Category: **Obligations Relating to Transboundary Environmental Harm**

Sub-Category: Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment

Name of Good Practice: (Espoo) **Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context**

Key Words: Impact Assessment, Regional, Transboundary

Implementing Actors: Nation State: 45 Parties to the Convention (as of December 2014); International Organisation: UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

Location: Europe, Central Asia, and North America

Description: The Espoo Convention, which entered into force in 1997, obligates its Parties to assess the environmental impacts of certain activities that may cause transboundary environmental harm at an early stage of planning. The Convention also obligates States to notify and consult with affected States with respect to certain proposed projects that are likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact across boundaries.

Although the Convention does not explicitly refer to human rights, it requires each Party to establish a procedure for the assessment of activities (that is, activities subject to the Convention), which permits public participation. The Convention also provides that the Party of origin shall give an opportunity to the public in the areas likely to be affected by a proposed activity to participate in relevant environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedures, including by providing comments or objections to the authorities overseeing the EIA process, and shall ensure that the opportunity provided to the public of the affected Party is equivalent to that provided to the public of the Party of origin.

The Parties to the Convention, in Decision II/3 of the Second Meeting of the Parties, reaffirmed the importance of public participation in the EIA process, recognizing that public participation in a transboundary context will help to: improve relations between peoples and countries; prevent transboundary environmental conflicts; develop civil society and democracy in the countries of the ECE region; promote the timely disclosure of relevant information to participants in the environmental decision-making process; make people understand and respect the final decisions on projects; and give insights into environmental protection and long-term environmental problems.

Further Information: Information about the Convention is available on the UNECE website: <http://www.unece.org/env/eia/welcome.html>.