

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

**Agenda item 4 (c): Public Participation**

**Norway**

Thank you Chair,

Norway would like to thank the Chair of the Task Force for her note and report, and for the work done to increase and spread knowledge on the rights of participation, 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 participation in accordance with the Convention.

Effective public participation 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 proposal to continue addressing the main systemic obstacles to public participation in decision-making within the scope of Articles 6 to 8 of the Convention.

As we are facing a triple planetary crisis and public participation is an important contributor to finding the best solutions to address them, we support to focus future work on participation in decision-making with regard to natural habitats, pollution and climate change.

We also support to focus on safe public participation for environmental defenders without persecution and harassments, given the challenges that persist

and the linkages to the Rapid Response mechanism and the work of the Special Rapporteur which we will hear more about under Agenda item 6.

We further support the proposal to consider arrangements to improve participation practices and promote broader involvement of the public. This is also in line with the Reykavik Principles for Democracy adopted last year at the The 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, and with the continuous efforts of local, regional and central governments in Norway for public participation. All local and central governments are obliged to have councils for youths and for elderly to advise them on cases concerning these particular groups. Citizens Assemblies is however a relatively new idea in Norway. We understand that some parties to the Convention have experiences with such assemblies. We support exchanging experiences on such assemblies and other types of organs for particular topics or groups of the public as means of effective public participation in decision-making in the field of environment.

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.