



Espoo Convention, 9th Meeting of the Working Group, Geneva, 25 August 2020

Statement pronounced orally by Switzerland

6 (e) Draft guidance on the applicability of the Convention to the lifetime extension of nuclear power plants

Switzerland would like to commend the co-chairs of the ad-hoc working group, and the secretariat, for their dedication and hard work in bringing the guidance to the consideration of the Working Group of the Espoo Convention.

Taking into account the divergent views expressed by the Parties participating in the ad-hoc working group and the complications arising from the covid-19 pandemic, to have this guidance before us is already an accomplishment.

Switzerland has participated in the ad-hoc working group to explain in which circumstances, according to the Swiss current legal and regulatory setting, its nuclear power plants are or are not subject to an environmental impact assessment.

The discussions in the ad hoc working group have shown a fundamental divide between the participating Parties, so important that it seems almost impossible for our co-chairs to bridge it at a technical level.

The guidance still contains bracketed texts that reflect views expressed by some of the participating Parties that other are not yet ready to accept. There are also brackets around the whole guidance, signalling that, at this stage, there may not be any guidance for the Meeting of the Parties to consider in December. Switzerland believes that the discussion in the ad hoc working group has not only highlighted significant differences in the views expressed, but also several legitimate concerns that clearly need further consideration:

- the concern to ensure the continuous safety of the nuclear power plants;
- the concern to reflect changing circumstances in the environment caused, among others, by climate change;
- the concern to be informed and consulted at critical moments of the decision making process, about the continued operation of nuclear power plants.

Switzerland believes that a solution has to be found that balances and brings together these different legitimate concerns. Thereby, each of the Parties has to better understand the concerns of the others and search for solutions that do not only reflect its own interest, but that also offer a solution to the legitimate interests of the others. With this in mind, further progress can still be made in the document, to remove the remaining brackets. We support the Working Group inviting the ad hoc working group to resume its discussions as soon as

possible and offering participating Parties recommendations for the preparation of a guidance fit for endorsement by the Meeting of the Parties in December.

One recommendation should certainly be for the participants in the ad hoc working group to exercise maximum flexibility in understanding all the different legitimate concerns, while drafting the guidance.

Another recommendation should be to look also, in an open, constructive, creative and solution oriented spirit, at additional approaches that may be needed to effectively address these concerns, including at tools and approaches that may be offered by other instruments than this guidance or even other instruments and frameworks than the Espoo Convention.

In addition, the Working Group has to agree on the decision text to be forwarded to the Meetings of the Parties. Thereby it has to also consider approaches to address certain concerns and questions in the decisions and not in the guidance as such. The decision text may not only show the political will of the Parties to endorse the guidance, it may also determine the scope and the context of the guidance itself, and it can also refer to approaches outside of the guidance per se to address concerns that cannot be solved within the guidance. Switzerland believes that an agreement on the decision text will be helpful for the ad hoc working group to conclude its mandated task on the guidance.