



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
25 March 2020

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention
on Environmental Impact Assessment
in a Transboundary Context

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

Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Ninth meeting

Geneva, 9–11 June 2020

Item 4 (d) of the provisional agenda

**Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties:
draft declaration**

Draft Vilnius declaration

Proposal by the Bureau

Summary

The present document contains a draft declaration to be adopted by the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment at their next sessions (Vilnius, 8–11 December 2020). It was prepared by the Bureau with support from the secretariat.

At its eighth meeting (Geneva, 26–28 November 2019), the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment took note of an earlier, informal version of the draft declaration (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/INF.10), but did not deliberate or comment on the draft. Instead, it agreed to consider the draft declaration at its next meeting, once it had been further reviewed by the Bureau, including taking into account possible comments that the delegations were invited to submit after the meeting (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/2, para. 55). No comments were received, but the Bureau reviewed and slightly revised the draft document at its meeting in Geneva, on 25 and 26 February 2020.

The Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment is invited to consider and agree on the text of the draft declaration document to be forwarded for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties.



We, the high-level representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States and the European Union, gathered in Vilnius, from 8 to 11 December 2020, on the occasion of the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment,

Celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Espoo Convention and the considerable impact on international environmental law and the environment it has had over the past decades,

Also celebrating the value added produced by the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, since its entry into force 10 years ago, by extending the Convention's application to the earliest stages of decision-making with regard to plans and programmes and, where appropriate, to policies and legislation,

Recognizing the important contribution of both treaties to improving environmental governance and transparency in planning and decision-making,

Recalling the objectives and principles of, and the commitments under, the Convention and the Protocol, in particular to:

(a) Prevent and mitigate significant adverse environmental and health impacts likely to arise from envisaged economic activities or development,

(b) Render decision-making regarding planning in the relevant economic sectors more transparent and participatory through consultation of the environmental and health authorities, other stakeholders and the public at the local, national and international levels,

(c) Enhance international cooperation in assessing environmental impacts, in particular in a transboundary context,

(d) Further sustainable development,

Acknowledging that the Convention and the Protocol are also effective instruments for realizing benefits worldwide, including by contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the global commitments related to climate and biodiversity,

Acknowledging also the potential of the treaties to promote green growth and green infrastructure, sustainable and smart cities and circular economy,

Expressing serious concerns about the long-standing scarcity, unpredictability and uneven distribution of funding by Parties to the two instruments that put at risk the implementation of the workplans and the functioning of the secretariat, also taking into consideration future accessions by countries not member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe,

1. Reaffirm our strong commitment to fully implementing and complying with the Convention and the Protocol;

2. Commit to scaling up the resources – both human and financial – for the successful implementation of the activities under the treaties and the functioning of their secretariat, including through increasing the contributions to the treaties' trust fund;

3. Also commit to further strengthening the implementation and impact of both treaties, including by improving the uniformity of their interpretation, and, as needed, the clarity of their scope, as well as by enhancing political support through increased awareness of the treaties and their benefits;

4. Undertake to boost the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol, including, as needed, through guidance, awareness-raising and capacity-building, with a view to making full use of their potential for addressing new and emerging national, regional and global challenges and goals;

5. Call upon all Parties that have not yet ratified the second amendment to the Convention to do so to ensure unified application of the Convention by all its Parties;

6. Invite any State not yet a Party to the Convention and the Protocol to accede thereto with a view to increasing the impact of those treaties in the region, and, pending accession, to develop sufficient capacity for their successful implementation;

7. Encourage also countries from other regions to take steps to accede to the treaties and/or replicate and implement their provisions and good practice gathered thereunder;

8. Stress the need to accelerate the operationalization of the first amendment to enable the accession of non-ECE countries through the attainment of the remaining ratifications, and strongly urge the concerned Parties to ratify the first amendment as soon as possible;

9. Undertake to assist countries from within and outside the ECE region in their efforts to implement the Convention and to implement and accede to the Protocol;

10. Call for the active participation of and the strengthening of cooperation among countries and with other relevant international treaties, national and international organizations, civil society, the private sector and financial institutions to support the application of the treaties worldwide;

11. Welcome the long-term strategy and action plan for the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol,¹ adopted through decision VIII/3–IV/3, and commit to implementing the long-term strategy and action plan through operational activities set out in the workplans;

12. Also welcome the Guidance on the Applicability of the Convention to the Lifetime Extension of Nuclear Power Plants² and the Guidance on Assessing Health Impacts in Strategic Environmental Assessment,³ which seek to assist countries in the consistent practical application of the Convention and the Protocol;

13. Thank the Government of Lithuania for hosting the eighth and fourth sessions, respectively, of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in Vilnius and for its generous hospitality.

¹ [ECE/MP.EIA/2020/3–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/2020/3, forthcoming].

² [ECE/MP.EIA/2020/9, forthcoming].

³ [ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/2020/10, forthcoming].