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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)

PROGRESS REPORT ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN A TRANSBOUNDARY CONTEXT

Submitted by the delegation of the Russian Federation

Introduction

1. At the first meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (18-20 May 1998), it was agreed that the work-plan for the implementation of the Convention for 1998-2000 should include work on public participation in a transboundary context (ECE/MP.EIA/2, annex VI, item 4). The objective was to strengthen the application of public participation in environmental impact assessment (EIA) in a transboundary context, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention.

2. According to the work-plan, draft guidance would be prepared, with the participation of countries in transition and NGOs, on the basis of existing legislation, guidelines and research documents, including a report on international and national documents and experiences with public participation.

3. The Russian Federation would act as lead country in the preparation of a workshop (tentatively scheduled for February 2000) and draft guidance. Italy pledged financial support and other countries might also provide funds. The secretariat would provide practical assistance.

Activities between June 1998 and June 1999

4. The lead country nominated Mr. Nikolai Grishin of the Centre for Environmental Projects (CEP-Moscow) to manage the preparations. According to the work-plan, the lead country analysed the existing international (including the Aarhus Convention) and national documents, legislation, guidelines and research documents dealing with public participation in EIA, especially in a transboundary context.

5. The State Committee for Environmental Protection of the Russian Federation mandated the Centre for Environmental Projects to organize public participation in transboundary EIA. CEP-Moscow organized the public participation, on the Russian Federation's side, in the EIA of the "Loviisa-3" nuclear power plant in Finland. The practical aspects of public participation in EIA in a transboundary context were also discussed at the Workshop on the practical application of the Convention, which took place in Helsinki in May-June 1999 (see MP.EIA/WG.1/1999/5).

6. The activities between June 1998 and June 1999 have provided a better understanding of the general situation and the issues related to the organization of public participation in EIA, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. For instance, there are different traditions and levels of legislative backing for public participation in EIA in the States Parties or Signatories to the Convention. Differences in cultural traditions and legislation should be taken into account when organizing public participation in EIA, particularly in a transboundary context. Some problems are linked to the translation and dissemination of information. In this respect the deadlines for the authorities and the public to submit comments should be carefully considered, as they are not further elaborated in the Convention. These issues are particularly important for the countries in transition.

7. All activities mentioned above (with the exception of the Workshop mentioned in para. 5) were sponsored by the Russian Federation (CEP-Moscow). Participation in the Workshop in Helsinki was made possible thanks to the financial support from the event's organizers.

Future activities

8. After the first meeting of the Working Group and in accordance with the timetable, draft guidance will be prepared and submitted to the Workshop for discussion and possible revision. The Workshop's report, with a draft decision

and the guidance, will then be presented at the second meeting of the Working Group for finalization. Finally, it will be submitted to the Parties at their second meeting for possible adoption. Future activities will be carried out according to the time schedule below. These activities will include: a second pilot project for the practical study of organizing public participation in EIA; consultation with the Convention's secretariat on whom to invite to the Workshop, including countries in transition and NGOs; development of the first draft of the guidance on public participation in EIA; sending this draft to citizens' groups, to the Convention's secretariat and to the Workshop's participants; organizing the Workshop in the Russian Federation; and development of the next version of the draft of the guidance for submission to the Working Group at its second meeting.

Timetable for the preparation of the draft guidance

1998

June-December	Collection of materials on public participation in environmental impact assessment at the national and international levels
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1999

January-February	Practical study on the organization of public participation in transboundary environmental impact assessment (pilot project: Russian public participation in transboundary EIA of Finnish nuclear power plant "Loviisa-3")
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March-April	Analysis of the legislative and theoretical aspects of materials on public participation in environmental impact assessment at the national and international levels
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May-June	Participation in the Workshop on transboundary EIA in Helsinki and analysis of the practical aspects of public participation in an environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context based on discussions with Workshop participants and representatives of Finnish firms
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July-September	Practical study on the organization of public participation in transboundary environmental impact assessment (second pilot project: Russian public participation in EIA of Finnish disposal facility of spent nuclear fuel-project "Posiva")
September	Consultation with the Convention's secretariat to decide on the participants to be invited to the Workshop in the Russian Federation
September-December	Development of the first draft of the guidance on public participation in environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context under the UN/ECE Convention
December	Finalization of the first draft of the guidance. Sending this draft to citizens' group, to the Convention's secretariat and to the prospective participants of the Workshop in the Russian Federation, including representatives of countries in transition and NGOs
2000	
January-February	Receiving and analysing the comments on the first draft of the guidance. Preparing the second draft for the Workshop in the Russian Federation
February	Organization of the Workshop. Development of the final version of the draft of the guidance and sending it to the Convention's secretariat
May	Participation in the second meeting of the Working Group on EIA, where the draft guidance will be presented for finalization
October	Participation in the second meeting of the Parties, where the draft will be presented for consideration and possible adoption