

Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (WGP 27)
(Geneva 26-28. June 2023)

Agenda Item 2: Ukraine

Norway

Thank you Chair and good morning dear colleagues,

First, take this opportunity to thank the Secretariat for preparing the meeting, the interpreters for their assistance and the Chair and the Deputy Director for their introductory remarks.

Norway commends Ukraine for their impressive efforts to implement the obligations and uphold the rights under the Aarhus convention and its PRTR Protocol in these truly difficult times for Ukraine.

I would like to join colleagues who have expressed support to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Norway condemns Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. The Russia's aggression is a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We also condemn Belarus for enabling and assisting the Russia's aggression.

We continue to be deeply concerned about the harm caused by Russia's irresponsible attacks on civilians as well as civilian infrastructure.

For more than fifteen months, Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable, and illegal full-scale invasion has inflicted incalculable devastation on Ukraine, including potentially irreversible consequences for Ukraine's environmental landscape. Two weeks ago, Russia's war of choice resulted in the destruction of the Hydroelectric Dam at Kakhova, causing severe harm to civilians and leading to massive flooding and potentially catastrophic consequences for surrounding vegetation and river networks.

Russia's attack on its neighbour Ukraine has devastating effects also on the ability of environmental human rights defenders to act as agents of change and exercise their rights in accordance with the Aarhus Convention without the risk of being penalised, persecuted or harassed in any way.

The people of Ukraine are thus paying a high price, in economic terms as well as in environmental terms, and most of all in human suffering and loss.

Norway stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, and we continue to provide Ukraine with unprecedented levels of support, helping to uphold its right to self-defence in the face of Russia's aggression.

Our support is about freedom and democracy, but also about defending the principles on which Europe's freedom and peace are based. It is about respect for international law. This includes the Aarhus Convention and the rights it provides to have access environmental information, to participate in decision making and to have access to justice in environmental matters. It is also about respect for internationally recognized borders.

A threat to these principles is a threat to us all.

Thank you Chair