

Activity title: Seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, fourth session on Convention's Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers

Date/Time/Venue: 19 October, Tuesday, 5:20-6 p.m. GVA-time

Target participants: National and local government representatives, International financial institutions (i.e., EBRD and World Bank), Civil Society Organization representatives, Network of people on the ground (volunteers, social workers, etc.), Private sector leaders, INGO representatives and development partners, Academics, U.N. agencies, and general public.

Speaking points for Laura Altinger, Regional Team Leader, UNDP Nature, Climate and Energy, Istanbul Regional Hub

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,
Good afternoon,

The Aarhus Convention has valuable lessons to enhance the public consultative process and strengthening participation in environmental matters. Playing an especially critical role in this context are the wide network across our region of some 50 Aarhus Centres in 15 countries across the region which are helping to turn the Aarhus Convention's principles into concrete actions on the ground.

At UNDP, we have a few good examples of how we have collaborated with Aarhus Centres to enhance public participation, stakeholder consultation, transparency awareness raising across the region.

In Kyrgyzstan, we have worked closely with the Aarhus Centre in the context of the GCF-funded National Adaptation Planning. The Aarhus Centre has played an important role in establishing training programmes for local universities and building the capacity of state bodies, local governments, and other partners on environmental and climate change issues.

Equally, earlier this year, we have collaborated with the Aarhus Centre on our project to enhance climate change mitigation elements for the Kyrgyzstan NDC under the Paris Agreement. This involved a stakeholder consultation to provide recommendations for updating the NDC. The workshop had attendees from government representatives and services, public organizations, media, teachers, and university students.

In Belarus, our UNDP Country Office works in partnership with the Aarhus Center on implementing the EU-funded project 'CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL', with a focus on information management systems for monitoring environmental risks in the field of ambient air quality. The partnership with Aarhus Center has a particular importance as it assists the projects' educational activities and identifies concrete actions to enhance awareness raising and environmental information to the public - in particular access to justice in environmental matters and public participation in the development of strategic documents.

In addressing the data gap to inform and support the civil society and creating a space for environmental information, our CO in Serbia has arranged multiple events on public hearing “system solutions for the Environment – defining water management problems” – where environmental awareness of the need for protection was addressed.

These are just a flavour of our collaboration to implement the Principles of the Convention on the ground. Given our US\$1bn+ portfolio across 18 countries and jurisdictions in the region, covering ecosystems and biodiversity; the sustainable management of chemicals and wastes; climate change adaptation and mitigation; climate risk and integrated water resource management, there is a lot more potential to strengthen collaboration on environmental information and transparency; stakeholder participation and awareness raising.

Thank you, Madam Chair.