

**Working Group of Parties of the Aarhus Convention, Twenty-fifth meeting Geneva, 3 May, 2021
Agenda item 2. Thematic session on promotion of the principles of the Convention in international forums.**

Intervention on behalf of Eco Forum, Magdolna Tóthné dr. Nagy, Guta Environmental Law Association

Madame Chair, and All,

On behalf of the European Eco Forum, we warmly welcome the entry into force of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Escazú Agreement, which took place on April 22nd, 2021, International Earth Day. The Agreement was adopted on March 4th, 2018 in Escazú, Costa Rica, and to date has been ratified by 12 Parties and signed by 24 Signatories. This first ever environmental agreement in Latin America and the Caribbean, therefore, as Ms. Alicia Bárcena, ECLAC's Executive Secretary said in her speech, it „is writing a new chapter in terms of strengthening environmental democracy and sustainable development.” While drawing inspiration from the Aarhus Convention, this treaty is the first, globally, to include a specific article for the promotion and protection of human rights defenders in environmental matters, guaranteeing safe and enabling environment for them. It also devotes particular attention to persons or groups in vulnerable situation to facilitate the exercise of their access rights.

During the past years, the Secretariat, Bureau, Chair and some members of the Compliance Committee, as well as some CSOs, have supported the development and ratification of this agreement, by sharing their experience including implementing a few projects funded by some Aarhus Parties. The entry into force of this treaty opens up now new opportunities for a more strategic and systematic cooperation between the Aarhus Convention and the Escazú Agreement to which it is worth to give more attention. This cooperation could imply not only support by the mentioned Aarhus bodies and actors but also a more direct interaction and cooperation with the Aarhus Task Forces on the implementation of the three pillars, the Compliance Committee, and on other key issues, such as on public participation in international forum.

The Escazú Agreement has a similar paragraph in its Article 4. 10 (i.e. „Parties may promote knowledge of the provisions of the present Agreement in other international forums related to the environment, in accordance with the rules of each forum.”), as the Aarhus Convention, Article 3.7. As this instrument just steps into the phase of practical implementation, opportunities arise for exchange of information, sharing of experience and good practices of promoting these principles by the Parties of these agreements, on the transparency, the scope of involvement of the public in different fora, etc., for example, in form of a joint workshop or seminar. Due to the rich experience, the Aarhus Convention could offer assistance and capacity building on how Article 3.7 is applied in practice, what key issues and activities the PPIF Task Force, and under the current arrangements, the PPIF sessions in the framework of the WGoP, have tackled, and what has been achieved in the different international fora. Specifically, the Parties of the two agreements could exchange views and cooperate in different international fora, promoting their (similar) principles on access rights, strengthening their application, and increase the transparency and involvement of the public in those fora.

We thank for the kind support given so far by the Aarhus Convention bodies and Aarhus community to the Escazú Agreement, and call on Aarhus Parties, CSOs and other stakeholders to support more actively in the future the implementation of the Escazú Agreement, discuss a more strategic approach, and be involved in more concrete forms of the cooperation with this agreement.

Thank you!