

**28th Meeting of the Working Group to the Aarhus Convention
(2-4 July 2024)**

Agenda item 4 (b): Access to Information

Norway

Thank you Chair,

Norway would like to thank the Chair of the Task Force on Access to information for the note and report, and for the work done to increase and spread knowledge on the rights of access to information, their implementation, best practices and the challenges faced and ways to address them. We believe that the Task Force provides a valuable platform for these purposes and through its work contributes to effective public access to information in accordance with the Convention.

Effective public access to information is an important element in the increasingly urgent work to address the triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollutions), which is necessary for a successful implementation of a number of Sustainable Development Goals (and specifically targeted by Goal 16).

We support the proposals for substantive issues to be given particular priorities in the next intersessional period.

Active collection and dissemination of environmental information through electronic information tools is one important element of access to information as it contributes to easier access for the broader public. Norway has established and are currently in the process of updating digital strategies for the government and its ministries in general and for the authorities with responsibilities in the

field of environment in particular. This is part of the digital transformation that we are aiming for.

Public access to environmental information is the other important element which is dependent on the transparency of public authorities, including their provision of information upon request and their use of exceptions provided for in the Convention to restrict access. Access to environment related product information is an important element to focus on, in combination with the use of electronic information tools such as product passports. Such passports are a central element of recent product related regulatory developments in the EU, which are also relevant to Norway as a consequence of the EEA Agreement.

The particular needs for groups in vulnerable situations with regard to access information should also be among the issues considered by the Task Force in the next inter-sessional period. They may need particular information and/or information in particular forms or through particular means, and they may not have the same possibilities for accessing digitally available information or through requests.

As for the work of the Task Force, the number and form of meetings, including the use of digital platforms, and the added value of the thematic sessions in the Working Group, we refer to the statement made under the previous Agenda item on Access to justice.

Thank you Chair.