

Statement by Andriy Andrushevych, Resource & Analysis Center “Society and Environment”
speaking on behalf of the European ECO Forum
Geneva, Feb 7, 2019

Ladies and gentlemen,

Civil society organizations from all across Europe came to observe closely the proceedings of this Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and SEA Protocol. I would like to summarize the impressions we shared among ourselves and focus on the following issues:

- **The process:**
 - NGOs and many non-EU representatives were excluded from meaningful dialogue in much of the deliberations.
 - This did not happen because of lack of time.
 - We believe deep changes need to be introduced into the future process to ensure that the EU coordination does not prevent effective participation of non-EU countries and civil society, and does not undermine multilateral nature of the UN processes.
 - We want to remind EU delegates this a European elections year. And faith in the EU institutions is at all time low. Further to this week’s events, we will find it more difficult to defend them and our desire to do so was lessened
 - We welcome the attempt at bridgebuilding by some non-EU delegations, like Norway, Switzerland, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

- **Regarding nuclear issues:**
 - We, the Espoo family and above all the EU coordination, shall not be hijacked by the nuclear community.
 - It is of extreme concern that some parties are unwilling to apply the convention rigorously to nuclear projects, and are also seeking actively to weaken the convention and the compliance mechanism. We include in this Belarus and the EU, and many individual parties who stood idly by. In the context of the EU’s supposed position as a leader in environmental protection and citizen’s interests, this is deeply disturbing.

- **Compliance mechanism:**
 - We cannot accept a coordinated attack on the compliance mechanism, undermining independent and scrupulous work of the Implementation Committee by re-negotiating its core opinions (and reasonings), and then pretending those hastily re-negotiated re-interpretations of the Convention’s provisions guided specific decisions on compliance
 - In this context we are convinced that in the future all individual compliance decisions should be decoupled from the general decision, and call for this.

- **Separately on LTE:**
 - We welcome progress and looking forward to intensive interaction with Ad Hoc group on the draft guidance.
 - We only want to highlight there’s a real need for urgency in solving this issue.

- **Lastly, on air pollution from coal plants**

- During the Side Event organised by ClientEarth, there was consensus that coal plants have scientifically established significant and certain impacts on the air quality of other states on a daily basis.
- Data submitted by parties-to the UNECE Air Convention clearly substantiate the transboundary impact. Parties to the Espoo Convention should reflect on these data and consider to activate their notification obligations in order to protect the health of their people
- We encourage synergies between the Espoo and the Air Conventions notably the drafting of guidelines to facilitate the assessment and mitigation of the transboundary impacts on air pollution coming from coal activities.

Finally, we thank Implementation Committee, Secretariat and Bureau for their work in supporting the Convention & Protocol.