

Statement

by the Latvian Delegation

Second Meeting of the Parties under the UN ECE Convention
on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context

Sofia, Bulgaria
25-27 February 2001

Mr Chairman

Excellencies, distinguished delegates

I am very pleased for the opportunity to participate today at the Second Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context. I would like to thank the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water for having organised this important event which gives a valuable contribution to the environmental policy making process on an international and national level. Also I would like to thank all the delegations, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, European Commission and NGOs for the work they have done to prepare this meeting.

Our view from the beginning when we joined the Convention in 1998 has been that the best prospect for increasing the effectiveness of environmental assessment including also transboundary issues is to work on developing an instrument that would be fully as possible integrated and developed from the best assessment instruments currently available.

As you may know, we in Latvia have been working on developing environmental impact assessment system since 1995. Recent analysis of the application of this instrument led us to the conclusion that considerable progress has been made during the last two years. The level of knowledge on how to use this instrument for more effective public involvement and decision - making process has increased. One issue that was debated, but not solved yet, concerned the fact that environmental impact assessment system is considered as very well developed at the procedural rather than methodological level. Our strong pledge is to work now on making more progress in developing the methodology of environmental impact assessment rather than in clarifying its procedural requirements. The one possible way of having the balance would be to support future studies on the methods of environmental assessment followed by drafting of guidelines.

The most important progress we have made just recently in improving our environmental instruments concerns the new project on developing the framework for implementing the strategic environmental assessment system for Latvia. Strategic environmental assessment is understood by us as one of major priority in the coming period. It is very important that we started now a debate on possibilities for introducing strategic environmental assessment since the need for integration and involvement of actors from different sectors and levels have shown their importance. We are currently trying to find a pragmatic solution how to convince other sectors in the need of improving their environmental objectives. Let us hope that we can find a solution that will increase the chances to develop and implement the instrument assessing best the impacts on the environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sure that we will be able to look back to our meeting in the future and say that it contributed to a successful implementation of the Convention.

Thank you for your attention.