



Additional statement input from Attracta Uí Bhroin, on behalf of European EcoForum, on

Agenda Item 5. Procedures and mechanisms 5(b) Compliance Mechanism

Please note: Text in italics not delivered in oral address given limitations of time.

Thank you Chair, Madame Chair of the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee, Honourable Delegates, fellow participants. I am Attracta Uí Bhroin, *Environmental Law Officer of the Irish Environmental Network*, speaking for European Ecoforum. *I am delighted to address once again this Working Group of the Parties as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Convention.*

I wish to speak on the commitments from Parties needed to give real meaning to these 25th anniversary celebrations, particularly in respect of the compliance committee as the beating heart of the Convention, and its secretariat – its life blood.

The Compliance Committee's role, is fundamental to supporting Parties in improving their compliance with critical aspects of the Convention. As we have just heard, its workload has increased because of multiple factors. Firstly, there are new and ongoing communications, a key differentiator in making the Convention effective and in assisting Parties with their compliance. There is also the need for follow-up on compliance decisions now after multiple Meetings of the Parties. This is essential for the mechanism to have real meaning. There is also the welcome development where Parties are increasingly seeking advice from the Committee. Additionally, despite the generous support from Ireland and Austria for resources for the Rapid Response Mechanism, pending their recruitment, support was drawn from the Committee's Secretariat. This is likely to be ongoing demand given its expertise and experience.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *IPCC*, have described the climate and biodiversity crises as interdependent crises – one exacerbating the other. This has huge implications for the health and wellbeing objectives of Article 1 of the Convention, as a Human Rights Convention. So the role of the Committee & its secretariat has simply never been more important.

Yet the report prepared for this working group on funding is alarming. It speaks (and I quote) to the: "uncertainty as to the availability of sufficient funds" and says clearly:

"For the sustainability of the work under the Convention, it is crucial to ensure staff funding on a long-term basis.

The extension of contracts for staff funded from the Aarhus Convention trust fund depends on the availability and level of contributions received.

Since the current financial scheme is based on voluntary contributions and provides no guidance on their amount, the level of contributions fluctuates, making the funding of extrabudgetary posts unpredictable and far from secure."

This is no way to welcome the 25th anniversary of the Convention, albeit certain Parties do contribute more in a voluntary capacity.

So we call on all the Parties who recognised the importance of the Aarhus Convention 25 years ago and today, to underline that importance urgently in the next days and weeks with practical financial commitments, so the Convention can plan and resource appropriately for the existential environmental challenges we collectively face. This is not a case of taking from one part of the Convention and allocating to another, it must be a transformational approach to funding.

We of course appreciate the challenges and difficulties that some Parties face, but for others what is required here is not significant in terms of national finances and the public benefits and savings which will flow.

Such a gesture would give real credibility to these celebrations, and re-affirm in practical terms the commitments made in signing and subsequently ratifying the Convention.

Funding for the Convention's Compliance Mechanism is however central if the text of the Convention is not to be a dead letter and meaningless words on a page. *The sustained pattern of inconsistent and uncertain funding is incompatible with the sentiments celebrating the 25th anniversary of a Convention whose relevance and importance has never been greater.* In practical terms compliance with the Convention is being undermined by the uncertainty on funding and lack of adequate funding by the Parties.

Support for longer term financial planning, to attract and maintain the calibre of staff needed to support the Committee as the beating heart of our commitment to Aarhus – is absolutely key.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge and thank the Compliance Committee members past and present, and its secretariat for their indefatigable commitment and work – there are simply no words which suffice here.

Thank-you for your consideration.