

**Statement by Ms. Nino Gokhelasvili, the NFP of the Aarhus Convention at the Joint High-level Segment of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs  
Budva, Montenegro, 14 September 2017**

Thank you Madam Chair,  
Excellences,  
Distinguished delegates,

I am extremely honored to be here today and on behalf of the Georgian delegation join my colleagues in extending the gratitude to our Montenegro hosts for inviting us in such a beautiful and pleasant city of Budva.

Let me use this opportunity and express the appreciation to the Aarhus Convention Secretariat and the whole UNECE team involved in the activities under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs for their efforts in strengthening environmental democracy in the UNECE region and even beyond.

Guiding us how to establish good environmental governance in the countries - the only path towards the sustainable future, the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol are exceptional treaties as they can contribute to the effective implementation of almost all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) even not directly environmental related ones. By ensuring access to information, enhancing transparency and guaranteeing participatory decision-making, the Convention and its Protocol promote peaceful and inclusive societies and good governance – the objective of the Goal 16. Moreover, the treaties with compliance mechanism can assist in finding the gaps in the implementation of SDGs and guide us how to perform better, what should be improved and how.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Constitution of my country, Georgia, states that: “everybody has the right to live in a safe and healthy environment”. To exercise this right everybody must share its own responsibility to keep the environment safe and healthy.

On behalf of the government, I can state that we are committed to build sustainable society and strengthen environmental governance. And it is not only a wish. Tangible activities have been done and are being implemented right now.

First I'd like to underline that the Government of Georgia has offered a high-level political support to incorporate SDGs into national priorities. Georgia was one of the 22

countries that presented National Voluntary Reviews at the HLPF on Sustainable Development last summer. In line with the provisions of the Aarhus Convention, SDG Coordination Council was established recently involving all stakeholders to further advance the dialogue, monitor and track the progress in the implementation of SDGs;

In compliance with the provisions of the respective UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including the Aarhus Convention, Environmental Assessment Code has been elaborated that was adopted this year. By establishing wider and effective public participation procedure, the Code will further promote inclusive society and good governance – the objective of the Goal 16;

To ensure the public access to information, participatory decision-making and accountable institutions, that are the provisions of the Aarhus Convention and the targets of the Goal 16, a separate unit – Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL) Environmental Information and Education Centre has been established under the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia;

In compliance with the Aarhus Convention and in line with the Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production, the Waste Management Code has been adopted. According to the Code a new position - Environmental Manager was created in the enterprises last year. Environmental Managers are already in up to 3000 companies, responsible for the management, monitoring and reporting of waste related issues.

And this is not a complete list of activities fulfilled by Georgia under the Aarhus Convention and carried out for the implementation of SDGs.

Distinguished delegates,

A very ambitious agenda is in front of us. Therefore, we, the Parties of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol even have to compete with each other in our efforts for better application of the treaties in our countries and thus contribute to the implementation of SDGs.

Madam Chair,

Let me conclude by expressing the wish that when we meet again we have a strong belief that we are capable to perform better and have a desire to achieve more in environmental democracy and good environmental governance.

As UNECE member states, this is our privilege to be the Parties of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs – the unique international instruments to “pledge that no one will be left behind”.