

Madame Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

During the last meeting in 2020, when Lithuania was honored to be the hosting country, we were living in pandemic conditions. Despite the fears, uncertainties, numerous illnesses and deaths caused by the pandemic, this was a moment of respite for the environment. Factories, transportation and other activities contributing to pollution and negative effects on the environment were temporarily suppressed.

Today we are living in different circumstances. At this Meeting of Parties we will adopt the Geneva Declaration, in which we will clearly express our position on the damage being caused by the unprovoked and unjustified full-scale military aggression of Russia against Ukraine, which lasts for already almost two years.

Through pollution of air, water and soil, destruction of habitats, protected areas and biodiversity, the war damages the environment and through deaths and harm to their physical and mental health – human lives. Beyond the profound human suffering and widespread destruction, Russia also presents serious and direct threats to the safety and security of Ukrainian nuclear facilities, which may result in further negative impacts on the environment and human health.

Three years ago, our Minister addressed the importance of environmental impact assessment as becoming increasingly vital in addressing global issues, such as accelerating climate change. And we all agreed that pollution, which is the main cause of climate change, unfortunately has no borders, and seemingly local human activities can have far reaching impacts on the countries in other parts of the world.

This week in this room we also touched on the question of how wide notification should be and how the rights of other states to participate in transboundary environmental impact assessment should be implemented.

As we know, wars and other military actions cause not only direct significant negative impacts but also are the reasons of major changes of the ongoing activities, such as destruction of dams and industrial facilities. Moreover, the disruptive changes of these activities are now performed by Russian Federation on the territory of another country, Ukraine, without respecting national and international legislation and internationally recognized borders. The consequences of the war destroy all the efforts of our Espoo community to prevent and mitigate significant adverse environmental impacts. And the only acceptable solution is to stop all destructive actions against neighboring countries, and to return to the compliance with international law.

I thank you