

**Speech delivered by Ms. Nino Tandilashvili, the Deputy Minister of
Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
at the Joint High-Level Segment of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on
PRTRs**

21 October 2021
Geneva, Switzerland

[High-level official from the UNECE],
Excellences,
Distinguished delegates,

I am extremely honoured and pleased to be here today and participate in the Joint High Level Segment of the meetings of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs at which, along with addressing a wide range of topics of environmental democracy, we are marking the twenty anniversary of the entry into force of the Aarhus Convention.

At the outset, on behalf of the Government of Georgia, I would like to express our deep regret for not having these meetings in my country, Georgia, for which we were preparing with great responsibility and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on this direction too. I would like to use this opportunity to convey our sincere thankfulness to the Aarhus Convention Secretariat for its assistance and flexibility in this situation and a huge effort made for organizing the meetings of the Parties.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the outcome documents of the meetings, which are fundamental instruments for our future activities under the Convention and its Protocol, let me refer to a persuasive, progressive, and ambitious *Geneva Declaration on Environmental Democracy for Sustainable, Inclusive, and Resilient Development*. Some main aspects in the Declaration are worth to be underlined. The first is that along with different successes, it notes the “*tangible positive changes across the ECE region and beyond*” that has been done, and which we consider as one of the main achievements. Further, referring to the challenges we are facing, the Declaration indicates the necessity of enhanced actions for not only maintaining but also strengthening the achievements and results under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol. We consider this approach of utmost importance.

All the Parties to these treaties have made different progress. I can firmly declare that, committed to *strengthening environmental democracy for sustainable, inclusive and resilient development*, Georgia also strives all its efforts towards effective implementation of the Aarhus Convention by developing legislative

framework, enforcement mechanism and implementing tools. As examples I can mention an Environmental Assessment Code that is in compliance with the respective EU directives and international treaties, which establishes new principles and approaches towards public participation; as well as a recently adopted Law on Environmental Liability. Furthermore, state control and accountability mechanisms under the Environmental Supervision Department are progressively improving and strengthened for effective enforcement. To facilitate the shearing of and access to environmental information different electronic portals have been updated and developed according to international standards. Considering a quality and high standard, one of them - Georgia's Air Quality Portal is integrated with the European one. Besides, Environmental Information and Education Centre under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia has been strengthened to further promote the implementation of the Convention and its Protocol in practice through facilitating access to environmental information and public participation, awareness-raising on environmental human rights, environmental democracy and the principles of sustainable development, education for sustainable development and others.

Of course, this is not a full list of our achievements. But, as it is highlighted in the Geneva Declaration, more important is our intention - continuously improve them. The Government of Georgia considers it critical to ensure that, along with the public officials, the whole society is strong, very active and highly demanding towards the government in protecting the environment. We can perform more effectively and meet the challenges we are facing only together, with a sustainable and resilient society.

Distinguished delegates,

Reviewing and summing up the activities carried out by all of us, the Geneva Declaration states that a lot have been achieved. But, I strongly believe that we have the capacity to do more. We affirm in the Declaration that continuous improvement of our achievements in environmental democracy both at the national and international levels is essential. Furthermore, we have to strive our efforts to ensure that "Aarhus Family" is expanded and become even stronger; and the principles of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs are applied in many countries around the world.

Thank you.