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Statement

by

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United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Acting Executive Secretary

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Joint high-level segment of the meetings of the parties to the Convention on
Access to Information, Public Participation in decision-making and Access to
Justice in Environmental Matters and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and
Transfer Registers

Maastricht, 2 July 2014

I am pleased to send greetings to the Parties to the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

I welcome the engagement of representatives of both government and civil society as a tangible demonstration of the value of partnerships.

The twin protections for the environment and human rights offered by these treaties have helped to hold governments accountable in their efforts to address climate change, biodiversity loss, growing energy demands, rapid urbanization, air and water pollution, poverty eradication and other multidimensional challenges facing our world today.

The Convention and its Protocol have inspired similar initiatives that intend to replicate their achievements beyond the European region. I especially applaud success in promoting people's right to information, public participation and justice in environmental matters. This has helped influence the workings of a number of global bodies, including the international financial institutions.

You are carrying out laudable efforts to empower people with the right to a healthy and favourable environment. I welcome your plans to explore the use of modern communication tools to enhance transparency and environmental democracy for all.

This work comes at an important juncture as the world shapes an ambitious post-2015 development agenda with new sustainable development goals. The Convention and its Protocol contain valuable lessons on how governments can effectively engage different stakeholders in decision-making, and I count on you to contribute to our broader campaign for a sustainable future.

In this spirit, I wish you great success at your meetings in Maastricht and beyond.