Statement of Norway

Thank you Chair,

Norway takes this opportunity to thank the Compliance Committee - eminently assisted by the Secretariat - for their continued efforts despite increasing resources constraints to contribute to ensuring that the obligations of the Convention are adhered to by the Parties and the rights of the Convention provided to the public as intended.

The need for continued efforts to implement these rights are highlighted by the communications from the public, submission from States and request for advice from Parties to the Compliance Committee, its considerations of and recommendations to the Parties concerned and the MOP and through the information we have received from the Committee today.

The Compliance Mechanism of the Aarhus Convention is one of the strongest and most efficient among the mechanisms of environmental conventions. To keep it that way will require continued shared efforts from the public, the Parties and the Compliance Committee. As we have heard, the work load of the Committee is steadily increasing and additional resources are urgently required. This is duly noted.

At the last Meeting of the Parties it was decided to deviate from the Meeting of the Parties’ long-standing and consistent practice to endorse the findings and recommendations of the Committee in case ACCC/C/2015/128 concerning The European Union. The decision on that case was postponed to the next Meeting of the Parties.
The European Union expressed its continued commitment at the last MOP to ensuring that the EU respects its international obligations in matters pertaining to the Aarhus Convention.

We therefore appreciate that the European Union last year carried out an online public consultation on possible options to address the findings of the Compliance, including the possibility of maintaining status quo. Norway contributed to the hearing and expressed a preference for Option 1 – amendment of the Aarhus Regulation. We therefore welcome that the Commission - as we have now heard from the EU – in its recent recommendation to the European Parliament and the Council on this issue – has concluded that ensuring compliance with the Compliance Committee’s findings in the case requires an adjustment to the existing legal framework or equivalent measure, and that the status quo would raise issues of compliance with the Committee’s findings. We note, however, that the Commission is still keeping all three options and possibly a combination of options open.

We therefore reiterate the expectation – as also expressed in the report from the last Meeting of the Parties - that the EU will follow up on the commitments it expressed in time for the Compliance Committee to review the follow-up and to report and make any recommendations necessary to the Meeting of the Parties accordingly.

Thank you, Chair