

28th Meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention

Geneva, 2-4 July 2024

Statements by Tim Knowles - Nuclear Transparency Watch & Cumbria Trust UK

6 (a) (ii) Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders

* - It was not my intention to speak on this issue but in the last 48 hours the BBC has advised that in two countries a combination of private legal actions by oil companies and public bodies, privatised justice, has made it illegal to protest at over 1200 locations. Such forms of protest, to include "slow walking" if that can be considered a real form of protest are aimed at Environmental Defenders. There is apparently no warning of prosecution and individuals face very high legal costs to defend themselves. The penalties for contravening these legal orders are up to 2 years imprisonment and unlimited fines. I am sad to say that those 2 countries are England and Wales and I hope the the Special Rapporteur will be able to take note of this unsatisfactory situation.

Item 8 Promotion of the Convention and other relevant developments and interlinkages

** - I have spent 40 years associated with the civil nuclear industry, half working in it and half representing the interests of stakeholders and communities in relation to it. On the matter of increasing awareness of the Aarhus Convention I would suggest that few outside of that industry, governments and stakeholders are even aware of this vital Convention and its aims. It is surely the responsibility of signature nations to ensure much better understanding of its provisions.