

**25th Meeting of the Working Group to the Aarhus Convention
(Virtual, 7-8 June 2021)
Agenda item 9(g): Work programme for 2022-2025**

Norway

Thank you Chair,

Norway would like to thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for the draft decision on the work programme.

We support the draft as originally proposed.

The proposed work-programme entails additional costs. These additional costs are however linked to issues and functions that are important to ensure that the rights and obligations of the Convention are well known, fully and correctly implemented and applied and also promoted in other relevant processes and forums. Civil and political human rights, including the rights provided by the Convention in the environmental field, are crucial in order for us to address the challenges we face due to climate change, the global nature crisis, pollution and covid-19 and obtain the sustainable development goals. The resolution on environmental human rights defenders that was adopted by consensus in the UN Human Rights Council last year, and the Information note on the situation regarding environmental defenders in the Aarhus Parties from 2017 to date, shows that these rights are under pressure.

Covid-19 puts pressure on our economies. However, if we do not preserve the tools we need to tackle this challenge the challenges to our climate and environment, we may face even greater challenges to our economies in our near future.

This does not mean that we should not carefully consider the costs and possibilities for reducing them without putting the efficient implementation and application of the Convention and the enjoyment of the rights it provides at risk.

The possibility of increasing the use of digital platforms for the work under the Convention and thus save travel costs are among those that should be carefully considered while securing the rights under the Convention.

Based on our experiences especially during the last year of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the use of digital platforms have increased enormously, such platforms provide a useful tool for meetings and exchanges. We therefore think it is worth exploring the opportunity to increase the use of electronic tools in the

work under the Convention, including its Task Forces. The virtual meetings of this Working Group is a useful experience in this regard. We should however also be aware of the challenges and limitations that digital platforms have. We should therefore think carefully about whether and to what extent physical meetings could be wholly or partially replaced with virtual meetings.