Eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention

High-level session
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Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and I would like to express my appreciation to the Espoo Convention Secretariat for the organization of this virtual event under the difficult circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) recognizes a close connection between protection of the environment, stability and peace, and therefore we aim to strengthen environmental co-operation as part of our comprehensive approach to security. The ongoing collaboration with UNECE in implementing Multilateral Environmental Agreements - including the Espoo, Aarhus, Water Conventions and their Protocols – is a crucial part of this effort.
In this context, I recall our joint project on Strategic Environmental Assessment in Central Asia (funded by the German Environment Agency - UBA), which aims at strengthening national and regional capacities in establishing national SEA systems in compliance with the SEA Protocol and, at the same time, at fostering regional co-operation and supporting wide participation in environmental assessment processes.

The OSCE also supports its 57 participating States in enhancing connectivity, particularly in Central Asia, the Caspian Sea Region, and Eastern Europe. Many infrastructure projects are underway to improve trade and transport facilities in these regions, and ensuring adequate and effective Environmental Impact Assessment is a key element towards achieving sustainable connectivity.

Dear Participants,

The OSCE is pleased to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Espoo Convention’s adoption. With the aim of marking this anniversary, we are promoting, in close cooperation with the UNECE, the publication of a set of selected elements in pictures of the Espoo Convention and its SEA Protocol. This easy-to-memorize set of drawings targets a non-expert audience with limited knowledge and awareness of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol, and intends to raise awareness of all stakeholders on key areas and also on the limits of their applications, as well as the functioning and the benefits stemming from them.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the Espoo Convention’s role in protecting the environment, in promoting international cooperation in environmental issues and, as a consequence, in strengthening stability, peace and security. The OSCE remains strongly committed to these principles and we are looking forward to continuing our fruitful cooperation.