

Annex IX

OSLO MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

We, the Ministers of the Environment and the European Union Commissioner for the Environment, gathered in Oslo, Norway, from 18 to 20 May 1998 on the occasion of the first meeting of the Parties to mark the entry into force of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context,

Welcoming the entry into force of the Convention as a key legal instrument for fostering environmentally sound and sustainable development at the regional level by promoting active and action-oriented international cooperation, taking into account the specific conditions and needs of the countries in transition, to ensure the integration of environmental considerations into the economic sectors,

Recognizing environmental impact assessment, in particular when applied in a transboundary context, as a key instrument to ensure transparency and a systematic analysis of the environmental impact of economic and sectoral activities in accordance with the 1992 Rio Declaration,

Mindful of the need to strengthen the progress made in countries to prevent, reduce and counteract the potential for adverse transboundary environmental impact,

Emphasizing the importance of coordinated international cooperation among the organizations in the region in assessing environmental impact, in particular in a transboundary context,

Noting that the Parties to the Convention:

(a) Encourage ECE member States which are currently not yet Party to the Convention to finalize their procedure for ratification, acceptance, approval or accession as soon as possible, and to participate actively in the work under the Convention so that the Convention will be implemented and complied with by as many States as possible and be translated into effective rules and regulations at the national level,

(b) Invite ECE member States non-Parties to the Convention as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and relevant international organizations to contribute fully as observers to the work undertaken under the auspices of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention, and

Considering that non-Parties to the Convention:

(a) Are striving to become a Party to the Convention as soon as possible,

(b) Intend to participate actively in the work under the Convention and to strive to apply its principles to the maximum extent possible, in

order to (i) foster international cooperation on the protection of the environment, in particular through the application of environmental impact assessment (EIA) in a transboundary context, (ii) strengthen mutual support in this field, and (iii) reinforce the work undertaken in relation to the Convention,

1. Welcome the entry into force of the Convention and support the implementation of its provisions;
2. Recognize the contribution of EIA to sustainable development in the ECE region and recognize that the implementation of the Convention will lead to an integrated approach to environmental protection;
3. Emphasize that States have the responsibility to take all appropriate and effective measures to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not have a significant adverse environmental impact on the environment of other States or on areas beyond the limits of their own national jurisdiction;
4. Also emphasize the importance of developing anticipatory policies to prevent, mitigate and monitor significant adverse environmental impact, and of promoting public participation and exchange of information specifically in a transboundary context;
5. Recommend that the outcome of relevant activities undertaken before the entry into force of the Convention, in particular those related to legal, administrative and technical aspects, should be taken into account when implementing and complying with the provisions of the Convention;
6. Invite the Executive Secretary to continue to provide adequate secretariat support for the Convention;
7. Invite the secretariats of other conventions as well as relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations to participate in and support the relevant activities under the Convention and to promote the application of the Convention within their fields of competence;
8. Welcome the submission by the Committee on Environmental Policy of the new Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters for adoption and signing at the Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" (June 1998, Aarhus, Denmark);
9. Recognize that the successful implementation of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context depends on adequate administrative and financial resources being made available to support and maintain the initiatives necessary to achieve its goals; in that respect and bearing in mind the special situation of countries in transition, we call upon Parties, Signatories and other institutional financing organizations to ensure that the resources necessary to meet the programme of activities which may from time to time be agreed are provided;

10. Recognize that a systematic analysis of the environmental impact of proposed policies, plans and programmes is enabled by the application of EIA principles and recommend that the principles of EIA in a transboundary context should also be applied to the strategic level; to this end invite Parties and non-Parties to introduce those principles into their national systems; and emphasize that the environmental impact of international sectoral policies, plans and programmes in areas such as transport, energy and agriculture should be assessed as a matter of priority;

11. Encourage coordination of multilateral efforts to prevent significant adverse transboundary impact, bearing in mind the relationship of the Convention with other relevant international instruments;

12. Also encourage the development of bilateral and multilateral agreements and other arrangements and of activities at the subregional level, to facilitate the implementation and application of the provisions of the Convention;

13. Invite Parties to the Convention to consider possibilities for allowing non-ECE member countries to become a Party to this Convention;

14. Welcome the Sofia initiative on environmental impact assessment under the "Environment for Europe" process, and the cooperation between that initiative and the work of the Convention, respecting their complementary character.