Thank you, Madame Chair.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour for me to address the Working Group of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, in my capacity as United Nations Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights. Thank you very much for your kind invitation to join this timely program.

Today, the rights of access to information, public participation, and access to justice enshrined in the Aarhus Convention are more critical than ever to safeguard the right to a healthy environment within and beyond national boundaries.

The right to information closely links with the right to science. While compelling scientific evidence shows how hazardous substances and wastes pose grave threats to human rights, the integrity of science and policymaking is undermined by disinformation, suppression of evidence, and conflicts of interest. Attacks against science and scientists spread undue confusion and doubt. This delays effective action to confront the serious environmental injustices caused by the unsound management of chemicals and wastes.

The right to participation is essential to enabling informed decision-making. Where participation is unduly restricted or undermined by attacks against environmental defenders, environmental democracy is often impaired by corporate capture. The result is increasing toxic risks and harms to human and environmental health.

In the multilateral chemicals and waste cluster, including negotiations on waste textiles, shipbreaking, highly hazardous pesticides, plastic pollution, and persistent pollutants like PFAS, we observe a troubling pattern: the growing influence of economic actors with vested interests. Industry interference, including distortion of scientific evidence and aggressive lobbying, continues to delay and weaken urgently needed protections.

To address these challenges, States must take decisive measures. Strong conflict-of-interest frameworks are essential; disclosure alone is insufficient. Transparency must be ensured, and information on environmental and health risks must never be withheld under claims of commercial confidentiality. Rules of procedure that govern multilateral processes should reflect the principles of the Aarhus Convention.

To conclude, Madame Chair,

A human rights-based approach to the sound management of hazardous substances and wastes begins with respect for the rights enshrined in the Aarhus Convention, including in multilateral processes.

This underscores the crucial role of Article 3(7) of the Aarhus Convention, together with the Almaty Guidelines, in advancing the principles of the Convention in global decision-

making processes on chemicals, wastes and pollution. Aarhus national focal points should actively engage with their counterparts in these multilateral processes to confront the global toxic tide.

Thank you very much.