

Good afternoon ladies, gentlemen and Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this session concerning a set of highly controversial, large-scale technologies known under the umbrella term of climate geoengineering.

Geoengineering refers to a set of proposed techniques to intervene in and alter earth systems on a large scale, particularly through manipulating the climate system. They carry a risk of very serious impacts on humans and ecosystems, and might even exacerbate the climate crisis as well as crises of biodiversity loss, ecosystem destruction, human rights violations, and global inequalities. They pose a threat to democracy and international security. There are also serious concerns that they risk delaying climate action in the hope of a technological fix until a point where it is too late.

An international voluntary standard which effectively enables geoengineering is currently being developed within the International Standards Organisation (ISO) process. The ISO, or International Organisation for Standardisation is a non-governmental international organisation that describes itself as developing voluntary, consensus-based specifications for products, services and systems. The ISO is made up of members from the national standards bodies of 164 countries. However the industry-led process through which the draft is developed is closed and confidential..

A draft of the standard was leaked and although the ISO responded by claiming that geoengineering was excluded from it, the draft contained unclear definitions and implicit references to technologies that would fall within the definition of geoengineering, enabling their deployment. In addition, requirements for transparency and community engagement in the draft were minimal.

On behalf of the NGO ECOS, I have been a liaison to the Working Group at the ISO discussing this standard for the past few months, have attended several working group meetings and have access to the relevant documents including the most recent drafts. However, I am here today speaking on behalf of HBF, CIEL and ETC Group. However ISO rules prohibit me from communicating externally about the drafts, the proceedings and discussions. Nevertheless I feel I should not be prevented from at least explaining that the concerns raised relating to the leaked draft discussed above have not been resolved.

The ISO policy on communication of committee work states that committee and working group documents shall not be shared externally and reproduction and distribution of content from draft standards at all stages of development is not permitted. While these standards effectively limit public awareness of or input into ISO processes, industry input into these same processes is often extensive. There are currently a discrete number of experts developing these rules in the industry-led ISO process.

Although the proposed standard, as well as the high-risk geoengineering technologies to which it effectively opens the door, are highly controversial and have been subject to very controversial governance debates in multilateral fora, its development is being driven by actors with commercial interests in its adoption. However, the wide-ranging nature of geoengineering proposals and their potential impacts make them relevant to a wide range of MEAs, including the UNFCCC, the UN Environment Assembly, the UN Biodiversity Convention, and the Aarhus Convention.

NGOS therefore have grave concerns about these concerns taking place within an industry-led body when they relate to questions of values and policy, in which public participation is key. The draft standard risks enabling geoengineering technologies and so pre-empting discussions in multilateral fora about the wisdom of deploying them.

We are very pleased that there will be a panel at the next PPIF session in Spring to discuss this topic further. For now, we would urge Aarhus parties to increase their awareness of the ISO process and the discussions taking place relating to this proposed standard. We would in particular urge them to look at the rules around public participation and whether key matters of human rights, environmental policy and wider questions about the appropriateness of geoengineering should be being discussed behind closed doors in a commercial body. I thank you for your attention and look forward to exploring this issue more fully in the Spring.

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