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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

First session

Geneva, 20–23 June 2011

Items 3 (a) and 8 of the provisional agenda

Outstanding issues: draft declaration

Adoption of the declaration

Draft declaration

Proposal by the Bureau

Summary

The following text was prepared by the Bureau to the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, with the support of the Convention secretariat, as requested by the Meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol at its second and third sessions.

We, the high-level representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) member States and of the European Union, gathered in Geneva from 20 to 23 June 2011 on the occasion of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context serving as the first meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment,

Welcoming the entry into force of the Protocol as a key legal instrument for fostering environmentally sound and sustainable development, aiming at integrating environmental, including health, considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes that set the framework for future development consent for projects and, to the extent appropriate, policies and legislation,

Recognizing strategic environmental assessment as a key instrument to ensure that environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the strategic decision-making process regarding plans and programmes that set the framework for future development consent for projects and, to the extent appropriate, policies and legislation, and cannot be considered in isolation from it, and that concerned citizens should have the opportunity to participate in those strategic decision-making processes, in accordance with principles 4 and 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,

Recognizing also that strategic environmental assessment can help achieve the Millennium Development Goal of integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes to ensure environmental sustainability,

Acknowledging the importance of coordinated international cooperation among governmental organizations in the region in assessing environmental, including health, effects, in particular in a transboundary context,

1. *Welcome* the entry into force of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment and support the implementation of its provisions;

2. *Recognize* the contribution of strategic environmental assessment to sustainable development, in particular in the UNECE region;

3. *Acknowledge* the importance of an integrated approach to environmental protection and of the mainstreaming of the environment into economic development through the implementation of the Protocol;

4. *Underscore* the potential for exploring linkages between strategic environmental assessment at the level of plans and programmes — and, to the extent appropriate, policies and legislation — and environmental impact assessment at the project level, and that such linkages should be explored with the aim of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of environmental assessments and of facilitating the decision-making process at the strategic and project levels;

5. *Emphasize* that Parties to the Protocol should observe that proposed plans and programmes that fall under the provisions of the Protocol and are within their jurisdiction or control comply with article 7, paragraph 2, as well as annex IV, paragraph 7, of the Protocol, and thereby accomplish that the measures to prevent, reduce or mitigate significant adverse transboundary environmental, including health, effects are described and assessed;

6. *Also emphasize* the importance of promoting public participation in strategic environmental assessment;

7. *Further emphasize* the potential for furthering sustainable development when environmental concerns are considered and integrated, to the extent appropriate, in the preparation of proposals for policies and legislation;

8. *Recognize* that strategic environmental assessment can be an appropriate mechanism to introduce the consideration of climate change impacts in plans and programmes that are prepared for regional development planning, and for town and country planning or for land-use planning, and thus to increase adaptive capacity;

9. *Invite* the UNECE Executive Secretary to continue to provide adequate secretariat support for the Protocol and request the allocation of regular United Nations budget funds to ensure the stable and effective provision of secretariat functions for the Protocol;

10. *Also 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 Protocol and to promote the application of the Protocol within their fields of competence;

11. *Recognize* that the successful implementation of the Protocol depends in part on adequate administrative and financial resources being made available to support and maintain the initiatives necessary to achieve its goals and, in that respect, and bearing in mind the special situation of countries in transition, call upon Parties, Signatories, other States and institutional financing organizations to endeavour to ensure that the resources necessary to meet the workplan are provided;

12. *Welcome* the efforts of countries with economies in transition to develop capacity to implement the Protocol, notably through the Belgrade Initiative on Strategic Environmental Assessment, led by Armenia, Belarus and the Republic of Moldova, and encourage Parties to support actively these efforts;

13. *Encourage* the Parties and Signatories to the Protocol, as well other States, to develop further capacity for the Protocol's ratification and implementation on the basis of demonstrated need, giving particular support to the countries of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and, wherever possible, working with regional institutions to make expertise and resources available as necessary;

14. *Recognize with appreciation* the valuable work carried out by the Signatories, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization and others to provide guidance in the practical application of the Protocol;

15. *Invite* civil society and all stakeholders to continue to assist with and contribute to the implementation and application of the Protocol, noting that the meetings under the Protocol provide for an exchange of views and information;

16. *Encourage* multilateral lending institutions and bilateral aid agencies to apply the principles of the Protocol to the development and implementation of their plans and programmes and, to the extent appropriate, policies;

17. *Call upon* member States of UNECE that have not yet done so to ratify the Protocol and invite other States that are Members of the United Nations to accede to the Protocol;

18. *Recognize* that strategic environmental assessment is a unique and important instrument for planning and policymaking related to greening the economy;¹

¹ The Bureau proposes inclusion of this and the following paragraph in preparation for the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference, Astana, 21–23 September 2011.

19. *Invite* the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference, to be held in Astana from 21 to 23 September 2011, to take into consideration the importance of strategic environmental assessment in the Conference’s two themes of sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems; and greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development;

20. *Request* UNECE to report within the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 (Rio+20) on the contribution of the Convention and, in particular, the Protocol to the implementation of the principles proclaimed by the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (Vol. I)).²

² The Bureau proposes inclusion of this paragraph in preparation for Rio+20.