

Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention
21st meeting
Geneva, 4-6 April 2017
item 10 “Other business”

Statement of the Belarusian delegation
(reply to the statement of the European ECO Forum)

Belarus fully respects its international obligations, including the provisions of the Aarhus Convention.

It is with deep regret that we noted the statement of the European ECO Forum. The events in Belarus in February-March 2017 which are mentioned in the statement were related to the Presidential Decree No. 3 “On preventing social dependency” which is beyond the mandate of the Aarhus Convention. Subsequent actions taken by the law-enforcement agencies were in strict accordance with the legislation of Belarus.

According to paragraph 8 of Article 3 of the Aarhus Convention, each Party shall ensure that persons exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of the Convention shall not be penalized, persecuted or harassed in any way for their involvement. The rights guaranteed by the Convention are the following: the rights of access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters. The Aarhus Convention doesn't limit the obligation of the state to ensure public order.

We believe that the statement of the European ECO Forum with regard to Belarus and the subsequent discussion at the 21st meeting of the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention constitute an abuse of the provisions of the Convention and undermine the value of the Convention by setting a negative precedent.

Belarus reiterates that the issue raised by the European ECO Forum is beyond the mandate of the Working Group and the Bureau of the Aarhus Convention. In this regard we request the Bureau members to avoid any actions that could further undermine the credibility of the Convention.