

**Closing statement
by**

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at

**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**

**14 September 2017
Budva, Montenegro**

Excellencies,

Implementing the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol, not to mention global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals, comes with a lot of challenges. However, I rejoice at the collaborative spirit that everyone has been demonstrating today. I am greatly encouraged by the constructive exchange of views, knowledge, experience and expertise and I would like to congratulate all participants for the successful outcomes.

The adoption of the Budva Declaration is an important milestone in promoting environmental democracy and sustainable development in our region, as well as a valuable reference for similar processes in other regions. In 2018, we will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Aarhus Convention. In view of this, and the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Protocol in 2019, the Budva meetings are proof of the unswerving commitment of all participants to promote the principles of the Convention and the Protocol, from the local level to the global.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity and thank all ministers, deputy ministers and heads of delegations from Parties and Signatories to the Aarhus Convention and to its Protocol, together with representatives of other States, international, regional and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), parliamentarians, private sector and other representatives of civil society for their active participation in the High-level segment.

I would also like to extend my personal gratitude and that of UNECE to the Government of Montenegro for their generous and excellent hosting of these important meetings, which has helped to make them a true success, and very enjoyable besides. I also would like to thank UNDP and OSCE for their important and seamless support in organising the events.

Finally I owe particular thanks to the Municipality of Budva, and the people of Montenegro for the warm welcome we have received.

Thank you.