

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE TO FOURTH SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES
TO THE CONVENTION ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION,
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE
IN ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS (AARHUS CONVENTION)**

Chisinau, 1 July 2011

*Delivered by Mr. Ján Kubiš, Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)*

I am pleased to send greetings to this important gathering.

The Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, which entered into force nearly a decade ago, is more important than ever.

This treaty's powerful twin protections for the environment and human rights can help us respond to many challenges facing our world, from climate change and the loss of biodiversity to air and water pollution. And the Convention's critical focus on involving the public is helping to keep governments accountable.

There have been many achievements over the past decade, including the entry into force of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, the first global legally binding instrument of its kind. The growing caseload of the Convention's Compliance Committee, which offers members of the public the opportunity to trigger action, is a healthy sign of constructive engagement.

The Convention is building synergies through cooperation with other international organizations, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Development Programme. Collaboration with international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is also yielding results.

I am pleased that your session will focus on the role of the Aarhus Convention in promoting sustainable development. As the international community gears up for the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, it is worth remembering that the Aarhus Convention is one of the major results of the Rio Declaration adopted at the first Earth Summit nearly 20 years ago. Your work at this session can help foster success at next year's vital Conference.

As the Convention enters its second decade, we applaud the accomplishments of the past while acknowledging the challenges ahead. I trust that the treaty's spirit of openness, participation and justice will ensure that the public stays constructively engaged in order to achieve even greater progress in the future.

I wish you a most successful session and look forward to its results.