

Intervention by the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) on behalf of the ECO-Forum

Promotion of the Aarhus Principles at the UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA)

Thank you Madame Chair,

We are mindful of the continued support provided by Member States and the UN Environment Programme for Major Groups and Stakeholders' engagement in the UNEA process and appreciate the possibility to participate and remotely attend public meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives related to the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) preparatory processes, and access the documents online, including draft resolutions.

However, we would like to raise a few concerns that have risen over the years.

In light of the diminishing participation of Civil Societies in UNEP's decision-making processes, we urge Member States to restart working on the Stakeholder Engagement Policy, that –as noted by the UN Environment Programme – was failed to be agreed upon at each of the three UNEA sessions.

We want that participation and engagement are meaningful and effective: civil society interventions should *not* be relegated to the end of plenary meetings depending on time permissions and chairs' grace; moreover, civil societies should *not* be denied the possibility to attend and intervene during resolutions' drafting working groups.

We are concerned about the diminishing resources allocated to supporting civil society participation at UNEA, especially in light of the creation of a Private Sector Unit within UN Environment to foster partnership with businesses, as admitted also by UNEP. As noted by the Women's Major Group "the focus is shifting more and more towards private sector partnerships, engagement and participation. A good example is the fact that at the third meeting of the UNEA, Major Groups didn't get the usual core funding for participation, whilst at the same time UNEP did provide financing to a joint VOLVO campaign."

We are also concerned about the shrinking relegation of space: for instance, at the last UNEA, the space allocated for Major Groups' meetings was in an isolated plastic tent that was not well advertised, while in the previous sessions we were granted a 'green room'. Moreover, no official side events organized by major groups were accepted. In addition, at the BRS triple COPs, we are seeing more and more exclusions from contact groups and less possibilities to take the floor.

We would like to be consulted not only about the substantial topics of a meeting but also on the structural planning and the drafting of the agendas.

Environmental NGOs attending the UNEA would appreciate having the opportunity to intervene and speak in our own right during the UNEA process, and not only under the Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) umbrella.

Thank you.