



Thank you Chair.

Building on what you have mentioned about the question of conflict of interest, we welcome the inclusion of this theme as a cross-cutting issue across this year's panels and as we talk about topics to be addressed in the coming years, we would recommend that conflict of interest continues to be included as a cross-cutting issue.

Under paragraph 15 of the Almaty Guidelines, Parties should put in place processes and mechanisms for international access to promote transparency, and avoid the exercise of undue economic or political influence, among other things.

Yet the question of undue influence has not been explored in depth by the Working Groups of the Parties or Meeting of the Parties. As has been seen from some of today's panel discussions and the intervention by my ECO Forum colleague, the increasing participation of private actors in the context of international environmental conferences exerts undue influence on and hampers progress in the negotiations.

We see this in the context of well known fora such as the UNFCCC or the plastic treaty negotiations, but this applies across many other fora, from energy, to shipping, aviation or biodiversity, to name a few.

The Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention plays a role in supporting Parties to understand their PPIF obligations, and liaising with multilateral environmental agreements' international Secretariats to generate information regarding the extent to which specific working methods are relevant to the Convention obligations and principles.

In that context, we would find value in a survey to be circulated by the chair of the thematic session and the Secretariat to several MEA Secretariats - to be followed by a brief report - to assess the challenges associated with undue economic and political influence, and potential steps that could be taken by the Parties to Aarhus Convention. In this context, we respectfully call upon Parties to include an invitation for the chair and the Secretariat in the WG outcomes.