



Statement at the 25th Working Group of the Parties of the Aarhus Convention Public Participation in International Forums: UN Climate Change Negotiations

Monday 7th June 2021

Good afternoon dear delegates and colleagues.

My name is Anna Blake of the Center for International Environmental Law.

We welcome the constructive engagement among Aarhus Parties today with regards to the finalization of the draft decision on PPIF. The decision highlights a lot of important elements that are critical to ensuring that decisions made in international forums do not undermine the principles of the Aarhus Convention, but that contribute to promoting the rights protected under the Convention - both in Aarhus parties and in other regions of the world.

This inclusive process, constructive engagement, and commitment is unfortunately not the norm in many international forums and we continue to see many of these forums not living up to the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and participation.

Many international processes have resumed their work over the past weeks, including for instance the UN climate negotiations taking place in a virtual setting. In many of these forums, serious obstacles hinder civil society participation, such as fewer opportunities for observers to contribute effectively into substantive discussions and too many sessions being closed to observers.

These issues are clearly exacerbated by the virtual setting used for the negotiations.

In this context, the ability of Aarhus Parties to fulfil their obligation under article 3.7 appears to continue being seriously limited due to many delegates representing Aarhus Parties in these forums being oblivious of the States' obligation under article 3.7.

Parties cannot be expected to fulfil their obligations under the Convention if the delegates representing them in international forums are not even aware of their obligations under the Aarhus Convention as it relates to their mandate.

In the context of the ongoing climate talks, we do see that when Aarhus Parties challenge modalities infringing the principles of transparent and inclusive decision making, these interventions have a positive impact on the negotiations. Aarhus parties are even more impactful when they work with governments from other regions - with delegates representing Parties of the Escazu Agreement constituting natural allies.



We therefore urge all delegates to Aarhus Parties participating to work with their colleagues following international forums falling under the scope of the Convention to ensure that their positions and interventions fulfil their Aarhus obligations.

Please let me conclude by thanking the Secretariat, the chair of the thematic session, and France as the country leading this work and by recognizing the work that many of you in this virtual room are doing to ensure that your governments live up to their obligation under article 3.7 of the Convention.

We hope that the next intersessional period can be used to ensure that international forums related to the environment do actually reflect the principles of the Aarhus Conventions in their modalities and in their substantive outcomes.

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