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**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

**Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment  
and Strategic Environmental Assessment**

**Tenth meeting**

Geneva, 1–3 December 2021

Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda  
**Promoting practical application of the Convention and the Protocol:   
subregional cooperation and capacity-building**

Identification of synergies and possible cooperation activities in marine regions

Note by the Bureau

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| *Summary* |
| The present note has been prepared by the Bureau, with support from the secretariat, further to the workplan for 2021–2023 under the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, which foresees that the Bureau, assisted by the secretariat, is responsible for the initial planning of the activity for the identification of synergies and possible cooperation activities in marine regions. The activity is funded by Italy.  The Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment is invited to take note of and comment on the document, as well as to provide guidance on the implementation of the activity in the period 2021–2023. During the meeting, the delegation of Italy and (a consultant to) the secretariat will provide any updates on the activity, possibly in the format of an informal document (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2021/INF.7, to be confirmed).  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  *a* ECE/MP.EIA/30/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13/Add.1, decision VIII/2–IV/2, annex I, item III.A.4. |

I. Introduction

1. The workplan for 2021–2023 adopted by the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment at their last sessions (Vilnius (online), 8–11 December 2020)[[1]](#footnote-2) provides for subregional cooperation and capacity-building activities in several subregions of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, with a view to promoting practical application of the Convention and the Protocol. The subregional cooperation and capacity-building activities pursue the following general objectives:

(a) Contribute to common understanding and improved implementation of the Convention and its Protocol within the ECE subregions;

(b) Promote cooperation among Parties within and between the subregions and strengthen contacts with States and subregions outside the ECE region;

(c) Increase professional skills of officials at all government levels and awareness of the public, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in relation to strategic environmental assessment, transboundary environmental impact assessment and the application of the Convention and its Protocol;

(d) Contribute to increased cooperation and synergies with relevant multilateral environmental agreements, other international instruments and organizations;

(e) Contribute to wider application of the Convention and the Protocol within and beyond the ECE region.

2. Marine regions are one of the agreed focus areas in the period 2021–2023. The related activities as set out in the workplan are as follows:

(a) Carry out a feasibility study to map out synergies and benefits for possible future cooperation activities to improve the coherence and the links between the Espoo Convention, its Protocol and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and other regional seas conventions. The activity also contributes to raising awareness of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol, and to enhancing contacts with the non-ECE countries of the subregions;

(b) Organize up to one joint technical (online) meeting per year, with interested Parties and the secretariats of the Barcelona Convention and the other regional seas conventions, to discuss and further develop the outcomes of the feasibility study, with a view to identifying synergies and possible cooperation opportunities between the respective treaties (looking at the treaty obligations and operational activities for their implementation). As needed, for the Mediterranean subregion, the possibility of (online) French-language interpretation should be explored. Prepare reports on the outcomes of the joint technical meetings and make them available for information and consideration of the Parties to the respective treaties;

(c) Prepare a final report presenting the identified synergies and a vision for the “way forward” and its benefits, and proposing possible joint activities for the subsequent workplans, starting with the workplan for 2024–2026 to be considered by the Meetings of the Parties (at their sessions in December 2023).

3. The Meetings of the Parties included the above-mentioned activities in the workplan further to a proposal by the delegation of the European Union, at the initiative of Italy. Italy also volunteered to fund and lead the implementation of the activity, together with other interested Parties to the Espoo Convention, its Protocol and the regional seas conventions, and with support from the respective treaty secretariats, within the limits of the available resources. The work is foreseen to be carried out with the assistance of a consultant/consultants.

4. Italy pledged earmarked funds for the implementation of the workplan activity in the marine regions totalling €120,000 for the period 2021–2023 (or €40,000 per year). Possible subsequent contributions by other interested Parties were also seen as being welcome.

5. The activity in the marine regions will also contribute to the implementation of strategic goals and priority objectives of the Long-term strategy and action plan for the Convention and the Protocol,[[2]](#footnote-3) namely: creating and increasing synergies and cooperation; coordinating and cooperating with relevant treaties and organizations; and contributing to wider implementation of the Convention and the Protocol within and beyond the ECE region.

6. The Meetings of the Parties made the Bureau responsible for the initial planning of the activity,[[3]](#footnote-4) supported by the secretariat. In keeping with this mandate, and based on an informal draft document prepared by the secretariat, the Bureau, in particular its member from Italy, developed the present note for presentation to the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment at its tenth meeting (Geneva, 1–3 December 2021). The note also takes into account the initial feedback and the expression of interest for cooperation from the Barcelona Convention secretariat.

7. The Working Group is invited to consider and comment on the note, as well as to provide guidance for the implementation of the activity. During the meeting of the Working Group, the delegation of Italy and a consultant to the secretariat will present any updates regarding the implementation of the activity,[[4]](#footnote-5) including the outcomes of a possible first joint technical meeting, provided that the organization of such a meeting is feasible in late 2021.

II. Scope of the cooperation

A. Geographical scope

8. In the workplan, the Mediterranean marine region, regulated by the Barcelona Convention, was flagged as one of the priorities for cooperation in marine regions. The 22 contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention are: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Union, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey. The Barcelona Convention has the following seven Protocols adopted in the framework of the Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Sustainable Development of the Coastal Areas of the Mediterranean:

(a) The Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft;

(b) The Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea;

(c) The Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities;

(d) The Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean;

(e) The Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution Resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and its Subsoil (This instrument, the so-called Offshore Protocol, is complemented by the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan);

(f) The Protocol on the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (The Mediterranean Pollution Assessment and Control Programme assists Parties to the Protocol in meeting their obligations);

(g) The Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean, which is implemented by an Action Plan and supplemented by the Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean. The Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre assists contracting Parties in meeting their obligations under the Protocol.

9. In addition, the Bureau identified other marine regions that are located either entirely or partly within the ECE region, as well as the corresponding regional seas conventions and/or coordination bodies, on which the activity could also focus, subject to the interest and the possibilities for cooperation of the respective instruments’ Parties and secretariats:

(a) The Arctic Sea, regulated by the Arctic Council and its Working Group for the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment[[5]](#footnote-6) (Member States: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Sweden and United States of America);

(b) The Baltic Sea, regulated by the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention) and the Baltic Sea Action Plan, both coordinated by the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission) (Parties: Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russian Federation and Sweden);

(c) The Black Sea, regulated by the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (Bucharest Convention) and its three protocols: the Protocol on Protection of the Black Sea Marine Environment Against Pollution from Land-based Sources; the Protocol on Cooperation in Combating Pollution of the Black Sea Marine Environment by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Emergency Situations; and the Protocol on the Protection of the Black Sea Marine Environment Against Pollution by Dumping (Parties: Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine);

(d) The Caspian Sea, regulated by the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention) and its four protocols: the Protocol Concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Cooperation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents; the Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land- based Sources and Activities; the Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity; and the Protocol on Environment Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (adopted in July 2018, not yet in force) (Parties: Azerbaijan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Russian Federation and Turkmenistan);

(e) The North-East Atlantic marine region – covering the Arctic waters, the Greater North Sea, the Celtic Seas, the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian coast and the wider Atlantic – regulated by the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention) (Parties:Belgium, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

10. The ultimate geographical scope of the cooperation would be defined during the initial implementation stages, including based on the expressions of interest and possibilities for cooperation of the respective regional seas conventions/bodies.

B. Objectives, areas and methods for cooperation

1. Objectives and areas of cooperation

11. The Bureau identified the following objectives and possible areas of cooperation with the respective regional seas conventions/bodies to be further explored in the framework of the workplan activity (the feasibility study and joint technical meetings):

(a) Enhancing awareness and implementation of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol within and beyond the ECE region, with an emphasis on the benefits of the treaties (in particular of the Protocol) for the protection of regional seas at the national and international levels, and their role in addressing regional and global challenges, including in relation to climate change, biodiversity and energy transition;

(b) Supporting the implementation of the regional seas conventions and their respective workplans/programmes of work at the national and/or regional/subregional levels with respect to environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, for example, in connection with maritime spatial planning and plans for tourism, regional development, town and land-use planning, water and waste management, etc.; as well as in relation to key procedural aspects, such as transboundary consultations and public participation;

(c) Enhancing communication, coordination and cooperation among the relevant national authorities and experts responsible for implementing the respective treaties (at the domestic and inter-State levels), as well as exchanges between treaty secretariats;

(d) Identifying legal requirements, activities, tools and instruments developed under the regional sea conventions, which directly or indirectly imply environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment approaches, including in a transboundary context, for the assessment of the state of the marine environment and of possible environmental, including health, impacts,[[6]](#footnote-7) with a view to:

(i) Pointing out similarities and differences between the methods and approaches under the various regional sea conventions;

(ii) Evaluating the coherence of those methods and approaches with the Espoo Convention and its Protocol;

(iii) Identifying good practice, as well as possible development areas and related needs for assistance, to promote coherence and complementarity between the environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment procedures under regional seas conventions and those set out in the Espoo Convention and its Protocol;

(e) Exchanging information on monitoring activities and environmental protection measures undertaken and planned for under the regional sea conventions, to identify common and diverging elements, as well as key sectors and environmental matrices/impacts to focus on, duly taking account of the different characteristics of each marine region;

(f) Exchanging good practices and lessons learned for the assessment of the state of the marine environment and of possible environmental, including health, impacts from planned activities, plans and programmes; as well as environmental protection and monitoring activities;

(g) Proposing possible future cooperation activities (with information on related resource requirements).

12. Cooperation with the Espoo Convention and its Protocol could prove particularly useful in the framework of the regional seas conventions’ broader objectives of integrated ecosystem management, promoting coherence with the ecosystem-based approach, also taking into account, for example, the Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management and the Conceptual Framework for Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean developed under the Barcelona Convention. Furthermore, such cooperation could take into consideration the “source-to-sea” approach. “Source-to-sea” is a concept to improve the understanding of the linkages between freshwater, land, coastal and marine systems, and to support efforts towards the effective and coordinated governance of these systems (addressing land-water interfaces).[[7]](#footnote-8) Successful source-to-sea management requires a multidisciplinary (holistic, integrated) and transboundary/regional approach.

2. Main outputs

13. At the end of the intersessional period 2021–2023, the activity is expected to yield main outputs, identified through the feasibility study conducted in consultation with interested representatives of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol and Parties and secretariats of the respective regional seas conventions/bodies, providing the basis for possible further cooperation. These outputs would be documented in the final report to be submitted to the Working Group and the Meetings of the Parties in 2023. Ultimately, it would be up to Parties to the Espoo Convention and the Protocol to decide, including in light of the available resources, which of the proposed activities to possibly include in the subsequent workplans under the two treaties, starting with the workplan for 2024–2026 to be adopted in 2023. The main outputs expected by the end of 2023 include the following:

(a) An overview of environmental assessment procedures, tools and activities regarding strategic environmental assessment and transboundary environmental impact assessment in use and planned for in the marine regions, highlighting those that are consistent with the Espoo Convention and its Protocol, constituting good practice and possible benchmarks for the implementation of relevant objectives and synergies of the regional seas conventions by their respective Parties (both within and beyond the ECE region). Good practices for consistent assessment approaches implementable also by non-Parties to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol within and beyond the ECE region, could also be defined;

(b) A list of most topical environmental issues to be assessed, addressed and monitored in the selected marine regions; as well as possible gaps, areas for improvement and needs for assistance in the field of environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, in particular in a transboundary context;

(c) Recommendations for possible further actions by Parties to the regional seas conventions for promoting environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment procedures and practice consistent with those under the Espoo Convention and its Protocol. These would include proposals for possible future cooperation activities within and beyond the ECE region to be included in the subsequent workplans of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol, starting with the workplan for 2024–2026, subject to the identification of corresponding resources and approval of the Meetings of the Parties. Information on the related resource requirements, and proposals for cost sharing (among the Parties of the various treaties) and implementation methods should also be included.

3. Possible future cooperation activities and methods

14. The possible future cooperation activities between the Espoo Convention, its Protocol and the regional seas conventions to be put forward for approval by the respective treaty bodies would build on the jointly identified outputs referred to above – i.e. focusing on exchanging and promoting good practice and addressing key environmental issues and areas of development, and other possible issues to be further specified.

15. The methods for future cooperation, to be further investigated during the current intersessional period, could consist, for example, of the following:

(a) The establishment of joint networks or rosters of experts for the exchange of information and expertise among volunteering national focal points or other national experts;

(b) The conduct of joint meetings or seminars; or the participation by national focal points/experts under the Espoo Convention and its Protocol in the activities and meetings of the treaty bodies under the respective regional seas conventions; for example, regarding the Mediterranean Sea, a possible platform for cooperation could be the Coastal Areas Management Programme under the Barcelona Convention, which represents an operational instrument for testing integrated coastal zone management regarding the Mediterranean Sea;

(c) Bilateral and multilateral technical assistance and capacity-building activities involving Parties to the respective instruments;

(d) The development of information materials.

III. Initial planning and implementation of the activity

16. The Bureau agreed on initial steps and a preliminary plan for the implementation of the workplan activity on marine regions, including an indicative timeline, as described in this section. The plan would be subject to adjustments during the implementation phase.

17. Both the implementation of the activity during the current intersessional period and possible future cooperation in the marine regions should involve regular information exchange and coordination with respect to the relevant work of the other ECE multilateral environmental agreements. For more information on that relevant work, see section IV below.

A. Initial implementation steps

18. As a first step, in mid-August 2021, upon its finalization of the present note on the activity, the Bureau invited the secretariat to contact the selected regional sea convention secretariats or coordination bodies to:

(a) Inform them about the objectives of the Convention and the Protocol and of the workplan activity in question;

(b) Inquire about their initial interest in cooperating;

(c) Invite them to designate contact points for further communication;

(d) Invite them to provide, by mid-September 2021, the following information – to be further explored in the feasibility study and discussed at the annual joint technical meetings:

(i) Legal requirements, activities, tools and instruments developed under the respective treaties/for the respective marine regions that directly or indirectly imply environmental assessment (strategic environmental assessment and environmental impact assessment) approaches, including in a transboundary context;

(ii) Key relevant environmental protection measures and monitoring activities undertaken or planned for;

(iii) Possible specific suggestions or cooperation needs and opportunities that would contribute to the implementation of the objectives and activities under the respective treaties and benefit their Parties, to be further explored in the feasibility study and discussed at the annual joint technical meetings;

(e) Identify possible dates for an initial joint meeting to be held online (for example, via Webex), if feasible, before the tenth meeting of the Working Group, between mid-October and mid-November 2021; participants to be invited (via the secretariats, for example, representatives of the treaty secretariat/coordinating body; working groups; Bureau; volunteering Parties and stakeholders); and any administrative or organizational, including possible interpretation, requirements to be considered;

(f) Initially inform and consult with them about the preliminarily planned timeline of the subsequent meetings (in 2022 and 2023).

19. The Bureau also suggested that the secretariat identify, if feasible, by the same date, volunteering contact points from among the Parties to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol that are also Parties to the respective regional seas conventions. The contact points would be invited to liaise with the experts responsible for the regional seas conventions/bodies at the national level, and consider attending the joint meetings and commenting on the various outputs in relation to the marine regions in question.

20. In parallel, upon the receipt by ECE of the Italian funding earmarked for the purpose, the secretariat should launch the recruitment of a consultant(s) for the implementation of the activity. In consultation with the secretariat, the volunteering contact points/representatives and the treaty bodies of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol and the interested regional seas conventions and bodies, the consultant(s) would be tasked with the following:

(a) The conduct of the feasibility study and the documentation of its outcomes, involving the preparation of several draft assessment reports;

(b) The organization and moderation of and reporting on the joint technical meetings with the interested Parties and the secretariats of the respective regional seas conventions/bodies to discuss the draft assessment reports;

(c) Reporting to and consulting with the Bureau and the Working Group on the project’s implementation;

(d) On completion of the feasibility study, the preparation of a final report, building on the draft reports and presenting recommendations for possible future cooperation activities (starting from the period 2024–2026) for consideration of the Working Group and the Meetings of the Parties in 2023;

(e) The preparation of communication and advocacy material, and website content for the purpose of information-sharing and visibility.

B. Draft reports and joint (technical) meetings

21. On the basis of the initial information to be provided by the regional sea convention secretariats/coordination bodies, the consultant(s) to the secretariat would initiate the feasibility study, starting with the development of an initial draft assessment report/elements for a draft assessment report for consideration of the secretariats and the volunteering contact points/representatives of the Espoo Convention, its Protocol and the interested regional seas conventions and bodies. The draft would also suggest specific focus areas and points of discussion of the initial joint meeting.

22. The delegation of Italy and/or the consultant should report on progress to the Working Group at its tenth meeting, including on the outcomes of the initial joint (technical) meeting with the interested regional sea conventions, if held before the meeting of the Working Group.

23. After the possible initial joint meeting on marine regions and the tenth meeting of the Working Group, the consultant(s) would further analyse the information on the respective marine regions received before and during the meeting(s); carry out consultations to obtain missing information and/or clarifications, as well as conduct further desk research with a view to preparing a more advanced and extended draft assessment report. That draft report should be submitted by February/March 2022 for consideration and feedback of the secretariat and the volunteering contact points for the activity, in particular Italy, and be presented to the Bureau at its meeting, scheduled for 9 and 10 June 2022.

24. On the basis of the findings of the draft assessment report, the consultant(s) would develop a draft agenda for the joint technical meeting to be held in 2022, possibly as an in-person meeting in the second half of June or early July. The outcomes of the joint meeting would be incorporated into the next draft assessment report to be prepared for early autumn and reported on to the Working Group at its eleventh meeting (Geneva, 19–21 December 2022).

C. Final report with recommendations for future cooperation

25. To complete the feasibility study, a draft final report, building on the various draft reports and containing recommendations for possible future cooperation activities, would be issued. That draft final report would first be submitted as an official document for feedback by the Working Group at its twelfth meeting, preliminarily scheduled for 13–15 June 2023. In addition, some of the suggested cooperation activities in the selected marine regions would be reflected in the draft workplan for 2024–2026 to be considered by the Working Group at that same meeting. The final report, revised based on the comments from the Working Group, would be discussed at the last joint technical meeting, (in July 2023, date to be confirmed) and, ultimately, submitted for consideration of the Meetings of the Parties at their next sessions, scheduled for December 2023, together with the draft workplan to be adopted by the Meetings of the Parties.

IV. Coordination with relevant United Nations Economic Commission for Europe conventions

26. The implementation of the workplan activity on marine regions, and possible related future cooperation, should involve regular information exchange with the other ECE multilateral environmental agreements, via their secretariats, in particular with the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (the Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health, and coordination with respect to their relevant work.

A. Water Convention and its Protocol

27. The Water Convention requires its Parties to take all appropriate measures to prevent, control and reduce any transboundary impact (art. 2 (1)), including to ensure that environmental impact assessment and other means of assessment are applied (art. 3 (1) (h)). The Convention’s core obligation of cooperation aims at protecting transboundary waters, as well as the environment influenced by them, including the marine environment (art. 2 (6)). The Convention also foresees cooperation of joint bodies established under the Convention with non-riparian coastal States (art. 9 (3)) and with joint bodies established by coastal States for the protection of the marine environment (art. 9 (4)).

28. Many bilateral and multilateral agreements on transboundary waters developed under the Water Convention contain provisions to protect the recipient sea and coastal areas. However, the second reporting exercise under the Convention showed that there is a need to enhance the understanding and implementation of the requirements of the Convention with regard to the protection of the marine environment. The draft programme of work for 2022–2024[[8]](#footnote-9) under the Water Convention that is expected to be adopted at the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties (Geneva, 29 September–1 October 2021) offers possibilities for reporting on and coordinating the relevant activities with the Espoo Convention and its Protocol. The programme of work envisages the organization of a global workshop on the source-to-sea approach in December 2022, linking governance and management of transboundary waters from the source (including mountain environment) to the sea (coastal and marine environment). A side event on the source-to-sea approach will be organized during the ninth session and a speaker will cover the topic during the high-level segment.

29. The main objective of the Protocol on Water and Health, jointly serviced by ECE and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, is to protect human health and well-being by better water management, including the protection of water ecosystems, and by preventing, controlling and reducing water-related diseases. To meet these goals, the Parties to the Protocol are required to establish national and local targets for the quality of drinking water and the quality of discharges, as well as for the performance of water supply and wastewater treatment. They are also required to reduce outbreaks and the incidence of water-related diseases.

30. In its article 3 (d), the text of the Protocol explicitly includes coastal waters “which are used for recreation or for the production of fish by aquaculture or for the production or harvesting of shellfish” in the overall scope of application of the Protocol’s provisions. Several Parties to the Protocol and other States have been reporting on the status of their coastal waters within the mandatory reporting system under the Protocol on Water and Health.

B. Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

31. The Bureau recommended that the implementation of the activity also involve cooperation with the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention),[[9]](#footnote-10) an instrument that applies to the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents capable of causing transboundary effects. Although the Convention does not cover accidents caused by activities in the marine environment or spills of oil or other harmful substances at sea (as specified in its art. 2 (2) (f)–(g)), the industrial accidents that fall under the Convention could have an impact on the marine environment (for example, via accidental water pollution flowing through a watercourse to the ocean). The ECE Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents has developed safety guidelines, good practices and checklists to help countries prevent water pollution from industrial accidents.[[10]](#footnote-11)

32. The Industrial Accident Convention secretariat is currently leading a partnership with the ECE Subcommittees of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and other international organizations, including the International Maritime Organization, to organize a United Nations/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development seminar in follow-up to the 2020 Beirut port explosion (online, 14 December 2021), with a focus on the safe storage of hazardous substances in port areas.[[11]](#footnote-12) The seminar, along with a preceding survey, will raise awareness of relevant International Maritime Organization treaties and recommendations.[[12]](#footnote-13) Furthermore, the Arctic Council has been informed, at some of its meetings, of the Convention’s experience and safety guidelines and the possibility to consider their possible application to the marine environment.

C. Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters and its Protocol

33. Lastly, in connection with access to information and public participation in decision-making relating to marine regions, cooperation with the ECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention) and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers will be of relevance. The Aarhus Convention and its Protocol provide authorities with a solid legal framework to promote transparency and inclusive and effective public participation in decision-making on different projects, programmes, policies, norms and legislation related to environmental matters, including for marine regions. It should be noted in this regard that, through the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development for 2016–2025, countries of the Mediterranean region decided to promote their accession to the Aarhus Convention. The forthcoming work programmes for 2022–2025 under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol that are expected to be adopted at the forthcoming sessions of the Meetings of the Parties (Geneva, 18–22 October 2021) foresee activities aimed at promoting these treaties to non-Parties and to other international processes.

1. ECE/MP.EIA/30/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13/Add.1, decision VIII/2–IV/2, annex I. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. ECE/MP.EIA/30/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13/Add.1, decision VIII/3–IV/3, annex, items II.A.5, II.B.4 and II.C. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. ECE/MP.EIA/30/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13/Add.1, decision VIII/2–IV/2, annex I, item III.A.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The information will be presented orally, and possibly also in an informal document (ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2021/INF.7 (to be confirmed)). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Unlike for the other marine regions, the protection and sustainable use of the Arctic Sea is not regulated by a regional seas convention but addressed within the framework of the Arctic Council and its Working Group for the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The relevant European Union legislation and regulations would also be referred to. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Definition and further information available at [www.siwi.org/what-we-do/source-to-sea/](http://www.siwi.org/what-we-do/source-to-sea/). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. ECE/MP.WAT/2021/3, available under “Item 18” tab at https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/MOP9\_Water\_Convention. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. See https://[unece.org/environment-policy/industrial-accidents](https://unece.org/environment-policy/industrial-accidents). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Available at https://unece.org/publications/industrial-accidents. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. See https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Industrial-Accidents/events/358445. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea; International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships; International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code; and Recommendations on the Safe Transport of Dangerous Cargoes and Related activities in Port Areas. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)