

Statement of Tatjana Hema, UNEP/MAP Coordinator

Joint High-Level Segment (HLS) under the Meetings of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs

Agenda item 4 “Geneva Declaration on Environmental Democracy for Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Development”

Thursday 21 October, from 3.40–5.15 p.m CET.

Ministers and heads of delegation of Parties, signatories, other States and international, regional and non-governmental organizations, together with other representatives of civil society, will be invited to consider and adopt a declaration.

Documentation: [Draft Geneva Declaration on Environmental Democracy for Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Development \(ECE/MP.PP/2021/17–ECE/MP.PRTR/2021/3\)](#)

Excellencies, esteemed delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored and very pleased to address on UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention behalf the Joint High-Level Segment (HLS) under the Meetings of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs. Please allow me to start by congratulating on the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Aarhus Convention the major importance to strengthen environmental democracy and sustainability of which we do all acknowledge.

Created 45 years ago, the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system as part of UNEP regional Seas Programme, brings together 21 Mediterranean countries, the European Union and many partners within a unique normative and implementation framework to fulfill the vision of a healthy Mediterranean Sea and coast that underpin sustainable development of this extraordinary basin sitting at the intersection of three continents.

The science encapsulated the UNEP/MAP report on the [State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean \(SoED\)](#) and the [First Mediterranean Assessment Report \(MAR 1\)](#) prepared by the network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC) tells us that the Mediterranean is suffering due to unsustainable development trajectories.

This region, which is home to 512 million people, is experiencing acute symptoms of the triple environmental crisis of pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change.

Around 730 tons of plastic waste arrive to the sea every day. 1’000 non-indigenous invasive species have been recorded. Crop productivity is expected to decrease by 20% by 2080. The Mediterranean is also a hotspot for climate change, with warming occurring 20% faster than the global average. By the end of the century, the sea level is likely to rise up to 2.5m, putting at risk more than 20 million people.

The message is clear: there is a strong demand for a prompt and adequate response.

The time is ripe for a post-COVID recovery that sees Mediterranean economy take off on more sustainable, inclusive and resilient grounds.

The full implementation of obligations of the Barcelona Convention by the Contracting Parties and the participation of stakeholders, including civil society organizations, businesses and informed citizens, constitute crucial building blocks for a green recovery in the Mediterranean and our work at UNEP/MAP.

In this context regional cooperation is very important and it is imperative to join forces to make our action impactful. I would like to give you some examples of bilateral collaboration with Aarhus Convention and its PRTR protocol, especially since 12 out of the 22 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention are already Parties to the Aarhus Convention

The creation of the Compliance Committee in 2008 reflects the firm commitment of the 22 Contracting Parties to achieve implementation of and compliance with the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

Collaboration with the Compliance Committee of the Aarhus Convention has been significantly strengthened during the last two years.

We look forward to continuing working together.

In addition, steps have been taken by all Contracting Parties to monitor and control industrial pollution under the Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol), through legally binding concrete regional measures adopted by the CPs.

This include a lot of efforts to build PRTR and we have closely collaborated with your PRTR protocol in building capacities in the southern Mediterranean countries and exchanging best practices and I was very pleased to hear the presentation by Israel on their experience on PRTR to which both our programmes and institutions have contributed together. We plan to expand our collaboration in the future.

Enforcement by Contracting Parties remains challenging due to institutional and capacity gaps. More systematic enforcement instruments should be included in national environmental policies, including economic instruments as well as public access to information which may urge more compliance by stakeholders.

We both in collaboration with -Aarhus Convention and PRTR protocol Secretariat should promote and support modernization and digitalization of environmental information systems, making the best use of PRTRs with effective access to environmental information.

Adopted in 2016, the MSSD provides a blueprint for green action aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

The strategy has been devised by the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), an inclusive forum for experience sharing and peer learning under the Barcelona Convention. The Commission includes not only government representatives but also local authorities, socio-economic actors, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, the scientific community and parliamentarians.

The MCSD is instrumental in our efforts to promote the engagement of all stakeholders to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision-making. This is at the heart of what I believe is the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system's contribution to upholding the principles enshrined in Aarhus Convention, notably those pertaining to environmental democracy and participatory governance.

The agenda of the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, to be held in Antalya, Turkey, from 7 to 10 December 2021, includes decisions that will contribute to shaping the future of the region in the post-COVID era, including an ambitious UNEP/MAP Medium-term Strategy (2022-2027) with an enabling Programme dedicated to advocacy, communication and knowledge.

We remain committed to informing the public on the state of the environment and development with a view to enhancing awareness and facilitating access to science and ensuring the participation of stakeholders.

Congratulations again for your achievements and I look forward to our strengthened collaboration to enhance the impact of our work in our regions.

Thank you for your attention,