

Dear Secretary General,

Once again thank you for all the support the Secretariat is providing for the work of the bodies of the Aarhus Convention. The last TF on Access to Justice was quite substantial and interesting.

Following up on the lively discussion we all had in this TF, may I insist that the outcome of such a body does not interfere with the work of the Compliance Committee.

As I said in the meeting, I was one of the drafter of the 3rd Report on Academic Freedom (- *Academic Freedom 3, Education and Human Rights*, co-edited with J. Daniel, N. Hartley, M. Nowak & F. de Vlaming, World University Service & Zed Books, Londres & Genève, 1995.) So I have a sign commitment for the liberty of discussion of any topic. But Convention bodies are not academic fora. A TF made of State and civil society experts is not mandated to comment the work of the official implementation organ of the convention (Which of course must be possible in any academic discussion). If the TF would be taking such a step, not only would it go over its mandate, but it would also create a mess in the relations and function of the Aarhus Convention Bodies and probably would trigger very strong debates and decisions at the next MOP.

May I also underline that the mandate of any TF is not to become an interpretative body of the Convention. If it was so, it would mean that we would have in the Convention several and competing sources of interpretation of a binding text. This would make its implementation by Parties quite problematic. TF are here to provide thoughts and guidance for its implementation, according to the mandate given by the MOPs.

As NGO we are very concerned to see attempts to change the functioning of the Convention bodies. We see this as a possible attempt by some Parties to avoid fulfilling their obligation under the Convention. This has not happened until now and we hope that the recognized efficiency of the Convention will not be jeopardized by any such destabilizing initiative.

Once again, many thanks for the support and the work for the Convention.

We look forward to reading the report of the TF.

Best Regards

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