

NGO statement by Ecoropa and by Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF)

Aarhus Convention – MOP5 – Agenda item 4(d) – GMOs

30 June 2014

Thank you for giving me the floor.

I'm speaking on behalf of the NGOs Ecoropa and for Women in Europe for a Common Future

The Aarhus Convention excludes full public information and participation with regard to GMOs.

In 2005, the GMO Amendment tried to rectify this historic mistake,

Yet - nearly a decade later - the GMO Amendment still lacks a handful of signatures to come into force.

Since 2000 - 167 countries, worldwide, have ratified the *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety* of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* - committing themselves to Article 23 on

"Public Awareness and Participation" in decisions regarding GMOs.

Moreover, a subsidiary Protocol on Liability and Redress - implementing the legal rights of victims - is about to come into force.

The 167 Parties to the Cartagena Protocol include nearly all Parties to the Aarhus Convention.

Since 2000, a fruitful cooperation between the Secretariats of the Aarhus Convention and the Convention of Biological Diversity - including the organisation of joint workshops and round tables - has taken place.

Hopefully, this cooperation will continue and will encourage more ratifications of the GMO Amendment

GMOs are a relevant environmental issue.

Civil society consistently participates not only in the public debate on GMOs - but also contributes to public education and information *and* to scientific risk assessment *as well as* testimonials in courts of justice.

And yet - the lacking ratifications - deprive us as Civil society of the full public information and participation prior to the release of GMOs.

This weakens our ability to contribute to prevention and precaution - twin Principles of Rio.

We call on all Parties - that have not yet done so - to ratify the GMO Amendment.

We call on them to bring their commitments under the Aarhus Convention in line with their commitments under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

But first and foremost - we call on them to ratify the GMO Amendment to allow all of us to participate - with all our expertise - to those decisions on GMOs that prevent harm to the environment.