

Agenda item 4 d: Genetically Modified Organisms

Thank you Chair for giving me the floor.

In 1998, GMOs were excluded from the Aarhus Convention.

Then, GMOs were mainly seen as crops and bacteria that would be constraint to agricultural fields and to bioreactors.

Since then, the technology has moved on.

Some of the new GMOs - such as gene drives - are **intended** to spread in the wild instead of being contained. Some are not even called “GMO” anymore.

The latest example are EU plans to deregulate so-called "New Genomic Techniques" based on the idea that all of their effects could be predicted as so-called “predictable DNA”.

There is a risk that the **same** plant in the **same** country will be declared a GMO under one set of regulations, but not under other rules.

Obviously this is not the place to discuss EU regulations.

We are here to ensure access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice in **all** environmental matters.

The easiest way to avoid confusion, to avoid drawn-out procedures about whether a new type of GMO - under any name - counts as GMO under the Aarhus Convention is to finally get the GMO Amendment ratified by one more country.

Then we all will know that effects of GMOs on the environment are finally subject to the provisions of the Aarhus Convention.

We are grateful for the plans of Ukraine to ratify the GMO Amendment, but we are still calling on the other countries whose ratification count, to take this long overdue step, especially since these countries are Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety - an international instrument that already includes access to information and public participation.

Let's hope that this is the last meeting to reports on activities to ratify and report about implementation instead.

Thank you.