



**6th session of the Meeting of the Parties
to the Espoo Convention
Geneva, 2-5 June 2014
Salle XXVI**

**Statement by Mr. Michael Møller
Acting Executive Secretary
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*At the opening ceremony of the high-level segment
Thursday, 5 June, (10.15-10.45)*

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Distinguished Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honoured to address, on this World Environment Day, the sixth Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, or in short, the Espoo Convention, and the second Meeting of the Parties to the Convention's Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Initially, as you know, this meeting was to take place in Kyiv, at the generous invitation of the Government of Ukraine but was later moved to Geneva due to the difficult situation in the country.

The reasons that have brought us all here are the concern we share for our environment and the commitments that your Governments have assumed under the Convention and the Protocol to ensure economic development that is environmentally sound and sustainable.

Adopted over 20 years ago, the Convention is now a mature instrument. Its application continues to rapidly increase as it has become routine for most of its current 45 Parties. This positive development confirms that Governments find the Convention to be an effective instrument.

I am particularly pleased to announce that, with the recent ratifications of Finland, Slovenia and Malta, the first amendment will enter into force on 26 August - opening the Convention to all United Nations Member States. This is major news. However, in concrete terms countries from outside the ECE region may accede only once all the Parties that adopted that amendment

will have ratified it. I invite all countries, which have not yet done so, to complete the ratification process as soon as possible. In parallel, I also invite you to take steps to speed up the process in your capitals. It is my hope that by your next meeting we can truly celebrate the global character of the Convention.

In the meantime, I welcome your wish to share your knowledge and experience under both treaties with the other regions, and to learn from them. I know that the seminar held yesterday was a concrete step to this end: it provided useful and interesting insights into the practices and needs of a number of countries in Eastern Asia and in North Africa in terms of environmental assessment. I hope that these discussions represent only the beginning for a mutually enriching exchange between our regions. I thank the European Investment Bank for its key role in organizing and contributing to the seminar, and welcome the active participation by the African Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank and UK's Department for International Development in sharing their relevant policies and practice. I also welcome the interest by the international financial institutions in exploring ways to raise awareness of the Convention and the Protocol globally and to see how IFIs could support the development of necessary legislation and institutional capacity for the implementation of the two treaties in countries outside the ECE region. The views of the civil society organizations were also enlightening in this regard. I very much encourage the continuation of this cooperation and the identification of new mutually beneficial partnerships with IFIs.

We are all aware of the constantly growing energy needs of our countries. I am therefore pleased that you are putting so much emphasis on discussing how to most effectively apply the Convention and the Protocol to ensure the sustainability of energy generation and use.

Moreover, since meeting the growing energy needs also inevitably calls for diversification of the energy sources, including the exploration of renewable sources, your lively discussion on Tuesday focusing on wind and hydro energy, was most topical, providing useful insights into good practice in the assessment of the potential environmental impacts of renewables.

With energy having been at the centre of your debates during these past days, you are about to adopt a declaration in the area of nuclear energy acknowledging the role of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA. You rightfully emphasize the need for close cooperation between Parties and the Convention secretariat with all relevant treaties and international organizations, in particular with the International Atomic Energy Agency, to maximise synergies and strengthen capacities. In this respect, I welcome your initiative to elaborate good practice recommendations to support the application of the Convention to nuclear energy related activities in the next period.

When you last met, in 2011, you celebrated the entry into force of the Protocol on SEA, including as a key instrument for planning and policy-making related to greening the economy

and climate change adaptation. During this week, you will have taken stock of the outcomes of the first review of implementation of the Protocol by its Parties. This indicated that although the experience in its application was still fairly limited, in particular to policies and legislation, the instrument has delivered on its objectives by concretely supporting more sustainable development planning and decision-making by Parties. However, the review also demonstrated that much more remains to be done to improve awareness and capacity in the implementation of the Protocol by its Parties. The Protocol currently accounts for 26 Parties. There is, therefore, still much room for enlarging its membership within the region.

In this regard, I welcome the numerous capacity-building activities carried out in the last period to promote ratification and implementation of the Protocol. I know that many more activities have been requested by countries and will be reflected in the workplan that you are considering for adoption. Successful capacity-building requires partnerships: with beneficiary countries, with donors, with other international organizations and with the secretariats of the other UNECE conventions. I wish to express my particular thanks to the European Commission for the funding made available under the EaP-Green Programme, and also to Finland, Sweden, Norway and others for their ongoing support.

I am pleased that you are considering the adoption of an ambitious but realistic workplan for the next three-year period, seeking to ensure that the proposed activities are matched with funds for implementation. I understand that you have also considered a financial strategy to ensure sufficient, stable and predictable resources for covering the costs of the activities under the Convention and the Protocol. In these times of financial constraints, including budget cuts at the United Nations, we must use all opportunities to further increase the efficiency of our work. Nevertheless, I need to emphasize the importance of sufficient financial and staff resources. It is unrealistic to expect, especially in times of austerity, the General Assembly to agree on providing the Convention with more regular budget resources, as the established practice is that financial requirements of conventions are covered by their Parties. Increasing demands on the secretariat must be met by commensurate resources. In this regard I would like to express my gratitude to Finland for having provided an associate expert to the Convention secretariat for 3 consecutive years. This has been extremely valuable for us and I hope that other Parties will follow Finland's example. I would like to thank the large number of Parties contributing to the Convention's budget, as we rely on your voluntary contributions to provide the secretariat functions you have come to expect. With the perspective of globalization of the treaties, for financing outreach activities, I would encourage countries to also explore funding opportunities through development assistance.

I would also like to highlight the value of further in-kind contributions for covering the costs of workplan activities and participation of experts in meetings, as well as in providing leadership and expertise within the subsidiary bodies under the two treaties. In that regard, I wish to recognize in particular the dedication of Ms Vesna Kolar Planinsic of Slovenia as Chair of the

Implementation Committee; Mr. Dmytro Mormul of Ukraine as Chair of the Bureau; and Mr Piotr Otwaski of Poland as Chair of the Working Group and Chair of the Meeting of the Parties in the general segment held these past three days.

Distinguished Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I will now leave you under the able direction of Ambassador of Lithuania, Mr. Rytis Paulauskas, and Mr. Andriy Mokhnyk, Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology of Ukraine, the co-Chairs for this high-level segment.

I wish you success in your deliberations today. Thank you.
