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UNECE RELEASES GUIDANCE TO REDUCE EXPLOSIONS IN COAL MINES

UNECE and the Methane to Markets Partnership (M2M) are releasing a "Best Practice Guidance for Effective Methane Drainage and Use in Coal Mines". The Best Practice Guidance was presented at a press conference held on 12 October at Palais des Nations.

Many factors increase the risks of methane explosions, including difficult geologic conditions, underinvestment in mine operations, poor operational practices, ineffective or even counter-productive regulatory standards, and poor enforcement of safety regulations. With the continued dependence on coal production, coal extraction is expected to become increasingly challenging in many parts of the world as shallow reserves are exhausted and deeper and more gassy seams are mined.

The Best Practice Guidance demonstrates how good safety practices in coal mines can reduce explosion risk by preventing the occurrence of explosive concentrations of methane, or by rapidly diluting it to safe concentrations (i.e., through the implementation of efficient ventilation systems).

The Best Practice Guidance provides a contribution to:

- improve mine safety practices at active underground coal mines, and thus save lives,
- encourage the use of coal mine methane to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, utilize otherwise-wasted energy resources.

Experience shows that when gas flows are so high that they exceed the capacity of the mine ventilation system, gas should be collected through a mine drainage system before it can enter the mine airways.

Following good practice will ensure that methane can be safely captured, transported, and (if appropriate) utilized.

Coal supplies 25% of the world's global primary energy and 40% of global electricity. The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects that emerging economies will see energy demand grow by 93% by 2030, driven largely by China and India, and coal is expected to be the leading fuel to meet this growing demand (IEA, 2009).

In addition to increasing safety, this can result in a major reduction of greenhouse gas emissions since methane has a global warming potential 20 times higher than CO₂. Coal mines release 6% of global anthropogenic methane emissions, or about 400 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂e) per year, and estimates show that this figure could double by 2020 (ESMAP, 2007).

Major Coal Mine Explosion Incidents since 2000

Country	Date	Coal Mine	Number of Fatalities
China	14 February 2005	Sunjiawan, Haizhou shaft, Fuxin	214
Kazakhstan	20 September 2006	Lenina, Karaganda	43
Russia	19 March 2007	Ulyanovskaya, Kemerovo	108
Ukraine	19 November 2007	Zasyadko, Donetzk	80
USA	2 June 2006	Sago, West Virginia	12



Methane (CH₄) is an explosive gas at concentrations of 5% to 15% in the air. Methane released during coal mining creates unsafe working conditions in many underground mines around the world. Although methane is not a problem in every mine, methane-related accidents are notable for their frequency, resulting in many unacceptable human fatalities.

In order to disseminate these best practices, UNECE will organize dedicated workshops in countries which operate numerous coal mines and have experienced severe accidents in the recent past: China, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. The first workshop will be held in Beijing, China, on 20 October 2010. □

The publication, published as part of the ECE Energy Series, No. 31 (ECE/ENERGY/73), is available for sale from the United Nations Publications, Sale and Marketing Section at: <https://unp.un.org>. For more information please contact Carlotta Segre at: carlotta.segre@unece.org.



ASIA PACIFIC TRADE FACILITATION FORUM TARGETS RED TAPE

The extent of "red tape" in Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific region results in goods taking about one month to get from factory to ship, compared to only 10 days for OECD countries. The cost of this huge delay is estimated at around US\$ 300 billion a year.

Against this background, the Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum, held on 5 and 6 October in Kuala Lumpur, called on governments to urgently streamline international trade procedures and ensure that regulations are simple, consistent and transparent.

At the Forum, UNECE, UNESCAP and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) organized trade-facilitation events that focused on paperless trade and "Single Windows" for trade in the transition economies and the developing countries of Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific region

During the Forum, the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and Pacific (UNNExT) held regional meetings and training and advisory services. A joint initiative of UNECE and UNESCAP, UNNExT acts as a platform for peer-to-peer networking and knowledge-sharing for policymakers, practitioners and technical experts from developing countries and transition economies.

UNECE, jointly with ADB, led a regional meeting for

policymakers from Central Asian countries, focusing on the importance of creating Single Windows for trade in Central Asia, especially for reducing the long waiting time at national borders. UNNExT will provide advisory services and capacity-building events to support Central Asia in developing national master plans and creating Single Windows.

Under the UNNExT capacity-building programme, UNECE and ESCAP jointly with the World Customs Organization organised a technical workshop on Data Harmonization for Paperless Trade. The workshop introduced latest standards, technologies and tools for simplification and automation of cross border data exchange, in particular UN/CEFACT standards on simplified trade documents and the recently published WCO Data Model.

Activities during the forum week were supported through funding and active support of the UN Development Account, ASEAN, ADB, USAID and World Bank. □

For more information on the Forum, please visit:

<http://www.unescap.org/tid/projects/tfforum.asp>

or contact Markus Pikart at: markus.pikart@unece.org.

For more information on UNNExT, please visit: www.unescap.org/unnex/unnex.asp.

UNECE COMPLETES UPDATE OF ITS GENDER STATISTICS DATABASE

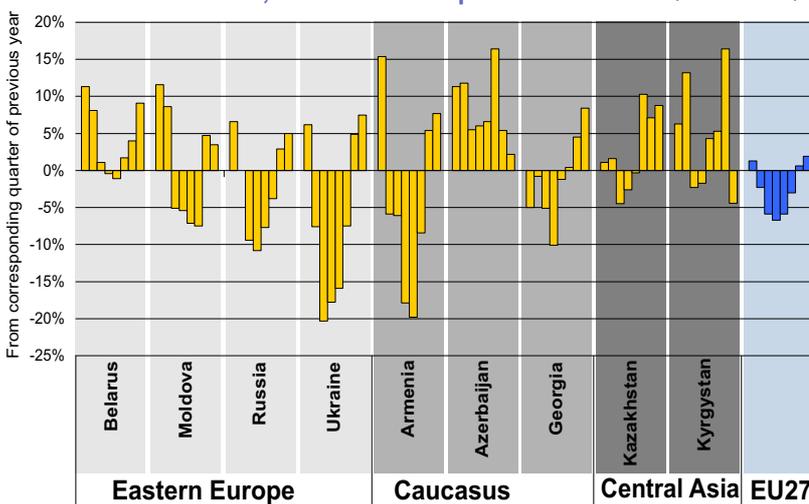
The Statistical Division completed the 2010 updates of its on-line database on gender statistics. The biannual updating of the database is carried out in collaboration with national experts on gender statistics who are requested to answer a questionnaire. On many indicators, data are collected from databases of other international organizations.

The UNECE Gender Statistics Database provides data for monitoring the development of gender issues over time in UNECE member countries and can be accessed free of charge at: <http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/DATABASE/STAT/Gender.stat.asp>. □



FACTS AND FIGURES ECONOMIC GROWTH IN FIRST HALF OF 2010

GDP growth in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asian countries, and in the European union 2008 Q3 - 2010 Q2



Source: UNECE Statistical Database (www.unece.org/stats/data), CISSTAT and national statistics.

The economic activity measured by the development in gross domestic product (GDP) continued to grow throughout the EU and the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) in the first two quarters of 2010.

While the economic crisis was observed in the EU countries already in the first half of 2008, many economies in EECCA continued growing, although at slower pace. In Moldova, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia, however, the slowdown lasted for as long as in most of the EU countries. Belarus and Kazakhstan experienced a shorter decrease and have returned to 5-10 per cent growth.

In Azerbaijan GDP continued to grow throughout the crisis but with lower pace in 2010. At the same time Kyrgyzstan slipped into a double dip recession, owing to shrinking retail sales. The unusually rapid growth in first quarter in Kyrgyzstan had originated in gold mining. Other economic short-term statistics show further signs of decelerating growth (see *ECE Weekly 390*). □

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