

CROATIAN DECLARATION
at the
Second Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact
Assessment in a Transboundary Context
(26-27 February, Sofia)
Delivered by Minister Bozo Kovacevic,
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning

Dear Ms. Chairperson, honoured delegates, Ladies and .Gentlemen,

please allow me to express, on behalf of the Croatian Government, compliments and appreciation to Her Excellency Ms. Evdokia Maneva and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, our host country, for the hospitality and all the work performed in organising this Meeting.

We also thank the Secretariat and the Working Group of the Convention for the very well prepared working documents that are the result of their work in the period from the Oslo meeting up to the present day.

The Republic of Croatia prepared its first Environmental Impact Assessment Studies in the late seventies, passed the first regulation on the Environmental Impact Assessment procedure in 1984, and acceded to the Espoo Convention in July 1997. After the Convention's entry into force in September 1997, we conducted two EIA procedures with the Italian Republic, while with our neighbours, the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Hungary, we have just initiated negotiations on Projects that might have transboundary impact. Our legal basis for the implementation of EIA procedures has been brought into line with the relevant provisions of both the Espoo and Aarhus Convention.

We welcome the work performed up to now by the Working Group, as well as the work that is still ahead of them, since we shall also benefit from this work as basis for the further enrichment of our expert work and legal framework. I believe that here we shall adopt a decision on starting work at the preparation of a protocol on strategic environmental assessment. I am confident of sharing today the satisfaction of numerous countries, organisations and experts that, also within the "Sofia initiative on EIA", have recognised the strategic environmental assessment as a significant step aimed at integrating environmental issues at early planning stages into programmes, plans and strategies of other economic sectors.

I hope that, in conducting together with the Republic of Poland the activities of subregional cooperation, we shall also give our contribution to further strengthening of cooperation amongst states at environmental protection issues.

We endorse the invitation to other countries of the region, in particular to our neighbours who have not acceded to the Convention yet, to join us, as soon as possible, in the capacity of full parties to the Convention.

Ms. Chairperson, please allow me finally to express the interest of the Republic of Croatia to host our next meeting, hoping that we will be as good hosts as our Bulgarian friends are here at this Meeting.

Thank you, Ms. Chairperson.