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Statement

by

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**Deputy Executive Secretary
of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

at

**Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents**

Monday, 28 November 2016

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing my sincere thanks on behalf of the secretariat for the warm welcome and excellent arrangements provided by Her Excellency the Minister. The Government of Slovenia has provided a first-rate setting for your deliberations over the next three days.

Thirty years ago this month, the fire at the Sandoz agrochemical store near Basel, Switzerland, and its dowsing with water led to a major environmental disaster in the Rhine River. Later it inspired the drafting of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.

However, thirty years later, major industrial and chemical accidents continue to happen. We witnessed only six weeks ago the deadly fire and explosion at the headquarters of BASF chemicals at Ludwigshafen, Germany. Your work is as important as ever, so we must ensure that it remains high on the policy agenda.

I will be moderating the first part of the UNECE/OECD seminar today, so for now I will only say that it is a recurrent pleasure for UNECE to cooperate with OECD on a range of issues and, in particular, with the OECD Environment Directorate.

I trust that again today our cooperation will support fruitful discussion on the linkages between industrial accidents prevention, preparedness and response, on the one hand, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, on the other. The seminar should help to guide the work in this area under both UNECE and OECD and to align our efforts with the global commitments.

Later in your meeting you will have the opportunity to translate well-intended words into clearer, concrete actions. I would like to highlight just a few of the items on your agenda.

You will discuss land-use planning and industrial safety, a policy nexus that has, to date, often lacked coherence and where policy integration – and, more simply, better communication between sectors – can help countries to move forward with their global commitments.

You will discuss water pollution arising from industrial accidents and the important work carried out jointly with the UNECE Water Convention on key issues of concern, such as fire-water retention, tailings management, contingency planning and joint exercises.

And, for the first time since the adoption of the Convention, you will consider an amendment to the Convention other than to annex I. This amendment is being proposed to the Conference of the Parties after a thorough intergovernmental drafting process. I would like to highlight two main features of this amendment.

The first is the strengthening and clarification of the provisions relating to the public. These changes tie in effectively with the Sendai Framework's priority of strengthening disaster risk governance.

They are also aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal on peace, justice and strong institutions. The changes will boost participatory decision-making and give the public a stronger voice in decisions that affect their communities.

The second feature of the amendment that I wish to highlight is the opening of the Convention to all Member States of the United Nations. This is clearly important because industrial accidents and environmental pollution do not respect borders. But it is also an important signal of openness, solidarity and sharing – a willingness to share knowledge and experience and, just as importantly, to learn from others.

Adoption of an amendment may seem to be a major step, but it is one of many on the road to implementation. Next, Governments will have to ensure the early ratification, acceptance or

approval of the amendment to support its entry into force, and consider how to implement it effectively and efficiently.

I am therefore pleased to see the Bureau's proposal, in the draft workplan for the period 2017–2018, to review the Convention's long-term strategy. This is with a view to addressing the opening of the Convention to all countries, as well as the linkages with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework.

I would encourage a rigorous consideration of these matters, with a long-sighted view through to 2030.

Finally, as always on such occasions, I must raise the question of resources. Your secretariat receives limited support from the regular budget of the United Nations and your activities are therefore heavily reliant on extrabudgetary resources for both assistance activities and many secretariat services.

This is your Convention and it will be your workplan. I therefore encourage all Parties, partners, industry representatives and others present, to seek to support the work under the Convention. That means continuing to expand the number of Parties that contribute financially but also increasing the size of contributions and actively helping the secretariat in resource mobilization.

At the same time, your in-kind contributions, especially through providing expertise and hosting events, are essential for the functioning of the Convention as a platform for cooperation on industrial accidents prevention, preparedness and response.

In conclusion, let me wish you all an efficient and successful meeting, with meaningful and productive discussions. Your work is important and touches upon people's lives and health, the economy and the environment.

Thank you.
