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№ 4/2880-04-08

«15» 12 2020il

**Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in
Transboundary Context - Eighth session**

High-level event dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Convention

Video conference

Speech by Mr. Rauf Hajiyev,

Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished meeting participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, let me express my gratitude to the Convention Secretariat for hosting this meeting. I would like to thank Mr. Georges Kremlis for the presidency and I wish new Chair success in his future activities.

I sincerely congratulate all participants of the event on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Espoo Convention adoption. The Espoo Convention is a crucial platform for the development of international cooperation in terms of environmental impact assessment within the transboundary context. We highly appreciate the efforts of the Convention aimed on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as addressing other environmental issues.

I am grateful to the Espoo Convention secretariat, the UN Economic Commission for Europe and the Eu4Environment Programme for providing technical assistance for capacity-building on EIA/SEA in 2017 - 2020. Work was carried out to harmonize the relevant national legislation with the norms of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, within the framework of technical assistance.

I would like to note that Azerbaijan is also completing the relevant procedures for making a contribution to the Espoo Convention Trust Fund.

Distinguished participants,

The ecology of Azerbaijan and the entire Caucasian region has been deliberately subjected to terrorism, over the past decades. As the consequence of the occupation of Azerbaijani territories, which lasted around 30 years, the environment of my country has been seriously damaged. The scale of environmental terrorism committed against Azerbaijan is unprecedented.

During the Patriotic War, which began on 27 September 2020, retreating enemy occupation forces deliberately inflicted irreparable damage to the ecosystem of Nagorno Karabakh and adjacent territories using prohibited weapons. The forests located on the outskirts of the Shusha city were deliberately shelled with white phosphorus, causing major fires. The forests of the Zengilan, Jabrayil and Fizuli districts were also vandalized and burned. Significant damage was caused to the flora and fauna of the Gekgel and Aggel national parks as the result of rocket attacks on territories located outside the scene of fighting.

It is clear that, owing to the lack of control over the occupied territories during the years of occupation, it has not been possible to comply with the provisions of the Espoo Convention and other multilateral agreements on those territories. We have presented to international organizations and the Convention incontrovertible evidence of the harm done by the Armenian side, calling for a strong condemnation of the environmental terror to which not only Azerbaijan but the entire region has been subjected. In conclusion, I would like to underline that Azerbaijan attaches particular importance to cooperation within the framework of the Espoo Convention. I am confident that this platform will continue to carry out all tasks effectively.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Mr. Rauf Hajiyev

Deputy minister of ecology and natural resources

