

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 serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment

Bureau

Geneva, 17– 18 June 2019

Informal notes on the Bureau meeting¹

Prepared by the secretariat²

I. Organizational matters

1. The Bureau under the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment met in Geneva, on 17 and 18 June 2019.
2. The Bureau noted the nomination of two new Bureau members, as follows: Ms. Leyla Aliyeva from Azerbaijan and Ms. Larissa Lukina from Belarus who replaced Ms. Sviatlana Kazakevich (from Belarus) as the Bureau member and the Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The following other members of the Bureau were present: Chair of the Bureau: Mr. Kremlis (Honorary Director, Active senior, European Commission); Ms. Vesna Kolar-Planinšič (Slovenia), Chair of the Working Group on EIA and SEA; Ms. Maryna Shymkus (Ukraine), Vice-Chair of the Working Group; Mr. Romas Svedas (Lithuania), Chair of the Implementation Committee; and Ms. Maria do Carmo Figueira (Portugal), First Vice-Chair of the Implementation Committee; Ms. Elyanora Grigoryan (Armenia); Ms. Seija Rantakallio (Finland), Mr. Vegard Engh (Norway) and Ms. Lourdes Aurora Hernando (Spain).
3. The Bureau adopted its agenda, as contained in informal document ECE/MP.EIA/B/2019/INF.1.
4. Mr. Lomtadze, Chief of section in the Environment Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), informed the Bureau about the challenging financial situation of the UN and its impact on ECE. The Bureau noted that the expected discontinuation of the interpretation for the Bureau meetings starting from the beginning of 2020 would be one consequence of the budgetary situation. In general, he stressed that the workload for servicing the two legal instruments, that was already disproportionately large compared to the staffing of the treaty secretariat, kept increasing from year to year while the available resources remained the same. In a long run, this trend was clearly

¹ Available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50461>.

² Prepared in consultation with the Bureau.

unsustainable as there was no expectation that regular UN budget would provide additional funding or new posts any time soon, nor was the level of the extrabudgetary voluntary contributions by Parties to the Convention and the Protocol increasing. The past period with an additional, intermediary, session of the Meetings of the Parties in February 2019 had been very challenging. Mr. Lomtadze pointed out that, in absence of more resources for its core services, the secretariat risked reaching a breaking point, which could lead to the need to cut some of the services and activities provided. The Bureau took note of that information and agreed to take it into account when addressing budgetary matters under the item 6 of its agenda.

5. The Bureau then welcomed Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, the new programme manager responsible for coordinating the implementation of the ECE's component of the European Union funded EU4Environment project in 2019–2022.

II. Review of decisions by the Meetings of the Parties

6. The secretariat reminded the Bureau of the outcomes of the intermediary sessions of the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol (5–7 February 2019) and of the adopted decisions, as contained in the report of the two sessions and its addendum (ECE/MP.EIA/27–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/11, including Add. 1). These decisions included two decisions on the review of compliance that the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention had adopted through a vote.

7. Following discussions on lessons to be learned and recommendations to be made for improving the future conduct of the Meetings of the Parties' sessions, the Bureau drew a few conclusions and made the following recommendations:

(a) Recalling the rules of procedure (rule 37), the Bureau agreed that Meetings of the Parties should strive as a matter of principle for consensus in their decision making and avoid to the extent possible adopting decisions through voting. At present, the right for regional economic integration organizations to vote with a number of votes equal to the number of their member States that are Parties, as provided for by article 12 of the Convention, meant that, (at present), the European Union had 28 votes for matters under the Convention. This gave it automatically a majority over the other Convention Parties and predetermined the outcome of votes in which it took part. (The Protocol's article 16 on the right of vote, contains a similar provision. At present, 23 European Union member States are Parties to the Protocol);

(b) The Bureau observed that it is regrettable that the Parties have revisited certain draft decisions on the review of compliance during the sessions of the Meetings of the Parties. It emphasized that, as a matter of principle, the draft decisions should not be revised, recognizing and respecting the thorough work of the Implementation Committee in preparing them. It also reiterated in that respect that the Committee should not revise its own drafts once these had been finalized and issued as official documents. Nevertheless, adjusting a decision during the sessions of the Meetings of the Parties in the light of new key information or updates, as evidenced by Parties, should still be possible, for instance in case of the adoption of new compliant legislation to implement the Convention and the Protocol;

(c) The Bureau recommended that Parties' positions to draft decisions and documents would be made available earlier and in a more transparent manner. Currently, although the secretariat ensured the availability of official documents 10 weeks before the meetings at which they were discussed, Parties most often presented their comments to these documents – including also proposals for major redrafting of the documents - only at the sessions of the Meetings of the Parties or at the meetings of Working Group for consideration of the other delegations. The Bureau considered important to have this changed for increased transparency and to allow all Parties and stakeholders a possibility to prepare and coordinate their views regarding any new proposals to be tabled at a meeting;

Consequently, the Bureau suggested that any amendment proposals be communicated in writing to the national focal points and stakeholders, through the secretariat, no later than two to three weeks before a session of the Meetings of the Parties (and a meeting of the Working Group). In this regard, the Working Group is invited to consider any amendments to the rules of procedure (e.g. rule 32);

(d) The Bureau also recommended that enough time be provided for presenting and discussing amendment proposals during the general segments of the Meetings of the Parties. It agreed to consider this matter when discussing the draft programme of the next sessions of 2020 under its agenda item 7.

8. The Bureau welcomed the plan of the Implementation Committee, as outlined by the Committee Chair, to prepare all draft decisions on compliance during the Committee's forty-seventh session in March 2020, with a view to presenting them as informal documents for comments before, during and after the ninth meeting of the Working Group on EIA and SEA, preliminarily scheduled for 9–11 June 2020. Taking into account the comments of the Working Group, the Implementation Committee would then finalize the draft decisions at its forty-eighth session in September 2020. The Bureau invited all the concerned Parties to provide the Committee with the requested information in a timely manner, to enable the Committee to finalize its draft decisions on time before the Working Group's meeting.

9. The Bureau also agreed that enough time should be reserved at the June 2020 meeting of the Working Group for a more detailed presentation of the draft decisions on compliance by the Committee, and for the delegations to discuss and comment on them. The Bureau invited all Parties to prepare their positions on the draft documents already for the meeting of the Working Group avoiding last minute coordination of positions before and during the sessions of the Meetings of the Parties.

III. Status of ratification of the Convention, its amendments and its Protocol

10. The secretariat reported on the status of ratification of the Convention, its two amendments and the Protocol on SEA. It also reported on the status of ratification of the 2008 multilateral agreement among the countries of South-Eastern Europe for implementation of the Convention (Bucharest Agreement). The Bureau noted that the Republic of Moldova had become the thirty-third Party to Protocol, with the Protocol entering into force for it on 13 May 2019, and that the country had also ratified both Convention amendments.

11. The Bureau was concerned that further six ratifications from the following Parties to the Convention were still needed for the first amendment to have effect and allow countries from outside the ECE region to accede to the Convention: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, North Macedonia, the United Kingdom United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Ukraine. It also regretted that North Macedonia and Ukraine had not submitted the written progress report regarding their ratification of the first amendment that the Meeting of the Parties, at its intermediary session, had requested by the end of May 2019, and that had been originally due by the end of January. Moreover, the following Convention Parties: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom were still to ratify the second amendment. The Bureau stressed the importance of the ratification of the second amendment by all Parties to ensure the unified application of the Convention.

12. The Bureau member from Azerbaijan informed the Bureau that its draft law on the ratification of both amendments was under a final revision and was to be adopted within a few weeks. The Ukrainian Bureau member stated that Ukraine focused on finalizing its by-laws for the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol, and that the ratification of amendments would follow their completion. The Armenian member reported that the country's new government was presently undertaking consultations on the ratification of

the first amendment. The member from Belarus, in turn, noted that due to the recent practices under the Convention that it deemed discriminatory, for the moment, Belarus withheld its ratification of the second amendment of the Convention and the Protocol.

13. The secretariat noted that, the technical assistance it had provided to six countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus with the European Union funding from the EaP GREEN programme had facilitated the ratification by the Republic of Moldova of the Protocol. With the new EU4Environment project funding, it was able to continue its technical assistance and capacity building activities to the six countries including to further support Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia to ratify the Protocol, and in the case of Georgia, also the Convention.

14. The Bureau reiterated its invitation to its members to continue to prompt their own countries and the other concerned countries to complete their ratifications as soon as possible, and to report on progress to the Working Group on EIA and SEA at its eighth meeting in November 2019.

15. The Bureau also agreed that in the invitation letters to the eighth and fourth sessions of the Meetings of the Parties of the Convention and the Protocol, respectively, the ECE Executive Secretary should again invite all the concerned countries to ratify the Convention amendments and the Protocol and to report on progress at these sessions.

III. Implementation of the workplan 2017–2020

16. The Bureau reviewed progress in implementation of the various sub-items of the present workplan for 2017–2020 under the Convention and the Protocol.³

A. Compliance with and implementation of the Convention and the Protocol

1. Review of compliance

17. The Bureau noted the report by the Chair of the Implementation Committee on the Committee's work since the intermediary sessions of the Meetings of the Parties. The Committee Chair highlighted the importance of the secretariat services for the Committee's work. He invited the Bureau to send a strong political signal and to propose concrete risk management actions to address the secretariat's resource constraints with a view to ensuring the continuity and the quality of the services provided to the Committee and the other treaty bodies. These should involve mobilizing additional resources and further prioritizing the workplan activities.

18. The Committee Chair then presented the Committee's ongoing efforts to improve the planning of its work and the efficiency of its working methods to tackle its constantly growing workload. He again emphasized the role of the concerned Parties in facilitating the Committee's review of compliance, through delivering their progress reports and responses to the Committee's inquiries in a timely manner and in a good quality.

2. Reporting and review of implementation

19. The secretariat informed the Bureau about the status of Parties' reporting on their implementation of the Convention and the Protocol in the period 2016–2018, indicating that only half of the Parties had reported on time, i.e. by 31 March 2019. The Bureau noted the information. It again highlighted the importance of timely reporting, including to allow the secretariat to prepare the draft reviews of implementation on time for consideration of the Working Group. It discussed ways to improve the timeliness of reporting, considering, for example, whether the currently accorded time period of five months for filling in the

³ See ECE/MP.EIA/23/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/7/Add.1, decision VII/3–III/3

questionnaires was too long and whether shortening it to two to three months would increase efficiency. It decided however not to propose changes to the time schedule for reporting for now.

20. The Bureau urged the Parties that had not yet provided their missing reports to do so, as follows:⁴

- (a) Azerbaijan, Germany and Serbia on their implementation of the Convention;
- (b) Cyprus and Germany on their implementation of the Protocol.

21. The secretariat provided an update on its preparation, with support from consultants, of the draft sixth review of implementation of the Convention and the draft third review of implementation of the Protocol. The Bureau noted the draft findings of the review of implementation of the Convention and preliminary proposals to improve the questionnaire on the implementation of the Convention in the next period. The draft findings for the review of the Protocol's implementation had not yet been finalized. Both draft reviews would be submitted to the Working Group for comments at its meeting in November 2019 and, on their basis, finalized for adoption by the Meetings of the Parties in 2020. The draft reviews would take into account the reports submitted to the secretariat until 31 June 2019 (i.e. up to three months after the reporting deadline). The secretariat explained that inserting the late inputs created additional work and prolonged the preparation of the draft reviews since that necessitated each time rewriting and revisiting the previously summarized information and statistics for each question.

3. Legislative assistance

22. The Bureau noted the secretariat's report on the ongoing and planned legislative assistance to support the implementation and, as relevant, accession to or ratification of the Convention and/or the Protocol in Central Asia. It welcomed the following assistance that the secretariat was providing with funding from Switzerland and Germany:

(a) Legislative assistance to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for amending their primary environmental assessment legislation, drafting secondary legislation on environmental impact assessment, and developing a legal framework on strategic environmental assessment;

(b) Preparation of a roadmap for legislative and institutional reforms for the implementation of the Convention in Uzbekistan, outlining also the country's further capacity building needs.

23. It also noted that due to the recent governmental changes in Kazakhstan, the country was experiencing some difficulties in making use of and following-up to the outcomes of the legislative support that the secretariat had provided to it between 2016 to 2018. The secretariat was currently considering ways it could assist Kazakhstan in overcoming those difficulties in the coming months.

24. Finally, the Bureau noted the secretariat's plan to publish by the next meeting of the Working Group the Revised Guidelines on environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context for Central Asian countries that the Meeting of the Parties had adopted at its intermediary session. The Bureau invited its members' governments, in the context of their possible bilateral or multilateral cooperation with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, to highlight the benefits of the Convention and the Protocol, and to encourage these countries to pursue their legislative reforms and accede to the two legal instruments.

4. Lifetime extension of nuclear power plants

⁴ Slovenia provided its two reports soon after the Bureau meeting, on 24 June.

25. The Bureau recalled that decision IS/2 on the applicability of the Convention to the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants,⁵ as adopted by the Meeting of the Parties at its intermediary session, set out that the draft guidance should be finalized for consideration by the Working Group, at its ninth meeting, in June 2020, before its submission to the Meeting of the Parties for adoption at its session in December 2020.

26. The Bureau members and the secretariat present at the latest meeting of the ad hoc group in Lisbon on 3 and 4 June 2019 reported on its main outcomes and on the planned schedule of the ad hoc working group's next meetings. They also reported on the workshop that the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA) had organized in Lisbon on 5 June, back to back to the ad hoc group's meeting. The workshop had aimed to support the intergovernmental by providing a forum for technical and scientific discussion open also to other stakeholders regarding the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants, looking particularly at environmental and health impacts. The secretariat specified that the reports of both events would be available on the Convention website.⁶

27. The Bureau took note of the information, including that the ad hoc working group's plans for finalizing the draft guidance involved further four meetings (in the Netherlands in October and in Austria in December 2019; in France in March and in Bulgaria in May 2020), as well as a workshop back-to-back to the December 2019 meeting, accessible also to representatives of other stakeholders and civil society. It welcomed the participation of the nominated members from Belarus and Ukraine in the ad hoc group's meeting in Lisbon, which it had encouraged, while regretting that no Party had identified funds to support the participation of Armenia.

28. The Bureau stressed the importance of providing the Working Group, at its ninth meeting, with an opportunity to comment the text of the draft guidance and to have its comments taken into account before the finalized text went to the Meetings of the Parties for adoption. It also acknowledged that in the context of ECE, official documents were made available in English, French and Russian. However, the Bureau observed that to meet the United Nations' deadline for translating the official documents for the Working Group's ninth meeting, which was 16 March 2020, the ad hoc group could hold as a maximum only three more meetings to finalize its draft. Consequently, to provide the group the possibility to meet one more time, the Bureau suggested seeking to informally translate the document. In the absence of a budget for that purpose, the Bureau invited the secretariat to explore whether e.g. the co-lead country, Germany, could consider translating the draft as an in-kind contribution. The Bureau considered the translation into Russian to be a priority but agreed that the French speaking State Parties should also be consulted on their need to receive the document in French for the Working Group in May 2020. The Bureau agreed that this would be done at the next meeting of the Working Group, in November 2019. It was understood that for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties, in December 2020, the final draft document would be issued in all three official languages of ECE.

29. Provided that the translation issue could be resolved, the Bureau recommended that the ad hoc group meet in Bulgaria in late April 2020 and submit a draft for informal translation shortly after. The Bureau agreed that the draft guidance document should be made available early enough for the delegations, e.g. four weeks before the Working Group's meeting (by 12 May) in English and at least two weeks before (by 26 May) in Russian.

30. The Bureau also agreed that further consultations were needed between June and early September 2020 for the finalization of the draft guidance based on the possible

⁵ See ECE/MP.EIA/27/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/11/Add.1.

⁶ The summary report of the ad hoc group's last meeting is available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51622>. The conclusions and presentations of IAIA's workshop are available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51625>.

comments from the Working Group, prior to its submission to the Meeting of the Parties as an official document.

6. Strategy and an action plan for the future application of the Convention and the Protocol

31. The Bureau recalled decision VII/7–III/6 and the informal document that Austria and the Netherlands had tabled for the intermediary sessions of the Meetings of the Parties on a strategy and an action plan for the future application of the Convention and the Protocol. The two countries had previously convened an informal meeting in London, in October 2018, back to back to a meeting of the ad hoc working group on the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants.

32. The Bureau welcomed the plans of Austria and the Netherlands to organize a second informal meeting on the strategy and the action plan, in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on 7 October 2019, again back to back to a meeting of the ad hoc group. The Bureau recommended that, based on the outcomes of that meeting, the two countries, with support from the secretariat, prepare an updated version of the informal document in advance of the next meeting of the Working Group, in November 2019. The Bureau again recommended inviting all the national focal points to attend and to contribute to the work in writing, if the participation in Rotterdam at their own costs was not possible.

B. Exchange of good practices

33. The Bureau took note of the preliminary plans of the secretariat to organize a workshop during the next meeting of the Working Group in November to present draft guidance on health impacts in SEA and on the involvement of health sector. The draft guidance was being prepared with support from consultants, in consultation with the secretariat, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) that also funded the activity. The Bureau agreed that the consideration of health effects and the consultation of health authorities were key obligations under the Protocol and that the guidance foreseen in the workplan for improving their implementation was clearly needed. The workshop would also provide a forum for presenting related good practice in the fields of regional development, transport and energy. The good practice examples to be presented were yet to be identified but could possibly include those from the United Kingdom, Sweden and a case study from the EIB. The good practice examples/case studies would later supplement the guidance document. The Bureau invited the secretariat to circulate the draft guidance to the Bureau in August for a quick round of possible comments prior to submitting the document to the Working Group at its eighth meeting.

34. The Bureau also noted that, for financial reasons, the European Commission was no longer able to organize a seminar on synergies between the transboundary EIA and SEA and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (articles 204–206) that had been foreseen for the present intersessional period.

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

35. The Bureau took note of the secretariat's report on its planning and recent implementation of the workplan activities that related to promoting ratification and application of the Protocol and the Convention. These included the following:

(a) The launch in April 2019 of the European Union funded EU4Environment project, which, in 2019–2022, will allow the secretariat to further support the implementation of the Protocol and, as needed, the Convention in Armenia, Azerbaijan,

Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. During the inception phase, that extended until the end of June, the secretariat and the countries concerned were planning initial project activities (June 2019-December 2020) that were to be presented for discussion at the first EU4Environment Regional Assembly meeting to be held in Brussels, on 27 and 28 June 2019. Azerbaijan was invited to present its priority needs to the secretariat in advance of that meeting.

(b) Activities to facilitate the implementation of the Protocol in the Central Asian countries, including a study tour to Germany scheduled for autumn 2019. The Bureau welcomed the secretariat's joint effort with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to raise funding for those activities, including from Germany;

36. The Bureau entrusted the secretariat to draft informal pamphlets or "Fastips" on the Convention and the Protocol for consideration of the Working Group at its next meeting prior to their publication by IAIA.⁷

V. Preparations for the eighth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment

37. The Bureau reviewed and revised the annotated provisional agenda of the eighth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment, to be held in Geneva from 26 to 28 November 2019 (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/1). It notably decided that due to its importance the item on budget, financial arrangements and financial assistance should be taken up at the start of the meeting, immediately after the adoption of the agenda.

38. The Bureau invited the secretariat to make the finalized provisional agenda available to the Working Group as an official document.

VI. Budget, financial arrangements and financial assistance

39. The Bureau noted the draft second annual financial report prepared by the secretariat extending from 1 July 2017 to 30 April 2019 and invited the secretariat to complete the document with data until the end of June 2019, upon the availability of the final expenditure figures (in August).

40. The Chair recalled that the Meeting of the Parties at their intermediary sessions had 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 to ensure the functioning of the secretariat during the intersessional period that was extended until December 2020. This was needed since the budget adopted in June 2017 through decision VII/4-III/4 covers only three years.

41. The Bureau referred to its earlier information items and discussions (see paras. 4 and 17 above) on the financial difficulties and the risks that overstretching the secretariat's scarce resources had on the functioning of the treaties. The Bureau recognized that at present the voluntary contributions to the Convention's trust fund were insufficient to cover the servicing of the Convention and the Protocol, and that overreliance on only a few main donors was not sustainable. It agreed that Parties should be strongly invited to contribute not only to address the six-month budgetary hole but also to tackle the general, longstanding lack of resources for the two treaties.

⁷ Available at: <http://www.iaia.org/fasttips.php>.

42. Following its deliberations, the Bureau recommended proposing to the Working Group the following:

(a) That the ECE Executive Secretary again send letters to Parties' foreign ministers and environment ministers in advance of the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties in 2020, but possibly also in late 2019, to strongly invite them to identify additional funding, as well as to consider sponsoring a junior professional officer and providing in-kind contributions. The letter(s) should clearly explain the likely consequences of the non-payment, such as the reduction and/or cutting of some of the secretariat services and activities;

(b) That Parties re-consider using as a basis for their contributions indicative minimum amounts based on the adjusted United Nations GDP/capita-based scale of assessment;

(c) That Parties re-consider adopting a mandatory scheme of payment.

43. The Bureau agreed to submit for consideration of the Working Group at its next meeting, in November 2019, an informal document that would elaborate more in detail on its above proposals. It requested the secretariat to prepare a first draft of that document well in advance of the meeting for its feedback.

VII. Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties

44. The Bureau noted the information presented by the secretariat on the indicative time schedule for the preparatory work for the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, preliminarily scheduled for 8-11 December 2020. The Bureau also noted that Lithuania was still considering its possibilities to host the next sessions, as announced at the intermediary sessions of the Meetings of the Parties, and that it would decide on this no later than by the next meeting of the Working Group in November. The secretariat confirmed that in absence of a confirmed host country by then, the next sessions would be held in Geneva.

45. The Bureau considered and agreed on elements of a draft programme for the Meetings of the Parties' sessions. It discussed the optimal length of the sessional period and estimated that prolonging the usually 3,5 days long ordinary sessions to four days would allow covering all the agenda items. The Bureau did not anticipate any specifically challenging items to be deliberated on, e.g. relating to compliance matters, which would call for extending the duration of the meeting even further.

46. The Bureau also suggested the following possible optional topics for a thematic seminar or a panel to be organized during the sessions' general segment:

(a) Greening of China's Belt and Road Initiative: the role of strategic environmental assessment and transboundary environmental impact assessment of infrastructure development planning and projects;

(b) The role of strategic environmental assessment for sustainable cities, including to help address climate change and health considerations in urban planning;

(c) Promoting circular economy through environmental assessment of related planning and projects (eg. regarding waste).

47. During the high-level segment, the Bureau suggested celebrating the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention (in February 1991). It invited the secretariat to produce the video on the Convention and its benefits foreseen in the workplan, in time for its presentation at the sessions. The Bureau also suggested inviting a statement from the Secretary General of the United Nations.

48. The Bureau agreed on an initial list of draft decisions and documents to be prepared for consideration of the Meetings of the Parties. It recommended that these include also a draft declaration, suggesting that it reiterates some relevant key themes from the earlier declarations, such as sustainable development goals, and that the issues highlighted would include: the Convention turning 30 years, the financial constraints, greening of the Belt and Road initiative, climate change, sustainable cities and health. The Bureau invited the secretariat to prepare draft elements of a declaration for the Bureau to comment by e-mail, prior to submitting the finalized draft to the Working Group at its next meeting, as an informal document.

49. Based on a proposal from the secretariat, the Bureau agreed on a new format for the next draft workplan 2021-2023 and considered several possible workplan activities that could be proposed to the Working Group. It agreed that the new workplan should again build on requests by Parties and stakeholders and reflect also findings of the most recent reviews of implementation, the recommendations from the Implementation Committee and the outcomes of the ongoing informal discussions on the future strategy and an action plan for the Convention and the Protocol.

50. The Bureau held initial discussions on vacant positions of officials of the treaty bodies to be elected at the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties. It agreed that it was important in this regard to also attract nominations from Parties that had never or not recently been represented and invited the secretariat to again provide the Working Group with a record of present and past officers. The Bureau welcomed the information from the secretariat that Switzerland would nominate Ms. Martine Rohn as a member of the Bureau. It invited also other Parties to come forward with nominations for officers to be elected.

51. Finally, the Bureau discussed how the meetings of the treaty bodies would best be scheduled in the next intersessional period that would start in January 2021 and was likely to extend until December 2023. In the past, the intersessional periods had started and ended in summer. It reviewed an initial proposal by the secretariat and agreed on a tentative sequence of meetings in the next intersessional period 2021–2023 (see annex to the present document).

52. The Bureau invited the secretariat to present the outcomes of its deliberations on all the above issues for consideration of the Working Group at its next, eighth meeting, as informal documents.

VI. Related events

53. The Bureau noted that IAIA's next conference in Sevilla, on 26-29 May 2020 would include a session on transboundary EIA and invited Parties to contribute to it

54. The Bureau member from Finland briefed the Bureau about the Arctic environmental impact assessment project by Arctic Council developed during the Finnish chairmanship of the Council in 2017-2019, which had involved the preparation of "Good practice guidance on EIA and Meaningful Engagement in the Arctic" – and which had been awarded by IAIA's Global Award in 2019.

VII. Other business

55. No other business was raised under the agenda item.

VIII. Presentation of the decisions and closing of the meeting

56. The meeting of the Bureau concluded on Tuesday, 18 June 2019.

57. The Bureau reviewed and agreed on the main conclusions of its meeting. It invited the secretariat to draft the informal meeting report and to circulate it for comments by the Bureau members prior to its finalization.

Annex**Provisional meeting schedule 2019–2020 and possible initial dates for the next intersessional period 2021–2023^{*)}**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Body</i>	<i>Session/comments</i>
2019	17–18 (am) June	Bureau (stand-alone meeting)	-
	10–13 September	Implementation Committee	45
	8–9 October	<i>Ad hoc group on LTE of NPPs</i>	7 (in Rotterdam, the Netherlands)
	26–28 November	Working Group on EIA & SEA	8 <i>Doc. deadline 2.9</i>
	3–4 December	<i>Ad hoc group on LTE of NPPs</i>	8 (in Vienna)
	10–13 December	Implementation Committee	46
	2020	25–26 (am) February	Bureau
March		<i>Ad hoc group on LTE of NPPs</i>	9 (in Paris)
16–19 (am) March		Implementation Committee	47
Late April?		<i>Ad hoc group on LTE of NPPs</i>	10 (in Bulgaria)
8–10 June		Working Group on EIA & SEA	9 <i>Doc. deadline 16.3</i>
<i>Between mid-June-end August?</i>		<i>Ad hoc group on LTE of NPPs?</i>	11?
1–4 September		Implementation Committee	48 (Additional)
8–11 December		Meetings of the Parties to the Convention & the Protocol	8/4 <i>Doc. deadline 16.9</i>
2021	<i>(16/17-19 March)</i>	<i>Implementation Committee</i>	49
	<i>(16–17 June)</i>	<i>Bureau</i>	
	<i>(14-16/17 September)</i>	<i>Implementation Committee</i>	50
	<i>(30 November-2 Dec)</i>	<i>Working Group on EIA & SEA</i>	10 <i>Doc. deadline 6.9</i>
	<i>(6-9/10) December)</i>	<i>Implementation Committee</i>	51
2022	<i>(28-30 March)</i>	<i>Implementation Committee</i>	52
	<i>(15-17 June)</i>	<i>Bureau</i>	
	<i>(13-15/16) September</i>	<i>Implementation Committee</i>	53
	<i>(29 November-1 Dec.)</i>	<i>Working Group on EIA & SEA</i>	11 <i>Doc deadline 5.9</i>
	<i>... December</i>	<i>Implementation Committee</i>	54
2023	<i>(21-23 February)</i>	<i>Bureau</i>	<i>Docs by 30.1.-6.2.</i>
	<i>(14-17 March/9-12 May)</i>	<i>Implementation Committee</i>	
	<i>(13–15 June)</i>	<i>Working Group on EIA & SEA</i>	<i>Doc. deadline 20.3</i>
	<i>(4-7 September)</i>	<i>Implementation Committee</i>	
	<i>(12–15 December or 5–8 December)</i>	<i>Meetings of the Parties to the Convention & the Protocol</i>	9/5 <i>Docs by 11/18.9</i>

(December?)

Implementation Committee]

***) All dates for 2021-2023 are initial suggestions and subject to confirmation.**
