

**Twenty-seventh meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention
(Geneva, 26 - 28 June 2023)**

Statement by Switzerland

Regarding agenda time 4a (thematic session on public participation with regard to large-scale infrastructure/transport):

“The need for public participation especially applies for large-scale infrastructure and transport projects. This is especially true for the following reasons: First, because large infrastructures usually have a significant impact on the environment. Second, because the majority of large-scale infrastructure and transport projects are intended for the public, making its involvement all the more imperative. As we all know, infrastructure not only causes direct important environmental impacts in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and biodiversity, but also require vast amount of metals and minerals, including sand. But today, we are faced with important challenges with respect to infrastructure. Demand for metals and minerals will increase exponentially to drive the energy transition and respond to infrastructure needs. This also implies need to develop new mines.

- The issue of public participation, transparency, access to justice with respect to large scale infrastructure and the mining sector is essential. The mining sector in particular faces strong local opposition, notably for environmental reasons. In that context, the Aarhus Convention is an important MEA, as well as the Escazu Agreement. In other regions, there are no specific conventions to support stronger public participation.
- Globally, there is wide recognition that we need to make our infrastructure more sustainable and resilient. As such, important intergovernmental processes were launched in recent years.
- Infrastructure was a core topic of the last "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference last October, and the Nicosia call constitute a very good sign of engagement from Member States up to the next Ministerial Conference. Switzerland was very pleased to announce 4 actions.
- At the last United Nations Environment Assembly, two resolutions also addressed the issue: one on sustainable and resilient infrastructure and the other on environmental aspects of metals and minerals.
- In our discussions, it would be good to explore opportunities to strengthen engagement and synergies between the Convention and these processes.”