

8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention (8–11 December 2020)

Welcome statement, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania

Dear Chair,

Heads of delegations,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Prime Minister and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania I would like to welcome all of you to the eighth Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention. The Convention serves as a major environmental protection framework and by the shared efforts of the countries helps to protect the local, regional and global environment and through international cooperation lets us move towards environmentally sound and sustainable development.

Espoo Convention defines a procedural mechanism of an utmost importance within which members of communities from different countries may cooperate, harmonize their approaches and resolve their differences, helping to mitigate transboundary environmental impacts.

In the context of the thirtieth anniversary of the Espoo Convention it is crucial to ensure that the Convention and the Protocol – the two international agreements and instruments, which secure adoption of decisions based on the highest international standards for protection of the environment and human health, maintain and strengthen their relevance and effectiveness.

We are proud to host the 8th Meeting of the Parties in Vilnius and were looking forward to welcome all of you in person. Unfortunately, due to the worldwide coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and related measures of safety, together with restrictions set in Lithuania and other countries, the Meeting will be conducted (most probably, for the first time in its history) by the means of remote communication.

I am sure that we will be able to overcome the challenges of remote working framework and will have positive and constructive dialogue leading to a general consensus and adoption of decisions.

Since an opportunity to take you on a live tour in Vilnius was lost, let me share some of the spirit of our city and to invite you to a short virtual tour.

Thank you very much and have a very fruitful event.