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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention  
on Environmental Impact Assessment  
in a Transboundary Context  
Second meeting  
(Sofia, 26-27 February 2001)  
(Item 4 (ix) of the provisional agenda)

DRAFT DECISION TO BE TAKEN  
AT THE SECOND MEETING OF THE PARTIES  
Submitted by the Working Group

**DECISION II/ 9**  
**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

The Meeting,

Recalling Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Convention, which stipulates that, to the extent appropriate, the Parties shall endeavour to apply the principles of environmental impact assessment (EIA) to policies, plans and programmes,

Recalling also paragraph 10 of the Oslo Ministerial Declaration in which the Ministers recognized that a systematic analysis of the environmental impact of proposed policies, plans and programmes was enabled by the application of EIA principles and recommended that the principles of EIA in a transboundary context should also be applied to the strategic level, and to this end invited Parties and non-Parties to introduce those principles into their national systems,

Taking into account the work undertaken on strategic environmental assessment in other international forums, including the ongoing negotiations on the EC directive on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and the findings of the Sofia initiative on EIA,

Welcoming the offer by the Sofia initiative on EIA to organize subregional activities in order to facilitate the preparation of a protocol on strategic environmental assessment and to benefit from the experiences of countries in transition,

Having considered the paper on strategic environmental assessment (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/16),

Having taken note of the Working Group's reports (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/2 and MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/18) and in particular the views expressed concerning the development of a legally binding instrument on strategic environmental assessment (SEA),

Having considered that a Protocol on strategic environmental assessment could be potentially important for the integration of environmental, including relevant health, concerns into strategic decision-making as part of the process towards achieving sustainable development in line with Agenda 21, and that such a protocol would supplement the existing provisions on EIA of the Convention,

Noting the reports of the seventh session of the Committee on Environmental Policy and the second meeting of the Signatories to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters,

1. Establishes a subsidiary body, called the open-ended ad hoc Working Group on the Protocol, with a mandate to prepare a legally binding instrument in the form of a protocol on strategic environmental assessment to the Convention, with the objective of finalizing it so that it can possibly be adopted at an extraordinary meeting of the Parties to the Convention to be convened on the occasion of the fifth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" to be held in Kiev, Ukraine;

2. Calls on the Parties to the Convention to participate actively in the preparation of the Protocol;

3. Urges the Meeting of the Signatories to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) to contribute to the preparation of the protocol;

4. Calls on the UN/ECE secretariat to ensure that invitations to the Working Group negotiating the SEA protocol are sent to all focal points of both the Espoo Convention and the Aarhus Convention;

5. Invites all interested intergovernmental organizations, in particular the World Health Organization/Regional Office for Europe (WHO/EURO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as well as non-governmental organizations, to contribute to this process.