

Aarhus Convention
25th Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (WGP 25)
(Geneva, 3 May 2021)

– Statement by the EU and its Member States –

Agenda item 3: Reports by the Chairs of the task forces and other updates on recent developments in the areas of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice – public participation in decision-making

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Chair of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making and the Secretariat for their work on this topic.

We welcome the outcomes of the 9th meeting of the Task Force on Public Participation in Decision-making under the Aarhus Convention (Geneva, 1-2 March 2021).

The EU and its Member States welcome the discussion of the participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups in decision-making and agree that the COVID-19 pandemic cannot justify restrictions of the public's right to participation in environmental matters, in particular of vulnerable and marginalized groups. We thank the exchange of practices that facilitate a more effective public participation without entailing additional significant resources on the part of public authorities.

The EU and its Member States acknowledge that the issue of emerging technologies is rather unknown to the general public and, therefore, an awareness raising to facilitate the public's involvement in decision-making will be required. We express concern that the impacts of emerging technologies are not fully known, and recognize that it is important to apply a precautionary principle when considering decision-making on such technologies while, at the same time, take into account the need for allowing scientific progress.

We support the highlight that ensuring effective public participation in decision-making in matters related to extractive industries sector, energy and climate is critical not only for fulfilment of national legislation and commitments, but also for implementation of a number of international commitments, notably the Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.