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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

Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Twelfth meeting

Geneva, 13–15 June 2023

Item 4(d) of the provisional agenda

**Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties:
draft declaration**

Draft Geneva declaration

Proposal by the Bureau

Summary

The present draft declaration was prepared by the joint Bureau of the governing bodies of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, with support from the secretariat, taking into account comments received during and after the eleventh meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Geneva, 19–21 December 2022).

The Working Group is invited to review and agree on the text of the draft declaration to be forwarded to the Meetings of the Parties to the Convention and the Protocol at their next sessions (Geneva, 12–15 December 2023).



We, the high-level representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) member States and the European Union, gathered in Geneva, from 12 to 15 December 2023, on the occasion of the ninth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and the fifth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment,

Deploing the severe damage that the military invasion of Ukraine has inflicted on the population, the environment and the economy of that country,

Concerned about the continuation of the war in Ukraine and its broad adverse environmental impacts, including transboundary impacts in the region, in terms of air, water and soil pollution, as well as biodiversity loss,

Emphasizing the alarming likelihood-risk of far-reaching nuclear accidents, as a result of the war in the areas where nuclear power plants are located,

Concerned about the negative spillover effects of the war, worldwide, on the energy crisis, biodiversity and natural habitats, climate change and the food supply chain, as well as on the availability of critical raw materials,

Recognizing the need to diversify sources of energy supply and to accelerate the deployment of renewable energies, as well as the implementation of circular economy models that reduce consumption and waste of raw materials, land, water and energy sources,

Acknowledging the need to step up efforts to combat climate change and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030,

Welcoming the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity and acknowledging the need to halt the loss of biodiversity,

Aware of the growing environmental pressures on marine and coastal ecosystems caused by climate change, increasing pollution loads, tourism, fishing, mining of minerals and energy production,

Recalling the global dimension of the Protocol as a key legal instrument for fostering environmentally sound and sustainable development, through the integration of environmental, including health, considerations into sectoral plans and programmes, and, to the extent appropriate, policies and legislation,

Anticipating, in the next intersessional period, the global opening of the Convention, offering to Parties worldwide a well-established legal framework for domestic action and international cooperation to prevent, reduce and control significant adverse transboundary environmental impacts from proposed activities,

1. *Stress the importance of the Convention and the Protocol, as environmental governance tools, in the process of the reconstruction of Ukraine and in its preparation, in terms of planning, public participation and assessment of plans and projects with a view to ensuring green financing and compliance with environmental conditionalities;*

2. *Call on Parties and stakeholders to strengthen and promote the implementation of both treaties in order-the aim to accelerate the energy transition and to promote carbon neutrality, through finding alternatives that safeguard and halt the loss of biodiversity and natural habitats, through the consideration of the climate impacts of projects, plans and programmes and their climate proofing, as well as through the creation of enabling conditions for the uptake of green financing;*

3. *Recognize the key role of the Protocol in sustainable spatial planning and, in particular, maritime-marine spatial planning, and that of the Convention in greening energy projects in the marine environment, involving exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons, cables and pipelines and offshore wind energy;*

4. *Welcome and further encourage enhanced cooperation with regional sea conventions and commissions to promote the effective application of the Convention and the Protocol for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea and other regional seas and coastal zones, building on the synergies and proposed activities identified through the work conducted with funding from Italy;*

5. *Express appreciation* for the finalization of guidance on assessing health impacts in strategic environmental assessment,¹ initially funded by the European Investment Bank, highlighting the key importance of integrating health considerations and involving health authorities in the application of the Protocol;

6. *Acknowledge* the significant potential of the Convention and the Protocol for contributing to circular economy, as the new global economic model in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, including through early screening and assessment of lifecycle risks associated with the selection of different solutions and by promoting innovative design and materials;

7. *Echo* the ministers at the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, 5–7 October 2022), who acknowledged that the Convention and the Protocol provide a framework and guidance for greening infrastructure, playing an important role in the green economy transition and in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;²

8. *Confirm* that the Convention and the Protocol are effective instruments for fostering environmentally sound and sustainable development, environmental governance and international cooperation also beyond the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region;

9. *Urge* the contracting Parties that have not yet done so to ratify: the first amendment to the Convention, to enable it to become global; the second amendment to the Convention, to ensure the treaty's uniform implementation; and the Protocol, to broaden its geographical scope of application;

10. *Call upon* all member States of ECE that have not done so to ratify and accede to the Convention and the Protocol;

11. *Invite* other interested States that are Member States of the United Nations to take steps to implement the treaties with a view to future accession;

12. *Emphasize* that, in order to reap the full benefits of the Convention and the Protocol, States must not only become Parties thereto, but must also adopt all the necessary measures at the national level to meet their obligations fully;

13. *Welcome* the extensive legislative assistance and capacity-building activities in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia that the secretariat facilitated in the period 2013–2023, with funding from the European Union, Germany and Switzerland, and for Central Asia, in cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe;

14. *Call upon* Parties and encourage signatories, other States, as well as partner organizations and international financial institutions, to support the effective implementation of the Convention and the Protocol, including by bilaterally providing further assistance to countries that express a need for it;

15. *Recognize* that the protracted insufficiency of Parties' voluntary financial contributions under the Convention and the Protocol strongly contrasts with the proven benefits and further potential of the two treaties, taking into account the multiplication of their activities and Parties, also in view of the anticipated future accessions by countries from outside the ECE region;

16. *Decide* that Parties must address the acute resource constraints of the treaties' secretariat as a matter of priority, owing to the important and constantly increasing role of both treaties and the consequent workload, which will only grow larger with the globalization of the Convention;

17. *Urge* the contracting Parties to make available the necessary financial resources for the proper functioning of the Convention and the Protocol and the full implementation of their workplan, conscious that, until then, several activities and secretariat services will necessarily be suspended or limited.

¹ ECE/MP.EIA/WG.2/2023/8.

² ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/L.1, para. 8.