

**24th Meeting of the Working Group to the Aarhus Convention
(Virtual, 1-3 July 2020)
Agenda item 3 (a): Access to Justice**

Norway

Thank you Chair,

Norway would like to thank the Chair of the Task Force on Access to Justice for his note and report, and for the work done to increase and spread knowledge on the rights of access to justice, their implementation, best practices and the challenges faced and ways to address them. We believe that the Task Force provides a valuable platform for these purposes.

We believe that the Task Force has had, and should continue to have a broad mandate, although not unlimited. We also believe that it would be useful to focus on the key elements on access to justice in environmental matters mentioned in the Chair's note and main challenges with regard to these elements, as well as on new thematic issues of particular importance in this regard. It could be useful to consider whether and if so which of these elements, challenges and new thematic issues that would merit particular attention and should thus be prioritized.

As for the work of the Task Force and the number and form of meetings, it would have to be considered in light of the resources available. We do however believe that the number of meetings during the next intersessional period should at least be the same as for the current period, and not be further reduced.

Based on our experiences especially during the last months of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the use of digital platforms have increased enormously, such platforms provide a useful tool for meetings and exchanges, especially as a supplement or an alternative when travel for different reasons is difficult or impossible. We therefore think it is worth exploring the opportunity to use electronic tools in the work under the Convention, including its Task Forces. This virtual meeting of the Working Group will be a useful experience in this regard. We should however be aware of the challenges and limitations that digital platforms have. We should therefore think carefully before considering replacing physical meetings – which for the Task Forces have already been reduced in numbers to ensure efficient use of limited resources – with virtual meetings.

Thank you Chair.

