Agenda item 6: Implementation of the work programmes for 2012-2014 and 2015-2017

The EU and its Member States would like to thank the Secretariat for providing the Report on the Implementation of the Convention’s work programmes for 2012 – 2014 and 2015-2017 (hereinafter – the Report) as a basis for our discussions at the WGP 19.

We would like to make the following substantive comments on the Report:

1. We welcome and highly appreciate the Secretariat’s efforts, indicated in paragraph 2 of the Report, to make its activities more resource and time efficient through the use of electronic tools. We strongly encourage the continued use and expansion of such an approach further in implementing the work programme for 2015-2017. In particular, we would like to underline that there may be further opportunities for use of electronic tools such as phone and video conferences in respect of the compliance mechanism and participation in various task forces. Due to the fact that many financial contributions are made towards the end of each financial year causing continuous uncertainty as to the availability of sufficient funds, we see continued and extensive use of electronic tools as one of the appropriate means to meet the financial challenges. We also appreciate the ongoing efforts within the informal group of representatives of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) governing bodies for the purpose of identifying synergies and common activities among MEAs as mentioned in paragraph 2 of the Report.

2. Recalling paragraph 1 of the decision V/3 on promoting effective access to justice, we recognize the need for further considerable efforts to achieve effective access to justice. However, we would like to emphasise paragraph 13 of decision V/3, which requests the Task Force on Access to Justice to prepare analytical materials “as resources allow” with regard to support the work on exchanging information, experiences and good practices on implementation alongside identified priority needs. We believe that due to limited financial resources available priority should be given to the implementation of the provisions under the Aarhus Convention. Carrying out of activities which go beyond the scope of application of the Aarhus Convention and their financing should be in balance with actual funds available.
3. We welcome the Compliance Committee’s work in addressing decision V/9, including on the format for submitting communications, as stated in paragraph 20 of the Report. As well as helping to ensure transparency and due process for all parties, and ensuring that domestic remedies are taken into account, the Committee’s work provides an opportunity to improve the focus and quality of communications. Given the growing number of communications made to the Committee, this will help to ensure that resources devoted to the compliance mechanism can be focused on cases that have merit and which raise issues that have not already been considered by the Committee.