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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

REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING

1. The fourth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment took place in Orvieto (Italy) on 19 November 2001.
2. It was attended by the following delegations: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan and Yugoslavia.
3. The Commission of the European Communities was represented. The following international and non-governmental organizations were also represented: the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization (WHO/EURO), European ECO Forum, the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA).
4. The Chairman, Mr. Stefan Ruchti, opened the meeting. Mr. Francesco La Camera welcomed the participants on behalf of the host authorities. The secretariat informed the Working Group of the available documentation.

I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The Working Group adopted its agenda as set out in document MP.EIA/WG.1/2001/1 on the understanding that item 2 on the election of officers would be dealt with at a later stage.

II. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN PURSUANT TO THE WORK-PLAN ADOPTED AT THE SECOND MEETING OF THE PARTIES WHICH REQUIRE A DECISION BY THE WORKING GROUP

A. Strategic environmental assessment

6. Mr. Terje Lind, Chairperson of the ad hoc Working Group on the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, informed the Working Group on the progress made in the preparation of this protocol. He indicated that the negotiations were expected to finish in time for the signing of the protocol at the Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" in Kiev in May 2003. The Working Group took note of this information.

B. Reviews of the implementation of the Convention

7. Mr. Wiek Schrage, Secretary to the Convention, explained how the draft review of the implementation of the Convention pursuant to item 1 of the work-plan adopted at the second meeting of the Parties would be prepared. The new reporting system would guide Parties in their reporting on the implementation of the Convention. The Working Group took note of the information provided.

C. Reporting system

8. The United Kingdom, lead country for this activity, introduced the draft reporting system (MP.EIA/WG.1/2001/3) and pointed out that the Meeting of the Parties needed solid and detailed data for a thorough review of the Convention. In the ensuing discussion the delegations voiced broad support for the new reporting system and thanked the Implementation Committee for its comprehensive work. Some delegations expressed concern at the length of the document and the information requested on particular projects. After focusing on ways to meet these concerns, the Working Group adopted the reporting system and requested the delegation of the United Kingdom to make adjustments to the reporting system in line with the outcome of the discussion. The delegation of Poland informed the Meeting of the possibilities that the environmental impact assessment database (ENIMPAS) offered for collecting the answers to the questionnaire. The Working Group requested the secretariat to circulate the finalized questionnaire to the Parties and non-Parties to the Convention in the beginning of the year 2002.

D. Review of the Convention

9. The delegation of Italy, lead country for this activity, informed the Working Group of the outcome of the first meeting of the Task Force on Amendments. It indicated that it had been disappointed by the reluctance of some experts in the Task Force to move forward and the silence

of others. For this reason it did not want to continue as lead country for this activity. The Chairman thanked the delegation of Italy for its efforts, deplored its decision to withdraw as lead country and indicated that a solution should be found. In the ensuing discussion, many delegations emphasized the need to base possible proposals for amendments on the experience gained in the application of the Convention. Consequently, the Working Group decided that the questionnaire for the reporting system, as adopted under agenda item 3 (c), should be circulated soon and Parties and non-Parties would have the time to reply before the summer of 2002. A small group of experts from Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Norway, United Kingdom and the European Commission would analyse the replies to the questionnaire and identify possible areas for amendment, to be presented at the next meeting of the Working Group.

III. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

A. Assistance to countries in transition

10. In the introduction of this agenda item, the Chairman reminded delegations that the success of the Convention depended also on the participation of representatives of all Parties, including those from countries in transition. However, this required funds. Given the current financial constraints, a proposal was put forward to revise the system of financial assistance and to adopt the more restrictive system used by the Committee on Environmental Policy. Representatives from countries in transition stated that their countries' financial difficulties would limit their ability to attend meetings under the Convention. Possible donor countries were requested to provide funds to support the countries in transition. The Working Group decided to maintain the current system of assistance, as decided at the second meeting of the Parties, and to come back to this issue at its next meeting on the basis of a proposal by the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties, with the assistance of the secretariat.

B. Budget and extrabudgetary resources

11. The Working Group reviewed decision II/13 on the budget as adopted at the second meeting of the Parties and noted that not all the activities were funded. The Working Group decided that a more stable financial situation would have to be established and requested the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties, with the assistance of the secretariat, to identify different options to solve this situation, for discussion at its next meeting.

IV. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

12. The Working Group was not able to cover all the items on its agenda, due to the extensive discussions within the available time, and decided to come back to the remaining items at its next meeting, in accordance with the rules of procedure. The Chairman summarized the main decisions taken by the Working Group. The Working Group requested its Chairman, with the assistance of the secretariat, to finalize the report of its fourth meeting. The meeting was closed on Monday, 19 November 2001.