



**Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and to the Protocol on PRTRs,
Budva, Montenegro**

Agenda item 7 (b) – Compliance mechanism: statement by the European ECO Forum

As in our previous Statements to MOPs 4 and 5, we cannot emphasize enough the importance and critical role of the compliance mechanism.

Indeed, this need is all the greater considering threats to the foundations of democracy occurring in Parties to the Convention, including of harassment of activists as the Draft Budva Declaration highlights.

During the last years the compliance mechanism has come under considerable political pressure and faced systemic attacks. We condemn these developments in the strongest terms. We are of course very concerned about the controversy surrounding case 32 in particular, but this is a point which will be addressed in a separate intervention.

Calls for making the compliance mechanism more “efficient” have, unsurprisingly, weakened procedures by making them more restrictive, with reduced transparency.

In this context we express our concerns regarding the MOP decision implementation review process. This review process has particularly consumed a huge amount of time, as Parties have often made little or insufficient progress in the intersessional period. This contributed significantly to the ACCC’s workload and is inconsistent with the bona fide rule of international law. As a result, and coupled with the drive towards efficient procedures, the implementation review process may have led to determinations that certain Parties have come into compliance, where developments in fact suggest the contrary.

Yet, the enormous time and human resources invested into compliance mechanism – by committee members, the secretariat and members of the public engaged in this process – have resulted in a number of positive and systemic changes in legislation, as well as on the ground; in some countries. That reassures our commitment to support the compliance mechanism in the future.