


**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**

**Intermediary session**  
 Geneva, 5–7 February 2019

**Report of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and of  
 the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the  
 Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on their intermediary  
 sessions**

**Contents**

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction .....	3
A. Attendance .....	3
B. Organizational matters .....	3
II. Outstanding issues.....	4
A. Outstanding issues relevant to the Convention .....	4
B. Outstanding issues relevant to the Convention and the Protocol .....	6
III. Review of the workplan .....	7
A. Subregional cooperation and capacity-building.....	7
B. Exchange of good practices.....	7
C. Promoting ratification and application of the Protocol and the Convention....	8
IV. Review of compliance, implementation and the activities of the Implementation Committee .....	9
V. Opening ceremony of the high-level segment.....	9



VI.	Statements by ministers and high-level representatives .....	10
VII.	Adoption of decisions.....	10
	A. Decisions adopted by consensus.....	10
	B. Decisions adopted by a vote.....	10
VIII.	Election of the Chair of the Bureau.....	11
IX.	Other business .....	11
	A. Budget for the extended intersessional period.....	11
	B. Side event.....	11
X.	Date and venue of next meetings .....	12
XI.	Conclusion of the session .....	12

## I. Introduction

1. The intermediary sessions of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol) were held from 5 to 7 February 2019 in Geneva.

2. The Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol convened in joint and individual meetings throughout the sessional period. The present report details the work of both sessions. The Meetings of the Parties refers to both bodies meeting in a joint session. For practical reasons, the decisions adopted at the sessions are being issued in an addendum to the present report.

### A. Attendance

3. The meeting was attended by delegations from the following Parties to the Convention and the Protocol, as well as other member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE): Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Uzbekistan. The European Union was represented by the European Commission. Statements on behalf of the European Union and its member States were made by Romania, which held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2019, and by the European Commission.

4. Representatives of the Convention secretariat attended the meeting. Representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO) also attended the meeting. The following intergovernmental organizations took part: the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); and the Nuclear Energy Agency. The following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were represented: Caucasus Environmental NGO Network; ClientEarth; the European Environmental Bureau, Friends of the Earth Europe (Belgium); Green Network (Belarus); the International Association for Impact Assessment; the Irish Environmental Network (Ireland); Nuclear Transparency Watch; Society and Environment (Ukraine); and the World Wide Fund for Nature (Russia). In addition, academics from Hokkaido University (Japan) attended the meeting.

### B. Organizational matters

5. The Chair of the Bureau, George Kremlis, opened the meeting. The Secretary to the Convention and the Protocol informed the delegations that the Bureau had recommended that Mr. Kremlis be elected as Chair of the general segment of the sessions. The Meetings of the Parties elected Mr. Kremlis accordingly.

6. The Chief of the Environment for Europe and Sustainable Development Section of the ECE Environment Division welcomed the delegates.

7. The Meetings of the Parties adopted their agenda (ECE/MP.EIA/26–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/10),<sup>1</sup> which had been prepared by the secretariat in agreement with the Bureau. As suggested by the Chair, under any other business, the Meetings agreed to consider the need for additional pledges to support the three-year budget of the Convention and the Protocol (adopted through decision VII/4–III/4) during the intersessional period that was extended to three and a half years.

---

<sup>1</sup> All official and informal meeting documentation for the sessions, the programme of the side event and other information, such as presentations that were provided to the secretariat and a list of participants, are available at [www.unece.org/index.php?id=50226#/](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50226#/).

8. The Meetings of the Parties noted the Chair's informal report on the credentials of the representatives of Parties attending the sessions. The Chair reported that, of the 45 Parties to the Convention, 37 Parties were present with credentials and two without them. Of the 32 Parties to the Protocol, 27 Parties were present with credentials and one without them.

9. The secretariat briefed the Meetings of the Parties on the status of ratification of the Convention, its two amendments and the Protocol. The Parties welcomed the recent ratification by Greece of both amendments to the Convention. They also noted the steps taken by Azerbaijan, Belgium, North Macedonia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland towards the ratification of the amendments, with Azerbaijan and Belgium having advanced the furthest in that regard. However, the Parties noted with concern that six further ratifications were still needed for the first amendment to become operational, allowing non-ECE countries to accede to the Convention. Consequently, they urged Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, North Macedonia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to make every effort to ratify that amendment as soon as possible. They also expressed regret at the fact that Armenia, Azerbaijan, North Macedonia and Ukraine had failed to submit a written report on their progress in that regard, as had been requested by the Bureau. They were requested to submit their reports by the end of May for the Bureau to consider at its next meeting (Geneva, 17 and 18 June 2019).

10. Moreover, noting that the second amendment to the Convention had been in force since 23 October 2017, the Meetings of the Parties urged all Parties that had not yet done so (i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) to ratify the amendment. That step was deemed important to ensure unified application of the Convention by all the Parties thereto. The Parties also urged the signatories to the Protocol that had not already done so (i.e. Belgium, France, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, the Republic of Moldova and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) to ratify that instrument and encouraged the beneficiary countries of technical pre-accession assistance on strategic environmental assessment to accede to it. The Republic of Moldova informed the meeting that it had already ratified both the second amendment to the Convention and the Protocol and that its corresponding instruments of ratification had been, or were about to be, deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

11. The Meetings of the Parties welcomed the ratification by Serbia of the 2008 multilateral agreement among the countries of South-Eastern Europe for implementation of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (the Bucharest Agreement) in December 2018 and encouraged other countries in the subregion (Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia and Greece) to ratify the agreement.

12. The delegation of Switzerland drew attention to the Environmental Performance Reviews, as a part of which it had been recommended that the reviewed countries, such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, should ratify the ECE instruments, including the Espoo Convention and the Protocol.

## **II. Outstanding issues**

13. The Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol discussed several outstanding issues prior to the high-level segment.

### **A. Outstanding issues relevant to the Convention**

#### **1. Draft decisions on the review of compliance with the Convention**

14. The Chair of the Implementation Committee, Romas Švedas (Lithuania), presented draft decision IS/1 on general issues of compliance with the Convention (ECE/MP.EIA/2019/1) and country-specific draft decisions on compliance IS/1a–c and e–g (ECE/MP.EIA/2019/2–4 and ECE/MP.EIA/2019/6–9). The First Vice-Chair of the Implementation Committee, Maria do Carmo Figueira (Portugal), presented draft decision IS/1d on compliance by Belarus with its obligations under the Convention in respect of the Belarusian nuclear power plant in Ostrovets (ECE/MP.EIA/2019/5). They explained that, as

mandated by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention at its seventh session (Minsk, 13–16 June 2017), the Committee had prepared the draft decisions based on its review of draft decision VII/2 and taking into account the progress made before, during and after the seventh session (ECE/MP.EIA/23–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/7, para. 27). Moreover, as had been suggested by the delegation of Ukraine in Minsk, the Committee presented the revised draft decision on general issues and each of the country-specific draft decisions in separate documents, to facilitate their subsequent consideration and adoption.

15. The Meeting of the Parties to the Convention first deliberated on the country-specific decisions, prior to addressing the decision on general issues of compliance that derived from the Committee's opinions regarding the individual Parties. Several delegations made proposals to amend the draft decisions, including: Belarus and the European Union, regarding draft decision IS/1 on the general issues of compliance with the Convention and draft decision IS/1d on compliance by Belarus; the European Union and Ukraine, regarding draft decision IS/1f on compliance by Ukraine; the European Union, regarding draft decision IS/1h on compliance by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and Armenia, and Azerbaijan, regarding, respectively, draft decision IS/1a and draft decision IS/1b on compliance in their own regards. Written amendment proposals were projected onto the screen during the plenary session and circulated by email for consideration by the delegations.

16. The concerned Parties also met on the margins of the sessional period, with a view to agreeing on revised versions of the draft decisions. At the end of the general segment, the Meeting of the Parties was unable to reach a consensus on a revised wording for draft decisions IS/1, IS/1d and IS/1h but had to forward alternative proposals for amendments to the text to the high-level segment for adoption. The delegation of Belarus reiterated its statement, made available to all the Parties in advance of the session, that the Implementation Committee had violated its operating rules by not inviting comments from Belarus on draft decision IS/1d prior to its submission to the Meeting of the Parties. The First Vice-Chair of the Implementation Committee stated that the Committee had strictly followed its operating rules with respect to all the compliance issues before it, without exception. She also noted that Belarus had been given ample opportunity to provide the Committee with information and comments regarding the compliance matter in question.

17. The delegation of Ukraine put forward proposals regarding the procedure for drafting decisions on compliance for the Bureau to consider, if necessary, together with the Working Group and the Implementation Committee. The delegation suggested, among other things, that the Bureau provide its opinion on the draft decisions prior to their submission to the Meetings of the Parties and that the Parties involved be afforded additional opportunities to comment on those draft decisions that followed up on previous compliance decisions taken by the Meeting of the Parties. It also recommended avoiding references to paragraphs contained in previous/other decisions of the Meetings of the Parties, which, in turn, contained references to previous decisions. The Meetings of the Parties invited the secretariat to submit the proposals of Ukraine for consideration by the Bureau and the Implementation Committee in advance of its next sessions.

## **2. Draft decision on the applicability of the Convention to the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants**

18. The German Co-Chair of the ad hoc working group developing draft guidance on the applicability of the Convention to the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants, as set out in document ECE/MP.EIA/2019/10, reported on work in progress in that regard. Under the co-chairmanship of Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the ad hoc working group had based its work on the terms of reference for guidance on the applicability of the Convention to the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants adopted by the Working Group on Environmental Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment at its seventh meeting in May 2018 (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2018/2, annex IV), and on the conclusions of a workshop held at that meeting. The two Co-Chairs had also met with representatives of NGOs on two occasions, to update and consult with them regarding the working group's activities.

19. After its consideration of the progress report, the Meeting of the Parties agreed on a revised version of draft decision IS/2 prepared by the Bureau (ECE/MP.EIA/2019/11), which would be forwarded to the high-level segment. As proposed by the European Union, the

decision was revised to ensure that it referred consistently to guidance on the “applicability”, and not the “application”, of the Convention to the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants. The European Union stressed that the former term had been used in the workplan for the implementation of the Convention and its Protocol for the period 2017–2020, adopted through decision VII/3–III/3. Some delegations questioned the use of the term “applicability”, because decision VI/2, taken by the Meeting of the Parties in 2014 concerning the Rivne nuclear power plant in Ukraine, had demonstrated that the Convention could apply to lifetime extensions by Parties.

20. The Meeting of the Parties noted the provisional schedule for the ad hoc working group’s next meetings, starting with one that was to take place in Geneva, on 25 and 26 March 2019. It thanked Portugal, the Netherlands and Austria for offering to host the subsequent meetings, scheduled for June, October and December 2019, respectively. The International Association of Impact Assessment offered to organize a workshop on environmental and health impacts of the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants back-to-back with the ad hoc working group’s Lisbon meeting, in June 2019. The workshop would support the work on the guidance by providing a platform for a scientific and technical debate on the topic.

21. The Meeting of the Parties also noted that Sweden was considering becoming a member of the ad hoc working group. It joined the Bureau in recommending that the nominated experts from Armenia, Belarus and Ukraine participate in the work of the ad hoc working group more actively in the future, including to ensure a broader representation of the Parties’ views across the ECE region. To facilitate the participation of those three countries, the Meeting of the Parties invited delegations to consider financially supporting the participation of one expert from each of the three countries concerned in the meetings of the ad hoc working group.

22. Nuclear Transparency Watch suggested that another workshop be organized to broaden the participation of other stakeholders and civil society in the preparation of the guidance. It also recommended that the ad hoc working group consider the relevant findings of the Compliance Committee under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and the forthcoming decision by the European Court of Justice regarding a case relating to the extension of the lifetime of two nuclear power plants in Belgium.

### **3. Draft decision on the Revised Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context for Central Asian Countries**

23. The Meeting of the Parties agreed to forward draft decision IS/3 on the Revised Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context for Central Asian Countries (ECE/MP.EIA/2019/13) without changes to the high-level segment, along with the related guidelines (ECE/MP.EIA/2019/12). Both documents had been revised by the secretariat based on the comments made during and after the seventh meeting of the Working Group, and later reviewed by the Bureau.

24. The Meeting of the Parties noted comments from the delegations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Switzerland and the European Union in support of the Revised Guidelines. It thanked Switzerland for having financed their preparation.

## **B. Outstanding issues relevant to the Convention and the Protocol**

### **1. Nomination of the Chair of the Bureau**

25. The Chair recalled that, in June 2017, the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol had extended his own term of office as the Chair of the Bureau until the intermediary session of the Meeting of the Parties. In May, the Working Group had invited delegations to contact the secretariat with proposals for the chairmanship of the Bureau beyond that session, i.e. until the eighth and the fourth sessions of the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol, respectively, in 2020. In the absence of any other candidates, the Chair was willing to continue chairing the Bureau until 2020. The Bureau had also supported that approach. The Meetings agreed to forward the extension of the current Chair’s chairmanship for a formal decision at the high-level segment.

## **2. Tentative calendar of meetings for 2019 and 2020**

26. The Meetings of the Parties agreed on a revised informal schedule of planned meetings for 2019 and 2020 contained in document ECE/MP.EIA/2019/INF.3.

## **III. Review of the workplan**

27. The Meetings of the Parties reviewed progress in the implementation of the workplan for the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol for the period 2017–2020 (see ECE/MP.EIA/23/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/7/Add.1, decision VII/3–III/3) since the seventh meeting of the Working Group, as presented in informal document ECE/MP.EIA/2019/INF.4. They also noted additional information presented by several delegations and the secretariat on activities foreseen in, or related to, the workplan.

### **A. Subregional cooperation and capacity-building**

28. The Meetings noted the information provided by:

(a) Uzbekistan, on the outcomes of a subregional seminar to promote the application of the Revised Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context for Central Asian Countries organized by the secretariat (Taskhent, 4 June 2018);

(b) Croatia, on the fourth Regional Conference on Environmental Impact Assessment that it would host in Vodice, Croatia, from 18 to 21 September 2019 – an event that would also cover the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol;

(c) Denmark, on its plans to organize, jointly with Finland and Sweden, a subregional cooperation workshop for the Baltic Sea area, in Copenhagen in the spring of 2020;

(d) Romania, on the organization of a workshop in 2020 to prepare for a first Meeting of the Parties to the Bucharest Agreement.

### **B. Exchange of good practices**

29. The Chair informed the meeting that the Bureau had supported the secretariat's suggestion that a workshop on health and health sector involvement in strategic environmental assessment should be organized during the next meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment, from 26 to 28 November 2019. The event would be linked to the preparation of guidance on the assessment of potential health impacts foreseen in annex II of the workplan (see also para. 35 below) and would serve as a forum for presenting the draft guidance and selected good practice.

30. The delegation of the European Union reconfirmed its willingness to organize a seminar on synergies between environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment in a transboundary context and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea during the intersessional period.

31. The Chair also invited the delegations to begin considering topics for a thematic seminar or a workshop, to be organized during the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties, in 2020. He explained that the “waiting list” contained in annex II of the current workplan provided for an event focusing on the application of the Protocol to climate change adaptation and mitigation. However, given that, at their last sessions in 2017, the Meetings of the Parties had already held panel discussions on climate change, the next sessions could possibly cover more specifically a related key topic, such as sustainable cities and climate change. The delegation of Switzerland suggested as a possible topic the role of strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment in greening large infrastructure projects in the ECE region and beyond, including in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals.

32. The secretariat informed the meeting about the activities planned for 2019 and 2020 under the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) on land-use planning and industrial safety that were linked to the joint guidance adopted in Minsk, in June 2017. Those activities included two subregional workshops: one for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, scheduled for 22 to 24 May 2019, in the Republic of Moldova; and another one for South-Eastern Europe, scheduled to be held in the spring of 2020, provisionally in Serbia. Parties to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol were invited to contribute, particularly through the presentation of relevant good practices. There were also plans to follow up the exchange of information on land-use planning and industrial safety through the development of a repository of good practices financed by the European Investment Bank.

### **C. Promoting ratification and application of the Protocol and the Convention**

33. The secretariat informed the delegations about the completion by Kazakhstan of a pilot project on strategic environmental assessment in the energy sector, which the secretariat had facilitated with funding from the European Union. A final project event had been held in Astana, on 14 November 2018.

34. A representative of OSCE and the secretariat informed the delegations about planned further assistance to all the Central Asian countries regarding the promotion of the implementation and ratification of the Protocol, which would mainly be funded by Germany and implemented in cooperation with OSCE. Upon agreement by all the five countries concerned on the modalities of the further support, the project implementation was expected to start in June 2019.

35. The secretariat reported on plans to draft guidance for assessing potential health impacts of plans and programmes and involving health authorities in strategic environmental assessment. The draft guidance would be developed jointly with WHO, with funding from the European Investment Bank and support from consultants. Two consultants, identified by common accord, would deliver a first draft for comments by the Bureau at its meeting in June 2019. Subsequently, a revised draft, together with selected good practice examples supplementing the “core guidance”, would be presented at a workshop to be organized during the eighth meeting of the Working Group in November 2019. Health sector representatives identified by WHO would also be invited to attend the workshop. Ultimately, the draft guidance would be submitted to the Meetings of the Parties in 2020 for adoption.

36. The secretariat also provided an update on the launch of the new European Union-funded regional programme “EU4Environment” in the spring of 2019. The programme would bring together environmental and economic actors in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. It would be implemented over a period of four years by the five following international partners: ECE; OECD; the United Nations Environment Programme; the United Nations Industrial Development Organization; and the World Bank Group. It built on the progress made under the previous European Union-funded programmes, including, in particular, the Greening Economies in the Eastern Neighbourhood (EaP GREEN) programme. Of the total European Union funding of €19.5 million for the programme, ECE would receive some €2.2 million to assist the six beneficiary countries in finalizing their legal reforms on strategic environmental assessment and transboundary environmental impact assessment, and in building capacity to effectively and systematically implement those tools. The EU4Environment programme would finance the implementation of several workplan activities.

37. The secretariat informed the Meeting of the Parties that it was about to finalize a publication on the lessons learned from the EaP GREEN-funded assistance during the period 2013–2018.

38. A representative of the NGO Society and Environment reported on a project funded by Germany, which it had implemented in partnership with Oekobuero and European ECO-Forum to raise public awareness, and to build the capacity of environmental NGOs of countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, regarding the Espoo Convention. The project involved the holding of a workshop in Lviv, Ukraine, on 2 November 2018, and the development of an online portal.

39. A representative of the International Association of Impact Assessment provided an update on its preparation of two-page informal pamphlets, or “FasTips”, and their translation into Russian. The secretariat confirmed that, in consultation with the Bureau, it would prepare the draft “FasTips” on the Convention and the Protocol foreseen in the workplan.

#### **IV. Review of compliance, implementation and the activities of the Implementation Committee**

40. The Meeting of the Parties noted the reports by representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Moldova on progress regarding the adoption or amendment of draft legislation and subsidiary regulations to implement the Convention and the Protocol further to the technical advice from the secretariat. The delegation of Uzbekistan also reported on the secretariat’s legislative assistance for the development of its new national legislation on environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment. Finally, a representative of the Russian Federation provided an update on the development of its new national legislation. The representative also reported on the adoption of the Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context by the five Parties to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, including the Russian Federation, in Moscow, in July 2018.

41. The secretariat reported that no Party had yet completed the questionnaires on their implementation of the Convention and the Protocol during the period 2016–2018 that were due on 31 March 2019. All the Parties were reminded of the request to report by that deadline (decisions VII/1 and III/1). The secretariat also reported on its plans for the preparation of the draft sixth review of implementation of the Convention and the draft third review of implementation of the Protocol, which were to be submitted to the Working Group at its eighth meeting, for consideration. The Meeting of the Parties thanked Canada for its offer to translate in-kind into English those questionnaire responses provided in French. It also invited the Russian-speaking Parties or other stakeholders to consider offering to translate the Russian-language responses into English.

42. Representatives of Austria and the Netherlands reported on the outcomes of an informal meeting on the possible elaboration of a strategy and an action plan for the future application of the Convention and the Protocol (London, 1 October 2018), as presented in informal document ECE/MP.EIA/2019/INF.6. The meeting echoed the Bureau’s recommendation that those discussions should continue at possible future meetings, inviting more Parties to contribute to the work.

43. The Chair of the Implementation Committee reported on the Implementation Committee’s activities since the past sessions of the Meetings of the Parties in June 2017. He highlighted the fact that the Committee had been obliged to dedicate four out of its five sessions to the mandated review and revision of draft decision VII/2 on the review of compliance with the Convention. That situation had considerably delayed the Committee’s consideration of numerous pending issues and new compliance issues. The Chair stressed the fact that the number and the complexity of the issues brought before the Committee continued to increase. In order to tackle its considerable workload, the Committee, in agreement with the Bureau, had decided to extend the duration of its sessions from three to four days, as needed, to hold one additional session in September 2020, and to regularly use electronic means of communication during the periods between its sessions. The Meeting of the Parties noted the information, acknowledged the increased workload of the Committee and agreed on the need for additional meeting days.

#### **V. Opening ceremony of the high-level segment**

44. The Chair of the general segment informed the Meetings of the Parties that the Bureau had recommended that His Excellency Mr. Hans Brattskar, the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, be elected as Chair of the joint high-level segment. The Meetings of the Parties elected Mr. Brattskar as Chair of the high-level segment of the Meetings of the Parties.

45. The Chair of the high-level segment made a number of opening remarks before giving the floor to the Principal Advisor to the ECE Executive Secretary, who also made an opening statement.

## **VI. Statements by ministers and high-level representatives**

46. At the high-level segment, the following country delegations made statements: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania and Slovakia. The head of the WHO delegation also made a statement. In addition, Society and Environment spoke on behalf of the NGO community. The Meetings of the Parties asked that the statements be made available on the website of the Convention, subject to agreement by the delegations concerned.

## **VII. Adoption of decisions**

### **A. Decisions adopted by consensus**

47. Having reviewed the changes agreed on earlier in the sessions, the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention proceeded with the adoption of the decisions. The meeting noted some inconsistencies in the Russian translations of the draft decisions and asked that they be rectified in the adopted decisions.

48. The Meeting of the Parties to the Convention adopted the following decisions by consensus:

- (a) Decision IS/1 on general issues of compliance with the Convention;
- (b) Decision IS/1a on compliance by Armenia with its obligations under the Convention in respect of its national legislation;
- (c) Decision IS/1b on compliance by Armenia with its obligations under the Convention in respect of a nuclear power plant in Metsamor;
- (d) Decision IS/1c on compliance by Azerbaijan with its obligations under the Convention in respect of its national legislation;
- (e) Decision IS/1e on compliance by Serbia with its obligations under the Convention in respect of a third block of the Kostolac lignite power plant;
- (f) Decision IS/1f on compliance by Ukraine with its obligations under the Convention in respect of the Danube-Black Sea Deep Water Navigation Canal in the Ukrainian sector of the Danube Delta;
- (g) Decision IS/1g on compliance by Ukraine with its obligations under the Convention in respect of the extension of the lifetime of the Rivne nuclear power plant;
- (h) Decision IS/2 on the applicability of the Convention to the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants;
- (i) Decision IS/3 on the Revised Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context for Central Asian Countries.

### **B. Decisions adopted by a vote**

49. The Meeting of the Parties had not been able to agree on all the draft decisions during the general segment. As all efforts at consensus had been exhausted and no agreement had been reached, Parties proceeded with voting according to rules of procedure 36–46 (See ECE/MP.EIA/2, annex I). The European Union stated that, according to rule 36 (2), it would exercise its right to vote with the number of votes equal to the number of its member States that were Parties to the Convention (i.e. 28 votes).

50. Concerning draft decision IS/1d on compliance by Belarus with its obligations under the Convention in respect of the Belarusian nuclear power plant in Ostrovets, the three following successive votes were taken:

(a) Belarus stated its view that the proposals of Belarus and those of the European Union to amend the draft decision had not been discussed earlier during the general segment and that all efforts to achieve consensus in that regard had not been exhausted. Consequently, it proposed postponing the consideration of the draft decision to the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties. The delegation of the European Union stated that it had considered the proposals of Belarus, circulated in advance of the session, and had attempted, on the margins of the session, to identify compromise solutions together with the delegation of Belarus. The motion from Belarus to postpone the consideration of the matter was put to a vote. The Meeting of the Parties rejected the motion with 33 votes;

(b) The European Union put forward a motion to change the order of consideration of the proposed text of draft decision IS/1d and to first consider its own amendment proposal of the draft decision. The motion from the European Union was put to a vote. The Meeting of the Parties supported the motion with 30 votes;

(c) The third vote was taken on draft decision IS/1d on compliance by Belarus with its obligations under the Convention in respect of the Belarusian nuclear power plant in Ostrovets, as amended by the European Union. The decision was adopted with 30 votes.

51. At the request of Switzerland, a vote on draft decision IS/1h on compliance by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland with its obligations under the Convention in respect of the Hinkley Point C nuclear power plant, as amended by the European Union, was taken. The decision was adopted with 31 votes.

## **VIII. Election of the Chair of the Bureau**

52. The Meeting of the Parties further extended the chairmanship of the current Chair of the Bureau, Mr. Kremlis, until the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties in 2020.

## **IX. Other business**

### **A. Budget for the extended intersessional period**

53. The Chair invited the delegations to consider making additional pledges to the trust fund under the Convention and the Protocol, emphasizing that the budget adopted through decision VII/4-III/4 covered only three years, while the intersessional period had been extended to three and a half years; i.e. from June 2017 to December 2020. Consequently, and as a minimum, it was necessary to identify additional funds of approximately \$100,000 to cover the costs of the external expert to provide secretariat support for the Convention and the Protocol, including to service the Implementation Committee in the second half of 2020.

54. Only one delegation, Romania, made an additional pledge of \$1,000. Consequently, the Meetings of the Parties invited the Parties to make further pledges for the second half of 2020, preferably by the Bureau meeting in June 2019 but at the latest by the meeting of the Working Group in November 2019. In addition, the Meetings of the Parties mandated the Bureau, in consultation with the secretariat, to put forward a proposal, for approval by the Working Group, on how to fill the budgetary hole and ensure the functioning of the secretariat during the extended intersessional period. To supplement the expected additional pledges, the Bureau should consider using any savings made to date, as well as the operating reserve.

### **B. Side event**

55.. The Meetings of the Parties thanked ClientEarth for organizing a side event on the transboundary environmental impact assessment of coal and lignite-related activities. It invited the secretariat to make the report of the side event available on the meeting web page.

## **X. Date and venue of next meetings**

56. The Meetings of the Parties decided that the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention would be held in conjunction with the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, and would be preliminary scheduled for 8 to 11 December 2020. Unless hosted by a volunteering Party, the sessions would be held in Geneva. Parties to the Convention and the Protocol were invited to come forward with offers to host the sessions by the eighth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Geneva, 26–28 November 2019).

## **XI. Conclusion of the session**

57. The Meetings of the Parties agreed on the main decisions taken during the sessional period, as presented by the secretariat. They authorized the secretariat to complete the report after the sessions, under the guidance of the Bureau.

58. In closing the joint session, the Chair thanked the delegations for their work and perseverance in finding solutions to several outstanding issues. The Meetings of the Parties also expressed their thanks to the delegation of Romania for hosting a reception and providing catering during the sessional period.

59. The Chair closed the joint session on Thursday, 7 February 2019.

---