and its Member States agree with the agenda items as proposed and look forward to fruitful discussions and exchanges of views and an efficient meeting.

Agenda item 3 (a): Draft decision on promoting effective access to information

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau for preparing the draft decision VIII/1 on promoting effective access to information.

The EU and its Member States thank the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Information, the Representative of Moldova, and the Secretariat for their valuable work on this topic.

We take note of the outcomes of the ninth meeting of the Task Force on Access to Information held on the 7th to the 8th of November in Geneva.

We support the text as it stands.

Agenda item 3 (b): Draft decision on Promoting effective public participation in decision-making

The EU and its Member States thank the Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in decision-making, and Italy for leading the work undertaken by the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making and the Bureau for their valuable preparation of the draft decision.

In relation to the upcoming eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties, which will take place on the 17th to the 20th of November in Geneva, we welcome the task force's preparation of the draft decision taking into account the national implementation reports, the findings of the Compliance Committee, relevant case law of the Parties and the work carried out under the auspices of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making.

We can support the proposed Draft decision VIII/2 on promoting effective public participation in decision-making as it stands and we support asking the Bureau, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to prepare the document for decision-making at MoP 8.

Agenda item 3 (c): Draft decision on promoting effective access to justice

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau for preparing this draft decision on promoting effective access to justice.

We appreciate the work done by the Bureau on the draft decision and that many of the comments submitted by the EU and its Member States were taken into account.

We would like to thank Belgium for leading the Task Force on Access to Justice over the last years.

As already raised during the last WGP, an important topic for the next inter-sessional period should be access to justice in cases concerning environmental crimes. In this regard, the adoption on 14 May 2025 of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law should be mentioned. It is foreseen that the Convention will be open to signatures, even by non-Council of Europe Parties, on 3 December 2025. We'd like to use this opportunity to encourage Parties to do so without delay. At the EU level, we'd like to highlight the ongoing transposition by Member states of the new EU Environmental Crime Directive, which entered into force on 20 May 2024.

The EU and its Member States could approve the draft decision on promoting effective access to justice and we would like to ask the Bureau, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to prepare this decision for final decision making at MoP 8.

Agenda item 4 (a): Capacity-building and awareness-raising

The EU and its Member States welcome the work done by the Aarhus Convention Secretariat as well as other international organizations to raise awareness, provide training and exchange experiences with regard to the implementation of the Convention, as well as the activities undertaken by governments together with these international organizations.

We would like to thank the Secretariat for its continuous work done in building synergies and enhancing coordination with other international organizations within the Aarhus Convention capacity-building coordination framework, and we strongly support the use of electronic tools whenever it is possible for capacity-building and awareness-raising.

Agenda item 4 (b i): Compliance mechanism – Compliance Committee

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Compliance Committee and its Secretariat for the work done.

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Compliance Committee for its close engagement with the Parties in assisting the implementation of the three pillars of the Aarhus Convention and for the preparation of its meeting reports.

We would like to acknowledge the ongoing issue regarding services hybrid meetings and would like to offer our support regarding the obtaining of an exemption to the existing rules barring hybrid meetings.

Agenda item 4 (b ii): Compliance Mechanism - Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders

The EU and its Member States thank the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders, Michel Forst, for his dedication and the work done so far to strengthen the protection of environmental defenders and encourage him to continue this important work.

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for preparation of the draft Guidelines on the Right to Peaceful Environmental Protest and Civil Disobedience.

We thank the Special Rapporteur for considering our comments on the Guidelines.

We believe that the Guidelines could serve as an inspiration for the Parties to the Convention.

Agenda item 4 (c): Reporting Mechanism

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the secretariat and the Bureau for the draft Decision on Reporting requirements.

The EU and its Member States promote, acknowledge and appreciate the efforts in activities and encourage all Parties to submit by the agreed deadlines their national implementation reports.

We welcome the synthesis report prepared by the secretariat, as well as the reports submitted by stakeholders as we consider that these reports provide a valuable overview of the status of implementation of the Convention.

We can support the current proposal for a draft Decision on Reporting requirements and we support asking the Bureau, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to prepare the document for final decision making at MoP 8.

Agenda item 5 (a): Thematic session on promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums

The EU and its Member States thank the Chair of the thematic session on promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums and the Secretariat, for the organisation of this thematic session.

The EU and its Member States underline the importance of spreading information about the Aarhus Convention principles among international institutions, governments, non-governmental organisations and academia.

We notice that there is growing interest in the Aarhus Convention principles which is reflected in new Parties acceding to the Convention and new instruments similar to the Aarhus Convention that are developing in the world.

The EU and its Member States thank the Chair of the Thematic session for the note on the possible future directions for the work.

We would further like to thank the speakers in this thematic session. The EU and its Member States recognizes urgent challenges posed by desertification, land degradation, and drought, underscoring the critical need for a cohesive and integrated approach to environmental management across Aarhus Parties. Continued engagement and partnerships on desertification, land degradation, and drought are vital to foster sustainable development and addressing the multifaceted challenges of land degradation. We invite Parties to ensure Aarhus Rights are respected in international Forums on our way to achieving land-degradation neutrality.

Agenda item 5 (b): Draft decision promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau for preparing the draft VIII/4 on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums.

The EU and its Member States appreciate the work done by the Bureau on the draft decision.

We would like to express our gratitude to France for its leadership of this work area and we wish to also thank the Chair of the Thematic session for the note on the possible future directions for the work.

The EU and its Member States reiterate their commitment to ensuring participation of the public in meetings of international forums in matters relating to the environment at all relevant stages of the decision-making process, unless there is a reasonable basis to exclude such participation according to transparent and clearly stated standards that are made available in advance.

We can support the proposed draft decision VIII/4 on promoting the application of the principles of the Convention in international forums as it stands and we support asking the Bureau, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to prepare the document for decision-making at MoP 8.

Agenda item 6 (a): Draft provisional agenda for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties

The EU and its Member States thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for preparing draft elements of the provisional agenda of the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and the proposal to have a Joint high level segment of the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

The joint High-level segment is an important part of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and to the Protocol and it gives an occasion to highlight the role of the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol as unique instruments in strengthening the environmental democracy in the process of the implementation of several regional and global initiatives and commitments to the wider public through its declarations.

We agree to the proposed agenda and welcome the inclusion of important topics for consideration by the High-level Segment. The triple planetary crisis concerning climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution should be regarded as an overarching theme, with a focus on the role of the Convention and the Protocol in addressing this critical challenge.

Agenda item 6 (b): Draft decision on the work programme for 2026–2029

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for preparing a Draft decision on the work programme for 2026-2029.

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for taking our comments into account. In our view the current draft provides a good basis for effectively addressing the challenges foreseen in the Work Programme during the upcoming intersessional period.

The EU and its Member States acknowledge that the draft decision takes a similar approach as the current work programme in terms of including a thematic discussion on different substantive issues at each meeting of the Working Group of the Parties. A diverse working structure under the Convention would contribute to a better substantive preparation for meetings and would enhance the capacity of Parties to participate effectively in various meetings held under the Convention during the four year intersessional period.

In light of the above, we can approve the current proposal for a draft work programme for 2026 to 2029 and we support asking the Bureau, with the assistance of the Secretariat to prepare the work programme for final decision making at MoP 8.

Agenda item 7: Thematic session on genetically modified organisms

The EU and its Member States thank the Chair for the thematic session on genetically modified organisms and the Secretariat, for the organisation of this thematic session.

The EU and its Member States thank the Chair for the note outlining possible future directions for the work. We again welcome the fact that thanks to the ratification of the GMO amendment by Ukraine, the amendment has now entered into force.

We would like to highlight that the GMO amendment has been ratified by the European Union as mentioned by the panelists as well by Directive 2001/18/EC on the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms.

We recognize the potential impact on biodiversity that the release of GMOs might have on the environment and the important role that the Aarhus Convention, the Convention on Biodiversity and especially its Cartagena protocol play in managing these impacts. We encourage parties to submit their national report in time for the Global Review of Implementation that will take place at the Convention on Biodiversity COP17.

The priority substantive issues suggested by the note, the methods of work and supporting materials for the next inter-sessional period are a good basis for the drafting of a mandate and workplan of the thematic session to be decided by the next Meeting of the Parties in 2025.

Agenda item 8: Implementation of the work programme for 2022–2025, including financial matters

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Secretariat for providing the Report on the Implementation of the Convention's work programme for 2022-2025 and the Report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the Convention's work programme for 2022–2025, with an overview of the implementation of the work for the Convention.

We appreciate that the Secretariat made strenuous efforts to avoid duplication of work and inefficient use of resources by pursuing synergies with activities under other United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) multilateral environmental agreements, United Nations agencies and other partners.

We welcome the fact that thanks to the ratification of the GMO amendment by Ukraine, the amendment has now entered into force. We also welcome the fact that Uzbekistan acceded the Aarhus Convention on 25 March 2025.

We deeply appreciate all the work done by the Secretariat, its involvement in all the activities earmarked in the report and its great effort undertaken to make the functioning of the Convention smooth and stable.

Agenda item 9: Promotion and interlinkages with other regions and global processes

The EU and its Member States welcome the efforts and progress made by the Secretariat in promoting capacity-building and awareness-raising regarding the Aarhus Convention at international level in various international forums.

We appreciate the fact that the Secretariat organised a thematic session on the promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forum on this meeting of the Working Group of the Parties.

We also appreciate all the activities undertaken by the Secretariat to promote the Aarhus Convention including the work of the Special Rapporteur and providing advice to various academic bodies, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders.

The EU and its Member States welcome the fact that the Secretariat has continued, and will continue, its activities under this agenda item.

Agenda item 10: Practical preparations for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention for the information provided on the practical preparations for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties.

We would like to underline the importance of the upcoming Meeting of the Parties and call on all the Parties to the Convention to actively participate in the meeting.

Agenda item 12: Adoption of outcomes

The EU and its Member states convey their thanks to the Secretariat for the smooth organisation of the meeting.

The EU and its Member states also thank the Chair of the meeting, the interpreters and all the panellist for their clear and very informative presentations.
