

June 22, 2026

To: National Focal Points to the Aarhus Convention

Re: Call for action to address critical funding needed to support the Aarhus Convention

Dear National Focal Point,

We, the undersigned non-governmental organizations, write to you with great urgency to call for action on the critical funding needs of the Aarhus Convention (Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters).

Already in 2023, the previous Chair Mr. Saladžius, stressed the **alarming** financial issues in his letter of 13 June 2023 to the Parties¹. In the past three years, the situation has deteriorated significantly, resulting in the Convention's Bureau declaring the current lack of resources **a crisis** (emphasis added) at its fifty-fourth meeting on 19 March 2026. Then, on 14 May 2026, Ms von Troil, Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention sent a letter to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Environment of the Member States Parties to the Aarhus Convention calling for **urgent action**. We fully support and highlight the calls made therein².

We have now reached a critical point where the secretariat has to progressively terminate employment contracts of staff crucial to the functioning of the Convention's bodies. To give just one example to illustrate the seriousness of the situation, the Work Programme 2026-2029, approved by Parties, foresees two new P3 (5 years of experience) for many of the work areas including the compliance mechanism and one P2 (3 years of experience) to support specifically the compliance mechanism and capacity building. However, due to the funding crisis the P3 positions have not been filled for years and now the P2 staffer will have to be let go by the end of this month.³ This means the Compliance Committee will only be supported by part of the time of one remaining staff member. This situation is no longer tenable.

We ask you to put the issue of the lack of funding for the Convention on the agenda of your government as a matter of urgency. At the upcoming 30th Working Group of the Parties, it will be crucial that you engage productively with the contact group on financial matters which will likely be set up. Please ensure that you share current and historical information on your government's pledged, made, and delayed contributions, the schedule of payments, and any commitments which can be made for the future. Without this information, the upcoming Working Group of the Parties will not be able to address this crisis adequately.

This resources crisis is the direct result of a combination of two issues:

Unpredictable, late, or missing contributions

¹ Letter of 13 June 2023, 2023/OES/180T/ENV/101, <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/toParties%20letter%20fr%20Chair%20Aarhus%20Convention.pdf>

² Letter of 14 May, ECE/EFD/2026/140 https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/Note%20Verbale_AC_Chair-Finance_Letter.pdf

³ Decision VIII/5 on the work programme for 2026-2029

Firstly, contributions are paid late, or not at all. This includes contributions made past the deadline of **1 October** for the subsequent year as well as pledged but never paid contributions for the previous financial year(s). The 8th Meeting of the Parties expressed its serious concern that several Parties and signatories did not contribute at all.⁴

The following Parties – more than half of all the Parties to the Convention – have not yet made their contributions for 2026:⁵

- **Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Estonia, European Union, Georgia, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan.**

Moreover, several of these Parties have not even made their contributions for 2025 yet, namely Greece, Guinea-Bissau, North-Macedonia, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine. **Turkmenistan** (since 2013), **Azerbaijan** (since 2018), **Greece** (since 2018), **North Macedonia** (since 2022), **Tajikistan** (since 2022) and **Guinea Bissau** (since 2023) have also regularly not paid for several of the previous years.

A system of voluntary contributions is only as good as the word of those who pledge them. At the 8th Meeting of the Parties, Parties decided to maintain a voluntary system of contributions instead of a recommendatory or mandatory scheme of contributions. The Meeting of the Parties also rejected the Bureau's draft decision proposing to encourage Parties to consider contributing as indicated through amounts in an Annex⁶. At the same time, the Meeting of the Parties made it clear that "*Parties should collectively strive to ensure that the costs of the activities of the work programme [...] covered through the financial scheme*" and reaffirmed a minimum annual contribution per party of \$2,000⁷. **Voluntary contributions can only be maintained if they produce reliable resources.**

Overall amount of contributions

Secondly, the overall amount of contributions is lacking. The amounts received over the last years do not cover the needs of the agreed upon Work Programmes. Even with contributions arriving on time before October 1 of each year, the overall amounts are simply not enough. As laid out in the separate Note on organization of work under the Convention in the light of the lack of resources⁸, the workload of the

⁴ Decision VIII/6 Financial arrangements under the Convention https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/ECE.MP_PP_2025.2.Add.1_E_aec.pdf

⁵ All information based on the Report on contributions and expenditures in relation to the implementation of the Convention's work programmes for 2022–2025 and for 2026–2029* https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/ECE.MP_PP_WG_1.2026.4_aec.pdf

⁶ Draft decision VIII/6 on financial arrangements under the Convention https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/ECE.MP_PP_2025.12.E.pdf and MoP Decision VIII/6 Financial arrangements under the Convention https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/ECE.MP_PP_2025.2.Add.1_E_aec.pdf

⁷ para 1, Decision VIII/6 on financial arrangements under the Convention, https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/ECE.MP_PP_2025.CRP2_DD_FA_adopted.pdf

⁸ Bureau Note on organization of work under the Convention in the light of the lack of resources https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/ECE.MP_PP_WG_1.2026.6.E%5B1%5D.pdf

Convention's Secretariat has steadily increased over the years, whereas no indexation of the expenditures was undertaken since 2003. The secretariat is unable to retain staff to carry out the mandate the Parties have bestowed upon it.

Financing the work programme and the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention is a collective responsibility of all Parties. Yet there are currently only a minority of Parties who contribute with a meaningful amount in line with the UN adjusted scale of assessments based on the annexed indicative annual contributions. An even smaller minority of those voluntarily contribute more than the indicated amounts. For 2025 these best performers included **Albania, Armenia, Austria, EU, Georgia, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, and Tajikistan**. We hope that these Parties will maintain their level of contributions for this and the following years.

For 2026, amongst the Parties with the largest deficits, comparing contributions made with the indicative contributions from draft decision VIII/6, are **Germany** (deficit \$ 356 713), **United Kingdom** (deficit \$ 292 183), **France** (deficit \$ 213 241), **Italy** (deficit \$ 205 941), and **Spain** (deficit \$ 138 734).

Any contributions made below the annexed indicative annual contributions for 2026–2029 in the original draft decision VIII/6 on financial arrangements need to be revised.

Need to act now

This is not the first time that National Focal Points have been addressed with utmost urgency and insistence to act on the financial crisis of the Convention. Given where we are, these requests seem to have fallen on deaf ears as though finances for the Convention were only the responsibility of other countries' ministries, and only the diplomatic burden of Permanent Missions to the UN, but this is also **your responsibility** and requires **your action** towards your government too.

We call upon you and your respective ministries to forward this letter alongside Ms von Troil's letter to all relevant individuals and governmental entities and to do all you can to ensure an affirmative and engaged response to the Chair's request. We call upon your government to pay already pledged amounts for 2026, increase its voluntary contribution to the Convention and to process the transfer well in advance of 1 October 2026.

We look forward to hearing from you on this call and are very happy to assist in any way we can.

The undersigned,

Aarhus Centres Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Green Legal Impact Germany

Arnika Czech Republic

Green Sod Ireland

Association Noé21 Switzerland

Guta Environmental Law Association

BLEJAN NGO Armenia

HAYACAN NGO Baku Azerbaijan

BlueLink Network Bulgaria	Independent Ecological Expertise Public Association Kyrgyzstan
Center for International Environmental Law	Information Center Green Dossier Ukraine
ClientEarth	Mediterranean Information Office Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development
Dalma-Sona' Fund Armenia	
Dryade non-profit Belgium	Náttúruverndarsamtök Iceland
Earthjustice	NGO Black Sea Women's Club Ukraine
Ecoforum of NGOs of Uzbekistan	Journalists for Human Rights-North Macedonia
Eco Advocacy Ireland	Justice and Environment Network
Environmental Justice Network Ireland	Khazer Ecological Cultural NGO Armenia
Environmental Law Initiative and Save Strandzha Association Bulgaria	ÖKOBÜRO Austria
Environmental Law Ireland – Initiative at an Taisce National Trust Ireland	Terra-1530 Republic of Moldova
Environment - People - Law Ukraine	Trócaire Ireland
European Environmental Bureau	Union for Defence of the Aral Sea and Amudarya Uzbekistan
European ECO Forum	Youth and Environment Europe
France Nature Environnement	ZERO Portugal
Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland	Green Sod Ireland