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NEW LOOK WEBSITE FOR THE INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS CONVENTION

Hot on the heels of the recent upgrade for the Transport website, the Industrial Accidents Convention has unveiled its new look site.

The new website is a great improvement on the old one with a massive reduction in pages and a new, simpler navigation.

The main challenge for any UN website is for site visitors to be able to find the information they need quickly and easily. With that in mind, we have reduced the number of pages on the website from around 100 to less than 20: a huge 80% reduction.

We also made the menu simpler and consistent across all the site's pages. Now, with only one menu, no page requires more than two mouse clicks to access.

The reduction in pages was mostly achieved through an innovative way of presenting meeting documents. Instead of each meeting having its own page, all meetings of the same convention body are grouped together on the one page using what is referred to in the web business, as an 'accordion'.

It is a little hard to explain how a website accordion works, so go to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents website and have a look at the 'Workplan' or 'Contacts' pages to see how it works.

We've also created a consistent colour scheme for the whole site and integrated an interactive map showing the parties to the Convention.

Have a look at the website: <http://www.unece.org/env/teia/welcome.html> and tell us what you think. For further information, please contact us at teia@unece.org.



IMPROVED REGULATIONS ON PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS IN THE UNECE REGION

On 18 December 2009, the Parties to the Protocol on Persistent organic pollutants (POPs) to the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution further stepped up their efforts to regulate or get rid of POPs in the region by broadening the Protocol's scope to include seven new substances: hexachlorobutadiene, octabromodiphenyl ether, pentachlorobenzene,

pentabromodiphenyl ether, perfluorooctane sulfonates, polychlorinated naphthalenes, short-chain chlorinated paraffins.

POPs are particularly harmful chemical substances (pesticides, industrial chemicals and by-products or contaminants) which pose a serious threat to the environment and to human health, not only in the UNECE region, but all over the globe. POPs are not just toxic: unlike other pollutants, they resist degradation, remaining in the environment for generations and accumulating in the bodies of humans and animals.

They are transported over long distances, including to the Arctic, where they menace the sensitive ecosystems and indigenous peoples, who had no part in their making. Humans are exposed to POPs through the food they eat and through the environment, including the indoor environments in which we live and work. Unborn and newborn babies are vulnerable to POPs through transplacental transfer or through breast milk. Health hazards from POPs include endocrine disruption, reproductive and immune dysfunction, neurobehavioural and developmental disorders, and cancer.

At the December meeting, Parties also updated and upgraded the Protocol's current obligations for eliminating the production and use of a number of POPs regulated by the Protocol (DDT, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene and PCBs) and for fixing emission limit values from waste incineration, and adopted up-to-date guidance on best available techniques to control emissions of POPs. Furthermore, Parties adopted an expedited procedure for the entry into force of the amendments to the Protocol.

Parallel to this, with a view to facilitating the Protocol's ratification by countries with economies in transition in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, the Parties introduced flexibilities for these countries regarding the time frames for the application of emission limit values and best available techniques.

The Protocol on POPs, which was signed in 1998 and entered into force in 2003, constituted the first international action to eliminate or curtail POPs. It has been a pioneer in the international fight against POPs and has served as a model for regulating POPs both at the European and global levels.

The Protocol so far has been ratified by 29 countries. Over the years, it had successfully regulated 16 substances, banning the production and use of some outright, while scheduling

others for elimination at a later stage or severely restricting their emissions. The Protocol also contains obligations for the use of best available techniques for controlling POPs emissions and for the environmentally sound disposal of wastes containing POPs, as well as specific limit values for the incineration of waste.



One of the major strengths of the Protocol is that its obligations are based on the sound science and data generated by the Convention's scientific network, which monitors and models emissions concentrations and depositions as well as environmental and health effects. □

The documents of the 27th session of the Executive Body of CLRTAP, 14-18 December 2009, are available at: http://www.unece.org/env/lrtap/ExecutiveBody/welcome_27.html

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THE UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL COMMISSIONS AND THE CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGES

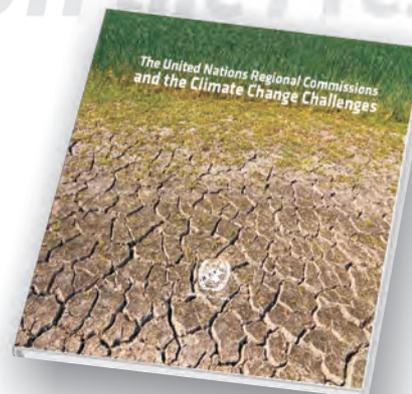
This publication offers a bottom-up regional perspective on climate change. It shows how the five United Nations Regional Economic Commissions are an important part of the mobilization against what the United Nations Secretary General has called the "leading economic and geopolitical issue of the 21st century".

The five United Nations regional commissions, working with regional partners and other United Nations bodies, are mobilizing their normative, analytical and technical capabilities to undertake collaborative initiatives and actions on climate change in support of member States. These efforts aim at integrating climate-change considerations into development plans, strategies and programmes at national and regional levels; assessing the economic impacts of climate change, evaluating the costs of mitigation and adaptation, and exploring options for climate-change financing; enhancing member States' capabilities and leverage resources for disaster-risk reduction and preparedness; preparing methodologies for assessing the vulnerability of water resources; and examining the impacts of climate change on land, agricultural productivity and food security from social, economic and environmental perspectives.

The regional commissions have also facilitated intergovernmental regional consultation processes with a view to sharing information about policy options for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and developing regional perspectives on the post-2012 framework. These regional consultations consist of two major approaches: 1) policy options on ways to mainstream climate-change policies into development plans, including through "Green Growth"; 2) policy consultations on the follow-up to the Bali Action Plan and innovative options for a climate-change-action framework now and beyond 2012 to promote the active participation of developing countries in mitigation and adaptation actions.

The document also provides a succinct and aggregated overview of emissions trends in the countries within the scope of each of the five United Nations regional economic and social commissions. It examines basic data and lists the activities being pursued by each commission in support of its member countries. The thematic summary of these activities presented in conclusion will give readers a sense of the work of the regional commissions and of their ever closer collaboration in the effort to better address the climate change threat. □

Off the Press



The publication is available on-line at
<http://www.unece.org/publications/oes/welcome.html>.