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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 Signatories to the Protocol  
on Strategic Environmental Assessment**

**REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING**

1. The second meeting of the Signatories to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) took place in Geneva on 25 and 26 April 2005.
2. The meeting was attended by delegations from the following Signatories to the Protocol and other UNECE Member States: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan. A representative of the Commission of the European Communities attended the meeting. The following States Members of the United Nations were also represented: Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Iran.
3. Representatives of two United Nations bodies attended the meeting: the United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (UNDP/RBEC) and the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for Europe (UNEP/ROE). A representative of the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe (WHO/EURO), a specialized agency in the United Nations system, also attended. The following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were represented: ECOGLOBE, ECOTERRA, European ECO Forum, the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC-CEE) and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC).
4. Mr Jan De Mulder (Belgium), Chair, opened the meeting with a special welcome to the delegation of Iraq, represented for the first time at a meeting under the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context. The Meeting adopted its

agenda prepared by the secretariat.

5. The Meeting observed one minute's silence in memory of Mr Igor Vucer, who had represented Slovenia at meetings under the Convention and who had passed away at the end of 2004. The Meeting requested the secretariat to write to the Minister of the Environment of Slovenia in order to express its condolences.

## **I. STATUS OF RATIFICATION**

6. The delegation of Finland announced that Finland had ratified the Protocol on 18 April 2005, becoming the first Party to the Protocol. The delegations of Albania and Norway indicated that they expected their respective countries to ratify the Protocol by the end of 2005, and the delegations of Estonia and Germany expected their respective countries to ratify it in 2006. The delegation of Armenia reported that its government had also begun the process of ratification.

## **II. INSTITUTIONAL AND PROCEDURAL ISSUES**

7. The delegations of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom introduced an informal paper on institutional and procedural issues, prepared by a small group comprising Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The small group had produced the paper further to decision III/12, on preparations for the first meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, and to decision III/9 on the workplan of the Convention and Protocol (ECE/MP.EIA/6). The Meeting welcomed the paper, and the draft decisions annexed to it, and asked the small group to:

(a) Consider the institutional and administrative aspects of the relationship between the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the same Meeting serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol;

(b) Analyse further the practical consequences of the proposals in the paper, including the issue of representation of subregions in the Bureau and the Implementation Committee;

(c) Work with the Bureau and the Implementation Committee on membership of those bodies when considering matters under the Protocol;

(d) Coordinate its work with the small group examining financial issues, nominated by the Bureau; and

(e) Present a next version of the paper in the light of the comments made and present revised draft decisions at the third meeting of the Signatories.

## **III. ANALYSIS OF CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDS**

8. A representative of UNDP/RBEC presented an overview of analyses of capacity-building needs in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), carried out under the workplan. The Meeting welcomed the work done by UNDP/RBEC, with the support of REC-CEE, and agreed that UNDP/RBEC:

- (a) Amend the country reviews of capacity-building needs to take into account recent developments, as presented to the Meeting by the countries participating in this activity;
- (b) Share information on pilot studies undertaken in this area; and
- (c) Ensure that national capacity-development manuals prepared under this activity are based on the region-wide capacity-development manual to support implementation of the Protocol on SEA, as referred to under paragraph 9 below.

#### **IV. CAPACITY-DEVELOPMENT MANUAL**

9. A representative of the REC-CEE, and the secretariat, presented the draft capacity-development manual developed under the workplan. The Meeting welcomed the draft manual and discussed its purpose, target audience, status and the way forward. The Meeting agreed that:

- (a) The REC-CEE and the secretariat revise the draft manual taking into account comments made during the meeting and any comments received in the six weeks following the meeting;
- (b) The manual primarily address application; it might also address transposition, but it should not provide interpretation of the Protocol;
- (c) A small editorial group, comprising Austria, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the European Commission and UNDP/RBEC, assist the REC-CEE and the secretariat in revising the draft manual;
- (d) The secretariat make the draft manual available on the Convention's website, with the small editorial group's permission; and
- (e) The draft manual be presented to the third meeting of the Signatories for finalization.

10. The representative of WHO/EURO recognized that there was a need for the consideration of health in the manual, but WHO/EURO had not provided any input yet because of the lack of resources, but also, and more importantly, because of the lack of a mandate from the health sector. The Czech Republic, Norway, the REC-CEE and the secretariat supported WHO/EURO's contributing to the manual. WHO/EURO was keen to collaborate with other States, especially those enjoying a strong domestic collaboration in government between environment and health sectors. The question of resources had still not been resolved, but WHO/EURO reported that it was hopeful of resolving this matter.

#### **V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING**

11. Mr Jeremy Wates, the Secretary to the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, presented a proposal for a joint workshop between the Protocol and the Aarhus Convention on public participation in strategic decision-making, which will be discussed at the second meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention (25-27 May 2005).

12. The Meeting thanked the Secretary to the Aarhus Convention for this information, and noted that the proposed workshop was not in its current workplan, that resources were not available and that countries had not much experience in applying the Protocol. The Meeting was not against further discussion on this proposal, but chose to wait and see whether it was adopted at the second meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention. The Meeting agreed to discuss this matter at its third meeting, taking into account the discussions at the second meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention, and to identify further funding.

## **VI. NEXT MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES**

13. The Meeting agreed that the Bureau would determine the date of the third meeting of the Signatories taking into account the number of ratifications of the Protocol.

14. The Chair urged the Meeting to consider preparation of a draft declaration and draft decisions for the first meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. The Meeting agreed that the Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, would prepare, for consideration at its third meeting, the relevant documentation including a draft declaration and draft decisions on:

- (a) Institutional and procedural issues, further to paragraph 7 above;
  - (b) Reporting under articles 13 and 14 of the Protocol;
  - (c) The capacity-development manual, further to paragraph 9 above, as appropriate;
- and
- (d) Elements for inclusion in a workplan and corresponding budget.

15. The Chair invited delegations to suggest activities for inclusion in a workplan. The Meeting agreed that a workshop on the exchange of practical experience might be organized as a side-event to the first meeting of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. The exchange of practical experience could also be provided for in the workplan. The Meeting also agreed that other items for the workplan might include:

- (a) Subregional cooperation;
- (b) Health, either within the capacity-development manual or as a separate issue in the workplan, with WHO/EURO as lead organization;
- (c) Public participation, with European ECO Forum or an EECCA country as lead country; and
- (d) Quality issues in relation to the implementation of the Protocol.

16. The Meeting agreed that these elements might be included in the Convention's next workplan and budget, rather than as a separate workplan and budget for the Protocol alone.

## **VIII. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

17. The representative of IAIA informed the Meeting of future international conferences

organized by IAIA:

- (a) On ethics and quality in impact assessment, Boston (United States of America), 31 May - 3 June 2005;
- (b) On international experience and perspectives in SEA, Prague, 26 - 30 September 2005; and
- (c) Its next annual meeting which was expected to take place in Norway in May 2006.

18. The secretariat summarized the Meeting's main decisions. The Meeting requested the Bureau to finalize the report of the meeting, with the support of the secretariat.

#### **IX. CLOSING OF THE MEETING**

- 19. The meeting was closed on Tuesday, 26 April 2005.