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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

**MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION
ON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
IN A TRANSBOUNDARY CONTEXT**

Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment

Thirteenth meeting
Geneva, 17–19 May 2009
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

Summary of workshop findings

Note by Belarus and Montenegro

Summary

The present note has been prepared further to decisions IV/4 and IV/5 taken at the fourth meeting of the Parties (ECE/MP.EIA/10), which requested the lead countries to prepare a short summary of the findings of, respectively, each subregional cooperation or capacity-building workshop held. This note summarizes the findings of a start-up workshop for a pilot implementation project in Belarus, held in Minsk from 22 to 23 June 2009.

In addition, a workshop on subregional cooperation for South-Eastern Europe was held in Podgorica from 15 to 16 December 2009. This workshop was not foreseen in the workplan but is reported here as information to the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment.

An informal report of the Podgorica workshop and other outputs from both workshops are available on the website of the Convention (<http://www.unece.org/env/eia>).

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INTRODUCTION

1. The first of the two workshops described below was foreseen in the workplan adopted for the current intersessional period within the activity on subregional cooperation and capacity-building to strengthen contacts between the Parties and other States, including States outside the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE/MP.EIA/10, decision IV/7). The Meeting of the Parties recognized that such activities promoted the implementation and practical application of the Convention in the subregion (decision IV/5).
2. The second workshop was intended to raise awareness in Montenegro and to support subregional cooperation. The Meeting of the Parties recognized that subregional cooperation promoted the regular exchange of information within the subregion and improved the practical application of the Convention (decision IV/4).
3. The Meeting of the Parties requested the lead countries to prepare a short summary of the findings of each workshop held, whether for capacity-building or for strengthening subregional cooperation (decisions IV/5 and IV/4, respectively). This document responds to the request of the Meeting of the Parties.

I. START-UP WORKSHOP FOR A PILOT IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT IN BELARUS, HELD IN MINSK FROM 22 TO 23 JUNE 2009

4. Representatives of Belarus and Lithuania, Parties to the Convention, participated in the start-up workshop for a pilot implementation project in Belarus. Representatives of the Russian Federation, a signatory State, also participated. Representatives of the Minsk offices of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations Development Programme were present. The Convention secretariat was also represented. The following non-governmental organizations were also represented: Ecopravo-Minsk; Minsk Aarhus Centre; and Ecohouse, a local non-governmental organization from Grodno (Belarus).
5. The workshop was hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus. The workshop was organized, facilitated and funded by the Minsk office of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.
6. At the start of the workshop, representatives of the three States presented their national environmental assessment systems.
7. The workshop initiated a pilot implementation project under the Convention, organized under the Environment and Security Initiative, with financial support from Canada. The project was built around the application of the Convention to a planned hydroelectric power plant on the Neman River, close to Grodno (Belarus), upstream of Lithuania and Kaliningrad (Russian Federation). The six phases of the project were as follows:
 - (a) Start-up workshop;
 - (b) Pilot environmental impact assessment implemented according to the Convention;
 - (c) Assessment of the results of the pilot environmental impact assessment;
 - (d) Development of national procedures and capacity-building;

- (e) Subregional conference to disseminate the results of the project;
- (f) Publication of a final project report.

8. The representatives of Belarus said that their country would notify the Russian Federation of the planned activity. The representatives of the Russian Federation indicated that their country would respond as it saw fit regarding participation in the transboundary environmental impact assessment as far as its national legislation permitted. The representatives of Lithuania acknowledged receipt of the notification during the workshop.

9. Participants also agreed in principle on the timescale for the pilot implementation project, including a more detailed timetable for the pilot environmental impact assessment, and on many practical details regarding points of contact, routing of correspondence and languages to be used.

II. SUBREGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE, HELD IN PODGORICA FROM 15 TO 16 DECEMBER 2009

10. Representatives of the following Parties participated in the workshop: Croatia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. The Convention secretariat was also represented. The workshop was hosted, supported and organized by the Ministry of Spatial Planning and Environment of Montenegro.

11. The workshop was held following Montenegro's accession to the Convention in the second half of 2009, with the intention of raising awareness in Montenegro and of supporting subregional cooperation. The workshop was not funded from the Convention's trust fund, as it had not been foreseen in the workplan.

12. Participants exchanged information on their national environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment systems and on practical experiences in the application of the Convention. Montenegro, for which the Convention had entered into force in October 2009, had no experience as a Party of origin, but had received a notification from Croatia.

13. Participants discussed the Multilateral Agreement among the Countries of South-Eastern Europe for Implementation of the Convention adopted in Bucharest in 2008. Bulgaria and Montenegro were Parties to the Agreement, and Croatia and Romania expected to ratify it in 2010. As the Agreement required three Parties for its entry into force, the participants expected that the first meeting of Parties to the Agreement might take place at the end of 2010 or early in 2011, and that it would be organized with the help of the Convention secretariat. Once the Agreement had entered into force, the Parties to the Agreement would have to consider the preparation of guidance, which the workshop participants felt could be done by e-mail and with the support of the Convention secretariat. The representatives of Serbia suggested carrying out a pilot strategic environmental assessment project on renewable energy sources involving the countries of South-Eastern Europe.

14. Within South-Eastern Europe, the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment had been ratified by Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia and Montenegro. Romania had completed its domestic procedures for ratification. All participants reported that a new law on strategic environmental assessment had been necessary. The representatives of Montenegro proposed to

start a new initiative regarding the application of strategic environmental assessment in South-Eastern Europe, including the drafting of guidelines or an agreement on strategic environmental assessment in a transboundary context.

15. The participants agreed that similar workshops, especially on the practical application of strategic environmental assessment and for training experts on strategic environmental assessment, would be welcome.

16. The participants agreed that the next workshop to be organized in the subregion should be announced well in advance, so as to improve representation by the countries in South-Eastern Europe. They also agreed that representatives of local or municipal authorities should be invited.
