

23.06.2011

**SPEAKING NOTE**

**5<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention**

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**1<sup>st</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment**

**Geneva, 20-23 June 2011**

**Agenda items 6 and 10: STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENCY**

Mr. Chair, [Your Excellency / Excellencies], distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Hungary, currently holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, will be speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

It is an honour for me to address this Forum.

The European Union and its Member States welcome the entry into force of the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment. It is a very important initiative of the Second meeting of the Parties to the Convention. Achieving its adoption and entry into force required compromises, but the result is a key instrument that has the potential to foster and ensure more extensive public participation in government decision-making in scores of development

sectors as well as better environmental outcomes. This can be done by integrating environmental and health objectives together with socio-economic ones into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes and, to the extent appropriate, policies and legislations.

This said, in order to ensure the true effectiveness of this new legal instrument, there must be an adequate - if not extensive - level of ratification. We would therefore welcome more countries acceding to the Protocol.

In our mind, there is no doubt that the Protocol on SEA is an effective tool for strengthening democratic accountability in strategic decision-making processes; it is equally without doubt that the successful implementation of the Protocol will depend not only on adequate human and financial resources but also on establishing collaborative networks between parties and ensure the seamless cooperation among the various actors involved at all levels in the process.

We are certainly aware that the implementation of such a legal instrument gives rise to major challenges. We, ourselves, have realised from our own experience from the implementation of our Directive 42/2001 on the assessment of plans and programmes, that development of capacity or enhancement of effectiveness is a complex, multifaceted task with many difficulties. In the previous days, we were glad to share our experiences with all of you, in order to inform our discussions on how to facilitate the better implementation of both the Convention and the Protocol.

In the same vein, we would like to emphasise the importance of cooperation between Parties, Signatories and Non-Parties to the Protocol in improving its implementation and application in order to ensure and strengthen environmentally sound and sustainable development.

On a broader level, we acknowledge that Strategic Environmental Assessment can also be an effective instrument to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals by integrating the principles of sustainable development into policies and programmes, and also by placing emphasis on the consideration of human health.

Mr. Chair, [Your Excellency / Excellencies], distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude that the European Union and its Member States assign great importance to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment and we are convinced that, together with the

Esppo Convention, which celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, these are significant instruments that can secure regional and sub-regional, bilateral and multilateral cooperation of Parties and Non-Parties, thus improving the integrated approach to environmental protection and mainstreaming the environment into economic development through their implementation. The European Union and its Member States are willing to cooperate and contribute on the development of good practices and are ready and willing to take part actively in the different boards and committees of the Convention and its Protocol, as well as to continue to contribute to the financial resources of both the Convention and its Protocol.

On behalf of the European Union and its Member States, I would like to thank the Secretariat and Bureau for the excellent organization of the meeting. We are looking forward to a series of successful and fruitful discussions and exchanges over the next inter-sessional period.

Mr. Chair, by your leave, I would now wish to cede the floor to my colleague from the European Commission to address this plenary and give you a more tangible example on how the EU is approaching in practice a difficult question, that of large scale infrastructure projects, as an illustration of the complexity of the challenges posed to the effective implementation of the Convention and the Protocol and the development of good practices.

I thank you very much for your attention.

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