



---

# Statement by Switzerland under Agenda Item 6 of the MOP-8 of the Espoo Convention

## High-level event to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention

Martine Rohn-Brossard, 11 December 2020

---

File: BAFU-061.2-03-09.3-01-1/3/3

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

On behalf of Switzerland, it is a great honor for me to celebrate with you the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Espoo Convention.

Looking back, we can **be proud of the achievements of the Convention in the last 30 years**, promoting persistently international cooperation and sustainable development in the UNECE region and beyond and enhancing environmental governance, public participation and transparency in decision-making.

The Convention has been an **innovative and a forward-looking instrument**, with respected bodies like the **implementation committee**: **this** is crucial for an effective implementation of the Convention.

**Looking ahead, the Espoo Convention is of highest relevance in particular regarding big infrastructure projects** like the Belt and Road Initiative, and also in the current context of the Covid crisis.

**Infrastructure** is a priority **candidate for quick economy recovery and job creation. It will be at the heart of many recovery agendas.** But **investments need to be directed toward sustainable infrastructure** to meet the **SDGs and the Paris Agreement** and to **avoid lock-in to carbon and resource intensive pathways.**

**The public sector** is typically the first investor in infrastructure. It is **central to ensure the right framework conditions** for sustainability and for leveraging private investment. For the recovery to be green and to make sure it works for jobs, income and growth, it will be critical for countries to apply **high environmental standards and well established EIA and SEA procedures.** **The Espoo Convention can serve as an excellent model at the global level.**



Closely linked is the **question of resource extraction, as large infrastructure projects require huge amount of resources such as sand, gravel, metals and minerals**, whose demand is expected to grow considerably. This poses challenges for all countries, whether they extract resources or not, as we are all dependent on mineral resources. It will be important to look at ways how to involve all stakeholders and provide the correct incentives to all actors along the value chain – from miners, to traders, investors, producers and consumers. **Here again the Espoo Convention has a role to play.**

In **2019, at the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly UNEA4**, a resolution on **sustainable infrastructure** and another one on **mineral resource governance** have been adopted at the global level putting these issues **at the top of the global environmental agenda for the first time**. The Espoo Convention was mentioned many time in this context.

In **2022, the next Ministerial meeting “Environment for Europe”** will take place in Cyprus. One of its main themes is sustainable Infrastructure. This will be another important political event to show the effectiveness of the Convention.

**The Espoo Convention is on the ride and we should use this momentum !**

Since it is a Party to the Espoo Convention, **Switzerland has been a strong supporter** of the Espoo Convention, contributing constantly to the fulfilment of its work-plans, strengthening capacity building especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus and supporting the effectiveness of the compliance system that makes the Convention so useful for the protection of the environment.

The Espoo Convention is 30, let us celebrate it !

The Espoo Convention has achieved a lot and remain of central importance. It has gathered a lot of experiences and best practices in the UNECE region and Switzerland hopes that the first amendment to the Convention will soon be operational, so as to benefit many countries all around the world !

Good luck !