

FOURTH MEETING OF THE ESPOO CONVENTION AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON LIFE-TIME EXTENSION OF NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

(London, 2-3 October 2018)

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Prepared by the Co-Chairs

The meeting was co-chaired by Christof Sangenstedt (Germany) and Lucy Tanner (the UK) and attended by representatives from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and the UK. The Chair of the Working Group on EIA and SEA (Vesna Kolar-Planinsic, Slovenia), the UNECE secretariat to the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA, and the European Commission (DG Environment and DG Energy) also attended.

As mandated by the Working Group on EIA and SEA at its seventh meeting (Geneva, 28-30 May 2018) the ad hoc group worked on the draft guidance on the applicability of the Espoo Convention (the Convention) to the lifetime extension (LTE) of nuclear power plants (NPPs), based on the terms of reference adopted by the Working Group. The ad hoc group also worked on the progress report to be submitted to the intermediary session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (Geneva, 5-7 February 2019).

Discussions on the first day were focused on two main topics. Firstly, the question of major change. The group discussed a range of factors which would be important in establishing whether a change had taken place. In doing so, it took into account the answers received to the questions circulated to members following the third meeting of the ad hoc group (Berlin, 20-21 June 2018). The group agreed that works would be one factor and changes in the operation of the NPP which result in a changed intervention in the environment (e.g. by an increased use of natural resources such as cooling water or output of emissions) would be another. Different views were expressed on a third group of factors requiring further discussion, such as increased technical and environmental risks deriving from ageing components, changes of the surrounding environment, lack of an EIA to date, or new scientific findings. It was discussed that there would also need to be a consideration of whether the change was major or not, taking into account the extent of any change/adverse environmental impact.

Secondly, the group considered a range of possible lifetime extension scenarios that do currently or may in the future occur in States which are Parties to the Convention. The group agreed that a scenario being described as a LTE does not necessarily mean that Convention applies and that equally, not being a LTE scenario does not necessarily mean that the Convention does not apply. Following debate, it was agreed that the guidance would likely need to cover a broad range of scenarios, including those which may not necessarily be regarded as a LTE scenario, in order to be of maximum use to the Implementation Committee and, in general, to Parties and future Parties to the Convention.

On the second day, a discussion was held regarding the concern expressed by the NGO representatives in their meeting with the Co-Chairs (Brussels, 8 August 2018) in relation to multiple minor changes. The group considered how the cumulative impact of such changes might be assessed as part of a process of determining whether a major change had taken place. The group felt that this

would also be a factor in assessing major change but one which would need to be considered on a case by case basis. In that respect, the possibility of a procedure seeking to screen the environmental effects of a change was mentioned.

The remainder of the second day was spent preparing the progress report to be presented to the intermediate session of the Meeting of the Parties. The group reviewed and discussed the draft report outlined by the Co-Chairs in terms of both structure and content and agreed a timetable through to submission. The group also considered what documents could meanwhile be sent for information and guidance by the Bureau for its next meeting (22nd-23rd October).

A number of other items were discussed during the meeting. Regarding membership of the group, it was requested that members should be mandated by their Governments; that preferably there should be no more than 2 people per delegation, per meeting, and that ideally these would be the same people each time. Where this was not possible it was requested that permanent members should be responsible for disseminating the related information to their alternates. Late registrations should also be avoided. A provisional schedule for future meetings was agreed (March, June, September and December 2019). The next meetings will focus on the relevance of Periodic Safety Review, the definition of the term 'decision', and the likelihood of significant adverse transboundary impact.

Ongoing engagement with the NGO community was discussed and the group agreed that further information would be shared with the NGO representatives for feedback, and that further consultation meetings with the Co-Chairs should take place, including in advance of the intermediary session of the Meeting of the Parties.

The group regretted the absence of the nominated experts from Armenia, Belarus and Ukraine and the Co-Chairs committed to write to these states to find out if anything further could be done to facilitate their participation in the group.

The group agreed that it would meet again in March 2019, following the intermediate session of the Meeting of the Parties in February.