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### INFORMATION NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary  
Context:  
Fourteenth Meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact  
Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment  
(WG 14 on EIA and SEA)  
(Geneva, 16–18 June 2026)  
- Statements by the EU and its Member States

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Delegations will find in [Annex](#), for information, a compilation of statements delivered on behalf of the EU and its Member States, at the 14th Meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Geneva, 16–18 June 2026), as transmitted by the Cyprus Presidency.

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**Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context**  
**Fourteenth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and**  
**Strategic Environmental Assessment (WG 13 on EIA and SEA)**  
**(Geneva, 16–18 June 2026)**

**- Statements by the EU and its Member States –**

**Agenda item 1: Adoption of the agenda**

Good morning, Chair, distinguished colleagues,

It is an honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States at the fourteenth meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment under the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment.

As this is my first intervention, allow me to convey our sincere appreciation to the Secretariat for its thorough preparation and continued professionalism, as well as the Bureau, the Implementation Committee and the Working Group members who contributed to the preparation of the documents. We also extend our gratitude to the interpreters, whose work is indispensable to the effectiveness and inclusiveness of our deliberations.

As we reconvene, it is essential to reaffirm the enduring importance and concrete impact of the Convention. It is a great achievement that the Convention has been making an important contribution to environmental protection for several decades – and celebrated its 35th anniversary in February. At the same time, we must be clear-eyed about the significant geopolitical, economic, and social pressures shaping our current environment. These pressures inevitably affect our work under the Espoo Convention. Yet the European Union and its Member States remain committed to upholding and advancing the principles and obligations of the Convention and its Protocol. We are determined to ensure that this framework continues to deliver meaningful results, whilst being in tune with the current challenging times.

We look forward to a focused, constructive, and results-oriented session.

With regard to the agenda, the European Union and its Member States support it as it is proposed. Thank you Chair.

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## **Agenda item 2: Status of ratification**

The European Union and its Member States thank the Parties for the information provided on progress toward the ratification of the first and second amendments to the Convention, as well as the Protocol.

We emphasize the importance of ensuring the entry into force of both amendments and advancing the ratification of the Protocol that are essential to strengthening the Convention's implementation and global opening and relevance.

We wish to express our appreciation to those Parties that have taken concrete steps toward ratification [and warmly welcome the ratifications completed to date].

We encourage all Parties with pending ratifications to take the necessary steps to bring this work to a successful conclusion.

On the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the Espoo Convention, this milestone year offers a significant opportunity, and the entry into force of the First Amendment would represent both a symbolic and a tangible step forward for the Convention. In this context, the European Union and its Member States call on the United Kingdom and Armenia to complete their ratification of the first amendment ahead of the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties since its entry into force is a prerequisite for enabling accession to the Convention by States outside the UNECE region.

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## **Agenda item 3: Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties**

### **3(a) Practical arrangements**

The European Union and its Member States would like to thank the Secretariat for the clear and comprehensive update on the practical preparations for the tenth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention and the sixth session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, to be held in Geneva from 1 to 4 December 2026. We highly appreciate the Secretariat's continued efforts and professionalism in ensuring the smooth and timely organization of these important meetings, and we look forward to continuing our close cooperation with the preparations ahead.

The European Union and its Member States can support the Informal document on Preparations for the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties as proposed.

### **3(b) Provisional agenda**

With regard to the agenda, the European Union and its Member States would like to extend their gratitude to the Bureau and the Secretariat for preparing the provisional agenda for the two sessions of the Meetings of the Parties and the Informal document Preparations for the high-level panel marking the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Convention.

With only minor organizational remarks we sent to the Secretariat, we support the proposed provisional annotated agenda, which provides a clear and balanced basis for our upcoming sessions, notably ensuring due attention to implementation, compliance, and future priorities of the Convention and its Protocol.

We also warmly welcome the high-level panel marking the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Convention. This represents an important opportunity to reflect on achievements, draw lessons learned, and discuss the Convention's future. This includes its potential global opening and strengthened cooperation in environmental assessment, as well as its challenges and opportunities to remain in tune with the current geopolitical context.

We favor an interactive, forward-looking panel, guided by a skilled moderator and high-level composition of panelists, structured around key questions on current concerns, as well as concise interventions from the floor.

The European Union and its Member States remain fully committed to the Convention and look forward to constructive discussions.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

### **3(c) Chairs of the sessions**

The European Union and its Member States welcome the proposed nominations for the Chairs of the forthcoming sessions of the Meetings of the Parties. We welcome the nomination of the Minister for Environment of Armenia as a candidate to chair the high-level segment, and the nomination of Mr. George Kremlis, current Chair of the Bureau, as a candidate for Chair of the general segment. The EU and its Member States support these nominations and look forward to working constructively with the nominated candidates in the preparation for and conduct of the upcoming sessions of the Meetings of the Parties.

### **3(d) Review of implementation of the 2024–2026 workplan and consideration of follow-up activities for the 2027–2029 workplan**

#### **3(d)(i). Facilitation, coordination and visibility of intersessional activities**

The European Union and its Member States thank the Bureau and the secretariat for the preparation of draft decision X/2–VI/2 and its annexes, as well as for the inclusive process that has allowed Parties to provide detailed written comments.

The EU and its Member States reaffirm their support for the Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA as key instruments for ensuring high-quality environmental assessment, strengthening transboundary cooperation and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, climate action, biodiversity protection and sustainable infrastructure development.

We welcome the overall structure of the proposed workplan for 2027–2029 and appreciate its focus on core implementation activities, compliance, capacity-building and regional cooperation, as well as its objective to balance deliverables against available financial and human resources.

The European Union and its Member States support the adoption of draft decision X/2–VI/2, on the understanding of incorporation of the clarifications and adjustments reflected in the comments we submitted to the Secretariat. We believe that these improvements strengthen the coherence, feasibility and effectiveness of the workplan and enhance its contribution to the full and effective implementation of the Convention and the Protocol.

With regards to the provisional schedule of meetings 2027-2029 the European Union and its Member States support it as proposed.

We stand ready to continue engaging constructively with all Parties to reach consensus on the final text.

### **3(d)(ii) Compliance and implementation**

#### **a. Review of compliance and related draft decisions**

The European Union and its Member States express their appreciation to the Implementation Committee and its Chair for the thorough documentation provided and for the clear presentation of the main outcomes of the Committee’s sessions. We would also like to thank the Secretariat for its continuous support to the work of the Implementation Committee. We take note of the initial draft decisions on compliance with the Convention and the Protocol.

The EU and its Member States would like to recall the statement and position by EU and its Member States at the 13th meeting of the Working Group regarding the findings and recommendations on compliance by Poland with its obligations under the Convention in respect of the construction of a barrier on the territory of the transboundary United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site “Bialowieza Forest”. This statement was forwarded to the UNECE Secretariat to be included in the minutes of the 13th Working Group meeting. We reiterate our full support to Poland’s efforts to pursue the project of “East Shield” in order to confront the ongoing challenges in the Eastern border region of the Union. The EU and its Member States wish to stress again the importance of European Union security and safeguarding external borders against military and hybrid threats and would like to stress that such projects are covered by Article 2(8) of the Convention.

The European Union and its Member States thank the Implementation Committee Chair for the reflections shared on the number of meetings necessary for the Committee to effectively fulfil its mandate. We recognize the added value of maintaining one online meeting per year, while also acknowledging the practical and resource-related considerations involved.

We look forward to further discussion on maintaining both efficiency and effectiveness in the Implementation Committee’s work.

## **b. Reporting and review of implementation and related draft decisions**

Regarding the proposed request by Belarus for the insertion of the subparagraph (g) in paragraph 74 of the Draft eighth review of the implementation of the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, as amended by the Working Group at its thirteenth session, European Union and its Member States could support the insertion of the first sentence of the subparagraph (g) in paragraph 74 of the Draft eighth review but we suggest amendments to the second sentence so as to read “Several Parties report difficulties in implementing the Convention that result from a lack of clarity in its provisions and suggest areas for improvement. Good practice exchange activities could help to address this issue and to develop specific guidance documents on the practical application of the Convention, if needed”. Our suggestion derive by a concern that the wording suggested by Belarus could weaken the compliance framework and potentially serve as a justification for inadequate implementation of the Convention and the Protocol.

The European Union and its Member States extend their gratitude to the Bureau and the Secretariat for the preparation of the draft Decisions X/5 and VI/5 on the reporting and review of implementation of the Convention and the Protocol, and the Implementation Committee for its continued careful and substantive work on these texts.

We welcome the approach of the draft decisions since these reflect the importance of regular reporting for assessing efficient implementation and compliance, as well as for identifying eventual further needs that may be needed by Parties.

The EU and its Member States fully share the emphasis placed by both draft decisions on the importance of timely, complete and high-quality national reporting.

The European Union and its Member States submitted their comments on the two Draft Decisions to the Secretariat. We support the adoption of the decisions, on the understanding of incorporation and adjustments reflected in our comments submitted to the Secretariat.

Furthermore, we also support the continuous work on revising and digitalizing the reporting questionnaires, with a view to improving clarity, user-friendliness and analytical value, and we appreciate the efforts to align reporting processes under the Convention and the Protocol as much as possible.

## **3(d)(iii) Promoting practical application of the Convention and the Protocol**

### **a. Subregional cooperation and capacity-building**

The European Union and its Member States underscore the value of a strategic, coherent and forward-looking workplan that further strengthens the effective implementation of the Espoo Convention and the Protocol, while enhancing regional cooperation and fostering synergies with relevant international frameworks.

We note with appreciation the progress achieved under the 2024–2026 workplan, particularly in the area of subregional cooperation and capacity-building, and commend the secretariat and participating Parties (Lithuania, Poland, Italy, Slovenia and Greece) for organizing and hosting the subregional meetings for the Baltic Sea and Mediterranean Sea subregion respectively.

We welcome the constructive outcomes of subregional cooperation, notably in the Mediterranean, including the valuable work on synergies with multilateral development banks, which offers practical opportunities to enhance policy coherence and international relevance. We also strongly support continued and strengthened engagement across marine regions and with relevant regional and global frameworks.

Furthermore, we appreciate the ongoing cooperation in Central Asia and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, including through joint initiatives and EU-supported projects, which contribute meaningfully to strengthening national capacities and regional collaboration.

The European Union and its Member States support the draft joint decision X/4–VI/4 on cooperation under the Convention and the Protocol in the Mediterranean region and remain committed to a constructive and forward-looking engagement in support of an effective and inclusive workplan for the next period.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

#### **b. Exchange of good practices**

The European Union and its Member States thank the Bureau and the secretariat for the information provided regarding the preparations for upcoming sessions and the proposed thematic work for the 2027–2029 intersessional period.

We welcome the forward-looking approach to the organization of thematic seminars during the 2027–2029 intersessional period. We support the proposal to hold focused half-day workshops and seminars, making full use of digital tools in line with budgetary constraints, aimed at showcasing the added value of the Convention and the Protocol, promoting good practices, and contributing to relevant Sustainable Development Goals, including with a view to a broader geographic reach.

We attach particular importance to ensuring that these seminars are practical, inclusive and results-oriented, producing concise outcome documents that can effectively inform Parties, support implementation, and further strengthen cooperation.

Furthermore, for the period 2027–2029, the European Union and its Member States would also suggest the preparation of fact sheets on good practices on digitalisation, efficiency of impact assessments, and on meaningful and efficient public participation processes.

We would also like to warmly thank Switzerland for hosting this valuable side event.

The European Union and its Member States remain committed to contributing actively to this work and stand ready to support its successful implementation in cooperation with all Parties.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**(i) Seminar on identifying and assessing alternatives in environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, including climate proofing**

EU and its Member States wish to express their appreciation to the delegations of Italy and Greece for kindly agreeing to chair the Seminar on identifying and assessing alternatives in environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment, including climate proofing, which has been jointly organized with the Secretariat. This timely initiative offers a valuable forum for the exchange of good practices, as well as for reflecting on shared challenges and lessons learned in this important area.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to all speakers for the efforts undertaken to prepare and share materials showcasing experiences, notably in relation to enhancing awareness and strengthening capacity-building for environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment in the context of climate proofing.

**(ii) Experience exchange event on application of artificial intelligence products, including open-source tools, during environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment procedures: existing solutions and developments**

The EU and its Member States express their appreciation to the Secretariat and the Bureau for the swift and responsive preparation of the draft decision on the application of artificial intelligence in environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment. The timely follow-up to the Working Group's request is duly recognized.

At the same time, the EU and its Member States consider it important to proceed in a proportionate and pragmatic manner, mindful of the additional personnel and time resources that more formal arrangements could entail. In this context, we have reservations about establishing an official Task Force on artificial intelligence at this stage and would be more inclined towards a flexible, lighter-touch approach, such as dedicating regular sessions within Working Group meetings to this topic.

We also see merit in further clarifying and examining the scope and objectives of any future work in this area. The dedicated session on artificial intelligence session planned for June could serve as a useful opportunity to identify concrete topics of relevance, assess where artificial intelligence may provide clear added value in the Espoo context, and better define priorities for potential follow-up. The outcomes of such discussions could then be appropriately reflected in the draft decision, including with regard to the format and focus of future work.

In this spirit, the EU and its Member States support the adoption of draft decision X/3–VI/3 on Application of artificial intelligence, on the understanding of incorporation of the comments, clarifications and adjustments reflected in the comments submitted by EU+MSs.

We look forward to continuing a constructive exchange aimed at ensuring a balanced, needs-driven and resource-conscious approach.  
Thank you Chair.

**(iii) Cooperation with partner organizations**

The European Union and its Member States thank the partner organizations for the informative updates on recent developments relevant to the implementation of the Convention and the Protocol.

Taken together, these contributions underscore the continued relevance of the Convention and the Protocol in the context of both established and emerging nuclear technologies, and they highlight the enduring importance of meaningful transboundary consultation for nuclear installations, regardless of their scale, in line with the Convention and the Protocol.

**(iv) Capacity-building and legislative activities**

The European Union and its Member States value the insights shared with regard to capacity-building activities carried out in Central Asia and thank Germany and OSCE for co-funding these important efforts.

The European Union and its Member States readily await the finalization of the two-page informal pamphlets, and appreciate the update given by the representative of the International Association for Impact Assessment.

**(v) Increasing awareness, accession and implementation beyond the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region**

We thank the secretariat for the comprehensive presentation of the proposed workplan for 2027–2029. We welcome the efforts to develop promotional materials highlighting the experience with the application of the Convention and the Protocol in marine regions. Such materials will also be instrumental in enhancing visibility, understanding and practical uptake, especially in complex and sensitive transboundary contexts. We therefore support the proposed approach and agree that the materials should be finalized in advance of the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties.

We also acknowledge the information provided by the secretariat on its ongoing efforts to mobilize funding for an initial global workshop aimed at promoting the application of the Convention and the Protocol beyond the ECE region, notably as tools to help ensure a level playing field. This initiative has the potential to significantly strengthen the global relevance and impact of the instruments.

In this regard, the European Union and its Member States are open to considering the proposal to include this activity in the 2027–2029 workplan, subject to the availability of resources, and we encourage the secretariat to continue its outreach and fundraising efforts. At the same time, the European Union and its Member States recall that the use of online means of communication can help overcome some of the resource implications of physical meetings.

### **3(e) Financial arrangements**

The European Union and its Member States thank the secretariat for the comprehensive update. We express our appreciation for the transparency and the continuous efforts of the secretariat and the Bureau to address the significant financial and operational challenges encountered. We also highlight the importance of ensuring that the workplan for 2027–2029 is realistic, implementable and fully aligned with the financial and staffing resources available. In this regard, we underline the value of timely pledges and take note of the need to complete the prioritization exercise on the basis of confirmed contributions.

The European Union and its Member States also acknowledge the broader context of resource constraints within the United Nations system, including the implications of right-sizing and right-servicing measures, and the impact these may have on meeting formats, secretariat capacity and the effective delivery of treaty bodies' work. We consider it important to continue exploring pragmatic solutions, including digital and hybrid modalities, where feasible and supported.

In this context, the European Union and its Member States support the adoption of draft decision X/1–VI/1 on financial arrangements for 2027–2029, on the understanding of incorporation of the clarifications and adjustments reflected in the comments submitted.

These comments aim to strengthen clarity, realism and sustainability, while supporting a more predictable and equitable funding framework for the next budget cycle and beyond.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

### **3(f) Prioritization of the draft workplan activities for 2027–2029 and consideration of the related draft decision**

The European Union and its Member States thank the Bureau and the secretariat for the preparation of the draft decision on the adoption of the workplan for 2027–2029, including its annexes, and for the inclusive and transparent manner in which the outcomes of the participatory exercise at the previous Working Group meeting, as well as subsequent written and oral inputs from delegations in this Working Group, have been reflected.

The European Union and its Member States appreciate the overall structure and ambition of the proposed workplan, which builds on the achievements of the 2024–2026 workplan and remains firmly anchored in the core objectives of the Convention and the Protocol. We particularly welcome the emphasis on full and effective implementation, compliance review, subregional cooperation, and the exchange of good practices, as well as the continued support for countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, South-Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean region.

At the same time, the EU and its Member States underline the importance of ensuring that the 2027–2029 workplan remains realistic, focused and deliverable, taking due account of available financial and human resources. In this context, we support the proposed prioritization of activities and the clear distinction between core activities and those that are subject to the availability of additional funding and successful fundraising efforts.

We attach particular importance to:

- consistency between the draft decision and its annexes, including with regard to the envisaged number and roles of meetings of the Bureau, the Working Group and the Implementation Committee;
- clarity on the scope and presentation of activities requiring additional fundraising, avoiding duplication with arrangements addressed under the separate draft decision on financial matters;
- a careful and balanced approach to emerging or evolving thematic areas, ensuring that activities remain aligned with the mandates of the Convention and the Protocol and reflect Parties' views as expressed in the EU+MSs written comments; and
- transparency regarding resource implications and assumptions underpinning the effective functioning of the secretariat.

In light of these considerations, the EU and its Member States support the adoption of draft decision X/2–VI/2 on the workplan for 2027–2029, on the understanding of the incorporation of the clarifications and adjustments reflected in the comments submitted by the EU and its Member States.

However, the European Union and its Member States, although having advanced in the discussions of the new comments, are not ready to discuss here today the proposed changes in the document due to their late submission.

We stand ready to continue engaging constructively with other Parties to reach agreement on the draft decision and its annexes, with a view to their submission to the Meetings of the Parties for consideration and possible adoption.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

### **3(g) Draft declaration**

The European Union and its Member States thank the Bureau and the secretariat for the preparations of the next sessions of the Meetings of the Parties and for preparing the draft Geneva Declaration.

We welcome the draft Declaration as a strong and timely political message, marking the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Espoo Convention and reaffirming the continued importance of environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment as science-based and participatory tools for informed decision-making.

In this regard, we underline the importance of fully reflecting the complementary role of different knowledge systems, including Indigenous and local knowledge, alongside science, as well as ensuring meaningful public participation throughout the text.

We also support strengthening clarity and consistency in the text, including alignment with agreed terminology under the Protocol, and reinforcing key messages on climate action, biodiversity protection, digital transformation, and synergies with other international frameworks whilst remaining in tune with the current geopolitical reality.

The European Union and its Member States appreciate the references to pressing geopolitical and environmental challenges, including the environmental consequences of war, and the important role of the Convention and the Protocol in supporting sustainable recovery and transboundary cooperation.

However, the European Union and its Member States, although having advanced in the discussions of the new comments, are not ready to discuss here today the proposed changes in the document due to their late submission.

Overall, we support the adoption of the draft Geneva Declaration as a solid basis for endorsement at the Meetings of the Parties, on the understanding of incorporation of the clarifications and adjustments reflected in the comments submitted by the European Union and its Member States, which aim to improve precision and coherence of the text.

We remain committed to working constructively with all Parties to reach consensus on a clear, balanced and forward-looking Declaration.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

### **3(i) Provisional schedule of meetings for 2027–2029**

The European Union and its Member States thank the secretariat for the preparation of the provisional schedule of meetings for the 2027–2029 intersessional period.

We recognize the importance of early and transparent planning of meetings in ensuring the effective functioning of the Convention and the Protocol and in facilitating the participation of Parties and observers in the work of the treaty bodies.

The European Union and its Member States underline that the proposed schedule should remain realistic, efficient and aligned with the financial, staffing and conference-servicing resources expected to be available during the next intersessional period. In light of the broader operational constraints currently affecting the United Nations system, careful prioritization and efficient organization of meetings will remain essential.

We also support continued consideration of flexible and pragmatic working methods, including online and hybrid meeting modalities where appropriate and feasible, while ensuring effective participation, transparency and inclusiveness.

In this context, the European Union and its Member States support the provisional schedule of meetings for 2027–2029 as It is proposed.

Thank you Madam Chair.

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#### **Agenda item 4. Related events**

The European Union and its Member States thank the secretariat and delegations for the information provided on recent related events. We welcome these opportunities for exchange and engagement, which contribute to strengthening policy coherence, sharing experiences and promoting good practices in environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment. We take note of the information presented and look forward to continued synergies between these fora and the work under the Convention and the Protocol.

Thank you Chair.

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#### **Agenda item 6. Presentation of the main decisions taken and closing of the meeting**

The European Union and its Member States would like to express their sincere appreciation to the Secretariat, the Bureau and the Chair for the efficient, transparent and inclusive manner in which the fourteenth meeting of the Working Group has been conducted. We also wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Secretariat for its excellent preparation of the meeting and for its consistent professionalism and support throughout our deliberations.

The European Union and its Member States reaffirm their strong commitment to continued constructive engagement within this Working Group and to the effective and consistent implementation of the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Finally, we wish to extend our sincere thanks to the interpreters for their invaluable contribution, as well as to all speakers for their clear and informative presentations. We also thank all participants for their active engagement and thoughtful contributions, and we wish the Secretariat every success in carrying forward the outcomes and follow-up actions of this meeting.

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