

*Check against delivery*

Chair, Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address you, distinguished participants, on the occasion of these Meetings of the Parties convened in intermediary sessions.

- Although being “only” intermediary sessions of the MoP, the agenda is quite rich and contains several very important items, which have partly remained from the agenda of the previous MoP-7, held in Minsk, in June 2017.
- Convening this week, we should first acknowledge the work done since the MoP-7, in particular by the Implementation Committee of the Convention, by the Secretariat, the Bureau and by the Working Group last year. We are grateful for their efforts.
- This MoP faces, in particular, the urgent need to identify satisfying solutions for the most exigent cases on compliance with the provisions of the Convention. Therefore, it is vital that our work be guided by sound deliberations, which should be echoed by adequate, fair, balanced and, at the same time, future oriented decisions.
- A very important issue on the agenda is dedicated to nuclear energy related projects. We appreciate and support the ongoing work by the especially established ad hoc working group, to which the elaboration of a guidance for the applicability of the Convention on *Long Time Extensions* of nuclear power plants has been assigned. Once finalized, it will assist Parties when deciding on such projects and protect the public’s right to public participation. This is said against the background that we fully acknowledge the benefits of preventive and precautionary approaches in the field of nuclear energy.

- The Espoo Convention and its SEA Protocol are both international instruments, which encourage bi- and multilateral cooperation to the benefit of every Party and the environment. There is no doubt that they also contribute to global goals such as sustainability and climate protection.
- Finally, implementing the provisions of the Convention asks for cooperation, concession and flexibility; transboundary EIA procedures are always teamwork exercises. However, to ensure the highest possible success, the Espoo Convention and its bodies require the upmost commitment from all Member States. Therefore, a future strategy and action plan for the Convention must include a vision on how to improve the staffing of the Espoo Convention bodies and to benefit best from various synergies with similar institutions within the UNECE “family”.

Thank you very much for your attention