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

Third meeting
Budapest, 27-30 October 2004
(Item 5 of the provisional agenda)

SECOND REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Prepared and submitted by the Working Group on Implementation

Introduction

1. According to article 23 of the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, Parties have an obligation to report on its implementation. Furthermore, in accordance with article 18, paragraph 2 (a), the Conference of the Parties shall review the Convention's implementation.
2. To assist it in reviewing the implementation of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting established the Working Group on Implementation and adopted its terms of reference (ECE/CP.TEIA/2, annex III, decision 2000/2, para. 4 and app.).
3. At its second meeting, the Conference of the Parties endorsed the first report on the implementation of the Convention, prepared by the Working Group on Implementation. Taking into account this report and its conclusions and recommendations, it took decision 2002/1 on strengthening the implementation of the Convention (ECE/CP.TEIA/7, annex I), which among other things entrusted the Working Group on Implementation with clarifying the reporting format to be used for the second round of reporting by providing guidance on certain questions and taking into consideration other reporting activities in order to achieve maximum synergy.

4. The Conference of the Parties at its second meeting elected Ms. A. Aleksandryan (Armenia), Mr. E. Malasek (Czech Republic), Mr. L. Iberl (Germany), Mr. L. Katai-Urban (Hungary), Mr. C. Piacente (Italy), Mr. S. Galitchi (Republic of Moldova), Ms. J. Karba (Slovenia), Mr. U. Bjurman (Sweden), Mr. B. Gay (Switzerland), and Mr. J. Wettig (European Commission) to serve as members of the Working Group on Implementation until the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

5. The Working Group, in cooperation with the Bureau, finalized the revision of the reporting form in May 2003. The revised form was distributed to all Parties and other UNECE member countries by the secretariat on 30 June 2003. The Parties were requested and other UNECE member countries were invited to submit responses which should contain all the information needed to assess the current status of implementation of the Convention and should identify the difficulties that the Parties and other UNECE member countries had encountered in implementing and/or ratifying/acceding to the Convention.

6. The deadline for the submission of individual country reports was set for 31 January 2004. Countries that did not meet this deadline and did not indicate that the report was under preparation were sent a reminder by the UNECE secretariat by post on 16 February 2004. The competent authorities of the Parties that had not provided a report in time for the second meeting of the Working Group on Implementation on 16-17 March 2004 were sent a last reminder on 2 April 2004 by the Chairman of the Working Group, with a deadline set for 15 May 2004.

7. The Working Group on Implementation met in Budapest on 16-17 March 2004 at the invitation of the Government of Hungary. The minutes of the meeting are contained in WGI4/12 May 2004. All members of the Working Group, with the exception of Mr. J. Wettig, who due to his new duties was no longer available to the Working Group, and Mr. E. Malasek, took part in the meeting. Mr. S. Ludwiczak, the Convention's Secretary, was also present. The Working Group elected Mr. Bernard Gay as its Chairman and Ms. Jasmina Karba and Mr. Lajos Katai-Urban as its rapporteurs.

I. REPORTING

8. At the time of the meeting of the Working Group, 30 UNECE member countries and the European Community had ratified, accepted or acceded to the Convention.^{1/} France ratified the Convention on 3 October 2003 and for this country the Convention entered into force in early 2004. Therefore the reporting obligation pursuant to article 23 of the Convention for the period ending in 2003 does not apply to France.

9. The Working Group based its second report on the implementation of the Convention on the reports from the following 24 Parties to the Convention: Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Norway, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom as well as the European Community. Three reports were submitted on a voluntary

^{1/} Azerbaijan and Latvia deposited their instruments of accession to the Convention on 16 June 2004, and 29 June 2004, becoming the thirty-second and thirty-third Party to the Convention respectively.

basis by other UNECE member countries, namely Azerbaijan, Turkey and Ukraine. The last one, however, was submitted too late to be taken into account.

10. The Working Group noted that reports were not available from the following six Parties: Albania, Finland, Greece, Kazakhstan, Romania and the Russian Federation. Albania and Greece were already Parties at the time of the first reporting round and did not report then either.

11. The Working Group also took into account the conclusions of the subregional workshop on the implementation of the Convention that had taken place in Erevan on 13-15 March 2003 and was informed by the secretariat of the key issues to be included in a document to prepare the launching of an internationally supported assistance programme to enhance the efforts of Eastern European, Caucasian and Central Asian (EECCA) and South-East European (SEE) countries to accede to and implement the Convention.

12. The Working Group appreciated the contribution from the 24 Parties and 3 other UNECE member countries to the process of monitoring and assessing the implementation of the Convention by submitting their national reports. The Working Group considered that the reports submitted provided sufficient information to draw conclusions on the implementation of the Convention and to identify topics/areas where additional efforts seem to be necessary to improve it. The Working Group expressed concern that several Parties to the Convention had not reported and suggested that these Parties should again be reminded of their obligation to do so.

II. ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS IN THE REPORTING FORM

Section I: Competent authorities (Q.1)

13. Question 1 required the Parties to check the information on the competent authorities provided by the secretariat on the basis of the Convention's Internet web page it maintains.

14. The information on the web site, as provided by the Parties, proved only partially up to date. Changes of contact details were reported in slightly more than a quarter of the reports (Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Norway, Slovenia and Sweden). With the exception of Albania, Greece and Romania, all Parties had designated competent authorities and informed the Convention's secretariat. Based on the latest information available, a third of the Parties had designated as competent authorities for the purpose of the Convention the authorities responsible for environmental protection, another third the authorities responsible for civil defence and the remaining third both these authorities.

15. The Working Group stressed that up-to-date information on competent authorities was crucial for the communication and cooperation among the Parties and with the Convention's secretariat. It therefore invited Parties to communicate to the secretariat any change to this information immediately. The Working Group also drew the attention of the Parties to the need to establish and maintain coordination between the different competent authorities that they had designated.

Section II: Implementation of the Convention (Q.2 – Q.6)

Q.2 Legislation and other measures adopted to implement the Convention

16. Question 2 required the Parties to provide information on all relevant national legislation adopted to implement the Convention. Parties that had transposed the Seveso II Directive could state this and provide only information on the legislation transposing provisions of the Convention not covered by the Seveso II Directive.

17. Twelve Parties indicated that their legislation transposed the Seveso II Directive. With the exception of Monaco's, all other reports gave a list of the relevant legislation adopted or in force. The lists in general covered the different aspects of the Convention, though Croatia's only covered the emergency plan part. The level of detail of the description of the legislation differed greatly. In some reports (from Armenia, Belarus, Estonia, Republic of Moldova and Slovakia), it was rather general for an assessment. The Working Group noted that only one Party (Switzerland) indicated as required the provisions of the Convention covered by the specific piece of national legislation.

18. The Working Group noted that progress has been achieved in reporting on legislation and concluded that in general Parties had adopted an appropriate legislative framework for the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents. However, more specific information was required to be able to assess whether this also held true for Armenia, Belarus, Croatia, Estonia, Monaco, Republic of Moldova and Slovakia.

Q.3 – Q.4 Problems and obstacles in implementing the Convention

19. Questions 3 and 4 required the Parties to report on the difficulties that they had encountered in the implementation of the Convention and offer suggestions on which information or assistance the Conference of the Parties or the Convention's secretariat could provide to help overcome the problems.

20. Seven Parties (Belarus, Hungary, Luxemburg, Monaco, Norway, Slovakia and United Kingdom) mentioned no problems in implementing the Convention.

21. Some reported a number of them. This was the case especially for the Republic of Moldova (lack of institutional capacities, lack of infrastructure and equipment for notification and emergency response, etc.), Armenia (difficulties with the identification of hazardous installations, lack of communication equipment, problems in the cooperation at national level), Bulgaria (lack of resources, lack of experience in risk assessment, safety management systems and safety standards, difficulties with the identification of hazardous installations). The Czech Republic also mentioned several problems (information to the public on hazardous activities in view of possible terror acts, insurance coverage, terminology) as did Spain (coordination, risk analysis, environmental vulnerability, land-use planning).

22. Four Parties (Estonia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland) mentioned difficulties related to the siting of hazardous activities. Estonia, Lithuania and Spain mentioned difficulties in the risk analysis performance. Three Parties (Austria, Italy and Sweden) mentioned some difficulty to establish the list of hazardous activities due to the different qualifying quantities under the Convention and under the

Seveso II Directive.^{2/} Other difficulties mentioned related to the federal structure of the country (Germany) and the lack of human and financial resources (Lithuania).

23. Requests for assistance to implement the Convention were made in the reports of 12 Parties. The reports of two countries included broad list of requests for assistance. These were Bulgaria (supporting material and activities on the identification of hazardous activities, technical safety, safety standards, risk assessment and inspection) and the Republic of Moldova (assistance in drawing up legislation, institution and capacity-building, technological transfer, financial assistance, assistance in the preparation of a bilateral workshop with Ukraine). A wish for a wider exchange of information in general was expressed in several reports (Belarus, Italy, Lithuania). Further individual requests for information or assistance concerned the identification of hazardous activities (Armenia, Spain) and the handling of domino effects (Spain).

24. Germany suggested a number of activities aiming at facilitating the communication and the flow of information between UNECE member countries, reducing the complexity of the international legislation on industrial accidents and increasing the cooperation with the European Union.

25. The Working Group concluded that a number of Parties, especially EECCA and SEE countries, needed very broad assistance for the development of capacities to implement the Convention. It welcomed therefore the internationally supported assistance programme for these countries designed as a follow-up to the Erevan subregional workshop of March 2003. It also recognised that it is important for the assistance to be effective that there exists a genuine commitment at the government level in these countries to achieve self reliance in industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response. It also suggested that activities should be carried out in the future to monitor closely the more urgent, concrete needs of these countries. The Working Group finally noted that the variety of topics for which information or assistance was needed was great and might require bilateral activities to supplement multilateral activities addressing the more widespread concerns.

Q.5 – Q.6 Problems and obstacles in ratifying the Convention

26. Questions 5 and 6 required UNECE countries that had not yet ratified/acceded to the Convention to provide information on the main problems or obstacles to this and also to report on assistance that the Conference of the Parties or the UNECE secretariat could render to help in becoming a Party to the Convention.

27. Only Azerbaijan and Turkey, and at a later stage Ukraine (not taken into account in this report), submitted a report. In both countries the process of ratification is under way. Azerbaijan stated that assistance was needed to draft a national emergency plan, create an industrial accident notification system and conduct training courses for personnel in prevention, preparedness and response activities.

28. The Working Group concluded that the reports did not provide many useful insights into the assistance necessary for the ratification of the Convention by most of the still non-

^{2/} Austria gave a detailed list of hazardous activities. Italy did not provide details in its list besides the type of activity, but referred to the information contained in the EU Seveso Plant Information Retrieval System (SPIRS). Sweden had no hazardous activities.

Parties. It noted that these were mainly EECCA and SEE countries and suggested that their situation might be at least partly similar to that of the Parties that needed most assistance and recommended to include these countries in the activities deriving from paragraph 25 above to enable them to ratify the Convention in the near future.

Section III: Identification of hazardous activities (Q.7 – Q.8)

29. Questions 7 and 8 required the Parties to report on the identification and notification of hazardous activities, to provide a list of these activities and to report on the bilateral cooperation in this context.

30. Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Luxembourg, Monaco, Norway, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom reported that they had no hazardous activities within their jurisdictions.

31. The reporting on the identification and notification of hazardous activities for the remaining countries is summarized in the table below. For the countries that did not provide a report in the second round, the information on hazardous activities is based on the first report, if available (the information in this case is shown in italics).

	Hazardous activities (HA)			Number of HA identified	Bilateral activities established
	present	identified	notified		
Armenia	yes	yes	no	24	no
Austria	yes	yes	yes	46	partly
Belarus	yes	yes	no	8	no
Bulgaria	possibly	no	no	?	no
Czech Republic	yes	yes	yes	142	partly
<i>Finland</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>no</i>
Germany	yes	yes	yes	40	yes
Hungary	yes	yes	no	27	partly
Italy	yes	yes	no	9	no
<i>Kazakhstan</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>partly</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>no</i>
Lithuania	yes	yes	yes	1	yes
Poland	yes	yes	yes	25	yes
Rep. of Moldova	yes	yes	no	11	no
<i>Russian Federation</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>
Slovakia	yes	no	no	?	?
Slovenia	yes	yes	partly	18	partly
Spain	yes	no	no	?	?
Switzerland	yes	yes	partly	45	partly
Azerbaijan	yes	yes	no	9	no
Albania	?	?	?	?	?
Greece	?	?	?	?	?

Romania	?	?	?	?	?
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32. Fourteen Parties and one other UNECE member country provided in the first and/or second round of reporting a list of hazardous activities with at least some information on the type of hazardous activity or the substances which fulfilled the qualifying criteria (the detail of information provided on hazardous activities varied greatly). Some lists (in particular from the Czech Republic and the Republic of Moldova) seemed to contain also hazardous activities not covered by the Convention.

33. Five of these Parties (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania and Poland) notified these activities to all neighbouring Parties, three of them (Kazakhstan, Slovenia and Switzerland) notified some of the neighbouring Parties and six Parties had not yet notified at all.

34. Eight Parties (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Switzerland) stated that bilateral activities aimed at identifying hazardous activities were taking place. Among the countries pursuing a particularly active bilateral cooperation, Austria, Germany and Poland should be mentioned. Some reports referred to bilateral agreements rather than bilateral activities.

35. The Working Group concluded that notable progress had been achieved in identifying hazardous activities and appreciated the work done in this area that is crucial for the implementation of the Convention. However, a number of EECCA and SEE countries still needed assistance in this process. The Working Group also concluded that the notification of hazardous activities to neighbouring Parties was lagging behind. It strongly urged all Parties that still had to notify as required by the Convention to do so as soon as possible as a basis for initiating or extending bilateral cooperation.

Section IV. Prevention of industrial accidents (Q.9)

36. Question 9 required Parties to provide information on the measures taken specifically to prevent industrial accidents at national, regional and local levels and, if possible, to assess their success.

37. The majority of the reports mentioned the adoption of legislation, the introduction of licensing and inspection systems and the use of safety reports as instruments to enforce compliance with the legislation. Some reports referred to measures adopted to implement Seveso II. Bulgaria, Estonia, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom mentioned guidance documents aimed at facilitating the implementation of the legislation. Poland also mentioned the establishment of a national centre for best available technologies (BAT). Only Estonia gave an assessment by mentioning that the guidance documents proved to be very successful in practice and that it intended to issue more guidance.

38. The Working Group noted that progress had been achieved in reporting about measures to prevent industrial accidents. Systems and instruments to implement preventive measures to ensure compliance with the legislation mentioned under question 2 are generally available.

Section V. Industrial accident notification (Q.10 – Q.18)

Q.10 – Q.17: Points of contacts for industrial accident notification and for mutual assistance

39. Questions 10 to 17 required the Parties to give information on the equipment and capabilities of their points of contacts for industrial accident notification and for mutual assistance.

40. All reporting Parties had established points of contact for industrial accident notification and for mutual assistance that were operational at all times (with the exception of Poland, where the point of contact would be operational at all times from 1 July 2004) and most were equipped with telephone, fax and e-mail connections. In the majority of countries the same authority had been designated as a point of contact for both purposes. The languages most spoken by the personnel working in the points of contact, besides their mother tongue, were English and Russian.

41. The Working Group took note of the conclusions from the first consultation and training session for points of contact for the purpose of accident notification and mutual assistance (CP.TEIA/2003/9) organized by Slovak authorities on 10-11 November 2003 and of the results of the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification System test carried out by the Slovak point of contact. The test showed that out of 36 points of contact of UNECE member countries and the European Commission only 19 responded adequately.

42. The Working Group was also informed of the projects funded by the European Union to further improve the information/communication systems between member States.

43. The Working Group concluded that, although the basic infrastructure was largely in place, the effectiveness of the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) System should be increased. To this effect, further testing should be carried out and should be extended to the points of contact for the purpose of mutual assistance. The Working Group also concluded that all Parties should be urged to inform the secretariat of the Convention of any change in the data relative to the points of contacts. It suggested to the Conference of the Parties to explore the creation of an interactive Internet home page containing information on points of contacts that they could manage themselves. The Working Group welcomed and encouraged all initiatives for the harmonization of the UNECE IAN System with other existing systems and especially for the harmonization of reporting procedures existing under different bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Q.18 Establishment of regional/local industrial accident notification system

44. Question 18 required the Parties to indicate whether regional/local industrial accident notification systems had been established with neighbouring Parties.

45. Industrial accident notification systems were reported to be established at regional level in most of the reporting Parties. The exceptions – excluding the Parties which had no hazardous activities – were Armenia, the Czech Republic and Italy. However, the answers from neighbouring Parties were sometimes contradictory (Czech Republic vs. Austria, Germany, Hungary and Poland; Croatia vs. Hungary; Italy vs. Switzerland; Slovenia vs. Austria; Belarus vs. Poland and Lithuania), possibly reflecting a lack of cooperation in the establishment of the national implementation report between authorities at the regional/local level and at the national level in some Parties.

46. The Working Group concluded that there was a need to improve cooperation between authorities at the regional/local level and at the national level in some Parties. For those UNECE countries that had not yet established regional/local industrial accident notification systems, the Working Group suggested that future assistance could be provided in cooperation with the Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at a Local Level (APELL) programme of the United Nations Environment Programme and should focus on the establishment of cross-border communications at local level.

Section VI. Emergency preparedness (Q.19 – Q.20)

47. Questions 19 and 20 required the Parties to report on the measures specifically targeting emergency preparedness and on the cooperation to make off-site contingency plans compatible with those of the neighbouring Parties.

48. A few Parties (Armenia, Belarus, Croatia, Republic of Moldova) give only a very general answer to the question. Most of the other Parties mentioned the establishment, review and testing of on-site and off-site emergency plans. Measures mentioned to make these plans operational included the establishing, training and equipping of emergency services as well as measures for the information of the public that could be affected. Norway and Switzerland also reported some financial support intended to improve emergency preparedness.

49. Belarus, Germany, Hungary, Norway, Poland and Switzerland further mentioned cooperation aimed at making the off-site contingency plans compatible with those of neighbouring Parties. Norway, Poland and Switzerland stated that there were drafts of common bi- and multilateral contingency plans.

50. The Working Group noted that Parties had taken practical measures aimed at establishing and maintaining emergency preparedness to respond to industrial accidents. As no report provided an appraisal of their success, the Working Group could draw no definitive conclusions as to their efficiency. The Working Group noted that the framework needed for the harmonization of off-site contingency plans largely existed. It therefore encouraged Parties to undertake practical activities in this respect.

Section VII. Scientific and technological cooperation and exchange of information (Q.21)

51. Question 21 required the Parties to report on their programmes for scientific and technological cooperation and the exchange of information.

52. Most Parties were engaged in some form of bilateral/multilateral programmes to exchange information, experience or technology. Among the multilateral programmes, the EU Phare programmes, which involved experts from several EU countries, and the cooperation under the Danube Convention were explicitly mentioned. Germany was the most active in providing support to other Parties through its “Beratungshilfe” programme, which was essentially intended to lead the countries receiving assistance to self-reliance. Poland too was very active bilaterally (joint instruction of fire brigades with the Czech Republic, preparation of a Polish - Czech - Slovak glossary for notification of and information on industrial accidents, information campaign with Denmark). Other concrete cooperation activities were reported in particular by Belarus (bilateral programme with the

Russian Federation on monitoring and forecasting emergencies), Norway (cooperation in the Nordic region) and Sweden (Community mechanism to facilitate reinforced cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions). In some reports the answer merely mentioned agreements and did not provide any information on activities carried out.

53. The Working Group noted with satisfaction that much multilateral and bilateral cooperation seemed to be already taking place.

Section VIII. Participation of the public (Q.22 – Q.24)

54. Questions 22 to 24 required the Parties to report on how they regulated the participation of the public in areas capable of being affected by an industrial accident.

55. The responses referred to the ratification of the Aarhus Convention (Armenia, Norway), to the implementation of the Seveso II Directive (Austria, Germany), to the APELL programme (Croatia) as well as to the ratification of the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Slovenia, Switzerland). Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom mentioned participation of the public in the development of emergency plans. The reports from Norway and the United Kingdom gave good examples of the participation of the public in practice. In some reports, the responses addressed public information rather than public participation.

56. With the exception of Estonia, Lithuania, the Republic of Moldova and Slovakia, all Parties stated that the possibility of participation given to the potentially affected public in neighbouring countries was equivalent to that given to their own public. With the exception of Estonia and the Republic of Moldova, all Parties stated that natural or legal persons capable of being affected by an industrial accident in the territory of another Party had access to relevant administrative and judicial procedures in their country.

57. The Working Group concluded that legislation to ensure some participation of the potentially affected public seemed to be in place in most Parties. However, the information provided did not make it possible to assess how the legislation was applied in practice. Further exchange of information and experience would benefit many Parties.

Section IX. Decision-making on siting (Q.25 – Q.26)

58. Questions 25 and 26 required the Parties to report on their policies on the siting of hazardous activities, including in a transboundary context.

59. All Parties but one (Armenia) reported to have established some siting policies. According to the mostly general answers, the instruments of these policies consisted in some legislation on land-use planning, a licensing system and the use of environmental impact assessment. Norway, Slovenia and Switzerland explicitly mentioned the use of the results of risk assessment and/or fixed safety distances.

60. A few countries mentioned that neighbouring Parties were involved in decision-making on a hazardous installation that could affect them, though not on the siting of the installation itself.

61. The Working Group noted that the answers to these questions were mostly very general. It was aware of the difficulty of the question and considered that some guidance on the topic of the siting of hazardous activities should be drawn up. It suggested that the question should be approached in a wider context together with other bodies active in this field. The Working Group therefore encouraged the secretariat to contact the UNECE Committee on Human Settlements as well as the Major Accident Hazards Bureau of the EC - DG Joint Research Centre to explore the possibility of organizing a joint workshop.

Section X. Reporting on past industrial accidents (Q.27 – Q.28)

62. No industrial accident with transboundary effects occurred, so no notification was necessary.

III. COMPARISON WITH THE FIRST ROUND OF REPORTING

63. The Working Group noted with appreciation that the number of countries reporting on their implementation of the Convention had increased. In the first round (2000-2001) 17 out of 24 Parties with reporting obligations had submitted a report. In the second round (2002-2003) 24 out of 30 Parties with reporting obligations had submitted a report. At least one was available from 28 Parties.

64. In both rounds some reports were submitted on a voluntary basis (Slovakia and Ukraine in the first reporting round, Azerbaijan, Turkey and, later, Ukraine in the second).

65. The Working Group noted that the proportion of good-quality reports had increased notably since the first round. The quality of reporting might have improved because individual reports from the first round had been made available as examples of good practice to the competent authorities through the password-protected site within the Convention's Internet home page maintained by the secretariat.

66. The identification of hazardous activities had been found by the Working Group to be a major weakness in the first reporting round. The Working Group noted that progress had been achieved in two years even though it was still a major problem in some EECCA and SEE countries. Another important step in the implementation of the Convention would be the notification of identified hazardous activities to all potentially affected Parties.

IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE REPORTING PROCEDURE

67. The Working Group considered the reporting format used for the second round of reporting to have been largely adequate. It should be used essentially unchanged for the next reporting round. Minor changes should be introduced only to the layout to bring together the information on the competent authority and the focal points for the Convention and on the contact person for the national implementation report.

68. The Working Group noted that in spite of the improved wording, some questions were still sometimes misunderstood. The Working Group suggested that these difficulties could be solved on a bilateral basis between the Parties concerned and the Working Group on Implementation with the support of the secretariat.

69. The Working Group also noted some contradictions between answers to different questions within one report or to questions involving bilateral activities in reports from neighbouring Parties. This may be due to a lack of cooperation, coordination and/or communication between the authorities at the national and regional/local levels and to the fact that bilateral cooperation was still in an early stage. The Working Group therefore invited Parties to involve all relevant stakeholders at national and regional/local levels in the preparation of the reports and to contact their counterparts abroad on questions relating to bilateral cooperation before finalizing their reports.

70. Some members of the Working Group expressed serious concerns that the reporting was mobilizing very limited resources that should instead be devoted to efforts to provide assistance to countries that needed it to become Parties to the Convention or to exchange experience between Parties on implementation. They felt that priority should be given to the more systematic long-term cooperation in this field rather than to reporting and questioned the need for further reporting in the next two-year period by those Parties that had already submitted a report.

71. Other members felt that reporting was an important for strengthening the Convention, benefiting all Parties, in particular the countries which were making efforts to become a Party, and providing a basis for a substantive discussion on the Convention's future priorities and work plan. They further noted that most Parties now had some experience in the drafting of the implementation report and suggested that, with some increased support from the Working Group through bilateral contacts, the next implementation report should require a modest amount of work from the Parties.

72. The Conference of the Parties was invited to weigh the different aspects of this question and to determine how it wished to proceed.

V. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE CONVENTION'S IMPLEMENTATION

73. The Working Group stressed that the individual national implementation reports provided the most important indicator of the practical implementation of the Convention and that the overall assessment of the implementation depended critically on the quality of the answers in these reports.

74. The Working Group noted that, although the explanations of the answers in the reports had generally improved, the degree of implementation of the Convention could still not be fully assessed.

75. The Working Group considered that the majority of Parties had introduced an adequate framework for the proper implementation of the Convention, but noted that in many Parties further efforts needed to be made, especially:

- On the notification of hazardous activities;
- On the establishment of bilateral cooperation on local notification systems, joint contingency plans and the siting of hazardous installations; and
- On the effective horizontal and vertical coordination and cooperation among different authorities at national, regional and local levels.

76. The Working Group noted that examples of good practice existed for all the above topics and suggested that these should be promoted and shared with countries needing advice, especially through the planned internationally supported assistance programme to enhance the efforts of EECCA and SEE countries.

77. The Working Group considered that a few Parties had not yet implemented the Convention to a satisfying degree and that further efforts needed to be made, with the assistance of the Conference of the Parties, especially on the following critically important activities:

- Identification and notification of hazardous activities;
- Adoption of appropriate measures to prevent industrial accidents;
- Establishment and maintenance of emergency preparedness to respond to industrial accidents.

78. The Working Group noted that, for a UNECE-wide implementation of the Convention to become a reality, EECCA and SEE countries needed to be assisted through international and bilateral programmes and projects to be able to implement the Convention and thus be able to become Parties to it. Parties from these subregions needed to be assisted in applying the instrument in practice. The Working Group also stressed that a genuine commitment at the government level from these countries to achieve self-reliance in the field of industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response is necessary. The Working Group strongly encourages the Governments of these countries to make such a commitment, support the assistance programme and take an active part in it.

79. The Working Group suggested that activities to monitor more closely the concrete needs of these countries for the ratification and implementation of the Convention should be continued.

80. The Working Group finally considered that the effectiveness of the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification System should be increased and that efforts should be made to harmonize this system with other comparable systems.