

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY GENERAL OF MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,
ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE
JOINT HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF MOP5 & MOPP2

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates

First of all, on behalf of the Hellenic government, we would like to express our deep appreciation to the Dutch Government for taking the initiative to support and host the 5th Meeting of Parties to the Aarhus Convention and the 2nd Meeting of Parties to the PRTR Protocol. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Aarhus Secretariat for its valuable contribution and preparatory work for these important Meetings that have the potential to contribute significantly to the promotion of environmental democracy principles.

Nowadays, the world is standing at an important crossroads trying, on the one hand to find solutions to address the current financial crisis and the demand of considerable part of their population for better living conditions and employment, on the other hand to draw a path towards a development model that will enhance efficiency and minimize pressure on natural resources and ecosystems.

The legal tools, such as Aarhus convention could contribute considerably to addressing the aforementioned challenges. The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters provides the framework for the establishment of procedural rights in favor of the right to the environment, which ensures both human health and quality of life and, at the same time, protects the environmental elements themselves.

Building on the acquis of the previous Meeting of Parties, we look forward to the adoption of the Maastricht Declaration to be the outcome of our discussions and the reflection in an appropriate manner of the commitments of the Convention's Parties to transparency for furthering environmental democracy. Simultaneously, this adoption

has the potential to give a new political impetus and a clear strategic vision to the Convention and Protocol.

The Aarhus convention and its Protocol constitute an important step forward in the efforts of the international community to ensure a sustainable environment for present and future generations and simultaneously, have the potential to contribute on the preparations for an ambitious post-2015 development agenda and new Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, we strongly support the references in the text of the Convention on the synergies among the Convention and the Rio +20 outcome “The Future we Want”, which is in line with the principles of international environmental law, such as the principle of sustainable development, the prevention and precautionary principles, the «the polluter pays» principle and the principle of access to information and public participation in environmental issues.

Greece attaches utmost importance to the value of effective and efficient participation and involvement of stakeholders and civil society in the environmental governance. In line with this, Greece encourages the development of innovative mechanisms and means such as modern communication tools to enhance stakeholder involvement and capitalize on the progress made so far in this field.

At this point I would like to inform you about a Hellenic initiative concerning the implementation of the Aarhus Conventions Provisions with the use of modern electronic tools. More specifically, almost every piece of draft legislation or even governmental policy initiatives including those concerning environmental issues , are posted in a website prior to their submission to parliament. Citizens and organisations can post their comments, suggestions and criticisms article-by-article. All submitted comments are gathered and assessed by competent authorities and they are incorporated in the final regulations.

To continuously improve the quality of life and well-being for present and future generations, we need to improve the information and sensitivity concerning the environmental democracy. Greece supports all appropriate steps aiming to enhance the environmental democracy quality and we reaffirm our commitment to the promotion of environmental transparency in favour of the generations to come.

To be checked against delivery

I would like once again to thank the Dutch authorities for their hosting and the organizers for providing the conditions for a productive meeting.

I am confident that these constructive MOPs will produce fruitful and inspired deliberations.