

**Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation
in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters**
Fourth session
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High-Level Segment

**Statement by Mladen Zirojević, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations
(Bosnia and Herzegovina)**

Mr. Chair,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honor to greet you all on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a State level ministry which deals with the environmental protection issues in the context of international cooperation. Also, I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to discuss all the challenges of enforcement of the Aarhus Convention and its contributions to RIO +20 Conference.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is set to become the 42nd Party to the Aarhus Convention, having deposited our instrument of accession to the treaty with the UN Secretary-General on 1 October 2008. Under article 20 of the treaty, the Convention has entered into force on 30 December 2008 for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has prepared First National Implementation Report on Aarhus Convention which was supported by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina through a regional project in support of Aarhus Convention implementation in Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through the coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 25 institutions at state, entity and BD level, received a questionnaire related to their field of responsibility under the Aarhus Convention. The information were used in the preparation of the First National Implementation Report on Aarhus Convention in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is important to emphasize that many representatives of environmental non-governmental organizations participated directly in the drafting of this report and all drafts were regularly delivered to all members of the working group, as well as to a larger number of NGO's that take part in e-coalition network.

We have organized public hearings in the four towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka and Brčko) inviting government representatives, public authorities, civil society, NGO's and citizens to offer their comments on the draft of the First National Implementation Report on Aarhus Convention in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The draft report was also made available on web pages of the public authorities involved, and the public was invited to provide their comments also through e-mail or regular post. Through the drafting of this report main finding are:

- Participations of governmental institutions were satisfied and given data were very useful.

- Many data are not included in report concerning word limitation, and that data will be included in the next report
- Comments of NGO's was very useful particularly marking problems and disadvantages in the process of implementation of the set of Environmental Law's in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- NGO sector finds that the present procedure in this governmental framework is too complex and complicated (but we completed Report and submitted to the Secretariat of the Convention on time).

Through the drafting process we defined next step need to be taken for implementation of the Aarhus convention provisions. The next step for Bosnia and Herzegovina should be strengthen the public participation and access to justice through the:

- Improve implementation capacity and better skills of officials of environmental and other authorities on public participation in decision-making.
- Improve capacity and awareness of judges, prosecutors and legal professionals on the Aarhus Convention, related EU directives and national legislation.
- Increase awareness and better understanding of requirements of legal, technical and operational requirements of PRTR systems by authorities, operators and NGO's through pilot activities and dialogue between authorities, operators and NGO's.
- Dissemination and sharing of good practices and outcomes with other communities and stakeholders in the SEE countries through the Aarhus Convention meetings.
- Establishment of Aarhus info centers in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- NGO's activities at the local and sub-national level,

To achieve this objectives Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina need to cooperate closely with international organizations (OSCE Mission in BiH, REC, embassies, other) governmental organizations, NGO's, civil society, neighbor countries, and other relevant stakeholders.

Currently, there are no judges or prosecutors in BiH specialized in the environmental law, but there are plans to organize trainings in this field. For example, the 2010 program of the Judicial and Prosecutorial Training Centre of BIH covers the topic „International conventions in the fields of labour law, family law and protection of the environment“. In addition to this, there are experts available for the field of the environment to facilitate the work of judges. Also, mechanisms for assistance to remove or reduce financial and other barriers to access to justice have not been considered.

In this process active role of environmental NGO's is more important especially to promote education and awareness of environment issues through their activities. For examples The Centers of Civic Initiatives (CCI) initiated several countrywide campaigns, while the E-coalition network (gather 39 NGO's) organized several street campaigns, as well as of the BELLS Movement (Balkan Environmental Life Leadership Standard) organized political dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the SEE Countries in the process of drafting State Environmental Law.

At the end I would like to assure you that Bosnia and Herzegovina is strongly committed to promote Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration by enhancing implementation of the Aarhus Convention which is powerful tool in achieving the goals of the Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration.

I would like to thank to the Government of Moldova for the efforts that were made in order to organize this event, and also to all other participants who will contribute to the successful implementation of the Aarhus Convention.
Thank you.