

# Aarhus Convention 28<sup>th</sup> WGP

## Frederik Hafen, EEB, Aarhus ECO Forum

**3 July 2024, Agenda item 8:**

Thank you Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of my colleague Iano Jorge Injucam from the NGO, GDVR, from Guinea Bissau who does not speak any of the official UN working languages fluently.

The world is facing a number of environmental problems which Guinea Bissau, especially, is not immune to.

Guinea-Bissau's accession to the Aarhus Convention represents an essential step towards a new democratic environmental order in Guinea-Bissau, by taking advantage of the Convention's substantial content through the effective exercise of the three pillar rights.

The Guinean population is dependent on the ecosystem and the use of natural resources for its survival. Paris Agreement relevant sectors of the country are all essential to the survival of residents of local or traditional communities. Therefore, Civil Society and NGOs have played an essential role in promoting environmental democracy in Guinea-Bissau, by monitoring the implementation of environmental policies, informing society and participating in environmental assessments for example in relation to the exploitation of heavy sand in Varela or the environmental status of the M'batonhá Lagoon, or the clearing of mangroves.

Civil Society and NGOs commend the government of Guinea-Bissau for having held the 1<sup>st</sup> National Dialogue on the Environment in May of this year under the Slogan "*Together for the environment: Building bridges to sustainability*". During this dialogue Civils Society called upon Guinea Bissau to:

- Create a specific regime for access to information and access to justice
- Adapt the legal framework for Public Participation in environmental Assessments to be in line with the Aarhus Convention
- Create dedicated public policies aimed at promoting environmental education, raising awareness, and liaising with media
- Encourage the development of projects aimed at eliminating or reducing practices that have a negative impact on the environment.
- Adopt participatory mechanisms that are inclusive and open to traditional and ethnic groups taking into account their socio-cultural particularities.



Mr Iano Jorge Injucam would also like to call upon the secretariat to issue recommendations to Parties to reduce or eliminate legal costs as obstacles to environmental proceedings. And he would like to raise the point, that the language availability under the UN system is inadequate for the purpose of the Convention and do not allow Civil Society from Guinea Bissau to participate more actively.