Plan of action for decision VIII/8c (Bulgaria)

A. Description of the process by which the plan of action has been prepared	
This plan of action has been prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Water as it is the national focal point for the Aarhus Convention for Bulgaria and has the necessary expertize to proceed with decision VIII/8c. The plan is based on the outcomes of the long-standing consultations with the concerned authorities commenced after the adoption of decision V/9d of the Meeting of the Parties on compliance by Bulgaria with its obligations under the Convention in 2014 – the first decision of the Meeting of the Parties which concerns compliance issues of Bulgaria (in particular - the findings and recommendations of the Committee on communication ACCC/C/2011/58). Of course, the suggestions and the information provided by the communicants also have been duly taken into account. The draft plan of action has been consulted with the competent public authorities- the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, the Ministry of Justice and the National Institute of Justice. The final version of the plan of action has been placed on the Ministry's website – on the special section for the Aarhus Convention.	
B. Detailed plan of action	
Recommendation: **Para. 2 (a) (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c**	In paragraph 2 (a) (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c, the Meeting of the Parties requests the Party concerned, as a matter of urgency, to: (a) Take the necessary legislative, regulatory and administrative measures to ensure that: (i) Members of the public, including environmental organizations, have access to justice with respect to General Spatial Plans and Detailed Spatial Plans; (ii) Members of the public concerned, including environmental organizations, have access to review procedures to challenge construction and exploitation permits for the activities listed in annex I to the Convention;
Short description of the measure(s) proposed to fulfil recommendation and how each measure will contribute to doing so	Amendment of the Spatial Planning Act (SPA) would be needed and in particular those provisions (Art. 127, Art. 131, Art. 149, Art. 177, Art. 215 – 219) which regulate the challenging of general spatial plans, detailed spatial plans and construction and exploitation permits, as well as the interested persons entitled to appeal. Standing should be granted to the public according to the definition in §1, p. 24 of the Additional Provisions of the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) where is stated that "public" is defined as one or more natural or legal persons, and associations, organisations or groups thereof established in accordance with national legislation. §1, p. 25 of the EPA further defines "the public concerned" as the public referred to in §1, p. 24 who are affected or likely to be affected by, or which has an interest in, the procedures for approval of plans, programmes and development proposals, and in the

	decision-making process on the granting or updating of permits according to the respective environmental procedure or in the conditions set in the permits, including non-governmental organisations promoting environmental protection which are established in accordance with national legislation. Additional criteria for standing to be met by the members of the public should also be considered – for instance, related to objectives and activities pursuing environmental protection implemented by the entities, previous experience in this respect, number of members of the public supporting the contestation, etc. The grounds for appeal should be restricted to violation of the requirements of the environmental legislation – lack of issued statements/decisions on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or non-fulfilment of conditions, measures and restrictions set in them. A significant problem is that the expanding the circle of interested parties to include representatives of the "public concerned" within the meaning of Art. 2 (5) of the Aarhus Convention and § 1, item 25 of the additional provisions of the EPA, who may appeal acts under SPA, would lead to duplication of judicial proceedings, for the consideration of environmental issues that have already been considered or could have been considered in separate independent proceedings under the EPA. In the proceedings on spatial planning and construction permits, the acts that are of decisive importance for the environment are the statements/decisions under the SEA/EIA – subject to judicial review in separate judicial proceedings as administrative decisions concerning environmental issues, and subject to the applicability of Art. 9, (2) and (3) of the Aarhus Convention regarding the circle of appellants. By challenging the statement/decision on SEA/EIA, access to justice is also achieved on issues affecting the environment in relation to spatial plans and construction permitting. Therefore, to allow the challenge of spatial plans and construction and exploitation permits on issues affecting the environment by members of the public concerned, including non-governmental environmental organizations, would mean that the court would re-examine issues on which it has already ruled with a final decision in separate independent proceedings on the issue of challenging the statement/decision on SEA/EIA.
Outline of the main steps that need to be taken to implement the proposed measure(s), including timeframe by when each step is expected to be completed	It would be appropriate the draft amendment of the Spatial Planning Act to be approved by the Council of Ministers until the end of April 2027. Prior to submission for approval an ex-ante regulatory impact assessment of the amendment (subject to liaising with the Administration of the Council of Ministers) should be prepared, and the bill, accompanied by this assessment, should be placed for public consultations for at least 30 days. According to the established practice, it is realistic to expect the National Assembly to adopt the bill in three months – by the end of July 2027, and before the summer break – in August 2027. The lead responsibility for preparation and proceeding the amendment of the Spatial Planning Act lies with the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works.

List of the government departments and other actors whose involvement will be needed to implement each of the above steps	The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works may consider amendment of the Spatial Planning Act and, if appropriate, to undertake this legislative initiative. The Ministry may consult within the process with some other relevant authorities – Ministry of Environment and Water, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economy and Industry and National Association of the Municipalities in Bulgaria, as well as with NGOs (environmental and those from the construction sector – Bulgarian Construction Chamber, for instance).
Final date by when implementation of recommendation is expected to be completed	July 2027
Recommendation: Para. 2 (b) (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c	In paragraph 2 (b) (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c, the Meeting of the Parties requests the Party concerned, as a matter of urgency, to: (b) Review the approach of its courts to appeals, under article 60 (4) of the Administrative Procedure Code, of orders for preliminary enforcement challenged on the ground of potential environmental damage, and to undertake practical and/or legislative measures to ensure that: (i) Instead of relying on the conclusions of the contested environmental impact assessment/strategic environmental assessment decision, the courts in such appeals make their own assessment of the risk of environmental damage in the light of all the facts and arguments significant to the case, taking into account the particularly important public interest in the protection of the environment and the need for precaution with respect to preventing environmental harm; (ii) The courts in their decisions on such appeals set out their reasoning to clearly show how they have balanced the interests, including the assessment they have undertaken of the risk of environmental damage in the light of all the facts and arguments significant to the case, taking into account the particularly important public interest in the protection of the environment and the need for precaution with respect to preventing environmental harm;
Short description of the measure(s) proposed to fulfil recommendation and how each measure will contribute to doing so	Amendment of the Administrative Procedure Code would be needed and in particular those provisions (Art. 60 and Art. 167) which regulate the contestation of the ruling whereby preliminary enforcement is admitted or refused. The main problem is that the recommendations of the Committee are difficult to be implemented by legislative measures, as such measures would come into contradiction to the principle of the independence of the judiciary, regulated in Art. 117, para. 2 of the Constitution, which ensures the free and independent formation of the internal conviction of the court in revealing the truth in the course of a case. It could not be

	imposed on the court as an obligation (much less by law) to ignore the conclusions of the contested decision or to appoint its own assessment of the risk of environmental damage, as this would mean to be ignored and violated the basic fundaments of the justice and the functioning of the judiciary in Bulgaria. In view of these principles, it is clear that the court in challenging SEA/EIA statements/decisions is obliged to assess all the evidence in the case and the arguments of the parties, given the fact that the SEA/EIA procedure is complex, public and involves broad public participation, and there is no obstacle the court to appoint, on its discretion and internal conviction, an independent expertize through the experts appointed by the court, to clarify the objective truth. Nevertheless, the most efficient solution to fulfil the recommendations seems to be the consideration of some amendments of the Administrative Procedure Code. In view that the relevant provisions of the Code concerns general principles of the enforcement of the administrative law and the administrative judicial proceedings, possible amendments could introduce some more common conditions like: assessment by the courts of all risks of damages (including but not explicit refer to the risk of environmental damage), all public interests (incl. the public interest in the protection of the environment) to be taken into account by the courts and the courts to set out their reasoning to clearly show how they have balanced the interests (incl. the public interest in the protection of the environment). It should also be taken into account the opinion of the President of the Supreme Administrative Court, which states that at present the case law in issuing acts pursuant to Art. 60, para. 5 of the Administrative Procedure Code on challenging orders that allow or refuse preliminary enforcement of SEA/EIA statements/decisions is permanent and consistent. It is stated that in each specific dispute the court makes an assessment of the risk of environmental damage in the light of all facts and arguments relevant to the case, taking into account the particularly important public interest in environmental protection and the need for precautionary measures to prevent environmental damage. It is also explicitly stated that: *"The principles to which environmental protection is subject, explicitly stated in Art. 1 of the Environmental Protection Act, and the specifics of this type of case require the court to take into account and discuss the allowed/requested preliminary enforcement of the economic project in the context of its impact on the environment. Since administrative acts on environmental protection are precautionary, the court assesses the possible damages to nature from the preliminary enforcement of the (S)EA/EIA decision that has not entered into force from those from the lack of immediate enforcement. In all cases, a comparison is made between the damages from the enforcement and the non- enforcement of the administrative act in order to assess whether the preliminary enforcement was reasonably allowed."* In conclusion, a generalized conclusion is made that the national legislation and in particular the provision of Art. 60, para. 1 of the Administrative Procedure Code establishes a clear, objective and measurable standard regarding the admission/refusal to issue an order for preliminary enforcement of SEA/EIA statements/decisions and thus the Republic of Bulgaria fulfils its obligation under Art. 9, para. 4 of the Aarhus Convention.
Outline of the main steps that need to be taken to implement the proposed measure(s), including timeframe by when each step is expected to be	It would be appropriate the draft amendment of the Administrative Procedure Code (by a law) to be approved by the Council of Ministers until the end of April 2027. Prior to submission for approval an ex-ante regulatory impact assessment of the amendment (subject to liaising with the Administration of the Council of Ministers) should be prepared, and the bill, accompanied by this assessment, should be placed for public consultations for at least 30 days. According to the established practice, it is realistic to expect the National Assembly to adopt the bill in three months – by the end of July 2027, and before the summer break – in August 2027.

completed	
List of the government departments and other actors whose involvement will be needed to implement each of the above steps	Further consultations are needed between the Ministry of Environment and Water, the Ministry of Justice and possibly – the Supreme Judicial Council and the National Institute of Justice.
Final date by when implementation of recommendation is expected to be completed	July 2027
Recommendation: **Para. 2 (b) (iii) of decision VIII/8c**	In paragraph 2 (b) (iii) of decision VIII/8c, the Meeting of the Parties requests the Party concerned, as a matter of urgency, to: (b) Review the approach of its courts to appeals, under article 60 (4) of the Administrative Procedure Code, of orders for preliminary enforcement challenged on the ground of potential environmental damage, and to undertake practical and/or legislative measures to ensure that: (iii) Training and guidance is provided for judges and public officials in relation to how to carry out the above-mentioned balancing of interests in environmental cases, including on how to properly reflect that balancing in their reasoning;
Short description of the measure(s) proposed to fulfil recommendation and how	When the amendment of the Administrative Procedure Code is adopted according to the recommendations in paragraph 2 (b) (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c, the National Institute of Justice may consider to provide training and guidance for judges from the administrative courts how to carry out the balancing of interests in judicial review of orders for

each measure will contribute to doing so	preliminary enforcement, including on how to properly reflect that balancing in their reasoning, according to the newly introduced legal norms. The trainings could be organized as e-learning courses with lectures and discussions on practical case studies. The training resources (incl. main lecture guidance materials and additional information related to the implementation of the Convention) for the judges from the administrative courts have to explain how to be implemented the new provisions in the Administrative Procedure Code in the context of the recommendations in paragraph 2 (b) (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c, with provided good practices from the case law (national and such of the Court of Justice of the EU). Suitable examples of court rulings with appropriate balancing of interests and reasoning are available and could be used for this purpose. At the same time, the Court of Justice of the EU has issued significant rulings clarifying how to be imposed interim measures – referred to as 'injunctive relief' in Article 9(4) of the Aarhus Convention, for instance on case C-76/08, which also should be taken into account. Other sources are the Notice on access to justice in environmental matters of the European Commission and the Implementation Guide for the Aarhus Convention (second edition). The National Institute of Justice may update the existing curricula intended for judges of the administrative courts and, if necessary, develop new curricula that will reflect the amendments to the Administrative Procedure Code, in regard of the recommendations in para. 2, (b), (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c.
Outline of the main steps that need to be taken to implement the proposed measure(s), including timeframe by when each step is expected to be completed	By June 30, 2028, the National Institute of Justice may organize regular trainings and/or develop a self-learning resource intended for administrative judges and judicial assistants from the administrative courts.The trainings could be 3 or more (with groups of no more than 20 persons) in order to be covered at least 60 judges (the administrative judiciary in Bulgaria consists of 28 administrative courts and the Supreme Administrative Court).
List of the government departments and other actors whose involvement will be needed to implement each of	The main responsibility lies with the National Institute of Justice, which may consult with the Ministry of Environment and Water in the process of the elaboration of the training resources. In developing the training content, the National Institute of Justice will work in coordination with the state and judicial authorities within whose scope of competence the Aarhus Convention falls.

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Final date by when implementation of recommendation is expected to be completed	June 2028
Recommendation: Para. 2 (c) (i) of decision VIII/8c	In paragraph 2 (c) of decision VIII/8c, the Meeting of the Parties recommends that the Party concerned take the necessary legislative, regulatory, administrative and practical measures to ensure that: (i) Adequate and effective remedies are provided for the public to challenge General Spatial Plans and General Spatial Plan amendments adopted on the basis of unlawful strategic environmental assessment decisions;
Short description of the measure(s) proposed to fulfil recommendation and how each measure will contribute to doing so	As it is explained above, the recommendation in paragraph 2 (c) (i) of decision VIII/8c would be fulfilled by the measure foreseen for the implementation of the recommendations in paragraph 2 (a) (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c, namely – with the amendment of the Spatial Planning Act in order to be provided to the members of the public, incl. environmental organizations, access to review procedures to challenge the general spatial plans, detailed spatial plans and construction and exploitation permits for the activities listed in annex I to the Convention.
Outline of the main steps that need to be taken to implement the proposed measure(s), including timeframe by when each step is expected to be completed	According the measures addressing the recommendations in paragraph 2 (a) (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c.

List of the government departments and other actors whose involvement will be needed to implement each of the above steps	According the measures addressing the recommendations in paragraph 2 (a) (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c.
Final date by when implementation of recommendation is expected to be completed	According the measures addressing the recommendations in paragraph 2 (a) (i) and (ii) of decision VIII/8c.
Recommendation: **Para. 2 (c) (ii) – (v) of decision VIII/8c**	In paragraph 2 (c) of decision VIII/8c, the Meeting of the Parties recommends that the Party concerned take the necessary legislative, regulatory, administrative and practical measures to ensure that: (ii) Public notice to initiate public participation in decision-making on General Spatial Plans contains details related to the proposed activity and the nature of the subsequent decision, as well as all other relevant information required by article 6 (2) of the Convention; (iii) All necessary information, including, but not limited to, the text of the proposed General Spatial Plan, and, in the case of a General Spatial Plan amendment, the text of both the existing General Spatial Plan and the proposed amendment thereto, is provided to the public in due time before the hearing; (iv) In decision-making on proposed General Spatial Plans and General Spatial Plan amendments, a reasonable time frame between the publication of the public notice and the hearing is provided to the public; (v) In decision-making on proposed General Spatial Plans and General Spatial Plan amendments, due account is required to be taken of the outcomes of the public participation in the decision, and that this is documented in a transparent and traceable way;

Short description of the measure(s) proposed to fulfil recommendation and how each measure will contribute to doing so	Amendment of the Spatial Planning Act would be needed and in particular those provisions which regulate the procedure for public hearing of general spatial plans (Art. 127, para. 1). It is important to note that the public hearing is combined with and is part of the procedure for conducting public consultations on the SEA, which the draft spatial plan developer organizes and conducts in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act. According to the regulatory framework for the procedure of SEA, applicable to the general spatial plans (GSP)/GSP amendments, for the GSP, in the highest degree "relating to the environment" (within the meaning of Art. 7 of the Aarhus Convention) and their amendments, it is obligatory to conduct SEA with the respective strict criteria for public participation, according to Environment Protection Act (EPA) and the Ordinance on the conditions and order for implementation of environmental assessment of plans and programmes. These requirements for public participation within the SEA procedure at each stage (consultations on the elaborated SEA report together with the plan/programme; announcement for conducting of consultations; public discussion (hearing); approval of the plan/programme), are in full compliance with Art. 7, in connection with Art. 6, Para. 3, 4 and 8 of the Aarhus Convention. Furthermore, for GSP/ some GSP amendments the SEA is obligatory and all other GSP amendments are subject to an SEA screening procedure (assessment regarding the necessity of SEA). This means that all GSP and all GSP amendments, which could have significant environmental impacts, should be put through SEA and accordingly – public participation under the SEA. Regarding those GSP amendments for which it is considered that no SEA should be performed, it is very doubtful whether it can be assumed that they are related to the environment and therefore – that they fall within the scope of Art. 7 of the Aarhus Convention. Nevertheless, in view of the findings of the Committee based on the opinion that all GSP/GSP amendments (regardless whether a GSP/GSP amendment is subject to SEA or not) are related to the environment within the meaning of article 7 of the Convention, and thus subject to the requirements of that provision, the procedure for public hearing of GSP should be revised in the light of the recommendations in paragraph 2 (c) of decision VIII/8c.
Outline of the main steps that need to be taken to implement the proposed measure(s), including timeframe by when each step is expected to be completed	It would be appropriate the draft amendment of the Spatial Planning Act to be approved by the Council of Ministers until the end of April 2027. Prior to submission for approval an ex-ante regulatory impact assessment of the amendment (subject to liaising with the Administration of the Council of Ministers) should be prepared, and the bill, accompanied by this assessment, should be placed for public consultations for at least 30 days. According to the established practice, it is realistic to expect the National Assembly to adopt the bill in three months (by the end of July 2027) and before the summer break (August 2027). The lead responsibility for preparation and proceeding the amendment of the Spatial Planning Act lies with Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works.

List of the government departments and other actors whose involvement will be needed to implement each of the above steps	The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works may consider amendment of the Spatial Planning Act and, if appropriate, to undertake this legislative initiative. The Ministry may consult within the process with some other relevant authorities – Ministry of Environment and Water, National Association of the Municipalities in Bulgaria, as well as with NGOs (environmental and those from the construction sector – Bulgarian Construction Chamber, for instance).
Final date by when implementation of recommendation is expected to be completed	July 2027
Recommendation: **Para. 7 (a) of decision VIII/8c**	In paragraph 7 of decision VIII/8c, the Meeting of the Parties recommends that the Party concerned take the necessary legislative, regulatory, administrative and practical measures to ensure that: (a) Where they meet the criteria, if any, laid down in its national law, environmental non-governmental organizations and other members of the public have access to administrative or judicial procedures to challenge air quality plans, adopted at municipal level, which contravene national law relating to the environment;
Short description of the measure(s) proposed to fulfil recommendation and how each measure will contribute to doing so	A bill for amendments and supplements to the Clean Ambient Air Act (CAAA) which explicitly provides for the possibility of appealing against municipal air quality programmes (AQPs) has been adopted by the National Assembly and entered into force on 23.09.2025 (promulgated in State Gazette, № 78, 23.09.2025). Translated in English, the relevant provisions of the CAAA should be read: *"Art. 27.*

	(1) In cases where in a given region the total mass of emissions leads to exceeding the standards for harmful substances (pollutants) in the ambient air and the standards for deposits, the mayors of municipalities shall develop and implement programmes for reducing the levels of pollutants and for achieving the approved standards under Art. 6. The programmes shall be adopted by the municipal councils. *[.....]* *(11) (New – State Gazette, № 78 of 2025, effective 23.09.2025) The programmes under para. 1 may be appealed under the procedure of the Administrative Procedure Code. The court shall examine the appeal, issue a decision and announce the decision within one month of the session in which the consideration of the case was concluded. The proceedings on the appeal shall be concluded within 6 months of its submission."* The procedure for challenging acts/decisions concerning the environment by the order of the Administrative Procedure Code and the legal standing in such cases are applicable to the appealing many acts/decisions for the environment, and according to the amendments of CAAA, shall apply also to the municipal AQPs. The interested persons, incl. members of the public which can appeal the administrative acts/decisions in the field of environment are defined according to the definitions in § 1, items 24 and 25 of the Additional Provisions of the Environmental Protection Act which state that: "public" shall be one or more natural or juristic persons and the associations, organizations or groups thereof, established in accordance with national legislation; "the public concerned" shall be the public, which is affected or is likely to be affected by, or which has an interest in, the procedures for approval of plans, programmes, development proposals, and in the decision-making process on the granting or updating of permits according to the procedure established by this Act, or in the conditions set in the permits, including the non-governmental organizations promoting environmental protection which are established in accordance with national legislation. By this way - with this completed legal measure, the recommendation has been successfully implemented.
Outline of the main steps that need to be taken to implement the proposed measure(s), including timeframe by when each step is expected to be completed	N/A

List of the government departments and other actors whose involvement will be needed to implement each of the above steps	N/A
Final date by when implementation of recommendation is expected to be completed	N/A
Recommendation: **Para. 7 (b) of decision VIII/8c**	In paragraph 7 of decision VIII/8c, the Meeting of the Parties recommends that the Party concerned take the necessary legislative, regulatory, administrative and practical measures to ensure that: (b) The fee payable by non-governmental organizations for cassation appeals is fair and equitable in line with that payable by sole traders, public authorities and entities exercising public functions;
Short description of the measure(s) proposed to fulfil recommendation and how each measure will contribute to doing so	Amendment of the Administrative Procedure Code would be needed and in particular those provisions - Art. 227a, (1), which regulate the fees in the cassation proceedings. The current rule is that the cassation appellant shall pay in advance a state fee amounting to BGN 70, where the appellant is an individual, sole trader, state or municipal body, or another person performing public functions, or an organisation providing public services, and amounting to BGN 370, where the appellant is an organisation. It would be necessary this requirement to be changed in order to be ensured the state fee to be BGN 70, where the appellant is an individual and BGN 370 for all organisations, sole traders, state or municipal bodies, or another persons performing public functions.
Outline of the main steps that need to be taken to	It would be appropriate the draft amendment of the Administrative Procedure Code (by a law) to be approved by the Council of Ministers until the end of April 2027. Prior to submission for approval an ex-ante regulatory impact assessment of the amendment

implement the proposed measure(s), including timeframe by when each step is expected to be completed	(subject to liaising with the Administration of the Council of Ministers) should be prepared, and the bill, accompanied by this assessment, should be placed for public consultations for at least 30 days. According to the established practice, it is realistic to expect the National Assembly to adopt the bill in three months – by the end of July 2027, and before the summer break – in August 2027. The lead responsibility for preparation and proceeding the amendment of the Administrative Procedure Code lies with the Ministry of Justice in view that issues related to legislative amendments to the Administrative Procedure Code, including the determination of the amount of state fees, are within the competence of the Ministry of Justice as the leading authority for the preparation and coordination of amendments to procedural legislation.
List of the government departments and other actors whose involvement will be needed to implement each of the above steps	The Ministry of Justice may consider amendment of the Administrative Procedure Code and, if appropriate, to undertake this legislative initiative. The Ministry may consult within the process with some other relevant authorities – Ministry of Environment and Water, Supreme Judicial Council, Administrative Courts
Final date by when implementation of recommendation is expected to be completed	July 2027
Recommendation: **Para. 7 (c) of decision VIII/8c**	In paragraph 7 of decision VIII/8c, the Meeting of the Parties recommends that the Party concerned take the necessary legislative, regulatory, administrative and practical measures to ensure that: (c) The Committee's findings and recommendations on communication ACCC/C/2018/1611 are translated into Bulgarian and circulated to all Members of Parliament (the National Assembly) and the Cabinet of Ministers;
Short description of the measure(s) proposed to fulfil recommendation and how	The Committee's findings and recommendations on communication ACCC/C/2018/161 should be translated into Bulgarian and should be sent to the National Assembly and all public authorities by a letter to the Chair of the National Assembly and the Ministers. If necessary, the national focal point for the Aarhus Convention at the Ministry of Environment and Water will provide further guidance

[1] ECE/MP.PP/C.1/2025/15.

each measure will contribute to doing so	and clarification on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations in the context and application of Article 3(8) of the Convention.
Outline of the main steps that need to be taken to implement the proposed measure(s), including timeframe by when each step is expected to be completed	N/A
List of the government departments and other actors whose involvement will be needed to implement each of the above steps	Ministry of Environment and Water
Final date by when implementation of recommendation is expected	October 2026

to be completed	
Recommendation: **Para. 7 (d) of decision VIII/8c**	In paragraph 7 of decision VIII/8c, the Meeting of the Parties recommends that the Party concerned take the necessary legislative, regulatory, administrative and practical measures to ensure that: (d) The Rules of Organization and Procedure of the National Assembly are amended to require expressly that each Member of Parliament refrains, either during sessions of the Parliament or otherwise in the public domain, from any statements that penalize, persecute or harass persons exercising their rights in conformity with the provisions of the Convention;
Short description of the measure(s) proposed to fulfil recommendation and how each measure will contribute to doing so	The Rules of Organization and Procedure of the National Assembly and in particular - Section II. Ethical Norms of Conduct in Chapter Eleven Members of Parliament may be supplemented at the discretion of the National Assembly with additional provisions in order the Members of Parliament to refrain, either during sessions of the Parliament or otherwise in the public domain, from any statements which are not in compliance with the requirements of Art. 3, para. 8 of the Aarhus Convention.
Outline of the main steps that need to be taken to implement the proposed measure(s), including timeframe by when each step is expected to be completed	The Ministry of Environment and Water should inform the Chair of the National Assembly about the recommendation in para. 7 (d) of decision VIII/8c and possible amendments of the Rules of Organization and Procedure of the National Assembly with a letter by October 2026.

List of the government departments and other actors whose involvement will be needed to implement each of the above steps	The National Assembly may consider amendment of the Rules of Organization and Procedure of the National Assembly and, if appropriate, to undertake this legislative initiative. It may consult within the process with some other relevant authorities – Ministry of Environment and Water, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. The Rules of Organization and Procedure of the National Assembly regulate the internal organization and parliamentary procedures of the National Assembly and its adoption or amendment is within the exclusive competence of the National Assembly pursuant to Art. 73 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. The Ministry of Environment and Water does not have the authority to initiate, coordinate or submit proposals for amendments to the Rules outside the general order for interaction between the executive and legislative branches.
Final date by when implementation of recommendation is expected to be completed	June 2028