

**Oral statement by the Secretariat in connection with
E/2023/15/Add.1, Section IB, draft resolution IV on Economic
Commission for Europe decision J(70) "*Implementation of the
rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental
defenders under the Convention on Access to Information,
Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice
in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)*"**

1. The present statement is made in accordance with rule 31 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council.

2. This Oral Statement is distributed in connection with E/2023/15/Add.1, Section IB, draft resolution IV, which requests the Economic and Social Council to endorse decision J(70) of the Economic Commission for Europe, and accordingly request the Secretary-General to increase the support by ECE, in order to strengthen the secretariat's capacity to facilitate the implementation of the rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention.

3. Detailed cost estimates, and their underlying assumptions for the requirements, are provided in the annex to this statement.

4. Should the Economic and Social Council approve draft resolution IV, additional programme budget appropriations for the year 2024, amounting to \$251,200 (recurrent) and \$14,600 (non-recurrent) would be requested in the context of the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions of ECOSOC adopted during its 2023 session. An additional amount of \$19,200 would arise under section 36, Staff assessment, and would also be requested in the context of the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions of ECOSOC adopted during its 2023 session, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. The recurrent resource requirements would be requested annually from 2025 in the context of the respective proposed programme budget.

Oral statement by the Secretariat in connection with E/2023/15/Add.1, Section IB, draft resolution IV on Economic Commission for Europe decision J(70) “Implementation of the rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)”

Annex

1. Under the terms of draft resolution IV, ECOSOC would endorse decision J(70) of the Economic Commission for Europe, and accordingly request the Secretary-General to increase the support by ECE, in order to strengthen the secretariat’s capacity to facilitate the implementation of the rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention.
2. The background to the request and relevant mandates are set out in resolution J(70) of the Economic Commission for Europe, which is annexed to draft resolution IV, in report E/2023/15/Add.1, Section IB. In particular Operating Paragraph 8 of resolution J (70) *requests the Secretary-General to increase the support by ECE, in order to strengthen the secretariat’s capacity to facilitate the implementation of the rapid response mechanism for the protection of environmental defenders under the Aarhus Convention.*
3. In accordance with this extended mandate, there will be a need to service the rapid response mechanism to protect environmental defenders by:
 - a) assisting the Special Rapporteur in his work, including through preparing the required legal and other documents, provide legal advice, contribute to preparation of meetings of the Convention’s subsidiary bodies, support missions, promote cooperation and synergy with relevant UN entities and other organizations, and coordinate and implement capacity building and awareness raising activities;
 - b) assisting Parties and other interested UN Member States in promoting safe, effective and inclusive access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice in environmental matters thereby supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goal 16; and
 - c) supporting development of concrete tools and guidance for strengthening capacity of Parties and other interested UN Member States to promote enabling and safe conditions for activities of environmental defenders.
4. Accordingly, in order to implement the mandate contained in draft resolution IV, additional regular budget resources of \$265,800 would be required, starting in 2024 as follows:
 - a) Recurrent costs of \$251,200 would provide for:
 - One Legal Affairs Officer at the P-3 level (\$189,000)
 - Consultants (\$20,000)

- Travel of staff (\$35,000)
 - Office and IT supplies (\$5,000)
 - Maintenance and utilities (\$2,200) under section 29E: Administration, Geneva.
- b) Non-recurrent costs of \$14,600 would provide for:
- Acquisition of office automation equipment (\$1,900)
 - Alteration of premises (\$8,400) under section 29E: Administration, Geneva
 - Furniture (\$4,300) under section 29E: Administration, Geneva.
5. An additional amount estimated at \$19,200 would arise under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from Staff Assessment.
6. Total resource requirements by budget section are presented in the table below:

Section 20, Economic Development in Europe	
Posts	\$189,000
Consultants	\$20,000
Travel of Staff	\$35,000
Office/IT supplies	\$5,000
Acquisition of office equipment(non-recurrent)	\$1,900
Subtotal, Section 20	\$250,900
Section 29E, Administration Geneva	
Maintenance and utilities	\$2,200
Alteration of premises (non-recurrent)	\$8,400
Furniture (non-recurrent)	\$4,300
Subtotal, Section 29E	\$14,900
TOTAL SECTIONS 20 AND 29E	\$265,800
Section 36, Staff assessment	
Staff Assessment	\$19,200
Subtotal, Section 36	\$19,200
Total costs	\$285,000