



EUROPEAN UNION

**Permanent Delegation to the United Nations Office
and other international organisations in Geneva**

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EU statement

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Madam Chair,

I would like to start by thanking the panelists and the members of the Working Group for their contributions.

The environmental challenges ahead of us are global and systemic. Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to all of us. To overcome these challenges, we have to transform the core systems of our societies. That is especially true for systems related to energy, transport, construction and food.

In this context, it is becoming ever clearer that we also have to look at environmental issues through a social lens. Environmental inequalities, socio-economic status, and health and well-being are closely intertwined. Environmental risks disproportionately affect persons in socially disadvantaged and vulnerable situations, exacerbating existing inequalities, including those affecting People of African Descent¹. The EU recognizes that climate change and environmental degradation threaten the effective enjoyment of human rights.

¹ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/unequal-exposure-and-unequal-impacts/environmental-justice-environmental-hazards-and>

Madam Chair,

The EU has some of the world's highest environmental standards, developed over decades. EU environmental policies and legislation aim at protecting natural habitats, keeping air and water clean, ensuring proper waste disposal, reducing plastic waste, improving knowledge about toxic chemicals and helping businesses move towards a sustainable economy.

In developing its policies, the EU actively works to ensure that no one is left behind. The European Commission's 2019 reflection paper "Towards a sustainable Europe"² stressed that the transition to an ecologically sustainable system can only be successful if it is socially fair at the same time.

Furthermore, the European Green Deal not only aims at protecting our planet but also at making the transition just and inclusive for all. Through the [Just Transition Mechanism](#), financial support and technical assistance is being provided to help those that are most affected by the move towards the green economy, to ensure that the transition happens in a fair way.

Within the EU we are also discussing ways to improve access to justice in environmental matters in the EU and its Member States, through a revision of the Aarhus Regulation³. The Aarhus Regulation sets out how the EU and its Member States implement the international Aarhus Convention, which aims to guarantee access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/rp_sustainable_europe_30-01_en_web.pdf

³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/17/council-reaches-agreement-on-improving-access-to-justice-in-environmental-matters/>

Madam Chair,

As you know, the fight against racism and racial discrimination and the full and effective implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination are priorities for the European Union. When we talk about environmental discrimination in the EU, the focus is often on the Roma community. In this context, I would like to highlight that the newly adopted EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation⁴ foresees explicitly in guidance to upscale measures to prevent or mitigate the disproportionate impact of crises on persons belonging to the Roma community and to deliver environmental justice.

While this framework is the first direct contribution to implementing the EU Action Plan against racism 2020-2025, it is definitely not the last one. The EU remains committed to continuing the fight against all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance.

I thank you.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/new-eu-roma-strategic-framework-equality-inclusion-and-participation-full-package_en