

This statement is on behalf of the EU and its 28 Member States

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to address these Meetings of the Parties.

Please allow me to begin by expressing, on behalf of the European Union and its member States, our appreciation to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and in particular the Secretariat of the Espoo Convention for organizing and hosting the Sixth Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and the Second Meeting of the Parties to the SEA Protocol. I would also like to extend our thanks to the Bureau, the Implementation Committee and the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment for all their work done since the previous Meeting of the Parties.

Over the years, the role and the meaning of the environmental assessments have gained importance and visibility in the overall environmental policy. On the EU level integrating environmental protection concerns through SEA and EIA has been recently highlighted in the 7<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme, which will be guiding the European environment policy until 2020.

On the international level, the Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol support environmentally sound and sustainable development by providing information on the interrelationship between certain economic activities and their environmental impact, particularly in a transboundary context. Both instruments enhance the regional, sub-regional and bilateral co-operation between the Parties.

Lately the Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol are increasingly in the forefront of public interest because of some major and large-scale energy activities with significant transboundary environmental impacts.

The energy production landscape in Europe and beyond encompasses the promotion and investment in a wide range of sources varying from renewables and safe and sustainable low carbon technologies to nuclear power, and gas and oil

pipelines. As the aim of the European Union and its Member States is to further intensify the diversification of Europe's energy supply, the Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol are valuable tools in ensuring high levels of environmental protection in a transboundary context.

The European Union and its Member States recognize the value of the Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol and hence reiterate our willingness to actively participate in and contribute to the different bodies, working groups and activities of both instruments.

To further enhance the effectiveness of the Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol, we invite all Parties that have not yet done so, to ratify the SEA Protocol as well as the two amendments to the Espoo Convention. In this respect, allow me to stress the importance of the first amendment, which, once effective, will allow for the accession of non-UNECE United Nations Member States to the Convention. The future globalization of both the Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol will be a significant step forward.

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen; in conclusion, I would like to convey, on behalf of the EU and its Member States, our best wishes for the constructive co-operation amongst all Parties to the Convention and the Protocol. We are looking forward to a series of successful and fruitful discussions and exchanges over the next inter-sessional period.

Thank you for your attention.