

## Comments by Norway

Norway supports the draft Declaration. It focuses on some of the most pressing challenges of our time and clearly shows the important role that the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol play in meeting these challenges and working towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Focusing on spatial planning and the need to ensure transparency, participation and access to justice in order to achieve a knowledge-based and balanced result across all three dimensions of sustainable development, is pertinent and illustrative of the dilemmas and the tools needed to solve them to achieve sustainable development.

The draft Declaration highlights core elements of spatial planning that coincide well with the Norwegian Planning and Building Act and the [National expectations regarding regional and municipal planning 2019-2023](#). Promoting sustainable development in the best interest of individuals, society and future generations, and ensuring transparency, predictability and public participation for all affected interests and authorities are among the purposes of the Act. It provides a framework for considering environmental and economic interests in connection with civil and social rights on the different administrative levels of planning. In Norway the planning authority is to a large extent decentralized to municipal authorities. Close proximity to local challenges and population is an important reason. This requires efficient local decision-making systems, functional tools and a solid basis of knowledge.

We only have two minor comments to the draft Declaration. We propose the following changes to paras 8 & 10 (additions in bold):

*8. At the same time, we acknowledge that such projects, and spatial planning more generally, have complex environmental impacts related to the different components of the Earth's systems: atmosphere, hydrosphere, geosphere and biosphere. They also influence a number of social issues linked to the public's rights, such as displacement, land ownership, cultural heritage, indigenous peoples, gender equality, employment, public health, safety and security. **A knowledge-based approach and rights-based social safeguards should therefore be applied to infrastructure development and spatial planning to guarantee that they benefit all, leave no one behind, and respect human rights. Paramount among these is the assurance of transparency and the rule of law, inclusive, transparent and effective public participation in decision-making, and adequate and effective remedies throughout the planning and development process.***  
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*10. In this regard, we stress the important role of the Convention and the Protocol for promoting transparency and effective and inclusive public participation in decision-making on policies, plans and projects related to large infrastructure and spatial planning, including in the transboundary context, and for safeguarding the rule of law in this complex setting. We call on Parties to encourage the use of pollutant release and transfer registers as a tool to assist sustainable planning and health policies through, for example, the map-based visualization of registered sources of pollutant releases, which can help to identify the most suitable location for infrastructure projects, as well as the need and potential for strengthening the operating conditions of such projects, with a view to preventing or, at least, minimizing the potential risks for the environment and health. **Plans and projects entailing adverse effects on land-use should only be implemented where socio-economic benefits out-weigh negative impacts, including on climate and environment.***"