

**Aarhus Convention: Meeting of the Task Force on Access to Justice  
and its special session for judiciary 27-28 February 2018  
Statement on behalf of UN Environment re Judiciary work**

1. Thank you for giving UN Environment the opportunity to brief this Task Force on initiatives and activities of the United Nations Environment Programme relevant to judiciaries and access to justice.
2. UN Environment remains continuously engaged in promoting the further integration of human rights concerns into environmental decision-making. It enjoys a strong partnership with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Prof. John Knox, and will continue to support this mandate the renewal of which will be discussed at next week 37<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council.

3. In this context I am pleased to refer to the launch of the Environmental Rights Initiative and campaign next week on 6 March. For the first time, UN Environment's work will feature a public campaign. Judiciaries around the world will form a critical part of the broad coalition of partners. We hope to continue, and expand, international judicial cooperation on a rights-based approach to environmental protection.
  
4. The work of UN Environment with the judiciary has been reinvigorated in recent years. In 2016, UN Environment and others convened a World Congress on Environmental law. This Congress and a number of regional processes led to the Establishment of the Global Judicial Institute for the Environment with the mission to promote the rule of law and support the role of courts and tribunals in applying and enforcing environmental laws and the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. Judges from 15 countries and six continents gathered for the Institute's first, inaugural meeting. For its current two-year term the fourteen-member Interim Governing Committee has been

established to spearhead the Institute's initial operations and UN Environment will host the temporary 2-year Secretariat of this Institute here in Switzerland.

5. At the very moment of this gathering here, UN Environment, together with its regional partners in Asia Pacific (including the Asian Development Bank and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute ), is holding a Judicial Colloquium on Climate Change: *Using Constitutions to Advance Environmental Rights and Achieve Climate Justice under the auspices of the Lahore High Court in Pakistan*. This effort seeks to enhance the capacity of of 20-40 senior judges from the Asia Pacific region, and up to 250 judges and legal stakeholders from Pakistan and to promote environmental constitutionalism to achieve climate justice.
6. Through the InforMEA Initiative to which UNECE Aarhus Convention is a member, and with the support of UN Environments and UNECE's joint network of partners, a component on knowledge management and data collection in the context of judicial decisions and case law is under development.

Efforts will include joint training activities for judicial stakeholders, and the development of common semantic and technical standards and formats for the exchange of case law and jurisprudence to support enhanced exchange among judicial networks and to ultimately underpin the monitoring of progress towards global internally agreed goals, including SDG 16 with statistical data on environment related case law.

7. Next month, at the 8<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, the biggest global water related event, a sub-process to engage judges and prosecutors in discussing and implementing pro-active processes to tackle water challenges will be featured. Expected results include enhanced interaction between judges and prosecutors, a joint event with parliamentarians, and an official declaration or statement. Practitioners and academics have further been invited to a two-day side event on “Water Resources and the Environmental Rule of Law” to share their experiences with established practices and principles and to identify emerging

trends in water governance at national, regional, and international levels.

8. UN Environment continues to strongly promote the environmental rule of law as mandated through the first session of the UN Environmental Assembly in June 2014 and expects soon to launch the first ever “Global Environmental Rule of Law Report”. Let me also draw your attention to the recently published second edition of a Judicial Handbook on Environmental Constitutionalism which seeks to, amongst others, support processes towards enhanced access to Justice and Principle 10.
  
9. At its third session of the UN Environment Assembly, which was held on an exceptional basis, in December 2017, Member States considered the overarching theme of pollution. In this context, the experience by the UNECE Conventions including Aarhus Convention and its PRTR Protocol in promoting access to information on pollutants/pollution for a broad spectrum of

stakeholders served as an inspiration for the resolutions emanating from this session.

10. UNEP looks forward to a continued strong cooperation with UNECE and the Aarhus Convention and its Task force on Access to Justice.
11. Allow me to thank you once again for having invited us to address this meeting.