

Item 8. Related events and international processes

The outcomes of the Nicosia Ministerial Conference of relevance to the Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol

Information for the EIA/SEA Working Group meeting (Geneva 19-21 December 2022) by the UNECE Secretariat to the Committee on Environmental Policy

The **Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference** was held in Nicosia, Cyprus, on 5-7 October 2022¹. The Nicosia Conference was attended by 899 delegates from 62 countries, including government delegations from 53 UN Member States (42 UNECE member States). Two major environmental themes of the Conference were “Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure”, and “Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism”.

Through the adoption of the **Nicosia Ministerial Declaration**², The ministers in Nicosia “...recognized the important role that sustainable infrastructure plays in the green economy transition and in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and underlined that sustainable and resilient infrastructure investment should be at the core of green economy policies and commitments”. The ministers acknowledged that “...*the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment* provide a framework and guidance for assessing and reducing environmental impact, both in greening infrastructure and industry”.

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The ministers also took note of the key findings of the seventh pan-European assessment, produced by ECE and the United Nations Environment Programme, and the urgent need to “...Devote additional resources to achieving the institutional and technical capacity necessary for the *planning, design, execution, operation and decommissioning of sustainable infrastructure projects*”.⁴

Overall, the ministers:

- appreciated progress achieved under *the ECE multilateral environmental agreements* and recognized their important role in supporting countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;
- commended the tangible results achieved with the implementation *of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements*, both in enhancing environmental protection and industrial safety, as well as in improving social, economic and health aspects of people’s lives across the pan-European region and beyond;
- committed to strengthening the participation of civil society and the private sector in the implementation of those *agreements*;

¹ See more: <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Committee-on-Environmental-Policy/events/368999>

² ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/L.1, https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/ECE_NICOSIA.CONF_2022_L.1_E.pdf

³Ibid, para 8.

⁴ Ibid, para 16.

- encouraged interested countries to ratify and implement those instruments and provide adequate resources for their implementation.⁵

The background substantive document of the Conference on “greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure”⁶ praised the work done under the Espoo Convention: “ECE has contributed to greening the economy and making infrastructure more sustainable through promoting implementation of its relevant legal instruments, including the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment.”⁷

The reference was also made to the ECE work in the pan-European region under the Espoo Convention: “In the period 2017–2021, the ECE secretariat to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment supported legislative reforms and/or capacity-building for the effective implementation of the two treaties in Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with funding from the European Union, Germany and Switzerland. See <https://unece.org/central-asia>.”⁸

The document sees the future role of the Protocol on SEA in working towards sustainable infrastructure: “The way forward for the pan-European region should be collective, with common goals, targets and criteria for policymaking, performance monitoring and replicability of practices best suited to domestic needs, while following and promoting the implementation of existing guidance as established in UNEP resolutions 4/5 and 5/9 on sustainable infrastructure, as well as long-standing relevant legal instruments such as the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment.”⁹

The thematic segment on sustainable infrastructure has been held in the framework of the Conference. Key messages of the outcome of interactive thematic segment were presented to the Conference; they included the recognition that “... Accession to and the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, such as those of UNECE – notably the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, and the Aarhus Convention – is important”.¹⁰

⁵ Ibid, para 14.

⁶ ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/4, https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/ECE_NICOSIA.CONF_2022_4_E_1.pdf

⁷ Ibid, para 4.

⁸ Ibid, para 28

⁹ Ibid, para 62.

¹⁰ ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/2/Add.3, para 46 (7)