Preventing water pollution on the Scheldt River: the Warning & Alert System of the Scheldt (WASS) and Meuse River Basin (WASM)

Leon Dhaene – Secretary General

UNECE Conference “Accidental transboundary water pollution prevention – contingency planning, early warning, mitigation"
Budapest, 4 – 5 November 2019
The International Scheldt Commission:

**MISSION**

*Intergovernmental organisation* for the coordination of joint actions and the monitoring of *water quality and quantity* (surface and groundwater) aiming at a *sustainable and harmonised water management*, at the international level in the International Scheldt District.

**PARTIES**

- France
- Flemish Region
- Wallonia
- Brussels-Capital Region
- Belgian Federal State
- The Netherlands

**INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR CO-ORDINATION OF**

- *European water directives* in the Scheldt district:
  - Framework Directive Water, establishing a framework for community action in the field of water policy (2000/60/EG),
  - The EU Floods Directive, on the assessment and management of flood risks (2007/60/EG),
- *Adaptation to climate change*, including measures to prevent and reduce the impact of drought
- Transboundary *management of accidental pollution* of all water bodies in the Scheldt District
• Surface : 37,170 km²
• Population : > 14,5 mio
• High population density : > 100-2000 / km²
• Water scarcity
• Dense network of waterways and motorways
• Considerable industrial & urban structure
• Intensive agriculture
• Old industrial (polluted ?) sites
• High flood risk areas
The International Meuse Commission: mission parties responsibilities

- **MISSION**
  *Intergovernmental organisation* for the coordination of joint actions and the monitoring of *water quality and quantity* (surface water only) aiming at a *sustainable and harmonised water management*, at the international level in the International Meuse District.

- **PARTIES**
  - France
  - Luxembourg
  - Flemish Region
  - Wallonia
  - Brussels-Capital Region
  - Belgian Federal State
  - Germany
  - The Netherlands

- **INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR COORDINATION OF**
  *European water directives* in the Meuse district:
    - Framework Directive Water, establishing a framework for community action in the field of water policy (2000/60/EG),
    - The EU Floods Directive, on the assessment and management of flood risks (2007/60/EG),

  - *Adaptation to climate change*, including measures to prevent and reduce the impact of drought / flooding
  - Transboundary *management of accidental pollution* of all water bodies in the Meuse District
- Surface: 35,000 km²
- Length: 900 km
- 818 waterbodies
- Population: > 9 mio inhabitants
- Drinking water: 7 mio inhabitants
- Water scarcity
- High flood risk areas
- Dense network of waterways
- Intensive agriculture
The International Scheldt Commission: organisation
Warning and Alert System Scheldt/Meuse (WASS/WASM): Key features

- Platform for the input and exchange of notifications on water pollution
- Connections via main warning centers
- 3 types of notifications:
  - Warning
  - Information
  - Request of information
- Standardised information exchange
- Monthly tests
- 5 main warning centers
- Contacted by regional warning centers
- Connected to WASS: decide whether an alert has an international impact or not
Warning and Alert System Scheldt (WASS)

Message flows

Alert notification per mail (WASS) and fax

Read receipt

Telephone call to confirm receipt of mail and fax

Testreport mailed to ISC

Typical problems:
- Fax not working
- No read receipt received
- Telephone answered in only one language
WASS works as a mailsystem:
- Alert messages are mailed downstream
- Information messages is sent upstream
- Request for information mostly sent upstream

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<th>Outgoing incidents</th>
<th>Incoming messages*</th>
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*To + CC
Type of pollution:

- Mainly mineral oils / diesel
- In a first phase, alerts might be of an unidentified type
DEVELOPMENTS 2020:

- Updated WASS/WASM
- Field exercise involving all services, based on a field issued alert
The International Scheldt Commission:

for more information

- **International Scheldt Commission**
  Theaterbuilding – 19th floor
  Italiëlei 124
  2000 Antwerpen

- **New public website**: [https://www.isc-cie.org](https://www.isc-cie.org)
  (expected for yearend 2019)

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