

**Statement by
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**to the 3rd Meeting of the Parties
to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-
making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters**

Riga, Latvia, 13 June 2008

Mr Chairman, distinguished Colleagues, dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to have an opportunity to address the third session of the Aarhus Convention. On behalf of my country I wish to express my appreciation to our neighbouring government of Latvia for hosting this important conference.

I believe that access to information is a significant human right, a necessary condition for independent media and accountability of governmental action. That is also a helping tool for fighting environmental challenges. Also, it is very important to promote active and democratic participation of all community members to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Since its independence from the Soviet Union, Lithuania has developed new policies and systems based on a democratic political system. Within this process, Lithuanian society has also been addressing the issue of access to environmental information and justice, as well as public participation in decision-making.

Lithuania has already ratified the Aarhus Convention GMO Amendment. And I can only urge other countries to do so and in this way ensure one more opportunity for all of us to participate in the decision-making procedure on the release of a genetically modified organism into the environment and on the placing it on the market. Lithuania has already made a decision to ratify the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers, which is a significant step towards access to information on

environmental matters for the society. In this way we can facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Lithuania has already developed a unified national information system on pollutants, which is being slightly modified and supplemented in accordance with the basic requirements of the Protocol.

On giving our approval to the Riga Declaration today it is of primary importance that we keep clearly in mind the basic character of the document. It is not a treaty; it is not an international agreement. It is not and does not seem to be a statement of law or of legal obligation, but we have to follow it, as it is a Declaration of basic principles promoting environmental democracy and serving as a common standard of achievement for all the nations of the UNECE region.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Each of the multilateral environmental agreements requires countries to develop specific implementation mechanisms and fulfil obligations involving reporting, training, public education, and other activities. And our every effort will be reflected on the environment that we try to preserve for our children.

Thank you for your attention.