

Development of a long-term strategy and an action plan for the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA - Second informal meeting

Inntel Hotels Rotterdam Conference Center, (Leuvehaven 80, 3011 EA Rotterdam, the Netherlands)

Monday, 7 October 2019 (10 am – 6 pm)

Provisional programme

I. Introduction

1. The informal meeting will bring together representatives of Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (Protocol on SEA). It will provide an informal setting for further discussions on the development of a long-term strategy and an action plan for the Convention and the Protocol that was mandated by the Meetings of the Parties to the two Treaties.¹ The informal meeting is co-chaired by representatives of Austria and the Netherlands.

2. Building on the outcomes of the first informal exchanges held in London, on 1 October 2018 (see informal document ECE/MP.EIA/2019/INF.6), the meeting will aim at informing the deliberations of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment at its eighth meeting (Geneva, 26-28 November 2019). The Co-Chairs are expected to prepare an informal document for the Working Group on the outcomes of the discussions, also outlining plans for the development of the strategy and the action plan in advance of the Working Group's next meeting, in May 2020, and, ultimately, for submission to the Meetings of the Parties at their next sessions, in December 2020.

3. For the most added value, the informal meeting is invited to link its forward-looking strategic discussions to the proposed priorities, operative actions and funding strategies under the Convention and the Protocol that are on the agenda of the Working Group's meeting in November. That will enable it to provide useful input and views as well as additional, alternative suggestions to the various topics and (forthcoming) draft documents to be considered by the Working Group in advance of the Meetings of the Parties. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) Budget and financial arrangements
 - Bureau's proposals on the financing of the Convention and the Protocol, (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/INF.2);
- (b) Possible activities for the draft workplan (2021–2023)
 - Informal document ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/INF.11);
 - See also conclusions on possible weaknesses or shortcomings in the treaty implementation identified in the Draft sixth review of implementation of the Convention (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/3) and Draft third review of implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/4);
 - Workplan (2017-2020) implementation status (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/INF.4)
- (c) Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties
 - Informal document (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/INF.9);
 - Key topics for thematic seminar/panel discussion during the Meetings of the Parties' sessions (the Bureau recommended focusing the high-level session on the upcoming 30-year anniversary celebrations of the Convention; and the general segment, on one/some of the following: (i) the role of SEA and transboundary EIA in greening infrastructure development (Greening of China's Belt and Road initiative) or (ii) the role of SEA for sustainable cities, including to help address climate

¹ See decision VII/7–III/6 of the Meetings of the Parties and the 2017–2020 workplan for the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol, adopted through decision VII/3-III/3.

change and health considerations in urban areas; or (iii) the promotion of circular economy through environmental assessment of related planning and projects (e.g. regarding waste)

- Elements for a draft declaration (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2019/INF.10) that the Bureau recommended should address a number of “old” and new priorities e.g. SDGs; financial matters; sustainable cities, health, greening the Belt and Road Initiative; climate change etc.

II. Provisional programme

- 10.00 – 10.30: I. Opening and introductory presentations by the Co-Chairs and the secretariat**
- 10.30 – 12.30: II. Reflection on priorities and corresponding (national and international) implementation actions and methods for the Convention and the Protocol: What should be done? In what priority order? When should actions be taken: in 2021-2023 and/or beyond?**
- A. Further improving the treaty implementation within the ECE region:
1. Addressing existing general weaknesses in Parties’ implementation (transboundary procedures, including public participation, language and quality of environmental documentation/report, monitoring/post project analysis, addressing health in SEA etc.)
 2. Enlarging the treaty membership, assisting future Parties to align their legislation and to build their capacities to ratify and implement the treaties;
 3. Focusing on key areas of importance e.g.: energy (nuclear, renewables); urban areas/sustainable cities; climate; infrastructure development (transportation, energy, and telecommunications – greening belt and road initiative); biodiversity; circular economy (elimination of waste);
- B. Contributing to the achievement of global goals: SDGs, addressing climate change;
- C. Cooperating and coordinating with relevant regional and global treaties and organizations: ECE Conventions; WHO, IAEA, UNFCCC, UNCLOS;
- D. Preparing for the future accession of non-ECE countries (global application of the treaties): outreach and capacity building activities; funding mechanisms
- E. Other priorities to be defined
- 12.30 – 13.30: Lunch Break**
- 13.30 – 15.00 III. Reflection on the necessary resources, means, methods, working arrangements to implement the priority actions by Parties, with support from the treaty bodies, and the secretariat:**
- A. What could be done:
1. At the national level (e.g. awareness raising campaigns to influence public opinion and political priorities and public funding; involving NGOs and the media; making links with SDGs and climate objectives more evident and operational; bilateral and multilateral agreements and other arrangements; capacity building; exchanges of good practice);
 2. In terms of the secretariat support: (aside from aligning staff resources with the workload, any changes needed regarding the role, tasks and services, methods of work?)
 3. By the Implementation Committee, Working Group, Bureau and Meetings of the Parties (e.g. any changes needed regarding the role, working methods/rules of procedure, and as relevant the number of officials and their election criteria):

- B. How to increase the resources available for the treaties to secure the functioning of the secretariat and the implementation of the workplan?
- E.g. Increasing the number and amounts of the individual contributions of Parties to the trust fund, e.g. through tapping also on national funds for development or global action; agreeing on indicative or mandatory amounts for contributions calculated based on adjusted GDP/capita based scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations; sponsoring a Junior Professional Officer to work in the secretariat; increasing in-kind contributions; Raising funds from external actors: IFIs, EU etc.
- C. What activities and services to cut if resources will not increase?

15.00 – 15.30: Coffee break

15.30 – 16.30 Discussion on item III continues, as needed

16.30 – 18.00: IV. Wrap up/Conclusions & next steps: (Proposed format and length of the draft guidance and action plan and time schedule and method for its development)