



REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA
MINISTRSTVO ZA OKOLJE IN PROSTOR

Dunajska c. 48, P.P.653, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija
Telefon: (01) 47 87 400 • Telefaks: (01) 47 87 422

EU Coordination

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Item 2(a)

Fourth Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context
Bucharest, Tuesday, 20 May 2008, 4:45 – 5:30

Agenda item 6: STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Madam Chair, [Your Excellency / Excellencies], distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for Slovenia, speaking on behalf of the European Union, to address this Forum .

1. First of all I would like to thank our host, Mr Korodi, Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development and Mrs. Pineta, Director General, and the Romanian Government for organizing the 4th meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention in the city of Bucharest and for all the splendid arrangements in these beautiful surroundings. You and your staff have worked hard to provide such excellent settings for this meeting.
2. Having the opportunity I would like to highlight a few issues of particular importance to the EU:
3. The European Union is pleased and impressed to see all the work done on the practical implementation of the Convention and the regional cooperation. However It is felt from our experience and from EU Member States comments that there are still possibilities to improve the application of the Convention, the regional cooperation and the sharing of common experiences between Parties and Non-Parties.

4. The European Union supports sub regional cooperation to strengthen contacts between parties and non-parties, including cooperation in relation to large-scale transboundary infrastructure projects. We are convinced, that strengthening of sub regional cooperation and promoting of the practical application of the Convention as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements facilitates the effective implementation of the Convention. As a concrete example I would like to mention our own positive experiences in improving the practical application and effective implementation of the Convention by sub regional activities, namely the Sava River Basin Agreement and recent activities in implementing the Marine Strategy in the Adriatic. We are convinced that there is also still room to further develop best practice experiences from the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea area and from South Eastern Europe and we encourage behind this background Parties to develop further bilateral and multilateral agreements and to report to the next Meeting of the Parties accordingly.

5. The European Union recognises that the implementation of the Convention has proved to be a major challenge. From our own experiences with the European Directive 42/2001 on the assessment of plans and programmes we know that building capacities and raising effectiveness on this field was and is not an easy task, so we are willing to share the experiences achieved.

6. The European Union emphasizes the importance of cooperation between parties and Non-parties and sees the importance of cooperation in improving the implementation and application of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context also in a broader context, namely thus contributing to ensure an environmentally sound and sustainable development and contributing to achieve the environmental, economic and social and challenges in our societies.

7. The European Union considers that the practical implementation of the Convention is furthermore a matter of political will, technical capacities and scientific work and could be advanced further in developing best practice large scale assessment projects related to energy, which are one of the European Union priority tasks according to the European Energy-Environment package.

8. I will not come to the end of my intervention without mentioning and recognizing the importance of the Protocol on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The European Union welcomes the inclusion of activities towards ratification and application of the SEA Protocol into the work plan.

9. Madam Chair, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude that the European Union attaches great importance to the Espoo Convention and that we are convinced of the significance to secure regional and subregional cooperation of Parties and Non Parties in order to improve the implementation and application of the Convention. The European Union is willing to cooperate and contribute actively on the good practise development and is willing to take an active part in the various boards and committees of the Convention as well as continuing to contribute to the financial resources of the Convention.

10. On behalf of European Union I express the wish for a successful cooperation and looking forward to work on this issue in the following period between the 4th and 5th meeting of the parties.

Thank you for your attention.