

STATEMENT BY EUROPEAN ECOFORUM ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING – AGENDA ITEM 4 (b)

AARHUS CONVENTION MOP 5 on 30 June 2014

Anke Stock, WECF

We thank Ireland and the Task Force leader for their work and commitment leading the Task Force and support within the last inter-sessional period.

We are happy to see that the mandate of the Task Force is renewed and its vital work will be continued.

We very much welcome the development of the “Maastricht Recommendations on promoting public participation in decision- making” under the Task Force and thank the secretariat and all involved experts for this thorough work. We hope for a wide application of this useful guidance on articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Convention.

However, civil society within the pan-European region is concerned about the existing flaws in implementing public participation provisions of the Convention at international, national and provincial level. We are not only concerned about the absence of relevant legislation in some countries. We are particularly worried about existing public participation processes: how the views of the public are not taken seriously into account and that they are often not adequately reflected in the decision.

Part of the mandate of the Task Force is to identify these obstacles to public participation, including the barriers for different marginalised stakeholder groups to be able to participate effectively. It includes not only exchanging good practices and new innovative practices.

Working together with various stakeholders to look at particular aspects of public participation in decision-making within priority areas is essential. This has been successfully done before, e.g. re the issues of water and sanitation and the nuclear domain and creates useful synergies. For the next inter-sessional period these areas

should be decision-making for sustainable development, related to climate change and energy related planning. This includes the nuclear domain – high on the priority at this time for our region. Furthermore, we need to look at decision-making processes in the extractive sector, chemicals, emerging technologies (such as nanotechnology) and related to products. This is challenging, but from the ECOFORUM'S side I can say we are happy to cooperate.