**Economic Commission for Europe**

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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 5 (a) of the provisional agenda
**Seminar on sustainable infrastructure**

 Draft programme for the seminar on sustainable infrastructure

 Prepared by Switzerland and the secretariat

 I. Introduction

1. The seminar on sustainable infrastructure is held under the framework of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).[[1]](#footnote-2) It takes place during the tenth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Geneva, 1–3 December 2021).

2. The seminar has been co-organized by Switzerland and the secretariat, considering decisions and feedback by the Bureau.[[2]](#footnote-3) The event will be moderated by Switzerland.

 A. Objectives

3. The general objective of the seminar is to share knowledge and experience regarding the legislation and practice for implementation of the Convention and the Protocol to energy, transport and other infrastructure plans, progammes and projects, with a view to illustrating and raising awareness on the treaties’ role and benefits for promoting sustainable infrastructure as well as transparent and participatory decision-making and international cooperation. The seminar will provide a platform for Parties, future Parties and stakeholders to present and discuss good practice in mainstreaming sustainability into strategic infrastructure planning and project preparation, as well as to raise any challenges and lessons learned in that regard, in order to improve and widen the treaties’ implementation within and beyond the ECE region. The seminar will also allow learning from partner organizations on their related activities, including regarding sustainable infrastructure investment and green financing, or the assessment of health impacts of infrastructure development.

4. With infrastructure cutting across and influencing all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the seminar will be able to underline the role that the Protocol and the Convention can play in contributing to Parties’ achievement of the SDGs.

5. The seminar will also provide an opportunity to explore how to enhance the application of the Protocol’s and the Convention’s procedures v-à-v objectives such as:

(a) Supporting green recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), through the identification of infrastructure planning and development options that also help decrease greenhouse gas emissions; pollution and nature loss;

(b) Promoting integrated and coordinated approaches to infrastructure planning and development;

(c) Improving planning and decision-making through more effective consultations and public participation, including, as relevant, in a transboundary context;

(d) Promoting cross-border cooperation for assessing likely environmental, including health impacts of infrastructure plans and projects; minimizing the potential of related tensions at the international level;

(e) Advocating for nature-based solutions to infrastructure planning and development, where relevant;

(f) Promoting innovation;

(g) Addressing gender mainstreaming within infrastructure development.

6.One of the specific issues of interest during the seminar will be the role of strategic environmental assessment and transboundary environmental impact assessment for greening infrastructure plans and projects foreseen under the “Belt and Road” initiative in the ECE region, but also in other continents including the Arctic, Africa and Latin America.[[3]](#footnote-4) (The importance of sustainable infrastructure in the global context is also illustrated by the new global infrastructure partnership “Build back Better for the World” that was launched by the G7 in June 2021.)

7. In general terms, the thematic seminar is expected to consider how to best share the experience and good practice gained under the Convention and the Protocol, including for expanding the awareness and the application of the treaty/treaties for greening the infrastructure within and beyond the ECE region.

 B. Outcomes

8. After the seminar, the main points and conclusions of the seminar will be summarized in a chair’s summary, to be appended to the meeting report. The Working Group will be invited to note the seminar’s outcomes. It may also wish to discuss and agree on possible follow-up actions on their basis.

9. Going forward, Parties and the secretariat will be able to report on the outcomes of the seminar to the ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022),[[4]](#footnote-5) which will focus on “Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure” as one of its two main themes. Exposure at the Ministerial Conference will contribute to enhancing the visibility of the Convention and the Protocol and advocate their role in promoting national and regional environmental objectives and SDGs.

 II. Provisional programme

 Thursday, 2 December 2021

 Geneva, Palais des Nations, meeting room: Tempus 3

 Each 10-minute presentation will be followed by 10 minutes for questions from the floor and discussions.

 1. Opening remarks by the moderator

10.00–10.15 ***Martine Rohn, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland***

 2. Why does sustainable infrastructure matter - and why are strategic environmental assessment and transboundary environment impact assessment key tools for promoting it?

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| 10.15–10.30 | **“Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure”: Thematic session at the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022) and the possibilities to contribute to it*Zaal Lomtadze, Secretary to the Committee on Environmental Policy, UNECE*** |
| 10.30–10.50 | **“International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure” *Rowan Palmer, United Nations Environmental Programme*** |
| 10.50–11.10 | **The role of impact assessment in inclusive infrastructure development and green recovery from COVID-19*Maria Partidario, International Association for Impact Assessment***  |
| 11.10–11.30 | **Transparency and public participation as key elements of sustainable infrastructure: Takeaways from the latest sessions of the Meetings of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers *Ella Behlyarova, Secretary to the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol, UNECE*** |

 3. Infrastructure development in Central Asia: Opportunities and risks for sustainability

11.30–11.50 **Greening the “Belt and Road”** **and other major infrastructure development plans and projects in Central and Eastern Asia
*Otto Simonett, Zoi Environment Network***

11.50–12.10 **Summary of progress and needs regarding** **SEA and transboundary EIA: Outcomes of the joint OSCE/UNECE activities
*Christian Melis, OSCE and Elena Santer UNECE***

12.10–12.30 **Plans to implement SEA and transboundary EIA to infrastructure development in Uzbekistan
*Anastasia Saidmakhmudova, Center of Ecological Expertise, Uzbekistan***

 4. Assessing infrastructure plans and projects: good practice, lessons learned, expected benefits

12.30–13.00 **Wind farm: transboundary EIA procedure
*Mari Lise Sjong, Norwegian Environment Agency***

***13.00–15.00 Lunch break***

15.00–15.20 **Baltic Pipe transboundary EIA procedure
*Marta Truszewska, General Directorate for Environmental Protection, Poland***

15.20–15.40 **SEA of a planned draft hydrogen strategy
*Roman Shakhmatenko, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Ukraine***

15.40–16.00 **Assessing health impact to support sustainable infrastructure: the cases of waste and seaports
*Sinaia Netanyahu, WHO Environment and Health Impact Assessment***

 5. Financial levers for sustainable infrastructure

16.00–16.20 **Investing in sustainable infrastructure: key trends and challenges from the EU bank’s perspective
*Zuzana Kaparova, European Investment Bank***

16.20–16.40 **Taxonomies of sustainable investments and EIA and SEA processes
*Jiří Dusík, Integra consulting, in cooperation with Nenad Mikulić***

 6. Conclusions

16.40–17.00 ***Moderator Martine Rohn,*** ***Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland***

1. See the workplan for 2021–2023, decision VIII/2–IV/2, ECE/MP.EIA/30/Add.1– ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13/Add.1, annex I, item III.B [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See informal notes on the Bureau meeting of 16 and 17 June 2021, paras. 53–55, available at: <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Environmental-Impact-Assessment/events/350792>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Initially announced by China in 2013, as a vision for strengthened economic cooperation through enhanced infrastructure connectivity, trade and investment links, and policy coordination. To date, some 140 countries have signed various forms of bilateral agreements with China, including 34 UNECE Member States. Generating trillions of dollars of investment, the initiative presents considerable opportunities and risks for sustainable development. It can help meet infrastructure needs for transportation, communication, energy supply and industry, and enhance connectivity and economic prosperity, as well as provide opportunities for developing green infrastructure, clean energy and clean technology. In contrast, in absence of proper environmental safeguards and effective stakeholder engagement, substantial adverse environmental impacts are likely. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. See informal notes on the Bureau meeting (16 and 17 June 2021). Originally scheduled for November 2021, the ninth Ministerial Conference was postponed by a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)