

STATEMENT

of the Minister of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria

Re: The Second Meeting of the Parties to the UN/ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Sofia, 26-27 February 2001)

Dear Ministers,
Dear Heads of Delegations,
Dear Delegates and Guests,

During the period between the First and the Second Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on EIA in a Transboundary Context, 18-20 May 1998, Oslo, Norway, until today, 26 February 2001 in Sofia, Bulgaria has been continuously proving that the Environmental Impact Assessment is and will be one of the most significant and successful instruments for the environmental policy implementation in the country.

A revised EIA regulation was adopted in July 1998, a new element in which is the development of the Espoo Convention regulations in our country's legislation.

1999 was notably active regarding the activities concerning the 1998-2000 Work Plan of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context. On 26-27 April, Bulgaria, respectively the Ministry of Environment and Water, with the financial support of Norway, organized a subregional pilot workshop on the practical application of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context. Representatives of the countries from the Balkan and the Black Sea regions participated in the workshop. During it, recommendations for further actions among these countries were approved, taking into account the specific needs of the countries with economies in transition.

During the year 2000, a new Environmental Protection Act was developed by the Ministry of Environment and Water, and later adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. In the Act, the national EIA system is completely harmonized with the requirements of the EU legislation and the principles of EIA in a transboundary context from the Convention are adopted in full.

Now we are facing the challenge of the practical application of the EIA procedures in a transboundary context. Bulgaria is ready for this and makes every endeavor to work jointly with the neighboring countries for the procedures' enforcement in the spirit of the Espoo Convention. At this stage, all the preconditions for such a cooperation are present, bearing in mind the development of large-scale infrastructure projects: the transit oil pipelines Bourgas (Bulgaria) – Alexandroupolis (Greece); Bourgas (Bulgaria) - Vljora

(Albania) through FYROM; the second bridge over the Danube River between Bulgaria and Romania.

For this reason, our country supports the exchange of experience with countries, advanced with the implementation of the Convention and expresses readiness to organize on its territory a seminar on good EIA practice in a transboundary context with the methodical and financial support of leading countries like Finland, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

Finally, I would like once again to greet most cordially all participants in the Second Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, and to note with pleasure that along the ten-year road from the signing of this important international document in Espoo – Finland, until today – in Sofia, Bulgaria has its well-deserved place.

Sofia, 26 February 2001