

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

Preparation for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties

Mapping of the Convention and the Protocol activities that support countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present informal document has been prepared at the request of the Bureau (see minutes of the Bureau meeting, 19-20 January, 2016, para. 45). It provides a mapping of activities, being carried out under the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, or suggested for the next intersessional period, that will support countries in their achievement of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also describes processes and specific activities that will support the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at different levels, national, regional and potentially global.

The document is an excerpt from a background paper for the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Batumi, Georgia, 8–10 June 2016), prepared by the UNECE secretariat to support the Ministers' discussion on "how to get the pan-European region ready for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda". The document for the Batumi Conference was prepared further to a request from the informal joint meeting between Chairs of the governing bodies of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements and the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) held on 26 October 2015, and is based on the secretariat's internal mapping of Environment subprogramme processes and activities that might support countries in achieving the SDGs. The CEP reviewed this document at its special session (Geneva, 23-25 February 2016).

The Working Group is invited to refer to the mapping of the Protocol and Convention activities with SDGs, when discussing the new workplan 2017–2020, including a proposed development of a strategy for the achievement of the relevant SDGs; the draft Minsk declaration; and the possible panel discussion on SDGs at the high level segment of the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol. It may also wish to comment and complement the document.

I. Cross-cutting



1. The UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and, in particular, its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA) provide a framework for the comprehensive integration of environmental and health concerns into a wide range of policies and legislation, programmes, plans and development activities, in all economic sectors, thus helping countries to assure alignment of development with the SDGs. The UNECE secretariat will assist countries in their efforts to accomplish sustainable development by provision of technical assistance and capacity development, including:

- (a) Facilitation of legal reforms;
- (b) Pilot projects;
- (c) National and local training of trainers aiming at strengthening the institutional and human capacities among Government officials and other experts;
- (d) Organization of subregional and national experience sharing and awareness raising events;
- (e) Development of recommendations and guidance materials on the basis of good practices identified by State Parties and other stakeholders.

2. More generally, the reporting mechanisms under the Convention and the Protocol (and under the other ECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA)s) will support countries in their reporting of progress on SDGs.

II. Goal by goal

3. This chapter lists all SDGs set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ and presents, for each relevant SDG, examples how the Protocol and the Convention help countries work towards achievement of the SDG. Reference to specific targets is provided in parentheses in the titles. These relevant targets are also listed in the chapter.

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1, Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E
In Russian: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&referer=/english/&Lang=R

SDG 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere (1.5)



1.5 *By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters*

SDG 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (2.4)



2.4 *By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality*

The Protocol on SEA sets out (in article 4) that strategic environmental assessment shall be carried out for plans and programme, which are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries regional development, town and country planning or land use, energy etc." SEA is therefore a tool to ensure that environment and health concerns as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation measures are taken into account in the plans and strategies for agricultural practices and food production, so as to ensure that ecosystems and human health are preserved.

Moreover, alongside with the Aarhus Convention, the Convention and in particular the Protocol help Governments to achieve sustainable agriculture through strengthening capacities of authorities to promote effective access to environmental information and to engage effectively non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local communities and other stakeholders in developing and implementing different agriculture-related plans, programmes and projects.

SDG 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (3.9, 3.d)



3.9 *By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination*

3.d *Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks*

The Protocol on SEA and, at the project level, the Espoo Convention, emphasize the links between environment and health; they contribute to reducing health hazards from chemicals, air, water and soil pollution and contamination by ensuring that environmental and health considerations are taken into account in the planning of all potentially polluting economic activities. By assessing the potential environmental and health impacts of plans and programmes, the Protocol provides early warning of unsustainable options and contributes to the reduction and management of health risks from economic activities.

Under the Protocol, capacity-development activities such as training-of-trainers workshops and pilot projects will continue to be undertaken to assist countries to effectively implement strategic environmental assessment (SEA). WHO has provided detailed guidance for the assessment of potential health impacts of government plans and programmes and for the involvement of health authorities. This guidance will be further developed and disseminated to provide guidance for country and sector specific planning.

SDG 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



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SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



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SDG 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 6 (a), 6 (b))



6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally;

6.5 By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate;

6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes;

6 (a) By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies;

6 (b) Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management

The workplans under the Espoo Convention and notably its Protocol on SEA include capacity-development activities to promote the use of SEA, together with cumulative assessment procedures, as a central tool in the sector of sustainable water management.

SDG 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all (7.2, 7.a)



7.2 *By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix*

7 (a) *By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology*

The application of the SEA procedure, stipulated in the Protocol on SEA, significantly contributes in the development of sectoral energy plans and programmes, as well as policies and legislation, that assist countries to meet their renewable energy targets and enhance international cooperation. The joint workplan under the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA includes assistance to countries to develop their legislative and institutional frameworks, through legal advice and capacity-development programmes. It also coaches countries in the pilot application of SEA in strategic documents in the energy sector.

SDG 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (8.4)



8.4 *Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, with developed countries taking the lead*

By integrating environment and health consideration into all development planning, the Protocol on SEA provides a key tool for greening economies, the integration of green economy considerations into development activities and making production patterns more sustainable. ECE will continue to promote SEA and support the establishment of SEA systems in line with the Protocol. The funding of follow-up activities to current European Union-funded green economy programmes, and the replication or extension of activities to other countries or subregions, is currently under consideration.

SDG 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (9.1, 9.4)



9.1 *Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all;*

9.4 *By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities*

By ensuring that a full range of potential environmental and health impacts and opportunities considered in the planning of infrastructure, SEA helps choosing more sustainable alternatives and best available technologies. Pilot projects and training events, for example on transport infrastructure, could be organized under the Espoo Convention and its Protocol

SDG 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries



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SDG 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (11.3, 11.4, 11.6, 11.a, 11.b)



11.3 *By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries;*

11.4 *Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage;*

11.6 *By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management;*

11 (a) *Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning;*

11 (b) *By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels*

By ensuring that environmental and health concerns are thoroughly taken into account in the urban, land-use and regional planning, and that the relevant authorities, stakeholders and the public are effectively consulted, SEA considerably improves development planning and enhances sustainable urbanization and human settlement. SEA is a key tool for integrated plans, programmes and policies, the incorporation of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures and risk prevention and management. Under the Protocol on SEA, pilot projects, training events, guidelines and a seminar for the exchange of experience—possibly in cooperation with the ECE Housing and Land Management unit and with THE PEP and the NGO Local Governments for Sustainability—could be arranged.

Under the Industrial Accidents Convention, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA, guidance on land-use planning, the siting of hazardous activities and related safety aspects is being prepared. Countries can be further supported in the implementation of the guidance through dedicated capacity-development efforts.

SDG 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (12.2, 12.4, 12.5)



12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources;

12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment;

12.5 By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse;

SEA contributes to reducing related environmental impacts, by ensuring that environment and health concerns are thoroughly taken into account in, among others, waste management plans and programmes. Pilot SEAs of waste management strategies in the Caucasus are underway under the Protocol on SEA. Similar assessments could be carried out in other countries should funding be available.

SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (13.1–13.3)



13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries;

13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning;

13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning

The Protocol on SEA provides a concrete procedural tool that can ensure integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into national planning, strategies and policies. Future work under the Protocol is expected to include the development of a database with examples of the use of SEA for the development of adaptation and mitigation strategies, training of trainers workshops, drafting of guidelines on SEA and climate change adaptation and a pilot project to test the application of the guidelines and a thematic seminar on the promotion of SEA as a tool for climate change adaptation

SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (14.1)



14.1 *By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution*

The Convention and the Protocol on SEA establish environmental assessment as an important tool to develop coordinated, coherent and transparent decision-making related to the use of marine resources and supports the sustainable development of seas.

SDG 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss (15.1, 15.4)



15.1 *By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements;*

15.4 *By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development;*

By ensuring that environmental and health concerns are thoroughly taken into account in the planning of land-use and sectoral activities, SEA contributes to protecting biodiversity and natural habitats. Recommendations could be developed under both the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA on the integration of biodiversity considerations into all SEAs and environmental impact assessments, possibly in cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

SDG 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (16.6, 16.7, 16.10)



16.6 *Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels;*

16.7 *Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels;*

16.10 *Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements*

By ensuring consultation of the environmental and health authorities, other stakeholders and the public at local, national and international levels, and by ensuring that the outcomes of these consultations are considered, the Espoo Convention and SEA procedures concretely render decision-making regarding the planning of economic activities more inclusive, participatory and representative. The procedures provide for the right of the public to be informed and consulted on envisaged economic activities that are likely to have adverse impacts on the environment and the health of the population.

SDG 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (17.13, 17.16, 17.17)

17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence;

17.16 Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries;

17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

SEA contributes to ensuring that SDGs are taken into account in the policymaking in consultation with all relevant sectors and levels of the government. Pilot projects, training events, guidelines and seminars for the exchange of experience could be organized under the Protocol on SEA.
