

Aarhus Convention WGP-25

Agenda item 9(e), Rapid response mechanism to deal with cases related to article 3 (8) of the Convention

**European ECO Forum draft general statement on agenda item 9(e)**

*To be delivered by Andriy Andrushevych (Resource & Analysis Center "Society and Environment")*

We are thrilled to see the RRM has moved forward from a plea to discussion of draft modalities. We are thankful to all parties for what seems to be an overwhelming support to establishing Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), in particular the EU and its member-states, as well as Norway and Switzerland, and the Bureau, and the Secretariat.

This is very in line with recent developments at the EU level regarding effects of climate change on human rights and the role of environmental defenders on this matter.

UNECE countries are not at the world top list of regions where environmental activists face real threats, but unfortunately it happens.

When it happens, it hits the very heart of the Convention: the people who are entitled to enjoy the rights. Every harassment or persecution brings multiple scars – from personal pain and to general fear and discouragement. Every time someone is penalized for trying to participate or express it concerns over environmental issues, we are many steps back from where the Convention was bringing us to.

We are confident now that RRM will be adopted at the coming MOP. For this to happen, we all made constructive efforts – and a few remain to be made today – to reach a consensus during a dialogue and with the help of the Secretariat and the Bureau.

After RRM is adopted, efforts will need to be invested to develop effective, balanced and practical approaches to deal with such sensitive situations and ensure necessary resources for RRM itself.

*This text may be amended in the course of WGP.*