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Economic Commission for Europe

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention
on Environmental Impact Assessment
in a Transboundary Context

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention
on Environmental Impact Assessment in
a Transboundary Context serving as the
Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on
Strategic Environmental Assessment

Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Fifth meeting

Geneva, 11–15 April 2016

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties

Elements for a draft Minsk declaration

Proposals by the Bureau

Summary

The Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment under the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment is mandated to assist in the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol and the management of their joint workplan (ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/2, decision I/5-V/5, para. 2).

In accordance with that mandate, the Working Group will consider the draft declaration contained in the present document, which was prepared by the Bureau to the two treaties with the support of the secretariat. The Working Group will be invited to discuss and agree on the document or, as needed, decide on its further development in advance of its next meeting (7–10 November 2016) for finalization at that meeting, and for subsequent submission for adoption by the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and its Protocol at their next sessions, scheduled to be held in Minsk, in June 2017.



We, the high-level representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States and the European Union gathered in Minsk from [12 to 16 June 2017] on the occasion of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment,

Recalling the entry into force of the Espoo Convention in 1997 and the considerable impact on international environmental law and the environment it has had since then,

Mindful of the added value that its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment has produced and is yet to produce by extending the application of environmental assessment to the earliest stages of decision-making, i.e., to plans and programmes and, to the extent appropriate, to policies and legislation,

Recalling decision VI/5–II/5 on accession by Member States of the United Nations not members of ECE and the Geneva Declaration on the Global Application of the Convention and the Protocol (Part B), both adopted jointly by the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol,

Welcoming the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹ which came into effect on 1 January 2016 and will guide the decisions of the United Nations Member Governments over the next 15 years in areas of importance for humanity and the planet,

Also welcoming [the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development,] [the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction] and the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

Recognizing that environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) are cross-cutting procedures designed to prevent and to mitigate a wide range of adverse environmental and health impacts likely to arise from envisaged economic development,

Recognizing also that the transboundary EIA and SEA procedures render decision-making regarding economic development planning more inclusive, participatory and representative by ensuring consultation of the environment and health authorities, other stakeholders and the public at the local, national and international levels, and by ensuring that the outcomes of these consultations are duly taken into account,

1. *Celebrate* the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention;
2. *Acknowledge* the vast benefits witnessed by Parties from the application of the Convention and the important contribution of the instrument in shaping sustainable development policies and fostering international cooperation throughout the region;
3. *Stress* the need to accelerate the entry into effect of the first amendment and [celebrate the adoption of the agreement on article 17, paragraph 3, as a crucial step in the implementation of the Convention at the global level] [request [names of States Parties in 2001] to ratify the first amendment as soon as possible];

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4. *Urge* all Parties to the Convention that have not done so to ratify the second amendment to the Convention, adopted by decision III/7, as soon as possible, to further expand and improve the application of the Convention;
5. *Recognize* that by applying the Protocol during the past seven years, Parties have enhanced implementation of their sustainable development objectives in all sectoral policies;
6. *Also recognize* that on account of the applied frameworks provided by the Convention and the Protocol, the region is a front-runner in integrating environmental and health concerns into economic development;
7. *Emphasize* that the Convention and in particular the Protocol play an important role in supporting countries to translate international principles into practical action at the national level and thus to achieve SDGs;
8. *Also emphasize* that promotion of SDGs in general at the national and international levels leads in turn to improved and all-inclusive processes for impact assessment, and hence to the effective application of the Convention and the Protocol;
9. *Further emphasize* that SEA is a key tool for the development of national climate change action and planning, and for the incorporation of specific climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into regional development and sectoral plans, programmes and policies, and the development of comprehensive risk prevention and management strategies;
10. *Call upon* Parties to the Convention and the Protocol to take action to maximize the effectiveness of the application of the Convention and the Protocol, respectively, so that the best possible results are achieved;
11. *Invite* Parties, signatories, civil society and all stakeholders, partner organizations, international financial institutions and the secretariat to widely promote the awareness of the Convention and the Protocol, and their role in the achievement of global commitments;
12. *Recognize* that the Convention and the Protocol are effective instruments for realizing benefits also worldwide by fostering the achievement of the global commitments, within and beyond the ECE region;
13. *Call upon* Parties to introduce all necessary national measures, both legal and practical, to fully meet their obligations and to reap the full benefit of the Convention and the Protocol;
14. *Invite* other interested States that are Members of the United Nations to take steps to implement the two treaties with a view to future accession;
15. *Invite* any interested State not Party to provisionally apply the Convention and the Protocol, pending accession, and to develop sufficient capacity for the successful implementation of those treaties, including in the pursuit of sustainable development and climate change goals and actions;
16. *Invite* Parties to develop a strategy to be adopted at the next session of the Meetings of the Parties, in 2020, to:
 - (a) Further promote the global application of the Convention and the exchange of experience with other regions of the world;
 - (b) Identify related workplan activities as well as partnerships and funding mechanisms for their implementation;

(c) Determine whether and how the present procedural, institutional and financial arrangements should be revised, taking into account the future accession by States outside the ECE region;

17. *Request* Parties to assist other United Nations Member States from within and outside the ECE region in their efforts to accede to and implement the Convention and the Protocol, inter alia, in support of mainstreaming their policies and legislation to achieve the SDGs;

18. [*Encourage*]/[*Welcome*] the design and implementation of workplan activities and the development of information materials in the forthcoming intersessional period that highlight the contribution of the Convention and the Protocol to the achievement of the SDGs, [notably SDGs 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 17];

19. [*Welcome therefore*] decision [VII/10–III/8] of the Meetings of the Parties to adopt a strategy at the next session of the Meetings of the Parties for promoting the achievement of SDGs by 2030 through the effective application of the Convention and the Protocol;

[20. *Call for* the active participation of and the strengthening of cooperation among countries, national and international organizations, civil society, the private sector and financial institutions to support the application of the treaties for the achievement of the SDGs;]

21. *Request* Parties to upgrade the sustainable availability of financing for the successful implementation of the activities under the Convention and the Protocol, and invite interested States, organizations and other stakeholders to also support the mobilization of means and resources for the widespread application of the two instruments worldwide.
