

Cover slide Thank you Chair,

- ① This is the first time that the UNFCCC secretariat has the opportunity to address the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and we are honoured to be invited to do so.
- 2 The UNFCCC secretariat considers interaction with the Aarhus Convention useful. We understand the legal obligations under which 44 out of the 193 UNFCCC Parties operate. The Aarhus Convention secretariat in turn understands better the circumstances under which Aarhus Parties are operating in UNFCCC such as the magnitude of public participation, the frequency of meetings and the complexity of issues under discussion.
- 3 It is also important for our NGO colleagues to see that the two processes are interacting so that they can work more effectively in respective processes.

Slide 3
Chart of
participation

The UNFCCC COPs/CMPs are the largest annual environmental conference in the UN system, with its subsidiary bodies meeting up to five times per year in recent years, holding up to 150 workshops per year. The complexity of issues is illustrated in the fact that several ministries and agencies comprise one national delegation.

The agenda item of enhancement of observer engagement has been regularly discussed since the beginning of the UNFCCC process. In Cancun, the Parties agreed to organize an in-session workshop on this topic during the SBs. NGOs and Parties tabled a wide range of proposals earlier this month. Parties then discussed and formally adopted the conclusions at the closing plenary.

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The SBI conclusions covered a variety of issues - mandating the COP/CMP President and presiding officers on opening informal consultations to observers, size of the venue, workshop presentations, interventions, chairs' briefings, and agreed to discuss new channel of observer inputs next year. It requested the secretariat to enhance web accessibility, flexibility in registration, webcast coverage. We are pleased to inform you that most of the mandates are in the pipeline.

in addition, SBI encouraged all Parties to further engage stakeholders at the national level. this is an important message.

These cover 7 out of the 13 Aarhus recommendations made last year

for UNFCCC.

The other Aarhus recommendations are answered in the handout to be shared with you shortly.

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There are some other key discussions that NGOs and Aarhus Parties were keen to see progress in, but were not agreed by the UNFCCC Parties. These are guidelines for participation, trust funds and webposting of draft texts. However, existing SBI conclusions on these issues will remain in effect.

**Slide 13
Conclusions**

- As the outcome of the SBI illustrates, it is up to the Parties to the UNFCCC collectively and individually to promote observer engagement in UNFCCC process. \Given the unparalleled magnitude of public participation, frequency of meetings and the complexity of th issues, SBI has made a good progress.
- Aarhus Parties acting collectively made an important contribution for moving the issues toward. In this context, I would like to commend the tireless work of the European Union in promoting the principles of the Aarhus Convention during the SBI discussions. All NGO colleagues who closely followed the contact group can appreciate the tremendous efforts made by the EU delegation in proposing many good ideas, or counter-proposing when faced with opposition, in order to keep the elements in the heavily negotiated texts.

Most of the NGOs who participated in sessions were relatively new to the process and had not witnessed the discussions on the same agenda item in 2004.

Compared to then, the SBI discussions this year were much more positive, and the Parties, not just Aarhus membership but also from other regions, were much more cognizant of the importance of the public participation and access to information. This is attributable to the dedicated work of the Aarhus Parties as well as the NGO colleagues who have been working very hard at the national level where Party positions are formed. We would like to commend all your efforts.

Here I would like to relay a message from the SBI Chair, Mr. Robert Owen-Jones.

"The complexity of the UNFCCC negotiations is remarkable. It is common for several thousand delegates to attend each round of the negotiations during the course of a year and for over ten thousand to attend the annual Conference. What is also remarkable is that

Government delegates are often outnumbered by observers.

Can we, as government delegates to the UNFCCC, be better served in our engagement with observers? In my view the answer is a resounding yes. For a start, Governments do not pretend to have a monopoly on ideas. The challenge is to empower and open the negotiations in a way that enhances global action while avoiding overwhelming the dialogue.

The recent improvements to the role of observer organisations achieved at the latest SBI meeting further enhances the positive role that observers play. It is a quiet revolution to the way that we do business that will reward country delegates and observers alike."

Thank you for listening and the UNFCCC secretariat looks forward to continuing exchange with the Aarhus Convention.

Thank you.