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**Fifth Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention
and Second Meeting of the Parties to the PRTR Protocol**

Joint High-Level Segment

Maastricht, 2 July 2014

Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

by H.E. Elisabetta Rosi, Vice Head of Cabinet to the Minister of Environment, Italy

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

First of all I would like to warmly thank the Government of the Netherlands and the city of Maastricht for hosting the 5th Meeting of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention and the 2nd Meeting of the Parties of the PRTR Protocol. You have done an excellent job in hosting us. Additionally, we would like to express our sincere thanks to the Aarhus Secretariat for its contribution to the organization of this important meeting.

The European Union and its Member States support the Maastricht Declaration, which is the result of inclusive and constructive discussions among Parties, Signatories and stakeholders, where the priorities and concerns of all have been duly taken into account. We welcome the fact that the Maastricht declaration has taken into account the role of the Aarhus Convention and the PRTR Protocol in an increasingly digitalized society and the necessity to find ways to ensure safety for environmental activists and whistleblowers..

Through the approval of the Maastricht Declaration and of the new respective Convention and Protocol Strategic Plans for 2015-2020, we commit ourselves to further implement the three pillars of the Aarhus Convention and its PRTR Protocol. We feel that the Aarhus principles are more relevant than ever and should be ambitiously addressed in the ongoing and future discussions on the post-2015 agenda in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 43 of the Rio+20 outcome document "The Future We Want". Moreover, we are strongly committed to implement Article 3.7 of the Aarhus Convention, in particular the involvement and participation of stakeholders as a general rule in relevant international fora.

We would like to reaffirm our strong commitment to transparency and democracy, which will enable environmental decision-making to obtain a truly positive improvement for the living conditions of present and future generations. When citizens come together in applying the spirit of the Convention as voters, consumers or stakeholders, organize actions and make use of available technology, including the social networks, they have a positive and increasing impact on Governments decisions, thus furthering environmental democracy.

The Aarhus and PRTR experience of citizens active participation and positive interaction between Governments and civil society may serve as models for other regions. In this regard, we strongly welcome the ongoing process of developing a regional instrument for Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the Principle 10 Resolution adopted last week by the UNEA. We also welcome the establishment of PRTR systems in the Mediterranean region under the UNEP/Barcelona Convention, and in other countries outside the UNECE.

Madame minister,

The EU and its Member States remain committed to promote and implement the principles of the Convention and the Protocol.

I thank you for your attention.
