

Ref.: 2022/OES/38T/ENV/029

27 February 2022

Excellency,

I would be grateful if you would kindly transmit the enclosed letter from Ms. Áine Ryall, Chair of the Compliance Committee under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), to H. E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for urgent attention.

A copy of the letter is enclosed for your information.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Olga Algayerova

H. E., the Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office
and other international organizations in Geneva
Parties to the Aarhus Convention

Áine Ryall
Chair of the Compliance Committee under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)

27 February 2022

Your Excellencies,

Re: Present military offensive against Ukraine and protection of environmental defenders

I write on behalf of the Compliance Committee of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) in the light of the deeply serious and rapidly evolving situation in Ukraine.

As you are aware, Ukraine is currently under heavy attack. The Compliance Committee has grave concerns that persons who are known environmental defenders in Ukraine, and their families, will be in imminent danger in the potential occupied territory.

Article 3 (8) of the Aarhus Convention requires that “each Party shall ensure that persons exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of this Convention shall not be penalized, persecuted or harassed in any way for their involvement”.

The Compliance Committee immediately calls on each Party to the Convention to do all possible within its means to fulfil its obligations under article 3 (8) of the Convention to ensure that environmental defenders in Ukraine in the potential occupied territory will not be persecuted.

In particular, the Compliance Committee requests all Parties, and not only those Parties bordering Ukraine, to facilitate safe passage and provide immediate sanctuary to Ukrainian environmental defenders, and their families.

The Compliance Committee likewise calls on Ukraine to permit any environmental defender, and their family, to leave the country upon their request, notwithstanding the imposition of martial law.

The Compliance Committee deeply appreciates the significant humanitarian assistance already offered to the people of Ukraine by several Parties to the Convention. The Compliance Committee calls on all Parties to the Convention to take immediate action to ensure that Ukrainian environmental defenders, and their families, are offered safe passage and sanctuary now. Given how fast the situation is escalating, any delay may mean it will already be too late.

Let me conclude by assuring you that the Compliance Committee stands ready to offer any urgent advice that any Party may require regarding the Committee’s above request.

Yours sincerely,



Áine Ryall

To: The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention

Cc: Permanent missions to the UN Office and other international organizations in Geneva of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention
National focal points of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention