

Statement of the Republic of Azerbaijan

by Ms. Umayra Taghiyeva, Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources

at the High-level session of 9th Meeting of Parties of the Convention on Environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context

(UNECE Espoo Convention).

14 December 2023

Dear Ms. Chair,

Dear participants,

It is an honor to greet you on behalf of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan **at the High-level session of 9th Meeting of Parties of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a transboundary context.**

We highly appreciate long-lasting cooperation with Espoo Convention Secretariat over the past two decades, since the ratification of the Convention.

Let me draw your attention to the fact that Azerbaijan ratified more than 20 multilateral environmental agreements, including those covered by UNECE. We firmly believe that nature has no borders and therefore strengthening environmental partnership at the regional and global level is of great importance.

We also believe in UNECE`s special role in raising awareness of importance of environmental standards in national programs and projects and invite all parties to keep their commitments to conduct transboundary impact assessments of projects and programs with transboundary impact in line with the ESPOO Convention.

We highly appreciate the fruitful results of joint capacity-building activities implemented on EIA and SEA in Azerbaijan under workplan activities since

2014. During those time period, adoption of Law on Environmental Impact Assessment was followed by developing and adoption of 5 regulations and a Guidance, including “Rules for conducting environmental impact assessment, including transboundary assessment” and “Rules for Implementation of Strategic Environmental Assessment”.

We had attached great importance to sustainable use of natural resources, transition to green and circular economy and clean energy.

Azerbaijan has supported international efforts to mitigate the effects of global climate change by ratifying the Paris climate agreement. Despite being accountable for only 0.15% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Azerbaijan has set ambitious targets to reduce GHG emissions. We have updated our Nationally Determined Contribution this year, setting a more ambitious target beyond 2030, 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Azerbaijan set the target to increase the share of renewable energy in total installed capacity from current 20% to 30% by 2030.

During recent COP28 in Dubai our energy major SOCAR announced its 2050 NetZero goal and signed Oil and Gas Decarbonisation Act.

It is honorable that at COP28 Azerbaijan was chosen to host COP29 for next year. We invite Espoo Convention to take part in the event, in the heart of Caucasus that would be the celebration of global unity for greener and sustainable future.

“The clean environment and green growth” has been identified as one of the five priority areas of our new national development strategy Azerbaijan-2030 and actions in this Strategy are fully aligned with global climate action and our climate goals and commitments.

Furthermore, I would like to highlight that we are currently undertaking extensive post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction, and reintegration efforts in the liberated Garabagh and East Zangezur Economic Regions. Based on the Decree of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on 'I State Program on the Great Return to the liberated territories of Azerbaijan', these activities are underpinned by climate-friendly, environmentally clean technologies, as well

as "smart" and "green" approaches. We are determined to transform these territories into "Net Zero Emission" zone by 2050, marked by innovative initiatives such as the establishment of "green energy" zones, sustainable agriculture, eco-friendly transport, smart cities, smart villages, and reforestation programs covering thousands of hectares of land. First Smart Aghali village has already settled with Internally Displaced Persons of Azerbaijan.

Dear Ms. chair and participants,

I would like also to emphasize that it is essential for all States Parties to the Espoo Convention to engage with one another in good faith in order to meet the goals of the Convention to prevent, reduce and control transboundary environmental impacts.

As the Convention makes clear, it is the duty of every State Party to undertake notification and consultation procedures, including to exchange information sufficient for the purposes of engaging in meaningful discussions with other States about the likelihood of transboundary impact. When one State refuses to provide information or to engage in such discussions, it not only frustrates the goals of the Convention but also causes irreparable injury, making it impossible for the Parties to comply with their mutual obligations to prevent transboundary harms.

In that regard, we note with satisfaction that the draft decision on general issues of compliance with the Convention considers, with reference to the opinions of the Committee, that:

- “When a Party wishes to enter into consultations under article 2(5) regarding an activity not listed in appendix I of the Convention, the Party of origin has an obligation to do so without delay”; and
- “A lack of response by the Party of origin to requests of the potentially affected Party . . . and a failure of the Party of origin to furnish a potentially affected Party with information about the activity. . . constitutes non-compliance with article 2(5) of the Convention”.

We call for the adoption of the draft decision during this Meeting of the Parties.

Dear colleagues,

We call upon you to strengthen international cooperation, to engage in good faith in order to prevent transboundary environmental harms, and to act responsibly on transboundary issues such as conservation of water basins, biodiversity and forests. We should use every opportunity which may lead to development of regional interaction.

Thank you for your attention!