



UNECE “Espoo” Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

19 June 2017, Geneva

Tea Aulavuo, Secretary to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol



What are SEA and EIA

ENVIRONMENT



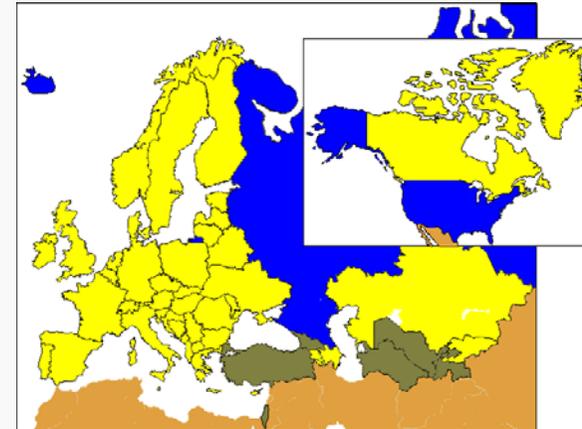
- **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** are widely applied in UNECE region as tools **to integrate environment and health considerations; green economy and sustainable development goals** into economic development projects (EIA), plans and programmes (SEA) in all economic sectors;
- At a planning stage – in consultation with stakeholders and the public;

Espoo Convention: Basic facts

ENVIRONMENT



- Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context
- Adopted in **Espoo (Finland)** in 1991, in force since 1997
- Has 45 Parties, in ECE region
- Being opened for accession by non-ECE countries
- Applies to planned projects with likely significant adverse environmental impacts across borders
- Parties must notify and consult each other (via national contact points) and the public; and take outcomes of consultations into account



Protocol on SEA: Basic facts

ENVIRONMENT



- Protocol on SEA to the Espoo Convention
- Adopted in Kyiv, 2003, in force since 2010
- Has now 30 Parties, in UNECE region
- Open to all United Nations Member States
- Applies to public plans & programmes regarding economic sectors; land-use planning and regional development at national level or with likely transboundary impacts
- Similar to EU SEA Directive but with stronger emphasis on health and public participation
- Contribute to achievement of almost all Sustainable Development Goals

● Parties
● Signatories



Parties in Central Asia and beyond

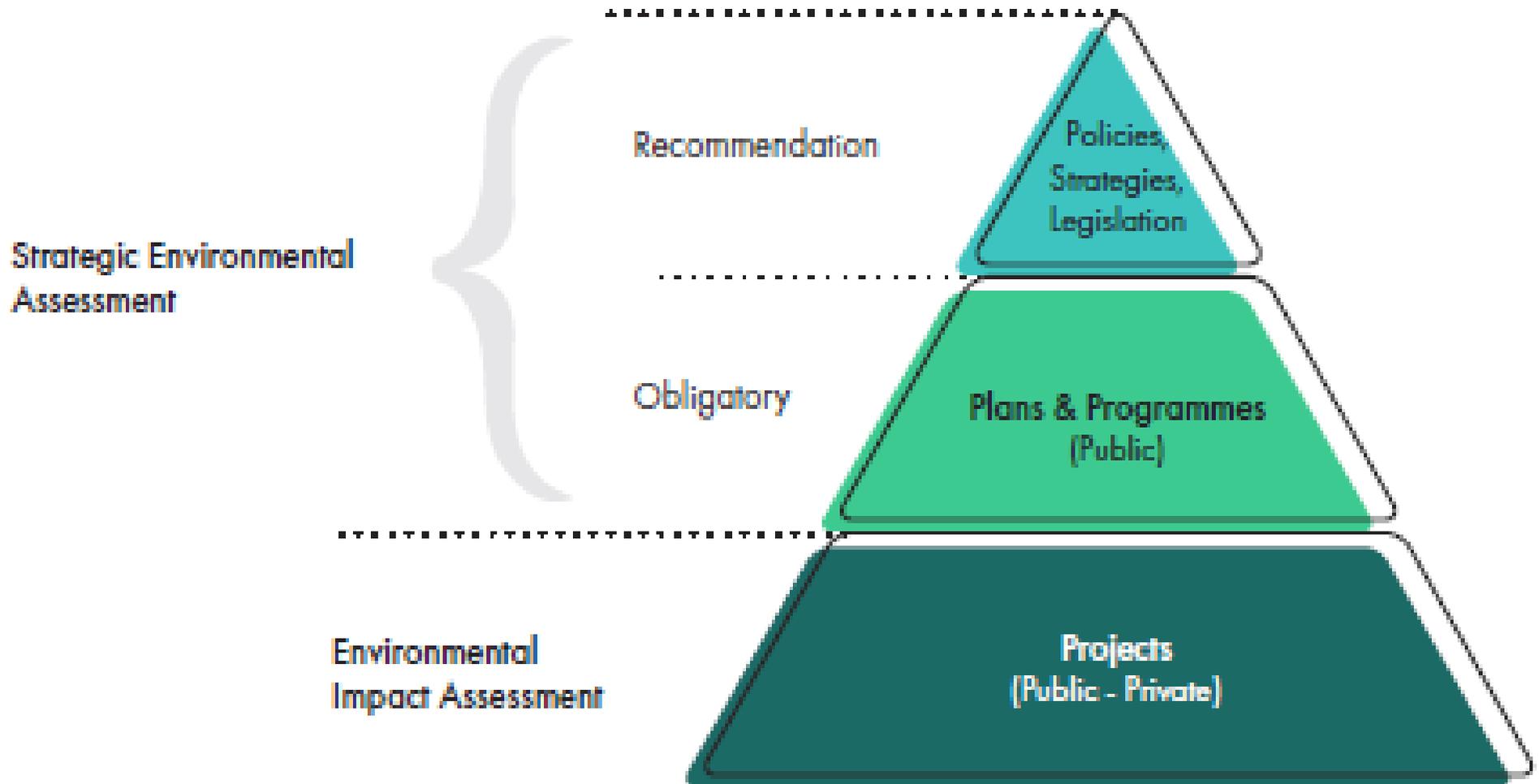


ENVIRONMENT

<i>State</i>	<i>UNECE</i>	<i>Espoo Convention</i>	<i>SEA Protocol</i>	<i>Caspian</i>
Uzbekistan	Yes	-	-	X
Kazakhstan	Yes	Party	-	Yes
Kyrgyzstan	Yes	Party	-	X
Tajikistan	Yes	-	-	X
Turkmenistan	Yes	-	-	Yes
Azerbaijan	Yes	Party	-	Yes
China	No	X	-	X
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	No	X	-	Yes
Russian Federation	Yes	Signatory	-	Yes

Linkages between SEA and EIA

ENVIRONMENT



Benefits of joining the treaties



ENVIRONMENT

- Treaties provide a framework for discussing planned developments with neighbouring States
 - **Reciprocity**: being a Party also obliges other Parties to notify & consult you
 - **Sovereignty** (decision-making power) is retained
 - **Confidentiality** is respected: not prejudicial to industrial & commercial secrecy or national security
 - **Enhanced international cooperation**, minimize misunderstandings, help avoid tensions/conflicts
- Technical assistance provided by the secretariat (legislative support, capacity building activities, pilot projects, sub-regional meetings, guidance documents)

If efficiently applied, SEA should...

ENVIRONMENT



- **Inform the decision-making** through
 - a robust assessment of the likely environmental and health consequences, and of their relationship with the objectives of the plan/programme;
 - identification of development alternatives; and
 - outcomes of the consultations;
- **Enable consultations** between public authorities (across sectors and tiers of Government), and with the public and stakeholders in the preparation of plans, programmes and policies, including, if relevant, on transboundary aspects;
- Enhance **governance** – transparency, participation,
- Ensure that the results of assessment and consultations are taken into account during decision-making and implementation.

Benefits of SEA application in accordance with Protocol

ENVIRONMENT



- **SEA** contributes to a **high level of environmental and health protection** as its application should avoid or minimize likely impacts of implementation of plans and programmes on environmental and health
- **SEA** provides ‘early warning’ to the planning authorities about possible **environmental and health risks**
- **SEA can be used to identify climate change risks** and formulate necessary adaptation measures and actions

Benefits of SEA application in accordance with Protocol

ENVIRONMENT



- **Saves time and money** - by preventing costly mistakes from neglecting environmental and health effects; helping avoid remediation of harm or corrective actions (e.g. relocating or redesigning facilities)
- Can streamline economic growth – by revealing **potential conflicts amongst economic sectors** (e.g. competition over water resources between agriculture and hydro-energy)
- SEA increases transparency of decision-making, and therefore **reduces risks for proponents/investors** (better acceptance of future projects, fewer appeals)

Benefits of SEA application in accordance with Protocol

ENVIRONMENT



- **Improves planning and programming** (more focused, rigorous, consistent, open to alternatives)
- **Identification of new innovative opportunities for development**
- **Facilitates later project development and related environmental assessment procedures** and thus reduces the timeframes for project finance approval
- Application of SEA is consistent with policies of **International Financial Institutions (IFIs)**, therefore it may be required as a condition for loans

Costs of SEA application in accordance with Protocol

ENVIRONMENT



- **Vary depending on SEA's scope and complexity**, which depend on scale of plan; number of alternatives; and methodology chosen;
- Parties are free to choose methodology that suits their capacities and economic context
- Generally up to 5-10% of planning costs; i.e. are **marginal** compared to implementation costs; (if no expensive modelling or data processing tools, costs associated mainly to hiring of SEA practitioners)
- **Timescales:** For small (e.g. municipal) plans: around 1 month; Medium-scale: 50-100 working days; Complex, large-scale SEA: between 150-300 days;

Examples of activities in Asia



ENVIRONMENT

- Long-standing cooperation with Republic of Korea including via seminars on transboundary EIA for South-East Asian countries;
- In 2014 and 2016, seminars on global application of the Convention and the Protocol with participation of China (Mr. Li Wei, Beijing Normal University); Cambodia; Mongolia; ROK, Vietnam, Mekong River Commission) – with EIB and other IFIs
- Update of the Guidelines on Transboundary EIA for Central Asian countries
- Legislative assistance to Kazakhstan on SEA (funded by EU)
- Technical advice to Kyrgyzstan on improving legislative and institutional framework to implement the Convention (Swiss funding)

Possible role of Convention and Protocol in recent development in Asia



ENVIRONMENT

- In China + Asia: increasing amount of transboundary environmental issues + impacts - increasing need to implement SEA and EIA;
- Promotion of the Treaties in Central Asia and beyond could help improve national legislative frameworks and SEA and EIA application in the region
- Treaties can serve as a 'benchmark' for SEA and transboundary EIA procedures
- Meetings under treaties serve as forums for networking and discussion among key actors (countries, international organisations, IFIs, etc.) regarding SEA and transboundary EIA application within 'One Belt, One Road' initiative
- Great potential for useful exchanges of experience; good practice and guidance between regions – mutual learning opportunities
- Cooperation with IFIs

Selected resource materials

<http://www.unece.org/env/eia/publications.html>



ENVIRONMENT

- Protocol on SEA: Facts and Benefits (<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42853>)
- Good Practice Recommendations on Public Participation in SEA (<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=42234>)
- Resource Manual to Support Application of the SEA Protocol (<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=27379>)
- Application of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment: Manual for Trainers (**DRAFT MAY 2017**, https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/eia/Publications/2016/Manual_for_Trainers/Manual_layout_En_Covers_For_Web_31.05.2017.pdf)
- Guidance on the Practical Application of the Espoo Convention (<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=7888>)



Thank you!

Tea Aulavuo
Secretary to the Espoo Convention
UNECE
Date 19 | 06 | 2017, Geneva

