

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Compliance Committee of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

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**Comments on Draft report to the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties on the progress by the Party concerned to implement decision VI/8c concerning compliance by Belarus.**

Dear Mr Chairman, distinguished members of the Committee,

The Public Association Ecohome appreciates the opportunity to submit commentaries on Draft Report designed by Compliance Committee.

There are remarks on some report issues:

Para 49. Inter-ministerial working group established by Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Belarus *for coordinating of drafting* National Report to MoP 7 and VI/8c Decision implementation unfortunately was absolutely useless and formal. There was no group meeting (or I was not invited there being a representative of Ecohome) and only one opportunity to discuss National Report issues was on Public Environmental Council Session on October 30, 2020. Prior to this session we're submitted our statement on the 24<sup>th</sup> session of the Working Group of Parties (October 28-29, 2020) about inadequate brutal persecution concerning civil society activists as well environmental activists after presidential elections in August 2020 in Belarus.

Due to indifferent attitude of Ministry of Environment and absence of any kind of reaction of national focal point in situation of total harassment to environmental activist we're decided not to participate this meeting.

There were no any other meetings of working group. It was much better on National Report drafting prior to MoP 6 in 2017 when we has less formal meeting in Aarhus Center and work together on report.

Paras 55-66. There are no changes and still no provisions on informing public in effective way in national legislation and practice.

Paras 83-86. There is still no final decision defined in national legislation and no opportunity to public to participate in *environmental decision making* – there is still only opportunity to discuss EIA report, but EIA does not mean decision.

Paras 104-116. The situation about persecution just getting worse. In the very beginning of July we're received from Ministry of Justice a request to present for revision a huge part of our NGO's documentation, including letters (a scanned copy

in Russian is enclosed). Usually, such kind of revision precedes repressive measures by the Ministry of Justice and the liquidation of the organization.

A week later (July 15-17) three-days action in all the country was presented by police forces – more than 20 offices and locations of NGO activists, journalists and human rights defenders were searched, more than 10 people arrested.

On July 15, 2021 Mr Aliaksand Kapucki, environmental activist from Molodechno, was detained but released by evening.

On July 9, 2021 Ms Maria Voytovich was arrested. She is environmental activist from Borovaya district.

On July 16, 2021 a home of Ms Marina Dubina, executive director of Ecohome, was searched. She was not at home that moment. Later police forces tried to get into Ecohome office but unsuccessfully.

Unfortunately, current situation in Belarus does not let to find any signs of MoP Decision implementation and present completely in compliance with Convention.

On behalf of Ecohome NGO

Siarhei Mahonau  
Legal advisor  
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