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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  
(First meeting, Geneva, 4-6 October 1999)  
(Item 4 of the provisional agenda)

**REPORT ON THE SUBREGIONAL PILOT WORKSHOP ON THE PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE EIA CONVENTION IN THE BALKAN AND THE BLACK SEA REGION**

Submitted by the delegation of Bulgaria

1. In accordance with the work plan for the period 1998-2000, as adopted at the first meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (ECE/MP.EIA/2, annex VI) (hereafter called the EIA Convention), a subregional pilot workshop on the practical implementation of the EIA Convention in the Balkan and the Black Sea region was held in Varna, Bulgaria, on 26-27 April 1999. It was attended by representatives from the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Norway, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Ukraine. The secretariat also participated in the meeting.

2. The main topics of discussion were:

- Countries' national systems to implement the EIA Convention and the ensuing responsibilities and obligations;
- Identification of the specific needs of the countries in the Balkan and Black Sea regions;
- Experience in the Nordic region with the implementation of the EIA Convention (on the basis of case studies);
- Proposals for future action by the countries in the region to meet the EIA Convention's requirements;
- Information on the follow-up to the decisions taken at the first meeting of the Parties.

3. During the workshop it became clear that many of the countries in the Balkan and Black Sea region were developing activities that could have a transboundary environmental impact. Various practical issues, such as those related to notification, translation and prediction methods, arose in the application of the provisions of the EIA Convention to these activities. The participants held that these should be resolved according to national EIA systems.

4. Participants welcomed the fact that several countries in the Balkan region and around the Black Sea had already ratified the EIA Convention, and they recommended those that had not yet done so to ratify or accede to it as soon as possible.

5. They also recommended that the EIA Convention should be applied to actual cases through the implementation of provisions in national legislation, even by countries that are not yet a Party to it. It was generally accepted that the practical experience gained by implementing the Convention would further strengthen the ratification process. As the proposed

activities listed in Appendix I to the EIA Convention might require further identification, the participants suggested that more work should be done and guidance provided for this "screening", both at the national and at the international level.

6. The workshop urged Governments to designate the points of contact to which notifications in accordance with Article 3 of the Convention should be submitted, whether or not they are a Party to the Convention. Since the legal and administrative systems varied considerably from country to country, the workshop recommended that the point of contact should be a specified institution with responsibilities related to environmental impact assessment and the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. It was also suggested that a meeting of the points of contact in the Balkan and the Black Sea region should take place to investigate how these responsibilities could be met. This would help to apply the procedures of the Convention more effectively.

7. To facilitate the notification of a Party likely to be affected by the transboundary impact of a proposed activity, the format for notification as included in decision I/4 (ECE/MP.EIA/2, annex IV) of the Meeting of the Parties should be used. It was also recommended that the competent authorities, as defined by the Convention, should consider the practical experience gained with the application of the Convention when deciding on the specific arrangements for the flow of information related to Article 3.

8. Although bilateral and multilateral agreements or arrangements were not a precondition for the implementation of the Convention, certain aspects, such as the consideration of the "significance" of an adverse transboundary impact, that are not clearly determined in the EIA Convention, could be further elaborated through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Also in order to identify similarities and differences between national EIA systems, Governments should enter into bilateral or multilateral cooperation arrangements, taking into account the elements included in Appendix VI to the Convention. These arrangements could also involve the governmental authorities designated by a Party to perform tasks covered by the Convention.

9. The workshop recognized the important role that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) could play in the implementation of the EIA Convention. In the light of the recent adoption and signing of the Convention on Access to information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), governmental authorities and representatives of NGOs in the Balkan and Black Sea region should meet to discuss the strengthening of the role of the NGOs in the procedures of the EIA Convention.

10. Governments in the Balkan and Black Sea region should continue to analyse the practical experience with the implementation of the Convention in order to identify difficulties and successful solutions for the management of transboundary EIAs. A workshop should be organized during which the competent authorities, as defined in the Convention, which deal with the practical application of transboundary EIAs should analyse projects with a transboundary impact. Since, in principle, the Convention applied to proposed activities with a transboundary impact, the workshop recommended that the provisions of the Convention should also be applied to projects that were themselves transboundary.

11. The workshop recognized that the countries in transition in the Balkan and Black Sea region had a specific need for better EIA methodologies. In this respect, the final results of the earlier work included in the publication "Current Policies, Strategies and Aspects of Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (ECE/CEP/9, Environmental Series No. 6) should be used as a background document by a group of experts, in particular to improve prediction methods and methodological approaches.

12. The workshop agreed that the EIA database operated under the Convention offered Parties and non-Parties an opportunity for promoting the dissemination of information and knowledge related to the Convention. The EIA database also contributed to capacity building, supported the application of EIA and made related management systems more effective. To further strengthen the practical experience with the application of the Convention in the Balkan and Black Sea region, it was recommended that countries should

make better use of the database and ensure that its information was regularly updated by the country data manager.

13. The workshop suggested that the Working Group on EIA should decide, at its first meeting on further steps to be taken, on the basis of the above conclusions and recommendations, in order to prepare for a formal decision by the Meeting of the Parties. To this end the Working Group could, for instance, request the lead country, with the support of the secretariat, to prepare such a draft decision for the second meeting of the Working Group together with items for the work plan.

14. The workshop participants commended the host authorities for the excellent organization and the warm hospitality and also thanked the Norwegian authorities for the financial support that they had provided.