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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Meeting of the Parties to the Convention
on Environmental Impact Assessment
in a Transboundary Context
Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment
(Third meeting, Geneva, 9-12 October 2000)

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE THIRD MEETING

to be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
starting at 10 a.m. on Monday, 9 October 2000

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Documentation for the second meeting of the Parties:
 - (a) Results of the implementation of the workplan;
 - (b) Proposals for the further development of the Convention;
 - (c) Workplan and financial issues;
 - (d) Sofia ministerial declaration.
3. Further preparations for the second meeting of the Parties.
4. Cooperation with the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy.

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5. Activities for promoting the implementation and ratification of the Convention.
6. Other business.
7. Closing of the meeting.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The third meeting of the Working Group is convened in accordance with a decision taken at its second meeting. The agenda and its explanatory notes have been prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau of the Meeting, in accordance with rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure.

Item 1. Adoption of the agenda

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure adopted at the first meeting of the Parties, the President, Mr. A. McGlone, will open the meeting.

The Meeting is expected to adopt its agenda as set out in the present document.

Item 2. Documentation for the second meeting of the Parties

The Working Group will provide all necessary input with a view to finalizing the documentation for discussion and adoption at the second meeting of the Parties:

(a) Results of the implementation of the workplan

(i) Aspects of bilateral and multilateral cooperation

The delegation of the Netherlands, lead country for this activity, will present a draft decision (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/6/Rev.1), including guidance on existing bilateral and/or multilateral agreements or agreements.

(ii) Practical application of the Convention

The Working Group may wish, in particular, to finalize the report and a draft decision for subsequent adoption at the second meeting of the Parties (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/7/Rev.1).

(iii) Public participation in a transboundary context

The delegation of the Russian Federation, lead country for this activity, will present a report (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/19) and draft guidance on this topic on the basis of the outcome of a workshop held in June 2000.

(iv) Non-compliance guidelines

The delegation of the United Kingdom, lead country for this activity, will present a revised draft decision on a possible non-compliance system under the Convention, based on the discussion at the second meeting of the Working Group (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/9/Rev.1).

(v) Recent EIA developments and links with other ECE Conventions

The delegation of Italy, lead country for this activity, will present a draft decision (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/20) on recent developments in environmental impact assessment as well as links with other ECE Conventions.

(vi) Database on environmental impact assessment

The delegations of Hungary and Poland, lead countries for this activity, will present a draft decision (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/12/Rev.1) on the evaluation of the database.

(vii) Database networking facility

The delegation of Switzerland, lead country together with Finland and Poland, will present a draft decision (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/21), including a document explaining the interactive features of the networking facility attached to the database on environmental impact assessment.

(viii) Subregional activities

The delegation of Bulgaria, lead country for this activity, will present a revised decision (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/13/Rev.1) based on the discussion at the second meeting of the Working Group.

(b) Proposals for the further development of the Convention

(i) Strategic environmental assessment

The Working Group will discuss and finalize a draft decision on strategic environmental assessment (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/22) submitted by the delegation of Switzerland. Further information is annexed to this agenda.

(ii) Amendments to the Convention

The working group will discuss and finalize a report on a package of possible amendments (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/23) prepared by the Task Force with Italy as lead country.

(c) Workplan and financial issues

(i) Workplan

The Bureau will present a new draft workplan (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/15/Rev.1), which was revised in the light of the comments made at the second meeting of the Working Group, for finalization.

ii) Financial issues

The Working Group will discuss two draft decisions prepared by the Bureau, one on financial support to countries in transition (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/24) and the other on the budget and the implementation of the workplan (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/25).

(d) Sofia ministerial declaration

The Bureau will present a draft ministerial declaration (MP.EIA/WG.1/2000/26) for finalization.

Item 3. Further preparations for the second meeting of the Parties

The delegation of Bulgaria will provide further information on the organization of the second meeting of the Parties, which is expected to take place in Sofia (Bulgaria) from 24 to 27 February 2001. An informal note with the preliminary agenda for the second meeting of the Parties will be made available at the meeting.

In accordance with Article 14 of the Convention, proposals for amendments should be circulated by the secretariat to the Parties at least ninety days in advance of a meeting of the Parties. Rules 14 to 18 of the Rules of Procedures set out the accreditation procedure for the Meeting of the Parties. Examples of accreditation documents will be made available.

Item 4. Cooperation with the ECE Committee on Environmental Policy

The Chairperson will report on the round-table discussion held at the Committee's annual session (September 2000) on cooperation among ECE Conventions and potential synergies, aimed at strengthening their implementation.

The Working Group will also be informed about the outcome of the Committee's other discussions and on the further steps to be taken on strategic environmental assessment (SEA).

Item 5. Activities for promoting the implementation and ratification of the Convention

The Working Group will be informed of the status of ratification of the Convention. Representatives of non-Parties will report on the steps that they are taking to become a Party to the Convention.

Item 6. Other business

Delegations wishing to propose points under this item are requested to inform the secretariat as soon as possible.

Item 7. Closing of the meeting

The President will close the meeting by presenting the main decisions taken for adoption by the Working Group.

Annex

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

1. At its informal consultation in June 2000, the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy discussed the issue of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) (CEP/2000/3). It was of the opinion that the instrument on SEA should be of a legally binding character and efforts should be made to develop it in time for the Kiev Ministerial Conference. Taking note of the decision taken by the Working Group on EIA to launch a negotiation round, it agreed that, due to the time constraints, the framework of the Espoo Convention on EIA in a Transboundary Context would be preferable for the negotiation process. The Bureau also stressed the need to fully involve experts from the Aarhus Convention in this process. The Bureau agreed that the Committee should discuss the modalities of the negotiation, taking also into account the outcome of the second meeting of the Signatories to the Aarhus Convention.
2. At their second meeting, in July 2000, the Signatories to the Aarhus Convention noted the recent decision of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment to proceed with the preparation of a draft protocol on strategic environmental assessment. There was general agreement on the importance of the provisions of the Aarhus Convention being fully taken into account in this process, and on the need for the expertise of officials and NGOs involved in public participation issues to be made available to the process.
3. With this in mind, the Meeting of the Signatories agreed to request the Committee to invite all UN/ECE States to ensure that the provisions of the Aarhus Convention were reflected in the SEA protocol and that those involved in the Aarhus process were represented in the negotiations on the SEA protocol to the Espoo Convention. Work undertaken in other international forums should also be taken into account.
4. In practical terms, this should mean that the invitations to the group negotiating the SEA protocol should be sent to all focal points of both the Aarhus Convention and the Espoo Convention. The Meeting further agreed to propose to the Committee that it should request the ECE secretariat to involve the secretaries to both the Aarhus and the Espoo Conventions in the informal drafting group on the SEA protocol as well as in the subsequent negotiations. The Meeting recommended that the proposed protocol should be open to non-Parties to the Espoo Convention as well as to Parties, including non-ECE States, through the incorporation of a provision similar to article 19, paragraph 3, of the Aarhus Convention.
5. The Meeting agreed to hold a workshop in order to develop ideas and make suggestions regarding public participation under articles 7 and 8 of the Aarhus Convention with a view to supporting the drawing-up of a protocol on SEA to the Espoo Convention. The workshop would also address health impacts. The focal points of both the Aarhus and Espoo Conventions would be invited with a view to furthering cooperation between the two conventions. The workshop would be organized by the Czech Republic and Norway, with support from the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe. (WHO/EURO). The practical arrangements would be handled by the Regional Environmental Center in Hungary. Italy offered to provide financial support.

6. There was general agreement on the desirability of the proposed protocol being ready for adoption at the fifth Ministerial "Environment for Europe" Conference (Kiev, 2002).