

**Joint High-level Segment under the Meetings of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention
and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers**

ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao

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OPENING REMARKS

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my honour to address today's joint high-level segment.

You are meeting at a time of extraordinary digital transformation, with ICTs allowing for environmental data and information to be measured and assessed in near real time.

ICTs also strengthen transparency, facilitating the participation of the public in the environmental decision-making process in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

ITU, as the UN specialized agency for ICTs, plays an important part in making all this possible.

ITU standards help implement cost-effective, interoperable digital infrastructure to collect, analyze and disseminate environmental data.

These standards help foster a more accessible digital ecosystem – one where the public can effectively exercise their rights under the Convention.

Yet almost half of the world's population is still unconnected.

I call on you to accelerate the digitalization of environmental information systems.

Together, let us bring the benefits of ICTs to everyone.

Let us ensure effective access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters to all.

I wish you a successful joint high-level segment.

Thank you.