

## Item 7(b) Compliance mechanism

Intervention by Laura Hildt, Youth and Environment Europe at the 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention

Thank you Chair for the floor. I speak on behalf of Youth and Environment Europe.

Most young Europeans have grown up with a sense of trust that the EU protects the rule of law, which provides a crucial safety net for youth in the context of the biodiversity and climate crisis. Environmental democracy rights enable young people to make our fears about our future - which are not just subjective fears but the established scientific consensus - heard, including in court. Respect for the rule of law is the fundamental pillar upon which the exercise of these rights rests and must include the full respect for the Aarhus Convention Compliance Mechanism.

By failing to endorse all the findings of the Compliance Committee, including on the case C128, the EU, and with that its Member States, are eroding that trust and are risking to establish an extremely problematic practice. Taking out a reference to C128 does not resolve the issue but merely ignores it and delays it for four more years - at a time when environmental issues have never been more urgent.

International law is not to pick and choose - the EU and its Member States doing so is utter hypocrisy and undermines the EU's credibility on all fronts. It is further sending the very worrying signal to young people across Europe that, in the midst of a continued failure to adequately address the climate and biodiversity crisis, the EU is continuing to cut into the fundamental rule of law safety net that enables us to be heard.

We are therefore very disappointed by the failure of the EU and its Member States to endorse all the findings of the Compliance Committee. We deeply deplore this approach and strongly urge all parties that this is not repeated.

Thank you.