

Statement delivered by Ms. Gita Parihar, Head of Legal, Friends of the Earth, United Kingdom

Civil society update on observer participation in the UNFCCC

The capacity of the UNFCCC liaison office has been reduced, and this will make things extra challenging for civil society. A report is expected in May 2013 on whether this has had an impact on civil society.

There is a lot of rhetorical support from governments on the role of civil society, this can be seen in SBI resolutions and discussions.

BUT

(1) we see delegates adopting rules to improve participation and transparency of their formal sessions, and then **move into informal meetings**

- "informals" during regular sessions, so we have access mainly to the meetings where parties reiterate statements but not to the most important meetings where accountability and creative proposals for compromise are most needed.

For example in the "informal session" currently taking place in Bangkok: there are no webcasts and limited access to the rooms. This should be avoided in future. Sometimes it is useful for parties to discuss things behind closed doors, but those are rare occasions and the exclusion of civil society from meeting rooms should be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

(2) a lot of work has now moved from the intergovernmental negotiations to **standing bodies** (Technology, adaptation, finance). Since those bodies are dealing with management of issues rather than the usual intergovernmental process it is really important to enable transparency in their work and the full provision of expertise. The kinds of problems encountered include relegating observers to an overflow room, failure to webcast, difficulties with civil society selection processes and proposals that active observers can only gain the floor at invitation of Chairs, and if no one objects.

**Very important to get this right before practice sets things in stone!**

**Aarhus parties need to be very vocal about those, and not use participation as a negotiating token.**