

Coordinated statement by NGOs on Friday, 16 June 2017

We welcome the decisions adopted by this 7<sup>th</sup> MoP which guides the future of the Convention.

We as important stakeholders in environmental protection and transparency strongly *regret* to see that the reflection on the work of the Implementation Committee has in the 6<sup>th</sup> MoP started to be politicised and that this politisation trend has increased this year. We note that this has negatively reflected on the quality of process and substance of the decisions concerning implementation of the Convention. This in turn will lead to more confusion and a lower level of effectiveness of the Convention vis-a-vis environmental protection.

This becomes for example clear in the fact that clarity in the case of the Astravets nuclear power station may not come shortly before the power station is planned to be in put into operation and potential measures to reduce risk – including transboundary risks - will be far more costly if not impossible to implement. For that reason we call upon Belarus to give an example of best practice by suspending works on construction at least until the intermediate meeting of parties will have reached a conclusion on compliance.

Issues responsible for this politisation include among others the traditionally grown special role of the EU block, and the lack of sufficient instruments to bring together countries with unresolved wider bilateral issues. We therefore call for a fresh look at the working methods of the Convention.

Where we note that especially nuclear related decision making are creating many emotions among the Parties (who would have thought that NGOs would have to say that to state actors?), we welcome the steps taken to develop clear guidance to the Parties on how to apply the Convention in the case of nuclear life-time extensions in the form of a working group and interaction with stakeholders, and we as NGOs present here will endeavour to play a constructive role in this effort as intensive as we will be allowed. We consider the good practice recommendations on application of the Convention in nuclear issues as a step forward.

We hope the Convention will be able to veer away from the trend of politisation and remain an effective instrument for environmental protection and public participation.