

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)

Item 3 of the Agenda

Thematic session on the role of the Convention and its Protocol in promoting sustainable infrastructure and spatial planning

Timing: Thursday, 21 October, 3–3.40 p.m.

Dear Chair, excellences, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

1. I am honoured to address you today at this historical event during which the Geneva Declaration will be adopted.

Allow me to congratulate all the Aarhus community with the 20th anniversary of the Aarhus Convention.

2. Adoption and implementation of the Aarhus Convention is crucial for assuring the human right to a healthy and clean environment.

Through these 20 years much has been done to ensure that the voice of the public is heard and respected.

But many challenges still lie ahead.

3. Over the last century, Lithuania has undergone many historical changes. It has lost and twice regained its independence.

Along with these changes Lithuanian society has matured, the public has regained its voice and the people have learned to express their opinion without fear of being persecuted.

Being a member of the Aarhus family has been one of the tools that helped us move towards an open, transparent and conscious society, learn to accept and listen to differing opinions and conduct a dialogue based on mutual respect.

4. Now Lithuanian society is better aware of the principles and spirit of the Aarhus Convention.

It actively participates in the environmental decision-making process.

5. Lithuania continuously amends and reviews its legislation seeking to ensure better public participation.

We have also created a system of legal, institutional and strategic planning, based on the principles of sustainable development.

a) This year Lithuania has adopted a new Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania which is one of the two most important strategic documents together with the National Progress Plan.

During the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan different institutions and public were involved.

They submitted more than 2000 comments; all were assessed, half of them were accepted.

b) Our national legislation also promotes public participation in decision-making related to economic activities through Environmental Impact Assessment, permitting or appeal procedures.

c) Recent amendments to the Law on Territorial Planning facilitate public participation in special territorial planning by requiring more time for public consultations and to provide more information to the public.

d) Public is encouraged to participate in planning and law making process through urban forums and meetings of architects.

e) Our national legislation guarantees the right for the public to participate both in person and remotely. This right proved to be particularly important during the pandemic period.

6. I believe that decisions made during this Meeting will further encourage us to continue implementation of the Aarhus convention to ensure health and well-being of present and future generations.