

**26th meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus
Convention**

(WGP-26 Geneva 23-24. June 2022)

**Agenda Item 8: Thematic session on the promotion of the principles
of the Convention in international forums**

Norway

Thank you Chair

I ask for your indulgence for taking this opportunity to first make a very short general statement that I should have made yesterday, but I was too late and too difficult for the Chair to see when I was asking for the floor from the fringe of the room.

Norway joins the speakers at the start of the meeting yesterday in condemning Russia's unjustified, unprovoked, and irresponsible attack on its neighbour Ukraine. The attack has devastating effects on human rights, the environment and on human rights defenders, including environmental human rights defenders. It is a clear violation of international law. I also reiterate Norway's unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you for your indulgence, and now to the thematic issue of promoting the Aarhus principles in foras and processes addressing plastic pollution.

First I would like to thank the panelists for their valuable insights, views and recommendations.

Norway attaches great importance to transparency and participation for all stakeholders, including civil society. I am glad to share some experiences and priorities for Norway in the development of a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, especially as they relate to ensuring public participation and access to information. A key to success in modern treaty-making is early and effective involvement of the business

community and voices in civil society. Governments cannot act alone in a vacuum.

Norway has been working to strengthen international governance of plastic pollution for many years. At the first United Nations Environment Assembly in 2014, Norway took the initiative for a resolution to identify marine plastic litter as an emerging threat. Since then Norway has spearheaded three resolutions at the next three Environment Assemblies. In this work, we have stressed the need to ensure the widest possible and effective participation in the ad-hoc open-ended working group meeting and the intergovernmental negotiating committee. As stated by the panelist from UNEP, this is also reflected in the last UNEA resolution 5/14. We have provided funding and cooperated with representatives of civil society in developing and disseminating information on the environmental problem, existing gaps in international governance and opportunities to strengthen international instruments. We have also included civil society representatives in our delegations to UNEA.

When it comes to plastic pollution, there are particularly vulnerable groups that is important to include. Workers under informal and cooperative settings provides essential services in the plastics economy in many parts of the world. Norway, together with many other countries, supported the inclusion of language that recognizes their contribution and the value of their knowledge in the historic resolution 5/14 End Plastic Pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument.

At the Open-Ended Working Group meeting in Dakar in May, delegations engaged in a discussion on the Rules of Procedure for the Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee that will develop the international instrument on plastic pollution. Civil society raised concern that these groups would not be able to be accredited to the negotiation meetings because they are not always organized as legal entities, such as NGOs. Norway provided a solution to this issue by having the meeting report reflect instructions to UNEP to develop criteria for accreditation that pay particular attention to representatives of workers in informal or cooperate settings. Norway will continuously consider opportunities to strengthen the participation of relevant stakeholders to further ensure the effective and meaningful participation of these groups in the INC process. This is crucial to develop an effective treaty that ensures a just transition for those affected by the instrument.

Thank you Chair