

2006

**Second meeting of the Parties to the Convention on
Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context**

26-27 February, Sofia

**Statement by Vitalijus Auglys,
Vice - Minister of the Environment
of the Republic of Lithuania**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to participate in the Second meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context in Sofia.

First of all we would like to express the thanks to the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria as well as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for the organisation of this important event. Meantime, we would like to congratulate all you on the 10-th Anniversary of the Espoo convention.

Lithuania is a small country in Eastern Europe bordering Poland, Latvia, Belarus and the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation. Good contacts and co - operation with neighbours in the field of Environmental Impact Assessment is of high importance to avoid negative transboundary environmental impacts.

Environmental Impact Assessment is one of the most significant prevention methods used in the environmental protection in Lithuania.

Process of amending the EIA legislation has started as a part of overall approximation of Lithuanian legal acts with relevant EU Directives and Conventions. One of the latest developments is a new Environmental Impact Assessment Law which was adopted by Parliament of Lithuania on 18 April, 2000. The law fully meets the requirements of the EU Directives. Requirements of EIA in a transboundary context are also taken into account. In relation to the directive on free access to the information on the environment, all requirements were incorporated into EIA law. This law lays down a basis for a new EIA process in our country. Having opportunity we would like to express our gratefulness to the Finnish Ministry of Environment, which provided considerable support in the development of this law.

The seminar on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context for the Baltic Countries and Finland was organised in Lithuania in September 1998. Seminar focused on exchange of experience gained on implementation the Espoo Convention and, in particular, concerning the bilateral agreements under Espoo convention in the Baltic Countries and Finland. The seminar was hosted by the Lithuanian Ministry of the Environment, financed by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment.

A bilateral agreement with Poland has been drafted. Several meetings took place between experts of Lithuania and Poland. In April 1999 Lithuania have organised the meeting with Polish experts to promote and intensify drafting of bilateral agreement on EIA in a Transboundary context. Lithuanian and Polish experts have considered the working plan for drafting of bilateral agreement.

Although there were no official meetings with representatives of Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, a bilateral agreement is drafted as well. The Intergovernmental agreement between Lithuania and Latvia on co - operation in the field of Environmental Protection on 1 October, 1999 is already signed and we expecting the acceleration of drafting and signing of bilateral agreement on EIA in a Transboundary context between Lithuania and Latvia.

It is of high importance to enhance our further co - operation with Poland and Latvia in the field of implementation of requirements of the Espoo convention. We are ready to start the preparation of similar agreements with Russia and Belarus.

On 11 January, 2001 Lithuanian Government has acceded to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a transboundary Context. We believe that the Espoo convention will strengthen the co -operation with our neighbouring countries and we are looking forward for its fruitful implementation in practice.

Finally, we would like to express the hope that we will be able to make the Espoo convention as really working and creating good contacts between countries.

Thank you for your attention.

Statement

by Sirkka Hautojärvi,

the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment,

Finland

on the occasion of the Second Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context
Sofia 26-27 February 2001

Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Finnish Government I would like to express our gratitude to the Bulgarian Government for hosting the Second Meeting of the Parties.

This Meeting also brings us together to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Convention in Espoo, Finland. Much work has been done within UN/ECE and nationally in order to enhance efficient implementation and application of the Convention.

During these ten years, Finland has applied the Convention seven times. Three of these occasions were before the Convention came into force. We notified Sweden of a reservoir project and enlargement of a ferrochrome and stainless steel works, while Russia was notified of a power plant project. Later, after the Convention was in force, Sweden, Estonia and Russia were notified of a nuclear waste project and a new nuclear power plant unit. We also notified Sweden of a dredging project and a power line project.

Finland has also received a notification from Sweden concerning a waste incineration plant and from Denmark and Sweden concerning a gas pipeline project.

At all times, the cooperation has been very successful.

Bilateral and multilateral cooperation is very important from our experience, contributing to an understanding of countries' respective national administrative systems and EIA procedures. We have worked together with all our neighbouring countries in this respect. Bilateral agreements are under preparation with Estonia and Russia, and we expect to sign the agreement with Estonia this spring. We hope that the agreement with Russia will be completed soon as well.

The Nordic countries also cooperate among themselves on transboundary issues. The points of contacts meet regularly for discussion.

In addition to the national activities, it's important to contribute to the work ongoing under the auspices of the ECE. One way to do so is through the workplan, which is essential for developing the application and implementation of the Convention. Finland and Sweden acted as lead countries supported by the European Community in developing the practical application. Finland has also worked with Switzerland in introducing the networking facility to the database on EIA. In the coming workplan period, we look forward to working together with Sweden and the Netherlands on the practical application and bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Let me now turn to another important matter. We strongly encourage that this meeting will decide on the preparation of a strategic environmental assessment protocol to the Convention. By including the notification and negotiation obligations in policies, plans and programmes, we may be able to solve some problems already at the strategic level. In other words, in the early phase of the environmental decision-making procedure. This is particularly important in the framework of the ECE, where a great number of countries are represented.

We have made good progress in ten-years time. Transboundary EIA promotes sustainable development through environmental protection. Without a doubt, the Convention will continue to be an important instrument for all of us. It provides a framework for participation and negotiation for neighbouring countries, while they work to minimize and prevent the adverse environmental impacts of projects, and, also in the future, of policies, plans and programmes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finland fully supports the adoption of the draft Sofia ministerial declaration in this meeting.