



Slot I.2: Thematic session on promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forum

Promotion of the Convention's principles in the international trade negotiations

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We think that under the Aarhus Convention more emphasis should be done on public participation in trade and the WTO negotiations.

Marrakesh Agreement Establishing of the *World Trade Organization* of 1995 put clear objectives of sustainable development and protection of the environment. Despite recent important WTO initiatives related to environmental sustainability (including climate change, plastic pollution, circular economy; biodiversity loss), these goals are clearly not yet achieved.

We worry that, environmental impacts of production and trade are not adequately regulated under the WTO rules and that the dispute settlement mechanism is at a standstill. and civil society is not sufficiently involved.

These issues are especially relevant, as the WTO is set to undergo a reform. We do not know yet how it will be reformed, but there is no dispute that there are problems with its transparency and participation of all the stakeholders.

Therefore, the Aarhus parties (all of them are also the WTO members or accession countries) have a clear opportunity and obligation under Article 3(7) to promote the principles of the Convention in the reform of the WTO.

Another problem has been related to the need for increased transparency and public engagement in the negotiating of *the bilateral trade agreements and trade-related multilateral regional agreements* (such as the Eurasian Economic Union, the Belt and Road Initiative). Despite some good practice in the region in this area, there is lack of adequate civil society access to information and public participation.

We suggest to organize a thematic panel on trade and public participation at the next Meeting of the Parties to discuss the most effective tools of access to information and public participation in trade, as well as possible actions at the national and international levels to improve the situation and successfully achieve SDGs.

WTO members can also raise the issues of transparency and civil society participation at the next 12th WTO *Ministerial Conference* which will take place in November-December **2021** in Geneva.

Thank you for your attention.