



Espoo Convention

EIA/SEA UPDATE

Issue No. 6, September 2006



Welcome!

Welcome to the sixth issue of EIA/SEA UPDATE. The UPDATE provides a less formal means of letting you know what is happening with the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). You can find out more about the Convention and Protocol on the Convention website, www.unece.org/env/eia.

This UPDATE follows on from the previous issue, presenting more activities that implement the workplan adopted by the 3rd meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention, held in Cavtat (Croatia) in June 2004 (see also www.unece.org/env/eia/activities.htm).



Belarus became the 41st Party to the Convention on 10 November 2005.

Albania became the 3rd Party to the Protocol on SEA (joining Finland and the Czech Republic) on 2 December 2005. On 30 March 2006 **Sweden** became the 4th Party to the Protocol, the 4th Party to the 1st amendment to the Convention and the 1st Party to the 2nd amendment. Finally, **Albania** became the 5th Party to the 1st amendment, and the 2nd Party to the 2nd amendment, on 12 May 2006.

Danube-Black Sea Canal

At the request of **Romania**, an inquiry commission was established in January 2005 to advise on the likely environmental impact of the proposed Danube-Black Sea Deep Water Navigation Canal in the **Ukrainian** Sector of the Danube Delta ('Bystroie Canal project'). The

inquiry commission presented its unanimous opinion to the Ambassadors of Romania and Ukraine and to Marek Belka, Executive Secretary of UNECE, on 10 July 2006 (photograph below). The commission's opinion was that the project was likely to have a significant adverse transboundary impact. For the commission's full report, please refer to www.unece.org/env/eia/inquiry.htm.



Working Group on EIA

Geneva was the venue for the ninth meeting of the Working Group on EIA, 3-6 April 2006. Most of the issues discussed at the meeting are described elsewhere in this UPDATE, but several that fall outside the Convention's workplan are summarized here:

- The Working Group welcomed the postponement of the 4th meeting of the Parties from 2007 to 2008, at the request of the Bureau. The postponement was intended to facilitate better preparation and to allow for the possible holding of the meeting back to back with the first meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (the so-called 'MOP/MOP').
- The Working Group also began identifying possible elements for inclusion in the workplan to be adopted at the 4th meeting of the Parties.

- The Working Group agreed that a CD-ROM on the Convention be prepared and made available at a side event to the Belgrade Ministerial Conference 'Environment for Europe' (October 2007).
- Finally, the Working Group commented on, and sought further clarification about, draft guidelines on promoting the application of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in international forums, including meetings under the Espoo Convention and its Protocol.



The Working Group meeting began with a workshop organized by **Bulgaria** for the exchange of good practice in post-project analysis in transboundary EIA, with presentations by Bulgaria and Romania. The workshop paper and presentations are available at www.unece.org/env/eia/activities.html#EIAexchange.

And the Working Group meeting concluded with a one-day study tour financed by **Switzerland** and organized by the Secretariat. The study tour, on both sides of the Franco-Swiss border in the Geneva area, was arranged primarily for the Central Asian States, as part of Switzerland's support to these countries (see next item), but there was also strong participation from other countries. See www.unece.org/env/eia/studytour2006.htm for documents, presentations and numerous photographs.

Activities supporting the Convention

Switzerland has offered to provide financial support, or has already provided funding for, workshops in **Armenia** and **Ukraine** to build

capacity in transboundary EIA, to be held late in 2006. In addition, Switzerland is likely to support the planned training course in transboundary EIA methodology in **Tajikistan**, as part of the Swiss EIA capacity-building programme in Central Asia.

A transboundary EIA pilot project—the Jeroy goldmine in the Talas River basin, **Kyrgyzstan**, and involving **Kazakhstan**—has been initiated, with a kick-off seminar held 26-27 January 2006 in Bishkek. The project will be funded with support from Norway and managed by the OSCE and UNECE, in cooperation with the State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry of Kyrgyzstan.

Guidelines on the application of the Convention in Central Asia have been finalized. The Working Group on EIA agreed to submit these guidelines to the 4th meeting of the Parties.

For more on activities in Central Asia, see www.unece.org/env/eia/central_asia.htm.

Sweden provided the venue for a workshop on subregional cooperation in the Baltic Sea subregion, 20-21 October 2005. The participants discussed a number of transboundary EIA cases - see www.unece.org/env/eia/activities.html#EIASubregion.



A third workshop on subregional cooperation in South-Eastern Europe was held, this time in Koprivshitzza (**Bulgaria**), 3-4 November 2005. (photograph above). The participants concluded negotiation of a subregional agreement to support implementation of the Espoo Convention in South-Eastern Europe. The draft agreement is available on the website at www.unece.org/env/eia/activities.html#EIASubregion. The countries have agreed that the agreement be adopted and signed at the 4th

meeting of the Parties to the Convention, in Bucharest, with **Romania** being the depositary.

Albania and **The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** have offered to host a further subregional cooperation workshop in South-Eastern Europe. A workshop for the Mediterranean subregion is expected in the near future, possibly in **Morocco**, with **Italy** having provided funding.

The Working Group on EIA agreed that the various lead countries would prepare a common draft report for each activity in the workplan: capacity-building in EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia), subregional cooperation and good practice workshops.

The **European Commission** described to the Working Group an August 2005 report on 'The Relationship between the EIA and SEA Directives'. This presentation was intended to help the Working Group decide whether it wished to undertake an examination of the substantive relationship between the Convention and the Protocol, but this question was left unanswered.

In preparation for the next **Review of the Implementation** of the Convention, the Secretariat pre-filled questionnaires with responses from the previous questionnaire, where appropriate, and sent them out to the Parties in October 2005, for return by April 2006. The Working Group had previously agreed that completed questionnaires were to be posted on the Convention website (see www.unece.org/env/eia/review2006.htm). To date (30 August 2006), 24 completed questionnaires had been received, including 21 from the 40 States Parties. The Secretariat has begun drafting the Review on the basis of the responses received.

The **Implementation Committee** met 14-15 November 2005 and 6-8 February 2006. The Committee discussed various procedural matters, including criteria for dealing with information other than submissions from Parties, and draft operating rules for the Committee, both proposals being later discussed by the Working Group on EIA.

The Committee also examined the first Review of Implementation and sought clarification of how certain Parties had implemented the Convention. The Committee was able to examine how the countries represented in the Committee had performed, with enquiries being sent to Armenia, Finland and Kyrgyzstan. Enquiries with other Parties are ongoing. Examples of correspondence between the Committee and the countries are presented on the website at www.unece.org/env/eia/implementation_committee.htm#Example.

The Secretariat published two trilingual **guidance** documents on transboundary EIA:

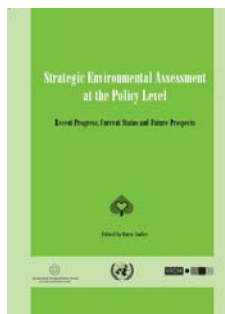
- Guidance on the Practical Application of the Espoo Convention (ECE/MP.EIA/7), endorsed by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention
- Guidance on Public Participation in EIA in a Transboundary Context (ECE/MP.EIA/8), adopted by the Meeting of the Parties

Resource Manual to support application of the Protocol

The UNECE Secretariat and the **REC** (Regional Environmental Centre for Central & Eastern Europe) have issued a 'draft for consultation' Resource Manual to Support Application of the SEA Protocol, with permission from the **small editorial group** established by the Meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol. The Resource Manual, in English and in Russian (and as an interactive website in English), is available at www.unece.org/env/eia/sea_manual/, where guidance on commenting on the draft is also provided: during the period to 31 October 2006, you are invited to submit suggested amendments to the Manual by email to eia.conv@unece.org.

It is expected that the small editorial group will review the suggestions and advise on the amendment of the draft Manual accordingly. The revised draft Manual will be presented to the third meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol, the date of which has yet to be

determined (probably either May or November 2007).



A volume on *SEA at the Policy Level - Recent progress, current status and future prospects*, edited by Barry Sadler, has been prepared by the REC, on behalf of the **Czech** Ministry of Environment, as additional information to

the Resource Manual. It is available at www.unece.org/env/eia/documents/PolicySEA/SEA%20of%20Policies%20volume.pdf.

Capacity-development supporting the Protocol

The UNECE Secretariat has continued to collaborate with **UNDP/RBEC** (the United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS), supported by the **REC**, in working with **Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine** to develop capacity to implement the Protocol. Capacity-development strategies have been developed by four of the five countries (Georgia instead worked with the Dutch Environmental Assessment Commission to develop a programme). Concluding workshops were held in the countries in spring 2006.

The earlier national capacity-development needs analyses, a subregional overview of needs, the national strategies and a joint UNDP-REC-UNECE bulletin on the work are available on the Convention's website at www.unece.org/env/sea/ecca_capacity.htm.

In addition, the REC has drafted proposed initiatives to support the national strategies. Countries (lead by **Armenia and Belarus**) have proposed one of these initiatives be raised at the Belgrade Ministerial Conference 'Environment for Europe' and this has been tagged 'the Belgrade SEA Initiative' (para. 27 of ECE/CEP/AC.11/2006/10 and page 10 of ECE/CEP/AC.11/2006/11, available at www.unece.org/env/efe/wgso/Belgrade/WGSOMeetings.htm).

Other Protocol matters

A small group (**Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom**) has been working to examine institutional and procedural issues for the entry into force of the Protocol, including: (a) membership of the Bureau and Implementation Committee when these bodies are considering matters under the Protocol; and (b) the institutional and administrative aspects of the relationship between the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (the 'MOP/MOP') and the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention. The Working Group on EIA welcomed the work done by the small group, available at www.unece.org/env/eia/activities.html#SEAinstitutional. The Working Group asked the small group, together with the Implementation Committee, to come forward with a consolidated draft decision on the membership issue.

The Budget

At the request of the Parties, the Secretariat has provided to the Bureau, and copied to the Parties, a series of detailed biannual financial reports (see the latest at www.unece.org/env/eia/budget.htm). All contributions pledged for 2004-5 and 2005-6 have now been received, but governments are requested to continue to send in contributions, whether or not pledged at the third meeting of the Parties. We are also able to identify particular activities requiring funding, for those governments or institutions interested in direct funding, for example for capacity-building activities in EECCA.

Other Secretariat activities

The Secretariat has continued to work with **UNEP** (the United Nations Environment Programme) in the Caspian Sea region, assisting in the development of a protocol on transboundary EIA: meetings on the Protocol on Transboundary EIA under the Caspian Sea Convention were held in Moscow, 24-26 October 2005 and 7-9 June 2006. A further

meeting is planned. The Secretariat has also continued to work with UNEP's Economic & Trade Branch on the UNEP initiatives in Integrated Assessment and Planning (see www.unep.ch/etb).

Within the European Union, the Secretariat took part in the 4th seminar of the **PlanNet** Europe network on SEA of urbanism plans and programmes, held in Brussels, 24-25 October 2005 (see plannet.difu.de).

Finally, the Secretariat participated in two International Association for Impact Assessment (**IAIA**) events: the special thematic meeting on 'international experience and perspectives in SEA' (26-30 September 2005, Prague) and the annual conference ('Power, Poverty & Sustainability') held in Stavanger (Norway), 23-26 May 2006 (see www.iaia.org).

Posters & Documents

Please contact the Secretariat if you need copies of the Convention's information poster, or the poster describing implementation of the Convention around the Caspian Sea. Both posters are available in English and Russian. We can also provide copies of the published Espoo guidance documents. Reports on the meetings described above may be found on the Convention website.

Next UPDATE / Русский

If you wish to contribute an article or news to UPDATE, please let us know - we will be as flexible as possible regarding deadlines.

The previous edition of UPDATE was translated into Russian courtesy of the NGO **EcoGlobe** - our thanks to them once again.

Upcoming events

9-10 October 2006	10 th Meeting of the Implementation Committee, Geneva
23-25 May 2007	10 th Meeting of the Working Group on EIA, Geneva
2-9 June 2007	IAIA annual conference ('Growth, Conservation and Responsibility'), Seoul
10-12 October 2007	'Environment for Europe' Ministerial Conference, Belgrade

Yet to be scheduled:

- 3rd meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol, Geneva
- Workshop on subregional cooperation around the Mediterranean Sea, Morocco
- Workshop for transboundary EIA capacity-building in Eastern Europe, Ukraine
- Workshop for transboundary EIA capacity-building in Caucasus, Armenia



For a more complete and up to date listing of events, visit the Convention website

NOT AN OFFICIAL RECORD.

This EIA/SEA UPDATE provides informal information on the: Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, and Kiev Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment.



Your news and views would be very welcome.

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