
Economic Commission for Europe

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention
on Environmental Impact Assessment
in a Transboundary Context

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention
on Environmental Impact Assessment in
a Transboundary Context serving as the
Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on
Strategic Environmental Assessment

Bureau

16 – 17 June 2021, Geneva (online)

Provisional annotated agenda

To be held on-line starting at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 16 June 2021*

I. Provisional agenda

1. Organizational matters;
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda;
 - (b) Participation;
2. Status of ratification of the Convention, its amendments and its Protocol;
3. Review of decisions by the Meetings of the Parties;
4. Financial arrangements;
5. Implementation of the workplan 2021–2023
 - (a) Management, coordination and visibility of intersessional activities;
 - (b) Compliance with and implementation of the Convention and the Protocol;
 - (c) Promoting practical application of the Convention and the Protocol;
6. Preparations for the tenth session of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment;
7. Related events;
8. Other business;
9. Presentation of the main decisions taken and closing of the meeting.

* The meeting will be held online (via WebEx). Members of the Bureau attending the meeting are requested to **register online by 31 May 2021** through the following link: <https://indico.un.org/event/35942/>. In case of difficulty, please contact the secretariat (email: maricar.delacruz@un.org; Tel. +41 22 917 26 82). The link to access the meeting will be emailed to the registered Bureau members.

II. Annotations to the provisional agenda

1. Organizational matters

Tentative timing: Wednesday, 16 June, 10.00–10.30

(a) Adoption of the agenda

1. This provisional agenda was prepared by the secretariat in agreement with the Chairs of the Bureau for the Convention and the Protocol matters. The Bureau will be invited to adopt its agenda as set out in the present document.

(b) Participation

2. The members of the Bureau are expected to introduce themselves.

Documentation

Provisional annotated agenda (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.1)¹

2. Status of ratification of the Convention, its amendments and its Protocol

Tentative timing: Wednesday, 16 June, 10.30–11.00

3. The secretariat will inform the Bureau of the status of ratification of the Convention, its amendments and the Protocol. The Bureau members from Belarus, Switzerland and Ukraine are invited to report on their countries' progress regarding ratifications of the amendments to the Convention and, as relevant, of the Protocol. The Chair of the Bureau for the Convention matters, representing Greece, is invited to report on progress of his country in the ratification of the Multilateral agreement among the countries of South-Eastern Europe for implementation of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (the Bucharest Agreement). The Bureau may also wish to discuss possible measures to further encourage ratification and accession, in particular to accelerate:

(a) The operationalization of the first amendment to the Convention, allowing all United Nations member States to accede to that instrument, which will require its ratification by Armenia, Belgium, North Macedonia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Northern Ireland;

(b) The missing ratifications of the second amendment (by Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Northern Ireland) to ensure unified application of the Convention by all its Parties.

Documentation

Status of ratification (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.2)

3. Review of decisions by the Meetings of the Parties

Tentative timing: Wednesday, 16 June, 11.00–11.30

4. The Bureau is invited to take stock of the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (The Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol) (Vilnius (online), 8–11 December 2020), and to review the decisions taken, in

¹ All meeting documentation will be made available on a dedicated (password protected) webpage for the meeting.

particular, as regards tasks assigned to the Bureau or related to its key functions, as included in the report on the two sessions.²

Documentation

Tasks of the Bureau (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.3)

4. Financial arrangements

Tentative timing: Wednesday, 16 June, 11.30–13.00

5. At their last sessions, the Meetings of the Parties noted the draft financial report in the period between their seventh/third and eighth/fourth sessions,³ expressed their satisfaction with the use of the trust fund, and invited the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, to finalize the report with data until the end of 2020. The Bureau is invited to consider the draft financial report extending from July 2017 to the end of December 2020 and agree on its publication on the Convention and the Protocol website.

6. The secretariat will report on contributions received or pledged by Parties since the last sessions of the Meetings of the Parties to fund the implementation of the workplan for 2021–2023. The Bureau may wish to review and comment any discrepancies between the agreed budgetary requirements for the present period and Parties' (pledged) contributions to fund them. It may also note and comment the number of Parties to the Convention and/or the Protocol that have thus far committed to taking part in the sharing of the workplan costs, which the Meetings of the Parties had decided they all had a duty to do.

7. The Bureau is also invited to continue to explore possible solutions to the issue of the insufficiency, uneven distribution and unpredictability of contributions for the implementation of the workplan for 2021–2023. The Meetings of the Parties requested the Bureau to present such possible solutions to the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment, at its eleventh meeting, preliminarily scheduled for December 2022,⁴ after consideration of also experiences of the other ECE multilateral environmental agreements in that regard. The Bureau could consider the development of a summary of the financial arrangements and approaches of the other ECE MEAs in advance of its next meeting, in 2022. At the present meeting, the Bureau members may wish to recall the previous proposals that the Bureau has put forward over the years and brainstorm/express ideas on possible additional solutions or recommendations.

8. The Meetings of the Parties further requested the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, to develop a system “to recognize in-kind contributions in a proper manner within the financial scheme”.⁵ The past practice has been to acknowledge in-kind contributions in the annual financial reports and at each meeting of the Bureau, the Working Group and the Meetings of the Parties, and to record them in the corresponding meeting reports. When discussing any contributions, the Bureau should also examine whether and to what extent the secretariat resources, possible travel funds or other expenditures from the trust fund are required in addition to the contributions for the implementation of an activity. The Bureau is invited to consider and comment an informal note from the secretariat on the matter, with a view to reporting on the outcomes of its initial reflections to the Working Group, at its next meeting.

9. Lastly, the Meetings of the Parties decided that, subject to the availability of funds for that purpose, financial support was to be provided for participation in formal meetings of representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and of developing and least-developed countries from outside the ECE region, in accordance with the agreed budget and criteria to be set by the Bureau, and, for non-ECE countries, subject to a case-by-case examination by the Bureau. The Bureau may wish to consider information from the secretariat on the NGO participation in the meetings and activities under the treaties in the

² See ECE/MP.EIA/30–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13, including Add. 1–3.

³ See ECE/MP.EIA/2020/2–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/2020/2.

⁴ Decision VIII/1–IV/1, para. 13, ECE/MP.EIA/30/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13/Add.1.

⁵ Decision VIII/2–IV/2, para. 12, ECE/MP.EIA/30/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13/Add.1.

past intersessional period and the information submitted by 12 NGOs in 2018, which it, at that time, had evaluated and based its decisions on. The Bureau will be invited to review and discuss the information. It is invited to decide on the possible further information that it needed for identifying (via electronic decision-making) five or six NGOs (one expert per NGO) that would receive financial support starting from the tenth session of the Working Group, scheduled for December 2021.

Documentation

Draft financial report in the intersessional period 2017–2020 (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.4)

Contributions to the Trust Fund (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.5)

Past proposals on financial arrangements (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.6)

Consideration of in-kind contributions (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.7)

Participation by non-governmental organizations (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.8)

5. Implementation of the workplan 2021–2023

Tentative timing: Wednesday, 16 June, 15.00–18.00, and Thursday, 17 June 9.30–10.30.

10. The Bureau will be invited to review progress in planning and implementing activities foreseen in the workplan for 2021–2023 (decision VIII/2–IV/2), make proposals and provide advice on the implementation of or follow-up to the activities, as needed.

11. As requested by the Meetings of the Parties, the Bureau is also invited to consider the way forward for the finalization of an outstanding activity from the previous workplan (for the period 2017–2020), namely, the draft guidance on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment. That draft guidance had been prepared with funding from the European Investment Bank and agreed by the Bureau at its meeting in February 2020 (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2020/7). At its ninth meeting (Geneva, 24–26 August 2020), however, the Working Group decided not to forward the document to the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, further to the view of the delegation of the European Union that the draft document still required further work. The Bureau is invited to refer to the draft guidance and to the comments put forward by the European Union, and, as necessary, request for further clarifications from the European Union on the textual revisions to be made. The members of the Bureau, that were part of the European Union delegation at the meeting of the Working Group, are invited to provide any additional information in this respect. The Bureau is then invited to propose a way forward for consideration of the Working Group at its next meeting.

Documentation

Workplan implementation status (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.9)

(a) Management, coordination and visibility of intersessional activities

12. At their last sessions, the Meetings of the Parties acknowledged the informal note on procedural matters of relevance to meetings with remote participation due to extraordinary circumstances, which had been prepared by the Bureau with support of the secretariat and in consultation with the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs.⁶ Further to the proposal by the delegation of the European Union, the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, was requested to assist the Meetings of the Parties and their subsidiary bodies in possible further clarification of procedural matters of relevance to meetings with remote participation for consideration by the Meetings of the Parties at their next sessions, preliminarily scheduled to take place in December 2023.⁷ The members of the Bureau that were part of the European Union delegation are invited to elaborate on the possible further development needs of the

⁶ See the note of 10 November 2020, as revised on 27 November 2020, available at: <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/meeting-parties-espoo-convention-8th-session-and-meeting-parties> (under the tab “informal documents”)

⁷ Decision VIII/2–IV/2, annex I, Item I.A (m).

paper, and to put forward textual proposals in advance of the meeting for consideration of the Bureau.

(b) Compliance with and implementation of the Convention and the Protocol

13. The Chair of the Implementation Committee is expected to present the main outcomes of the Committee's forty-ninth and fiftieth sessions (held on 2–5 February and 4–7 May 2021, respectively)⁸ and the main objectives for the Committee's upcoming, fifty-first session 5–8 October 2021).

14. The Implementation Committee Chair or the secretariat will present modifications proposed by the Committee to the questionnaires on the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol in the period 2019–2021. As set out in the present workplan, the adjustments aim at improving the information obtained through the questionnaires regarding progress achieved and remaining challenges in the implementation of the two treaties, contribute to making the reviews of implementation more informative for the Implementation Committee regarding potential non-compliance; as well as turn them into tools for collecting and disseminating good practice. A proposed timetable for the preparation of the draft seventh review of implementation of the Convention and draft fourth review of implementation of the Protocol will also be presented. In addition, the Bureau will be informed of the reporting templates that the Committee had been requested to prepare for the European Union to assist it to fulfil its reporting obligations under the Convention and the Protocol in light of its competencies. Lastly, the secretariat will report on the publication of the sixth review of implementation of the Convention and the third review of implementation of the Protocol, in electronic format, and the informal publication and periodic revision of the opinions of the Implementation Committee. The Bureau is expected to note and comment the information.

15. The secretariat and, as relevant, the Bureau members representing the concerned countries will report on the implementation of activities in the present workplan (decision VIII/2–IV/2) that relate to legislative assistance to support implementation and/or accession/ratification (Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The Bureau is expected to note the information and provide advice on the implementation of or follow-up to the activities, as needed.

Documentation

Proposed modifications to the draft questionnaire on the implementation of the Convention in 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF. 10)

Proposed modifications to the questionnaire on the implementation of the Protocol in 2019–2021 (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF. 11)

Timetable for the preparation of the draft reviews of implementation (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF. 12)

(c) Promoting practical application of the Convention and the Protocol

(i) Subregional cooperation and capacity-building

16. The secretariat and the Bureau members concerned will report on workplan activities that have been planned or carried out regarding subregional cooperation and capacity-building in the following subregions:

(a) Baltic Sea subregion: meetings to be organized by Estonia; and by Poland, as needed, with support from the secretariat;

(b) Eastern Europe and the Caucasus: a training workshop or study tour to facilitate information exchange and experience sharing among the countries, provisionally planned for the first half of 2022, with funding from the EU4Environment Programme;

⁸ Reports on the Implementation Committee's sessions held in 2021 are available at: <https://unece.org/sessions-3>.

(c) Central Asia: Completion of the sub-regional joint OSCE/ECE project “Strengthening national and regional capacities and co-operation on Strategic Environmental Assessment in Central Asia, including as a response to climate change”, funded mainly by Germany, with co-funding from ECE and OSCE, involving:

(i) Needs assessment exercises (in particular, in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan);

(ii) Road maps for the development of national SEA systems in line with the Protocol (in particular, in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan);

(iii) Awareness raising event in Tajikistan (17 March 2021);

(iv) A final sub-regional event in one of the Central Asian countries to share experience, scheduled for 2021, (date to be confirmed).

17. The Bureau is invited to initiate the planning of the activity that aims at identifying synergies and possible cooperation opportunities with the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) and other regional seas conventions; as well as at contributing to raising awareness of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol, and to enhancing contacts with the non-ECE countries. It is expected to consider a draft concept note prepared by the secretariat and provide advice for its finalization for presentation to the Working Group at its next meeting.

Documentation

A draft concept note for the identification of synergies and possible cooperation activities in the Marine regions (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.13)

(ii) Exchange of good practices

18. The Bureau is invited to discuss and agree on the topic of the workshop or seminar for the exchange of good practices to be held within the next meeting of the Working Group (Geneva, 1–3 December 2021), focusing on one of the themes/topics in the workplan, and to provide advice for the finalization of its programme. It may wish to consider and comment the related informal note prepared by the secretariat. The Bureau members are invited to volunteer organizing or co-organizing the workshop as well as to speaking or identifying speakers at the workshop.

19. The Bureau members may also consider any information from the secretariat or make proposals in relation to the implementation of the following workplan activities:

(a) The preparation of fact sheets on the practical application of the Convention and the Protocol, to be presented during the meetings of the Working Group and posted on the website;

(b) The online database of Parties’ good practice or collection and compilation of good practice, which will require identification of additional resources and funding for consultants.

Documentation

A thematic workshop or seminar in 2021 (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2021/INF.14)

(iii) Capacity-building

20. The secretariat and the countries concerned will report on planning and implementation of capacity building activities specified in the workplan, including:

(a) Pilot projects (in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine);

(b) Training workshops on treaty application (for Ukraine, 16–17 March 2021; Azerbaijan, 26–27 April 2021);

(c) National awareness-raising events (for the Republic of Moldova, 23 April 2021);

(d) National awareness-raising materials (for the Republic of Moldova);

- (e) National issue- or sector-specific guidelines (for the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine);
- (f) A model database on strategic environmental assessment;
- (g) Translating the video on the application of the Convention (in progress for the national languages of Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine).

21. In addition, the secretariat will report on its activities, in cooperation with the OSCE office in Nur Sultan and the EU funded Partnership for Action on Green Economy, to support Kazakhstan in establishing compliant national EIA and SEA systems with a view to implementing its new Environmental Code. The assistance stems from annex II to decision VIII/2–IV/2 and the requests specified by the delegation of Kazakhstan during the last sessions of the Meetings of the Parties, and involves the following activities:

- (a) A road map to implement the Convention and a related round table (in late May 2021, date to be confirmed);
- (b) An awareness raising event (Nur Sultan/online, 30 March–2 April 2021);
- (c) An initial training workshop on strategic environmental assessment (Nur Sultan/online, 28–29 April 2021);
- (d) A training workshop consisting of eighth online sessions (Nur Sultan, 19 May – 10 June 2021);
- (e) Terms of reference for a database on environmental impact assessment procedures (August–November 2021, tbc);
- (f) A training workshop on transboundary environmental impact assessment (autumn 2021, date to be confirmed);
- (g) A legislative review and recommendations for the alignment with the Convention of an implementing regulation (“instruction”) on environmental assessment.

22. Lastly, the Bureau may wish to suggest topics for the preparation of two-page informal pamphlets or “FasTips” by the International Association for Impact Assessment foreseen in the workplan.

23. The Bureau is expected to provide its views on the information provided and, as needed, agree on actions to ensure the implementation of or follow-up to these activities.

6. Preparations for the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Tentative timing: Thursday, 17 June, 10.30–11.30

24. The Bureau is expected to review and agree on the annotated provisional agenda for the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment, to be held in Geneva, from 1 to 3 December 2021.

Documentation

Draft provisional agenda (forthcoming) (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2021/1)

7. Related events

Tentative timing: 17 June, 11.30–12.00

25. The Bureau is invited to take note of the information presented by the secretariat on related events, including:

- (a) Relevant outcomes of the meeting of the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development organized by ECE (Geneva, (online), 10–18 March 2021);

(b) Relevant outcomes of the 69th session of the European Commission for Europe, focusing on circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the ECE region (Geneva, 20–21 April 2021);

(c) Organization of the Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in 2022.

8. Other business

Tentative timing: Thursday, 17 June, 12.00–12.30

26. Members of the Bureau wishing to raise other business should contact the secretariat as soon as possible.

9. Presentation of the main decisions taken and closing of the meeting

Tentative timing: Thursday, 17 June, 14.30–17.00

27. The Bureau is expected to agree on the main decisions taken at the meeting and to confirm the date and location of its next session before the Chair formally closes the session.
