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**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
TO THE CONVENTION ON THE TRANSBOUNDARY
EFFECTS OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS**

**FIRST CONSULTATION AND TRAINING SESSION
FOR POINTS OF CONTACT FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACCIDENT NOTIFICATION
AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE DESIGNATED WITHIN
THE UNECE INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT NOTIFICATION SYSTEM**

(Bratislava, 10-11 November 2003)

Report

Introduction

1. The consultation and the training session for points of contact for the purpose of accident notification and mutual assistance designated within the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification System (UNECE IAN System) were organized by the Ministry of Environment, the Office of Civil Defence of the Ministry of the Interior and the Slovak Environmental Agency on 10-11 November 2003 in Bratislava.
2. The consultation and the training session were held under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), within the framework of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.

Objectives

3. The key objectives were to provide a forum for:
 - (a) Reviewing the effectiveness of the UNECE IAN System on the basis of the results of the System's tests carried out in recent years and an additional test to be carried out before the consultation and the training session in Bratislava;
 - (b) Sharing experience in the functioning and organization of work of a point of contact;
 - (c) Discussing links and possible harmonization of the UNECE IAN System with other systems, in particular with existing alarm systems within international river commissions;
 - (d) Practical training of personnel of points of contact; and
 - (e) Discussing whether a manual for points of contact should be drawn up.

Participation

4. The consultation and the training session were attended by representatives of points of contact and other experts from the following 22 UNECE countries: Austria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan, and the European Commission.
5. The participation of representatives of eligible countries in transition was sponsored by Switzerland through the Convention's trust fund.

Opening – welcome addresses

5. Mr. Sergiusz Ludwiczak (UNECE) opened the consultation and the training session, and welcomed all the representatives of points of contact participating in the meeting. He also welcomed Mr. Laszlo Miklos, the Slovak Minister of Environment, and Mr. Ernst Berger, the Chairperson of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.
6. Mr. Miklos welcomed all the participants to Slovakia and expressed his Government's satisfaction that the consultation and the training session were taking place in Bratislava. Mr. Miklos stressed that the implementation of measures at hazardous activities was crucial to prevent accidents as far as possible. However, one had to be well prepared and able to respond to them effectively when they did happen. One of the elements of preparedness, he stated, was the efficient flow of information within established notification systems such as the UNECE IAN System. He wished the representatives of the points of contact gathered in his country successful deliberations and an enjoyable stay in Bratislava.

7. Mr. Berger stressed the fact that this was the first time that the representatives of the points of contact had a chance to meet following the entry into force of the Convention and the acceptance of the UNECE IAN System by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting. Mr. Berger also stressed the importance of establishing cross-border notification systems at all necessary levels including at the national level, which was represented at this meeting, and maintaining them operational at all times. He considered the communication element as a crucial part of preparedness and response capabilities.

Election of the Chairman

8. Mr. Tomas Trcka (Slovakia) was elected as the consultation is Chairman. Mr. Berger and Mr. Ryszard Grosset, Deputy Chief Commandant of the Polish State Fire Service, conducted the training session.

Programme

9. The consultation was divided into:

- (a) Session I: enhancement of the effectiveness of the UNECE IAN System;
- (b) Session II: practical training of personnel of points of contact;
- (c) Session III: experience of different national points of contact with their alarm systems within the framework of the Convention; and
- (d) Concluding session: identification of major obstacles and future challenges to improve the effectiveness of the UNECE IAN System and drafting of recommendations by the points of contact for submission to the Conference of the Parties.

10. The programme containing the names of speakers and the titles of their presentations is given in annex II to this document.

Test of the UNECE IAN System

11. The UNECE IAN System was tested on Sunday, 9 November 2003, by the Slovak point of contact. The outcome was presented at the consultation by Mr. Milan Šišulak, Director of the Office of Civil Defence, and discussed by the representatives of the points of contact.

Conclusions

12. Based on the presentations made during the consultation, the outcome of the training session and discussions held during the concluding session, the representatives of the points of contact agreed on a set of conclusions as contained in annex I to this report.

13. They also agreed to submit these conclusions to the Conference of the Parties for further consideration.

Visit to the headquarters of the Slovak point of contact

14. The participants had the opportunity to visit the headquarters of the Slovak point of contact at the invitation of the Ministry of the Interior. Mr. Šišulak reported on the tasks and the organization of work of the point of contact.

Closing of the consultation and the training session

15. The representatives of the points of contact agreed that the Convention's secretariat should prepare the report on the consultation and the training session, and finalize it in agreement with the Chairman and the instructors of the training session.

16. Mr. Berger, speaking on behalf of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, its secretariat and all participants, expressed appreciation to the Government of Slovakia for organizing the consultation and the training session and the visit to its points of contact and for testing of the UNECE IAN System. He also thanked the organizers for providing excellent facilities for the consultation.

Annex I

CONCLUSIONS

1. The representatives of the points of contact considered the first consultation and training session to be very successful. In their opinion, the meeting addressed the major issues in connection with the UNECE IAN System. These major issues were: (i) the lessons learnt from the test of the UNECE IAN System by the Slovak point of contact on Sunday, 9 November 2003; (ii) the improvement of the tools available within the UNECE IAN System to communicate information on industrial accidents to neighbouring countries; and (iii) the need for harmonizing of the different information systems in use.
2. The results of the test of the UNECE IAN System by the Slovak point of contact could be summarized as follows:
 - (a) The notification within the exercise was sent by the Slovak point of contact by fax and e-mail to points of contact in 36 UNECE member countries and the European Commission;
 - (b) The points of contact in 18 countries and the European Commission confirmed receipt of the notification according to the procedure within the UNECE IAN System; and
 - (c) Twelve points of contact (Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, France, Poland, Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine, United States and Uzbekistan) did not react to the notification, while six points of contact (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Spain, United Kingdom) could not be reached by fax or e-mail at all.
3. Given that a proper flow of information within the UNECE IAN System was crucial for effective preparedness and response capabilities, the representatives were seriously concerned that half the points of contact considered in the test did not react to the notification or could not be reached. They, therefore, recommended that:
 - (a) In general, efforts should be made to increase the effectiveness of the UNECE IAN System;
 - (b) The competent authorities of those Parties and the focal points for the Convention of those UNECE member countries which had problems in reacting to or receiving the notification should investigate the current situation at their points of contact and take the necessary measures to improve the situation;
 - (c) Future communication tests should be subregional rather than UNECE region-wide, as was the case for the tests carried out so far, to improve the accessibility of points of contact; and

(d) The secretariat should coordinate the planning of future subregional tests and compile their results for review by the Conference of the Parties and at future consultations of the points of contact.

4. On the basis of the results of the practical training session using the UNECE early warning, information and assistance request reports, the representatives recommended a review of the procedures as well as contents and layout of the reports as follows:

(a) The above procedures and reports should be tested during a bilateral cross-border response exercise. The delegation of Poland volunteered to test the UNECE IAN System's procedures and forms during a response exercise with one of its neighbours;

(b) An open-ended task force should prepare recommendations for improving the procedures and reports preferably before the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties (May/June 2004 was suggested as a possible time frame). A number of delegations expressed their interest in participating in this task force. The delegation of Poland volunteered to chair it;

(c) The task force should also look into possibilities for using up-to-date communication technology within the UNECE IAN System, e.g. the Infra-web system presented during this consultation; and

(d) The development of further guidance on the application of the UNECE IAN System especially for use by points of contact in Russian-speaking countries with economies in transition. The delegation of Poland agreed to prepare and disseminate a Russian version of the self-training kit for the UNECE IAN System among these countries.

5. The representatives of the points of contact also considered the third session of the consultation, during which different alarm systems had been presented, very useful and instructive. Beside the UNECE IAN System, there were many organizations involved in different alarm systems, such as the national alarm centres for nuclear power plants, the early warning systems for accidents at international rivers like the Rhine, the Danube or the Elbe and the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) of the European Commission. Because all these systems had their own infrastructure, their own national and international networks, their own reporting procedures and cooperate to various degrees with each other, the representatives of the points of contact recommended that:

(a) The UNECE IAN System should be harmonized, where possible, with other systems, in particular with existing alarm systems within international river commissions;

(b) The possibilities for harmonizing their procedures and reports should be presented in a background paper and further discussed at a meeting, possibly back to back with a meeting of the above-mentioned task force. The representatives of UNECE, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the European Commission welcomed this proposal, and agreed to coordinate the preparations for such a meeting.

6. The representatives of the points of contact participating in this meeting recommended to the Conference of the Parties to consider scheduling another consultation among them, possibly in 2005. The delegation of Italy offered to host it.

Annex II

PROGRAMME

Consultation Chairman: *Mr. Tomas Trcka, Special Adviser, Environmental Risks Management Department, Ministry of Environment, Slovakia*

Session I: Enhancement of the effectiveness of the UNECE IAN System

1. Overview of the UNECE IAN System

Mr. Sergiusz Ludwiczak, Secretary of the Conference of the Parties to the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

2. Results of tests of the UNECE IAN System performed by points of contact of Switzerland, Poland and Hungary

Mr. Dominique Rauber, Head of International Affairs, National Emergency Operations Centre, Switzerland

Mr. Ryszard Grosset, Deputy Chief Commandant of the State Fire Service and Deputy Chief of the National Civil Defence, Poland

Mr. Imre Varga, National Centre for Industrial Accidents, National Directorate General for Disaster Management, Ministry of the Interior, Hungary

3. Results of the most recent test performed by Slovakia

Mr. Milan Šišulak, Director, Office of Civil Defence, Ministry of the Interior, Slovakia

Session II: Practical training of personnel of points of contact

1. Introduction to the UNECE early warning, information and assistance request reports

Mr. Ernst Berger, Head of Section on Safety of Installations, Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape, Switzerland

2. Presentation of a simulated industrial accident for the purpose of the training session

Mr. Ryszard Grosset

3. Hands-on training session – completing the UNECE early warning, information and assistance request reports – moderated by:

Mr. Ernst Berger and Mr. Ryszard Grosset

4. Conclusion of the training session

Session III: Experience of different national points of contact with their alarm systems within the framework of the Convention

1. Tasks of the Hungarian point of contact within the framework of the Convention

Mr. Imre Varga

2. Experience of the Belarusian point of contact in fulfilling the tasks under the Industrial Accidents Convention

Mr. Mikhail Nestser, Head of Department of Operational Management of Forces and Assets, Ministry for Emergency Situations, Belarus

3. Experience and future challenges for the points of contact in the Caucasian UNECE member countries

Mr. Mutallim Abdulhasanov, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Azerbaijan

4. Organization of the Swiss point of contact within the framework of the Industrial Accidents Convention and its cooperation with other alarm and early warning systems

Mr. Dominique Rauber

5. Early warning systems within international river commissions

Mr. György Pintér, Senior Consultant, Institute for Water Pollution Control, Hungary

6. The Slovak experience in operating a national nuclear power plant alarm system

Mr. Lubos Tomik, Executive Director, Centre for Nuclear Safety for Central and Eastern Europe, and Mr. Vladimír Sladek, Head of Department, Nuclear Regulatory Authority, Slovakia

7. The Community Mechanism and the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) of the European Commission

Mr. Régis Elbez, Desk Official, Civil Protection Unit, European Commission

8. Infra-web – the new way of registration, communication and dispatch of incidents

Mr. Wilfried van Gogh, Crisis Manager, ICT Programme Manager, Institute of Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment (RIZA), Netherlands

9. Geographic information system of the Slovak Civil Defence

Ms. Ivana Flimelova - Office of Civil Defence, Ministry of the Interior, Slovakia

Concluding Session

Identification of major obstacles and future challenges to improve the effectiveness of the UNECE IAN System

Drafting of recommendations by the points of contact for submission to the Conference of the Parties