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**Jit Peters**

**Chairperson of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters**

The Hague, 2 October 2012

Dear Sir,

**Re: Killing of Ukrainian civic activist Volodymyr Honcharenko**

I am writing to you in order to express the concerns of the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) over the serious allegations raised by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the fifteenth meeting of the Convention's Working Group of the Parties (Geneva, 3-5 September 2012) regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. Volodymyr Honcharenko, the late Head of the Ukrainian NGO "For the Rights of Citizens to Environmental Safety". Furthermore, NGOs from Ukraine provided additional information on the matter in their letter (see enclosed) addressed to myself in my capacity as the Chair of the Convention's Meeting of the Parties.

On the occasion of these events, I would like to recall article 3, paragraph 8, of the Convention, which reads:

"Each Party shall ensure that persons exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of this Convention shall not be penalized, persecuted or harassed in any way for their involvement."

It is claimed that the killing of Mr. Honcharenko may be related to his civic activities, as it occurred four days after he had made a public statement on the allegedly illegal transfer of 183 tons of scrap metal, likely contaminated with the highly toxic chemical hexachlorobenzene. NGOs also reported a lack of information and transparency with respect to the official investigation carried out by the competent authorities in the country, both in relation to the killing of Mr. Honcharenko and the allegedly illegal transfer of contaminated scrap metal.

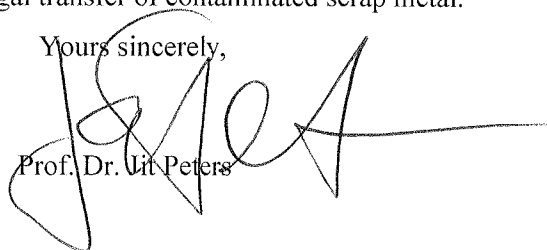
During the meeting of the Working Group of the Parties, after the statement of the NGOs, representatives of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine informed delegates that an official investigation was under way and that a working group had been established to examine how similar incidents can be avoided in the future. The conclusions were expected on 10 September 2012.

However, according to information received through the above-mentioned letter from NGOs, to date the Government has made no official statement and has provided no information regarding the matters under investigation.

I should like to emphasize that the Bureau is deeply concerned about any situation that may imply contravention of the wording and the spirit of the Convention.

Taking into account the gravity of the allegations, which may imply non-compliance by Ukraine with the provisions of the Convention, the Bureau would appreciate receiving your comments and relevant information with regard to the follow-up action undertaken by your Government after the killing of Mr. Honcharenko, including the issuance of an official report on the allegedly illegal transfer of contaminated scrap metal.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. Dr. Jit Peters

His Excellency  
Mr. Eduard Stavytskyi  
Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine  
Kiev

Cc: Ms. Ganna Dudka, National Focal Point to the Aarhus Convention, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine  
Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva