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Economic Commission for Europe

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

Bureau

Geneva, 22–23 February 2023
Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Organizational matters

Annotated provisional agenda for the Bureau meeting

To be held in room H-307-1, Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 22 February and closing by Thursday, 23 February 2023 at 6 p.m.*

I. Provisional agenda

1. Organizational matters.
2. Status of ratification of the Convention, its amendments and its Protocol.
3. Financial arrangements.
4. Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties
 - (a) Practical arrangements;
 - (b) Draft agenda;
 - (c) Draft workplan 2024–2026;
 - (d) Draft declaration;
 - (e) Chairs of the sessions;
 - (f) Officers for the next intersessional period;
 - (g) Provisional schedule of meetings 2024–2026.

* Delegates participating at the meeting are requested to register online no later than by **2 February 2023**, through the following link: <https://indico.un.org/event/1002020/>. On the day of the meeting, delegates should obtain an identification badge to access the Palais des Nations. Please note that, temporarily, this should be done from Villa Les Feuillantines (Avenue de la Paix 13, 2011 Geneva 10). Please collect your badge well in advance. In case of difficulty, please contact the Convention secretariat by telephone at +41 22 917 26 82 or by e-mail (maricar.delacruz@un.org).

5. Preparations for the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment.
6. Implementation of the workplan 2021–2023.
 - (a) Compliance with and implementation of the Convention and the Protocol.
 - (b) Promoting practical application of the Convention and the Protocol.
 - (c) Subregional cooperation and capacity-building.
7. Management, coordination and visibility of intersessional activities.
8. Other business.
9. Presentation of the main decisions taken and closing of the meeting.

II. Annotations to the provisional agenda

1. Organizational matters

Tentative timing: Wednesday, 22 February, 10.00–10.15

1. The Chair of the Bureau for matters under the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention), Mr. George Kremlis (Greece), and the Chair of the Bureau for Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment matters, Ms. Vesna Kolar-Planinšič (Slovenia), will open the meeting.
2. The Bureau will be invited to adopt its agenda as set out in the present document prepared by the secretariat in agreement with the Chairs.

Documentation

(The present) Provisional annotated agenda (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.1)¹

2. Status of ratification of the Convention, its amendments and its Protocol

Tentative timing: Wednesday, 22 February, 10.15–11

3. The secretariat will inform the Bureau on the status of ratification of the Convention, its amendments and the Protocol. As relevant, the Bureau members may wish to report on any recent progress of their countries regarding ratifications of the amendments to the Convention and/or ratification of/accession to the Protocol since the eleventh meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Geneva, 19–21 December 2022).
4. The Bureau will be invited to note the information. It may propose actions that could be taken to encourage accession to or ratification of the Convention, its amendments and the Protocol within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region. It may also wish to reflect on ways for promoting and preparing for accession by countries outside the ECE region in the next intersessional period 2024–2026, considering also the objectives and related actions set out in the long-term strategy for the Convention and the Protocol.²

Documentation

Status of ratification (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.2)

¹ All meeting documentation will be made available on a dedicated (password protected) webpage for the meeting.

² ECE/MP.EIA/30/Add.1–ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13/Add.1, decision VIII/3–IV/3, annex, subsection II C.2 and 3.

3. Financial arrangements

Tentative timing: Wednesday, 22 February, 11–12.30

5. The Bureau is invited to consider the draft financial report in the intersessional period 2021–2023, covering the period from the eighth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the fourth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Vilnius (online), 8–11 December 2020) to December 2022, and agree on its publication on the Convention and the Protocol website. The secretariat will provide an update on any recent contributions to the Convention’s and Protocol’s trust fund.

6. The secretariat will also inform the Bureau about the pledges for funding for the next intersessional period 2024–2026 that the Working Group had requested the Parties to provide by mid-February 2023. The Bureau is expected to consider the information and, as required, agree on further measures to prompt the focal points to mobilize further funding from their Governments. It may recall that the Working Group had agreed that, to remedy the secretariat’s severe staffing gaps, by the next intersessional period 2024–2026, the Parties should increase their financial contributions to collectively fund at least one additional professional post and part-time administrative support (on a 50 per cent basis). The Executive Secretary of ECE has also conveyed that request to the ministers for environment and ministers for foreign affairs of all the Parties (by a letter of 7 December 2022).

7. Taking into account its conclusions on the insufficiency of the current financial scheme³ in remedying the resource constraints and the uneven distribution and unpredictability of contributions for the implementation of the workplan under the Convention and the Protocol, the Bureau is expected to agree on the draft decision IX/1–V/1 on financial arrangements for the Convention and the Protocol in the period 2024–2026 for consideration of the Working Group at its next meeting (Geneva, 13–15 June 2023).

Documentation

Draft financial report in the intersessional period 2021–2023 (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.3)

Contributions to the Trust Fund (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.4)

Initial information on Parties’ pledges of funding for 2024–2026 (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.5)

Draft decision on financial arrangements for 2024–2026 (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.6)

4. Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties

Tentative timing: Wednesday, 22 February, 14.00–17.30

A. Practical arrangements

8. The secretariat will provide any updates on practical preparations for the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (Geneva, 12–15 December 2023).

B. Draft agenda

9. The Bureau is expected to consider and agree on an annotated provisional agenda for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol to be forwarded to the Working Group at its next meeting as an informal document.

10. The Bureau is invited to discuss and provide guidance on the organization (format, key questions, moderator, speakers, background paper) of the thematic event focusing on energy transition combined with circular economy to be held during the high-level segment

³ ECE/MP.EIA/30/Add.1-ECE/MP.EIA/SEA/13/Add.1, Decision VIII/1–IV/1.

of the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties with funding from Italy, and contributions from Spain, International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and Nuclear Transparency Watch and any further volunteers. It is invited to take into account any inputs to be provided by delegations ahead of its meeting.

11. The Bureau is also invited to discuss and provide guidance on the possible event dedicated to green financing to be held during the general segment of the Meetings of the Parties' sessions with inputs from the European Investment Bank (EIB), provided that a country or organization volunteering to organize that event will be identified by the next meeting of the Working Group. It is invited to take into account any inputs to be provided by delegations ahead of its meeting.

C. Draft workplan 2024–2026

12. For consideration of the Working Group at its next meeting, the Bureau is invited to prepare and agree on a draft decision IX/2–V/2 on the adoption of the workplan for 2024–2026 as well as on proposed elements of a draft workplan and corresponding resource requirements to be annexed to the draft decision. It is invited to take into account the related conclusions of the Working Group at its past meeting and any inputs by the delegations after that meeting.⁴

13. In view of the preparation of a draft workplan that is realistic and implementable, the Bureau is expected to ensure, and to invite the Working Group and the Meetings of the Parties to ensure that, for each sub-activity of the workplan, information is provided on the entities responsible (lead countries or organizations), organizational arrangements, expected outcome and, as relevant, any specific time schedule for implementation– and that the resource requirements for the activities are matched with expected future funding and secretariat staffing or, alternatively, covered through in-kind contributions, bilateral support etc. The Bureau members may wish to propose leading or sponsoring activities and hosting events. The draft workplan should also indicate which activities and services could not be implemented but should be cut without additional staffing for the core secretariat functions.

D. Draft declaration

14. The Bureau is invited to propose and agree on a draft declaration for consideration of the Working Group at its next meeting, building on draft elements to be prepared by the secretariat within the limits of its capacities, and taking into account any inputs to be submitted by delegations by 31 January 2023. As suggested by the Bureau earlier, the declaration should focus on the importance of the Convention and the Protocol as tools to boost energy transition and to ensure circular economy, low carbon economy and climate neutrality.

E. Chairs of the sessions

15. The Bureau is expected to discuss the chairing of the general and high-level segments of the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties. It is invited to recall that, at its past meeting, the Working Group welcomed the offer of the current Chair of the Bureau for Convention matters, representing Greece, to serve as a candidate for the post of chair of the general segment and that, unless Greece ratified the Protocol in advance of the next sessions, a co-chair, responsible for Protocol matters, would need to be nominated and elected in addition. At its last meeting, the Working Group invited delegations to come forward with nominations for a chair of the high-level segment, for agreement by the Working Group at its next meeting.

⁴ ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2022/2, paras. 100–103.

F. Officers for the next intersessional period

16. The Bureau is expected to continue to consider and to put forward proposals of officials for the treaty bodies to be elected at the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties for the next intersessional period 2024–2026, that is, a Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Working Group, a Chair and members of the Bureau and four permanent and four alternate members of the Implementation Committee. Additional new members of the Implementation Committee may need to be nominated depending on whether Committee members are Parties to the Protocol.

17. The Bureau will be invited to take into account that, at its past meeting, the Working Group: Welcomed the availability of the current Chairs of the Bureau and the Working Group to continue in their roles in the next intersessional period, if elected by the Meetings of the Parties, and the initial availability of the Implementation Committee Chair to do so; Encouraged Parties that had never or not recently been represented in the treaty bodies to put forward their nominations; Agreed to propose to the Meetings of the Parties that, if required, and on an exceptional basis, travel expenses of officers from countries not eligible for financial support could be funded from the trust fund; and Agreed that Parties should be mindful of possible conflicts of interest when electing members to the Implementation Committee.

G. Provisional schedule of meetings in the next intersessional period

18. The Bureau is invited to review and initially agree on a provisional schedule of meetings of the treaty bodies in the next intersessional period that is expected to extend from January 2024 to December 2026.

Documentation

Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.7)

Provisional agenda for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.8)

Thematic events: Inputs from delegations (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.9)

Draft decision on the workplan for 2024–2026 (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.10)

(Elements of) Draft Geneva declaration (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.11)

A list of vacancies (chairs and members) in the treaty bodies for 2024–2026 (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.12)

Provisional schedule of meetings 2024–2026 (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.13)

5. Preparations for the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Tentative timing: Wednesday, 22 February, 10–11

19. The Bureau is expected to review and agree on the annotated provisional agenda of the twelfth meeting of the Working Group to be held in Geneva, from 13 to 15 June 2023.

Documentation

Annotated provisional agenda of the twelfth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.14)

6. Implementation of the workplan 2021–2023

Tentative timing: Thursday, 23 February, 11–12.30 and 14–15

20. The Bureau will be invited to review progress since the eleventh meeting of the Working Group in planning and implementing activities foreseen in the workplan for 2021–2023 (decision VIII/2–IV/2), make proposals and provide advice on the implementation of or follow-up to the activities, as needed.

(a) Draft guidance on assessing health in strategic environmental assessment

21. The Bureau will be invited to continue considering an outstanding activity from the previous workplan (for the period 2017–2020), namely, the draft guidance on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment. It may wish to take stock of the conclusions made and discussions held at the past meeting of the Working Group further to the draft guidance that the Chair of the Bureau for Protocol matters and the other volunteering Bureau members had revised to accommodate the comments made by the European Union and its member States at the tenth meeting of the Working Group (Geneva (hybrid), 1–3 December 2021). The Working Group had urged all Parties, subject to the availability of resources, to make further efforts to comply with the request of the Meetings of the Parties in 2020 to finalize the draft guidance ahead of the 2023 session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol and agreed to continue its deliberations at its next meeting. The Bureau is expected to consider any amendment proposals to be provided by the European Union and its Member States and any other delegation by the end of January 2023 – and forward its feedback and any related recommendations to the Working Group.

22. The Bureau will also be invited to consider and agree on draft decision V/6 on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment for consideration of the Working Group at its next meeting.

(b) Compliance with and implementation of the Convention and the Protocol

23. The Chair of the Implementation Committee is expected to present the main outcomes of the Committee's fifty-fifth session (Geneva (online), 31 January–3 February 2023) and the main objectives for the Committee's fifty-sixth session (Geneva, 2–5 May 2023). The Committee Chair will also brief the Bureau on the Committee's schedule for preparing for the Meetings of the Parties' next sessions (Geneva, 12–15 December 2023). The Bureau may wish to note and comment the information.

24. The secretariat is invited to update the Bureau on the status of Parties' reporting on their implementation of the Convention and the Protocol in the period 2019–2021 recalling that the Working Group had urged the remaining Parties to provide their overdue reports as soon as possible and, at the latest, by 31 January 2023. The Bureau is invited to take into account the information on the reporting status and agree on draft decisions IX/5 and V/5 on the review of implementation of the Convention and the Protocol to be submitted to the Working Group at its next meeting.

25. The secretariat and, as relevant, the Bureau members representing the concerned countries will report on the implementation of activities in the present workplan (decision VIII/2–IV/2) that relate to legislative assistance to support implementation and/or accession/ratification. The Bureau is expected to note the information and provide advice on the implementation of or follow-up to the activities, as needed.

(c) Promoting practical application of the Convention and the Protocol

(i) Subregional cooperation and capacity-building

26. As requested by the Working Group, the Bureau is expected to review proposed cooperation activities in marine regions contained in the draft assessment report ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2022/INF.10 and prioritize and select some of them for the draft workplan 2024–2026 for consideration by the Working Group at its next meeting. The Bureau may also provide advice on the further implementation of the Italian funded activity in 2023, which will involve the organization of a third joint technical meeting with

participation of representatives of the participating regional sea conventions and commissions and the issuing of the final report. The Bureau members may also wish to volunteer to present good practice in the application of the Convention and the Protocol to projects, plans and programmes in marine regions.

27. The Bureau is also invited to review and agree on draft decision IX/3–V/3 on the cooperation in marine regions for consideration of the Working Group at its next meeting.

(ii) Exchange of good practice

28. The secretariat will provide updates since the past session of the Working Group, if any, in relation to the following further workplan activities for the exchange of good practice:

(a) The preparation of fact sheets on the practical application of the Convention and the Protocol, to be presented during the meetings of the Working Group and posted on the website;

(b) The online database of Parties' good practice or collection and compilation of good practice, which will require identification of additional resources and funding for consultants.

(iii) Capacity building

29. The secretariat and the concerned Bureau members will be invited to provide any updates on the implementation of activities foreseen in or related to the workplan regarding subregional cooperation and capacity-building in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus or Central Asia, since the past meeting of the Working Group.

30. The Bureau may wish to suggest topics for the preparation of two-page informal pamphlets or "FasTips" by the International Association for Impact Assessment foreseen in the workplan.

Documentation

Workplan implementation status (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.15)

Draft decision V/6 on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2020/INF.16)

Draft decision IX/5 on reporting and review of implementation of the Convention ((ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.17)

Draft decision V/5 on reporting and review of implementation of the Protocol (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.18)

Draft decision IX/3–V/3 on the cooperation in marine regions (ECE/MP.EIA/B/2023/INF.19)

7. Management, coordination and visibility of intersessional activities

Tentative timing: Thursday, 23 February, 15–16

31. The Bureau may wish to recall its conclusions from its previous meeting on the informal note on procedural matters of relevance to meetings with remote participation due to extraordinary circumstances, which it had prepared for the sessions of the Meetings of the Parties in 2020 with the secretariat's support, in consultation with the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs;⁵ Namely, that: Consistent with the practice of the other ECE multilateral environmental agreements, there was no need to revisit the procedural note at the current point because: it had applied only to the 2020 sessions of the Meetings of the Parties and to any similar future exceptional case of extraordinary circumstances; In-person meetings

⁵ See the note of 10 November 2020, as revised on 27 November 2020, available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/meeting-parties-espoo-convention-8th-session-and-meeting-parties> (under the tab "informal documents", "item 2").

were again the norm; Should the extraordinary circumstances arise again, it would look into the matter again and adjust the note, as required.

32. Noting the regrets expressed by the delegation of the European Union and its Member States with respect to the Bureau's conclusions, the Working Group had invited the European Union and its Member States to provide clear textual amendment proposals to the note by 31 January 2023. The Bureau may wish to consider the proposals to be provided and make any recommendations to the Working Group.

8. Other business

Tentative timing: Thursday, 23 February, 16–16.30

33. The Bureau members may wish to provide and consider any updates on the implications of the war in Ukraine (state of the environment, implementation of the Convention and the Protocol, nuclear threat etc.).

34. Members of the Bureau wishing to raise other business should contact the secretariat as soon as possible.

9. Presentation of the main decisions taken and closing of the meeting

Tentative timing: Thursday, 23 February, 16.30–18

35. The Bureau is expected to agree on the main decisions taken at the meeting and to confirm the date and location of its next session before the Chairs formally close the session.
