

Ref.: 2022/OES/196T/ENV/117

7 September 2022

Excellency,

I would be grateful if you would kindly transmit the enclosed letter from Mr. Aurimas Saladžius, Chair of the 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), to His Excellency, Mr. Andrei Khudyk, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, for his attention.

A copy of the letter is enclosed for your information.

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



Olga Algayerova

Her Excellency  
Ms. Larysa Belskaya  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus  
to the United Nations Office  
and other international organizations in Geneva



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

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe  
Palais des Nations, 8-14 avenue de la Paix  
CH - 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland  
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**Aurimas Saladžius**

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

Re: Decision by Belarus to withdraw from the Aarhus Convention

5 September 2022

Excellency,

I write on behalf of the Bureau of the 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).

I write to convey the Bureau's deep regret upon being notified that, on 27 July 2022, Belarus deposited its instrument to withdraw from the Aarhus Convention with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

We strongly believe that through the unprecedented action of deciding to withdraw from the Convention, Belarus is choosing to deprive itself, and its public, of the benefits of the powerful and proven instrument for facilitating and ensuring environmental democracy. Moreover, Belarus is doing so at a time of great global environmental peril and during a period in which its own environmental defenders are facing ever-increasing penalization, persecution and harassment.

The Bureau emphasizes that the Meeting of the Parties, the Compliance Committee and other bodies of the Convention have at all times been exemplary in their interactions with Belarus. In the service of their respective mandates, the Convention and its underlying principles, these bodies have been fair and measured in their actions, and have offered valuable clarification, assistance, and facilitation to Belarus on multiple occasions throughout the two decades that Belarus has been a Party to the Convention.

His Excellency  
Mr. Andrei Khudyk  
Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection  
of the Republic of Belarus  
Minsk

We are greatly concerned that the withdrawal by Belarus from the Convention will mark yet another way in which Belarus is turning its back against the international community and the protection of human rights in general. The military offensive by the Russian Federation in Ukraine has struck a direct and lasting blow to multilateralism and the values of the United Nations. The impacts of this war have been and continue to be devastating for people's lives, as well as for human rights, for the environment, and for the sustainable, shared future that we are working together to achieve. They also directly undermine the Aarhus Convention. At this difficult time for our region and indeed for the world, the importance of a united Aarhus community is more critical than ever.

On behalf of the Bureau, I therefore express our sincere and deepfelt wish that Belarus may find its way back to re-join the Convention in the future and to once again resume its role as an active and engaged Party to the Convention.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AS', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Aurimas Saladžius

Cc: Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva