Economic Commission for Europe

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment

Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Eighth meeting
Geneva, 26–28 November 2019
Item 8 of the provisional agenda
Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties

Elements for a draft declaration

Note by the Bureau

Summary

This note has been prepared by the Bureau with support from the secretariat based on recommendations by the Bureau at its meeting in June 2019. It presents elements for a draft declaration to be adopted by the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and its Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment at their next sessions, preliminary, scheduled for 8–11 December 2020.

The Bureau recommended that the draft declaration reiterates some relevant themes from the earlier declarations such as Sustainable Development Goals, and that the issues highlighted would include the Convention turning 30 years, the financial constraints, greening of the Belt and Road initiative, climate change, sustainable cities and health.

The Working Group is invited to consider the elements of the draft declaration and provide guidance to the Bureau on the development of the draft declaration in advance of its next meeting (9–11 June 2020) taking also into account its deliberations on the draft long-term strategy and action plan (see informal document ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/INF.7).
We, the high-level representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States and the European Union gathered in [Vilnius] from 8 to 11 December 2020 on the occasion of the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment,

Celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Espoo Convention and the considerable impact on the international environmental law and the environment it has had over the past decades,

Also celebrating the value added produced by the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment by extending the Convention’s application to the earliest stages of decision-making, i.e., to plans and programmes and, where appropriate, to policies and legislation,

Recognizing the important contribution of both treaties to improving environmental governance and transparency in planning and decision-making,

Recalling the ultimate objectives and principles of, and the commitments under, the Convention and the Protocol, namely:

(a) To prevent and mitigate adverse environmental and health impacts likely to arise from envisaged economic activities or development;

(b) To render decision-making regarding economic development planning more transparent and participatory through consultation of the environment and health authorities, other stakeholders and the public at the local, national and international levels;

(c) To improve transboundary cooperation in assessing environmental impacts;

(d) To further sustainable development,

Acknowledging that the Convention and the Protocol are also effective instruments for realizing benefits worldwide, including by contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, and the global commitments related to climate and biodiversity,

Also acknowledging the potential of the treaties to promote green growth and green infrastructure, sustainable and smart cities and circular economy.

Expressing serious concerns about the longstanding scarcity, unpredictability and uneven distribution of funding by Parties to the two instruments that put at risk the implementation of the workplans and the functioning of the secretariat. taking also into consideration the future accessions by non-ECE countries.

1. Reaffirm our strong commitment to fully implementing and complying with the Convention and the Protocol;

2. Commit to scaling-up the resources - both human and financial - for the successful implementation of the activities under the treaties and the functioning of their secretariat, including through increasing the contributions to the treaties’ trust fund;

3. Commit also to further strengthening the implementation and the impact of both treaties, including by improving the uniformity of their interpretation, and, as needed, the clarity of their scope, as well as by enhancing the political support through better awareness of the treaties and their benefits;

4. Undertake to boost the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol e.g. through guidance, awareness raising, capacity building - with a view to making full use of their potential for addressing new and emerging national, regional and global challenges and goals;
5. **Call upon** all Parties that have not yet ratified the second amendment to the Convention to do so to ensure unified application of the Convention by all its Parties;

6. **Invite** any State not yet party to accede to the Convention and the Protocol with the view to increasing their impact in the region, and, pending accession, to develop sufficient capacity for the successful implementation of those treaties;

7. **Encourage** also countries from other regions to take steps to accede to the treaties and/or replicating and implementing their provisions and good practice gathered under them;

8. **Stress** the need to accelerate the entry into effect of the first amendment to enable the accession of non-ECE member States through the attainment of the remaining ratifications, and strongly urge the concerned Parties to ratify the first amendment as soon as possible;

9. **Undertake** to assist countries from within and outside the ECE region in their efforts to implement the Convention and to implement and accede to the Protocol;

10. **Call** for the active participation of, and the strengthening of cooperation among, countries and with other relevant international treaties, national and international organizations, civil society, the private sector and financial institutions to support the application of the treaties worldwide;

11. **Welcome** the long-term strategy and an action plan for the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol for 2021–2023, adopted through decision VIII/7–IV/6, and commit to implementing it through operational activities set out in the workplans;

12. **Also welcome** the guidance on the applicability of the Convention to the lifetime-extension of nuclear power plants and the guidance on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment, which seek to assist countries in the consistent practical application of the Convention and the Protocol;

13. **Thank** the Government of [Lithuania] for hosting the eighth and fourth sessions, respectively, of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol [in Vilnius] and for its generous hospitality.

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1 ECE/MP.EIA/2020[---].
2 ECE/MP.EIA/2020[---].
3 ECE/MP.EIA/2020[---].