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

High-level Commitment Meeting

Geneva, 14–15 December 2005

**REPORT
OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITMENT MEETING**

Representatives of 17 countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE), by adopting a declaration, committed their governments to implementing the Convention, which was an important step within the assistance programme. Representatives of Central and West European countries expressed their strong support for the programme and pledged further financial resources for its implementation.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The High-level Commitment Meeting, a key element of the preparatory phase of the internationally supported programme to help countries of East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-Eastern Europe (SEE) enhance their efforts to implement the Convention, was held from 14 to 15 December 2005 in Geneva.
2. It was held under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), within the framework of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

II. PARTICIPATION

3. High-level representatives from the following 34 UNECE member countries participated in the Meeting: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan
4. The following international organizations were represented: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Representatives of DuPont de Nemours International SA and ExxonMobil and independent experts also took part in the Meeting.

III. OPENING

5. Mr. Ryszard Grosset (Poland), Chairperson of the Conference of the Parties and Commandant-Rector of the Main School of the Polish Fire Service, opened the Meeting. He introduced officials at the head table, in particular Mr. Zaal Lomtadze (Georgia), Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources; Mr. Paolo Garonna, Officer in Charge of the UNECE; and Mr. Kaj Bärlund, Director of the Environment and Human Settlements Division.¹ He informed delegates that Mr. Lomtadze was designated Chairman of the Meeting in accordance with the recommendation of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties, which had earlier held consultations with the Parties to the Convention.
6. Mr. Lomtadze thanked the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties for entrusting him with the task of chairing the Meeting. He welcomed the participants and expressed his appreciation that so many distinguished colleagues had decided to join him in Geneva to take part in the important deliberations that he hoped would lead to achieving the objectives of the Meeting.
7. Mr. Garonna informed participants that UNECE was currently restructuring its programme of activities and redefining its structure. The environment sector, including environmental conventions,

¹ Now renamed the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division.

would, in accordance with the wishes of UNECE member countries, remain a high priority. It was a sector in which the UNECE had always been active and achieved tangible results. This included the activities aimed at increasing the safety of hazardous industrial installations under the Industrial Accidents Convention, which were gaining solid regional recognition. The assistance programme for EECCA and SEE countries was highly valued and was fully in line with UNECE objectives geared towards implementation. He hoped that the participants' deliberations would lead to meaningful decisions on how best to assist the region's countries with economies in transition.

8. Mr. Bärlund pointed out that compliance by operators and authorities with the Convention's provisions would contribute to increased industrial safety, in particular at hazardous chemical installations. However, such installations would never be risk free, and, despite efforts to prevent accidents, unfortunately these sometimes happened. For example, in the past month, two major industrial accidents had occurred – at a petrochemical plant in the Jilin province in China and at an oil storage terminal northwest of London. While the Convention's implementation in Central and Western Europe was quite advanced, this was not yet the case for a majority of the EECCA and SEE countries. Reasons for this included a lack of effective regulatory and institutional frameworks and insufficient local capacities. Against this background, the Conference of the Parties had adopted a programme to assist these countries in implementing the Convention. He introduced three objectives that the Meeting was expected to achieve (see paragraph 11).

9. Mr. Sergiusz Ludwiczak, Secretary of the Conference of the Parties, introduced the draft declaration to be adopted by the heads of delegation of the EECCA and SEE countries (CP.TEIA/2005/10) and other documentation for the Meeting: the provisional programme (CP.TEIA/2005/9/Rev.1); the Concept of the fact finding missions; and the balance of financial resources earmarked for the assistance programme (CRP1 and CRP.2/14 December 2005).

10. Mr. Anton Wilson (United Kingdom) invited participants to an evening reception organized on behalf of Health and Safety Executive of the United Kingdom.

IV. OBJECTIVES AND PROGRAMME OF THE MEETING

11. The objectives of the Meeting were to:

(a) Ensure a common understanding of the different tasks under the Convention and what it takes to implement them;

(b) Obtain a firm commitment from the EECCA and SEE countries concerning the implementation of the Convention, namely the adoption of the declaration (CP.TEIA/2005/10); and

(c) Discuss how best to further support the implementation of the assistance programme, both financially and in kind.

12. The programme of the Meeting was divided into three parts reflecting these objectives.

V. A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFERENT TASKS UNDER THE CONVENTION AND WHAT IT TAKES TO IMPLEMENT THEM

13. Three speakers introduced the key provisions of the Convention, which address the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents. They described the roles of competent authorities and industry in applying and enforcing these provisions. A fourth speaker presented a framework for cooperation among the EECCA countries in implementing cross-border tasks under the Convention.

14. Mr. Ernst Berger (Switzerland), former Chairperson of the Conference of the Parties, recalled that European legislation related to industrial accidents, including the Convention and the European Union's "Seveso Directive", had been drawn up on the basis of practical experience and lessons learned from several major European accidents with severe consequences for human health and the environment. He described the key tasks under the Convention and the roles of various competent authorities at the national and local levels. Stressing the Convention's complexity, he pointed out that because countries lack appropriate resources, including sufficient human capacities, they are facing difficulties in its implementation. He underlining the need for regional cooperation, he invited the countries of Central and Western Europe to work with EECCA countries and those of South-Eastern Europe to make the region's hazardous installations safer.

15. Mr. Pierre Trauffer, Director, Safety, Health and Environment, Du Pont de Nemours International S.A., described his company's policies for managing risk in its hazardous activities. Du Pont was committed to developing and implementing safety management systems on a continuous basis, including through tools such as its "Safety Management Wheel". While attaching importance at all levels to the implementation of preventive measures, one should at the same time be prepared for the worst, as the risk of accidents would always exist.

16. Mr. Jon Lea (Norway), Director General, Directorate for Civil Protection and Emergency Planning, described the roles of a competent authority at the national level and other stakeholders in more closely linking prevention of industrial accidents with preparedness for them. He concentrated on how proper preparedness measures should be applied and how emergency responses could be facilitated. Four keywords in his opinion ensured the effective handling of an emergency situation: cooperation, coordination, transparency and communication.

17. Mr. Nurakhmet Bizhanov (Kazakhstan), First Deputy Minister for Emergency Situations, informed participants about the cooperation undertaken by EECCA countries to implement the Convention. He described the role of the Interstate Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States on Industrial Safety in this cooperation and named some of its achievements. He expressed satisfaction that the assistance to be provided through the programme would accelerate implementation of the Convention by the EECCA countries.

VI. A FIRM COMMITMENT FROM EECCA AND SEE COUNTRIES CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

18. Mr. Grosset recalled the process of drawing up the assistance programme, in particular its justification and the strong support it had received from the Parties at their third meeting in Budapest in October 2004. He highlighted the activities that had taken place after its adoption, especially the negotiation of the draft declaration to be adopted by the heads of delegation of the EECCA and SEE countries at this Meeting.

19. Mr. Grosset then invited the delegations of the EECCA and SEE countries to adopt the draft declaration. He stressed that the ensuing visits by fact-finding teams should be seen as an integral part of the programme and the teams' discussions with authorities as part of the assistance.

20. Ms. Milena Novakova (Bulgaria), Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Environment and Water, explained the modalities of the cooperation between her Ministry, as the competent authority, and other authorities at the national and local levels. This cooperation was important for meeting the Convention's objectives. Bulgaria welcomed the assistance programme as a platform for enhancing this cooperation, in particular in the cross-border context. The Government was willing to take an active part in the assistance programme, both as a beneficiary and as a provider of assistance to less advanced countries, and she strongly supported the draft declaration.

21. Mr. Yuri Brazhnikov (Russian Federation), Director, Department for International Cooperation, Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters, stressed the importance of cooperation between authorities which had different responsibilities under the Convention. He informed the participants on how his Ministry was working with other Russian authorities and with authorities in other countries on responses to emergency situations, including industrial accidents. An international conference devoted to transboundary cooperation in cases of emergencies would be of added value. The Russian Federation looked forward to strengthening cooperation among the Parties to the Convention within the assistance programme.

22. The heads of delegation of the following 17 EECCA and SEE countries adopted the declaration as annexed to this report: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.²

23. When adopting the declaration, the heads of delegation made short statements expressing their governments' commitment to implementing the basic tasks themselves and, with the assistance received through the programme, to implementing the Convention fully. They viewed the assistance programme as a useful tool for enhancing their efforts to manage the risks related to the hazardous

² After the meeting Albania also expressed interest in participating in the assistance programme.

industrial installations in their countries. The heads of delegation of countries that are not yet Parties to the Convention expressed their determination to accede to it. Some countries expressed their willingness to share their own experience in addition to receiving assistance.

VII. HOW BEST TO SUPPORT FURTHER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

24. Representatives of three countries that are major financial donors to support the activities under the Convention initiated a discussion on further financial and in-kind support for implementing the assistance programme.

25. Ms. Giuliana Gasparrini (Italy), Head of Division, Department for Environmental Research and Development, Ministry for the Environment and Territory, stressed the importance of further cooperation among countries of the UNECE region to improve industrial safety. Support should not be limited to sharing experience in preventing industrial accidents but also cover best practice in preparedness for and response to them. She expressed Italy's strong support, including a willingness to make further financial and in-kind contributions, for the assistance programme as a unique tool for such cooperation, which should help EECCA and SEE countries to implement the Convention. Italy was already involved in several bilateral projects related to management of the risks of hazardous industrial installations in some SEE and Central Asian countries. The results of these projects could well contribute to the implementation of future assistance activities under the programme.

26. Mr. Gerard Wolters (Netherlands), Inspector General, Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, expressed his enthusiasm about the clear signals given by the EECCA and SEE delegations about their governments' commitment to implementing the Convention and improving the safety of their industrial installations. The Central and West European countries should support the efforts of these countries by working with them, sharing experience and best practice related to the implementation of key provisions of the Convention. The assistance programme was an excellent platform for this partnership, and the Government of the Netherlands viewed it as likely to succeed. The programme's outcome would constitute a practical contribution to the "Environmental Partnerships in the UNECE Region: Environmental Strategy for Countries of EECCA. Strategic Framework" (EECCA Strategy) adopted by Environment Ministers in 2003. The Government of the Netherlands strongly supported the activities under the assistance programme and would continue to contribute financially to the programme.

27. Mr. Bernard Gay (Switzerland), Head of the Section of Safety of Installations, Risk Prevention Division, Federal Office for Environment, said the Government of Switzerland was very pleased about the outcome of the adoption of the declaration by the delegations of the EECCA and SEE countries, which proved that the recipient countries were committed and that the assistance programme was demand-driven. Therefore, their western partners, in the name of UNECE region-wide solidarity, should further support the assistance process financially and in kind. The financial resources pledged so far were not sufficient, and the implementation phase of the programme in particular would require further contributions. He invited the Parties and other UNECE member countries to join Switzerland and other donors in supporting the programme. Finally, he expressed

his satisfaction about the cooperative arrangements made by the Convention's secretariat and UNEP within the "Environment and Security" initiative. Switzerland would, in addition to further direct financial contributions to the programme, contribute CHF 100,000 to finance the participation of UNEP experts in the fact-finding visits by teams to EECCA and SEE countries.

28. After these introductory statements, the delegations of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Norway and Sweden expressed their governments' support for the activities under the assistance programme. Norway and Sweden would nominate experts to join the fact-finding teams and offered their services as well as travel and accommodation expenses as an in-kind contribution to the programme. In addition, the Norwegian delegation said that its country would continue to play an active role in the programme and pledged further financial contributions to it. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland offered the services of their experts during the fact-finding missions.

29. The delegation of Germany expressed its government's support for the assistance programme and offered to participate in setting up training projects within the programme.

30. The delegation of the United Kingdom, speaking on behalf on the European Union, expressed its support for the activities under the Convention, including those within the assistance programme.

31. Representatives of UNEP and UNITAR also voiced support for the assistance programme's further implementation. Their organizations were interested in participating in the programme's activities, firstly in the fact-finding teams and later in the planned capacity-building activities.

32. Mr. Alberto Susini (Switzerland), Head of Environmental Affairs, Labour Inspectorate, State of Geneva, provided information on an interactive system comprising environmental, land-use and technical data for industrial risk identification and management in the Geneva area. He offered the possibility of sharing the related knowledge and experience.

33. Mr. Grosset, speaking on behalf of the Conference of the Parties, thanked the representatives of EECCA and SEE countries for expressing a clear commitment and said this was an important step forward in the implementation of the assistance programme. He also welcomed all the statements of support for the programme made by delegations of Central and West European countries as well as international organizations.

VIII. CLOSING

34. Mr. Lomtadze, in closing the Meeting, concluded that it had been successful in achieving the objectives and thanked its participants for contributing to it. He congratulated the delegations of the 17 EECCA and SEE countries on taking an important step towards becoming participants of the programme by adopting the declaration. On their behalf, he expressed appreciation for the support that had been expressed at the Meeting and the future financial and in-kind contributions to the programme. He thanked the Chairperson of the Conference of the Parties, its Bureau and Working Group on Implementation and the secretariat for their efforts to implement the assistance programme to date and to prepare the Meeting.

Annex

DECLARATION

**BY THE HEADS OF DELEGATION
OF THE EAST EUROPEAN, CAUCASIAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN
AND THE SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

**ADOPTED AT THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITMENT MEETING
in Geneva on 15 December 2005**

Introduction

1. We, heads of delegation of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, met in Geneva on 14–15 December 2005 at a High-level Commitment Meeting organized under the auspices of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents. We were joined at this meeting by heads of delegation of Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom.
2. We recognize the challenge presented by the Convention, whose main objective is to prevent industrial accidents, in particular, those with transboundary effects, and to prepare for and respond to such accidents.
3. We note that the implementation of the Convention requires the coordinated involvement of a number of competent authorities at the national level. Certain tasks also require vertical coordination between the authorities at the national level and those at the regional and local levels. Finally, implementing the Convention also requires cross-border cooperation between neighbouring countries and the involvement of the industry and the public.
4. We welcome the numerous activities under the auspices of the Conference of the Parties aimed at improving industrial safety in our countries, in particular the subregional workshop on the implementation of the Convention held in 2003. We acknowledge that these activities led to the preparation of the internationally supported assistance programme for the EECCA and SEE countries to enhance our efforts to implement the Convention.

5. We welcome decision 2004/1 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on strengthening the implementation of the Convention, taken in Budapest on 27–30 October 2004, and in particular the adoption of the assistance programme. We gratefully acknowledge the strong support for the assistance programme expressed by many Parties in Budapest and the financial contributions made so far by the Czech Republic, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia and Switzerland thanks to which the programme was launched, thus facilitating the high-level commitment meeting.

Challenges

6. We recognize that most of our countries, in order to implement the Convention, need to strengthen their regulatory and institutional frameworks and to increase human resource capacities.

7. We are aware that this would have a positive influence on the safety of activities involving hazardous substances, many of which need modernization, replacement of obsolete technologies and better maintenance. We recognize the risk of an accident associated with these facilities and that such an accident could have impacts on both human health and the environment in our already highly vulnerable societies.

Our commitment

8. We commit ourselves to addressing these challenges and to making the necessary efforts to implement the Convention.

9. At the same time, we stress that our efforts need to be supported. To this end, we consider the assistance programme as an important tool to enhance our countries' efforts to fully apply the Convention in practice.

10. We reiterate the determination of our countries to improve industrial safety by implementing appropriate safety measures at activities involving hazardous substances. Our countries, therefore, are also strongly committed to implementing the Convention's national tasks and to fulfilling its cross-border and multilateral duties.

11. We stress that most of our countries have already implemented the majority of the Convention's basic tasks clearly defined by the programme (chapter IV, first paragraph of sections A to J). We shall ensure that the remaining tasks will be carried out without delay.

12. We will report on the present state of implementation of these tasks by submitting a national implementation report and, furthermore, we will demonstrate their implementation to the members of the fact-finding teams, set up in accordance with the third step of the action plan to implement the assistance programme.

13. We welcome the visits of the fact-finding teams in our countries and will, in cooperation with the Convention's secretariat, organize their meetings with representatives of: (i) all competent authorities at national level; (ii) selected authorities at local level; and (iii) selected activities involving hazardous substances. We will contribute to drawing up individual country reports and an overall report on the implementation of the preparatory stage of the assistance programme for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

Next steps

14. We will provide the fact-finding teams with more insight into the particular areas in which our countries need capacity-building activities and advisory services in order to be able to implement the more complex tasks under the Convention (chapter IV, second paragraph of sections A to J).

15. We will welcome the future assistance provided through the programme. We will thus actively participate in needs-driven assistance activities and receive advisory services. We will also put forward proposals for transboundary pilot projects, including joint response exercises among neighbouring countries.

16. We understand that for those of our countries that have not yet become Parties to the Convention, the assistance received through the programme will promote our accession to the Convention

17. We call on the countries of Central and Western Europe and North America and international financial institutions and programmes to support further the assistance programme financially and in kind in order to facilitate its full implementation.