

Remarks by Ms. Alicia Bárcena

7th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and 4th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kiev Protocol

21 October 2021

Honorable Chairperson, H.E. Mr. Levan Davitashvili, Madam Executive Secretary of UNECE, dear friend Olga Algayerova, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues and friends,

I am honored to address this Joint High-level Segment of the 7th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and 4th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kiev Protocol. Firstly, allow me to warmly congratulate all Parties, UNECE and the Aarhus family as a whole for this Convention's twentieth anniversary since its entry into force. This is a remarkable achievement and a source of inspiration for us in Latin America and the Caribbean. As you know, we ourselves recently celebrated the last 22 April 2021 the entry into force of the Escazú Agreement -the youngest environmental treaty inspired greatly by your successful experience- with enthusiasm and optimism, particularly in these notably complex and difficult times.

Latin America and the Caribbean is well aware of the environmental, climate, biodiversity and human rights crises that the world is experiencing today. Particular attention must be paid to the situation of the environmental defenders, as Latin America continues to be the most dangerous region to stand up for the environment.

Since its inception, the Escazú Agreement has greatly benefitted from the experience and cooperation of the Aarhus Convention, for which we are extremely grateful. The obligation to promote the Aarhus principles in international environmental decision-making processes as well as the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register Protocol's international cooperation provisions have set the stage for a fruitful collaboration between our regions. We also welcome your willingness to continue to cooperate with us, as outlined in the Geneva Declaration. It is our hope that such cooperation will intensify even more now that the Escazú Agreement is in force,

requiring to kick-start the operations of its core bodies, such as the first COP, which will be held in April 2022, as well as the Compliance Committee and the Secretariat, and lay solid foundations for effective implementation nationally and regionally.

Instruments such as the Aarhus Convention and the Escazú Agreement are mutually reinforcing and contribute to the realization of environmental democracy, access to information and participation with full entitlement of rights. Through them, all sectors of society can reach ambitious and long-lasting pacts to build a more just, inclusive and sustainable future. This is more important than ever specially in the COVID context and must inspire our efforts to build forward better to fully implement the 2030 Development Agenda for Sustainable Development. Let's continue to work together to make environmental access rights a reality for all.

I thank you.