

**Joint High-level Segment
Geneva, 21 October 2021**

Item 4 of the provisional agenda: “Geneva Declaration on Environmental Democracy for Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Development”

Statement by Italy

I am very pleased to be here today and I very much welcome the opportunity of today’s high-level segment providing a setting to discuss the role of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol in promoting sustainable, inclusive and resilient development, and the commitment of the Convention’s and Protocol’s Parties in that regard.

Italy is Party to the Aarhus Convention since 2001, and on 23 November 2020, became Party to the UNECE Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) to the Aarhus Convention, confirming its commitment to closely cooperate for the establishment of a coherent, integrated, and legally binding international instrument on PRTRs.

Italy welcomes the draft Declaration on Environmental Democracy for Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Development focusing on the potential role of the UNECE Aarhus Convention, and its Protocol, *in promoting transparency and effective and inclusive public participation in decision-making on policies, plans and projects related to large infrastructure and spatial planning, including in the transboundary context, and in safeguarding the rule of law in this complex setting.*

It reflects our common purpose to put our ambition into action and scale-up efforts to drive system-wide transformations that are *sustainable, environmentally viable, socially acceptable and healthy.*

Italy is firmly committed to encouraging Spatial planning policies in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. Modern planning approaches should be environmentally friendly, socially desirable and economically fair, taking into due account the complex structures and interactions that occur at regional level.

Whether spatial planning systems are prepared to deal with contemporary regional challenges is strongly dependent on their capacity to promote integration between policy sectors, to respond adaptively to changing societal and political conditions, and to ensure effective public participation in decision-making processes.

The challenges of developing and delivering sustainable infrastructure and making progress towards the Agenda 2030 are interconnected: addressing them requires integrated policy approaches at national, international and global levels, capable to deliver integrated, adaptive and collective planning decisions.

2021 is a very important year for Italy: we are holding for the first time the presidency of G20. Italy is also partner of UK in the Presidency of COP 26 of the United Nation Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC). All events organized under the G20 and COP26 partnership have been inspired by the principle of wider participation and of transparency, ensuring the involvement of the civil society and stakeholders’ constituencies, having great awareness raising potential for the public.

The three central issues of integration, adaption and participation are today of paramount importance when dealing with problems such as climate change, energy security and social injustice

with the aim to put in place actions for a planet's post COVID-19 recovery in line with the objectives of the Agenda 2030, and the Paris Agreement goals.

In this context, the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol represent key instruments for environmental democracy and Italy is willing to continue supporting them, thus contributing to a strengthened role and a more effective implementation.

Thank you.