

24th Meeting of the Working Group to the Aarhus Convention
(28-29 October 2020)

Agenda item 7 (b): Draft Strategic Plan for 2022-2030

Norway

Thank you Chair,

Norway would like to thank the Secretariat and the Bureau for preparing the draft.

Norway supports the draft as it stands now.

It is important to highlight the contributions of the Convention to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Given the increased challenges that environmental human rights defenders face and the priority Norway gives to their protection, it is also important to highlight the need for effective measures for their protection in the new strategic plan. The increased focus on implementation of Compliance Committee's findings and recommendations and the subsequent decisions taken by the Meeting of the Parties is also important. The advancement and increased use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital transformation bring both new opportunities and challenges for the promotion of environmental democracy. This, including the implementation of relevant e-Government, open Government and open Government data initiatives, are therefore also important issues for the next period.

We take this opportunity to comment upon the comments from the EU to the draft Strategic Plan in their statement at the July meeting.

With regard to Objective I.2, National, Indicative types of activity/measures, 2nd paragraph: The EU proposal is in our opinion not necessary. The Strategic Plan can not alter the obligations of the Parties or the competencies of the Compliance Committee pursuant to [MOP Decision I/7](#), section XI para 36 litra (b). The text of the Strategic Plan therefore has to be read within the framework of that decision. It therefore presupposes that findings and recommendations are made in accordance with Decision I/7. Furthermore, the wording "*as far as possible*" in the text

of the Plan clearly signals that this is not an obligation to go further than what the Party is obliged to pursuant to Decision I/7. To make this clearer and to align the language closer to [Decision VI/8](#) on general issues of compliance para 3 and thus hopefully also meet the concerns of the EU, the text of the Plan could be amended to read as follows:

*"To ensure that compliance issues are addressed without delay, individual Parties **shall do their utmost to, as far as possible, promptly and fully implement the Committee's findings and recommendations prior to the next session of the Meeting of the Parties, where the Party concerned has agreed that the Committee may make recommendations to them directly** "*

With regard to Objective I.2 National, Indicators of progress/targets, 3rd paragraph: The EU proposal is even less necessary here, especially with the changes just mentioned that we propose to accommodate the concerns of the EU. This is an indicator of progress in implementing the indicative measure which, with those changes, refers to the need for agreement with the Party concerned.

With regard to Objective I.2 International, Indicators of progress/targets, 1st paragraph: Although we agree that endorsement of the Compliance Committee's findings and recommendations are not an explicit obligation in the Convention or Decision I/7, it has been the long-standing and consistent practice of the Meeting of the Parties to endorse the findings of the Compliance Committee and recommend to the Party concerned to take actions in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee. Furthermore, the text of the Strategic Plan can not alter the obligations of the Parties pursuant to the Convention or the competencies of the Compliance Committee pursuant to Decision I/7. It is an indicator of progress, not an obligation. However, in order to make an effort to accommodate the EU, the text of the Plan could be amended to read as follows to clarify that endorsement is a practice not an obligation:

*Adoption of the findings and recommendations by the Compliance Committee, and ~~endorsement by the Meeting of the Parties of the Compliance Committee's findings and recommendations~~ **and adoption by the Meeting of the Parties of draft decisions on compliance endorsing those findings and recommendations in accordance with the long-standing and consistent practice to do so.**]*

Thank you Chair