

Final version of Espoo Statement by Norway

Mr Chair, excellencies, dear colleagues,

Norway would like to congratulate the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol with the many achievements since the previous Meeting of Parties, and with the preparation of many important decisions, including on a very ambitious work plan, for the next period. We would also take this opportunity to thank the Secretariat for its efforts, and the Bureau, the Working Group and the Implementation Committee for the good work done.

As you may be aware, Norway has strongly supported the Convention since it was first proposed in Warsaw back in 1989, and entered into force at the the first Meeting of the Parties, which Norway had the honor of hosting in Oslo in 1997. Norway also had the privilege of chairing the negotiations that resulted in the SEA Protocol. We have also been one of the main financial contributors to the work under the Convention.

These instruments are now at a stage where they every day must prove their value in real terms, also in the case of Norway. I have personally been away from the work under the Convention for several years, and it is with great satisfaction that I now can note the importance of these instruments in avoiding or solving transboundary environmental issues between neighboring states, as demonstrated at this meeting.

In order to achieve the purposes of the Instruments there are two prerequisites that I would like to underline, first, that finance is available to cover the ambitious work plan, and, secondly, to give continuous endorsement of the crucial work of the Implementation Committee.

In our opinion, the present Meeting of the Parties has not fully delivered on these two issues. The pledged support for the activities of the work plan covers less than 50% of the means required. Also, the conclusions of the Implementation Committee have been challenged.

Norway has been able, over the years, to provide substantial funds in addition to the pledged contributions, by drawing upon means for development cooperation, and also allocate unspent means meant for other purposes for the benefit of the Convention. In order to prompt financial contributions we would welcome an initiative by the Secretariat, before the end of each year, to remind also other parties of these, and other, possibilities.

With regard to the Implementation Committee, Norway has for several years had a position as alternate for the Protocol. Due to the reorganization of the ministries we are unable, for the time being, to continue in this position. However, we congratulate the new members of the Committee, and look forward to their well founded and balanced recommendations in the coming period.

Also, Norway welcomes the proposal to allow for the accession of non-ECE United Nations Member States to the Convention. As a country with considerable development cooperation engagements we know that such a possibility will be well received by many partner countries,

and others. On the same note, we welcome the interest expressed during this meeting by the International Financing Institutions to apply and support the Convention and Protocol.

To conclude, the Government of Norway will continue to give backing, both financially and politically, to the work under the Convention and Protocol, and look forward to three more active and productive years.

Thank you very much.