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## **EPLO is awarded the Observer Status at the Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol - UNECE**

On June 13, 2023 in Geneva, the Working Group of the Espoo Convention and the SEA Protocol has unanimously agreed on granting to the EPLO an observer status. The EPLO representative at the Espoo convention is Ms. Garifalia Selimi. The EPLO will therefore be able to attend the WG meetings and the Meetings of the Parties (MOPs), as well as any other meetings or events organized by any of these two UNECE (UN Economic Commission for Europe) Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

UNECE has negotiated five environmental conventions, also known as multilateral environmental agreements or MEAs. The Espoo Convention and the Sea Protocol are among them.

The Espoo (EIA) Convention is a key instrument for bringing together all stakeholders to notify and consult each other on all major projects under consideration that might have adverse environmental impacts across borders in order to prevent environmental damage before it occurs.

It sets out the obligations of Parties to assess the environmental impact of certain activities at an early stage of planning. It also lays down the general obligation of States to notify and consult each other on all major projects under consideration that are likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact across boundaries. The Convention entered into force in 1997, it has 45 Parties, including the European Union and all its Member States.

The SEA Protocol augments the Espoo Convention by ensuring that individual Parties integrate environmental assessment into their plans and programmes at the earliest stages – so helping to lay the groundwork for sustainable development. The Protocol also provides for extensive public participation in the governmental decision-making process. The Protocol was signed in 2003 by 35 European countries and entered into force in 2010. It is open to all countries of the UN.