

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

Tenth meeting

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United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Industrial Accident Notification System

Results of the online consultation of the Points of Contact

Report by the Points of Contact

Summary

The Conference of the Parties of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) at its ninth meeting (Ljubljana, 28–30 November 2016) called upon all Parties and invited other States to keep the contact details of their Points of Contacts, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, up to date and to carry out and participate in tests of the Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) System (ECE/CP.TEIA/32, para. 66). The Conference of the Parties, at its ninth meeting, also adopted a workplan for 2017–2018, which included as a non-core activity the implementation of a consultation of the Points of Contact, online or in person (ECE/CP.TEIA/32/Add.1).

The present document contains a summary of the sixth online consultation for the Points of Contact to the IAN System, conducted on 22 November 2018, following a connectivity test of the System on 14 November 2018.

Introduction

1. The Conference of the Parties of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) at its ninth meeting (Ljubljana, 28–30 November 2016) called upon all Parties and invited other States to keep the contact details of their Points of Contacts, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, up to date and to carry out and participate in tests of the Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) System (ECE/CP.TEIA/32, para. 66). The Conference of the Parties, at its ninth meeting, also adopted a workplan for 2017–2018, which included as a non-core activity the implementation of a consultation of the Points of Contact, online or in person (ECE/CP.TEIA/32/Add.1). The results of the connectivity test were discussed during the sixth online consultation for the Points of Contact to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) System, which was held on 22 November 2018, and are included in this document.

2. In order to allow countries in advance to verify their access to the IAN System, the secretariat announced on 26 October 2018 by email that a connectivity test be held in the following weeks and that the results of that test be discussed during the sixth online consultation for the Points of Contact on 22 November 2018. The exact date of the test was not known to the countries in advance of the test. The secretariat conducted the connectivity test on 14 November 2018.

3. After the connectivity test, the secretariat processed the results and presented them at the sixth online consultation for the Points of Contact to the IAN System. The consultation was held by the means of WebEx internet teleconference on 22 November 2018 in English and Russian. The presentation by the secretariat with the final results of the test¹ was made available, together with the list of participants for the meeting on the Convention website at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=50625>.

I. Agenda, participation and test results

4. The online consultation was open to all Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention and to non-Parties in the ECE region.

5. The consultation was attended by representatives from 15 Points of Contact of the following countries: Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland. In addition, representatives from the European Union and Germany attended in their function as Focal Points to the Industrial Accidents Convention. The meeting was moderated by the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention secretariat.

6. The secretariat opened the online consultation and outlined the objectives of the meeting, which were to discuss the results from the connectivity test on 14 November 2018, to draw recommendations for future tests and to review the conclusions and recommendations from the last (fifth) online consultation of the Points of Contacts, which was held on 15 February 2016.

7. The secretariat reported that on 14 November 2018 at 10:49 a.m., Central European Time, an early warning report was sent in the exercise mode of the IAN System to 43 registered ECE member States. In addition, the report was sent for information to the European Union (European Commission – Civil Protection Monitoring and Information

¹ The analysis of the test results reflects the state of information as of 20 November at 19:00 p.m. CET.

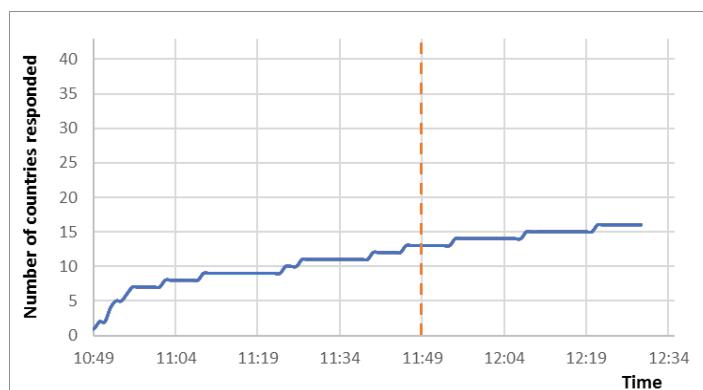
Centre) and to the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit. The below statistics are based on the country responses only.

8. The main test results were the following:

(a) 20 countries acknowledged receipt of the accident report,² which is less than half of the 43 registered ECE member States in the IAN System;

(b) Out of those countries that responded, 13 acknowledged receipt within the recommended time limit of one hour (see figure 1 below),³ which represents less than one third of the registered ECE member States in the IAN System, three reacted thereafter on the same day⁴ and four countries acknowledged receipt two days or later;⁵

Figure 1: Number of countries which responded on the day of the exercise, including within one hour



(c) Out of the registered ECE member States, 23 countries did not acknowledge receipt of the accident report,⁶ which represents more than half of the registered ECE member States in the IAN System;

(d) Two countries could not acknowledge receipt of the test due to technical problems related to the functioning of the IAN System (Austria and Poland), and the reaction time of two other countries (Belgium and Germany) were initially not correctly reported in the preliminary results of the connectivity test, which were shared by e-mail with the Points of Contacts and Focal Points on 16 November 2018;

(e) While three Parties to the Convention (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland and Montenegro) are not registered in the IAN System, five non-Parties (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan,

² In the order of confirmations received: Portugal, Belgium, Russian Federation, Czechia, France, Croatia, Germany, Switzerland, Belarus, Netherlands, Norway, Monaco and Romania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Denmark, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and Spain.

³ In the order of confirmations received: Portugal (10:49 a.m.), Belgium (10:51 a.m.), Russian Federation (10:51 a.m.), Czechia (10:53 a.m.), France (10:53 a.m.), Croatia (10:54 a.m.), Germany (10:56 a.m.), Switzerland (10:57 a.m.), Belarus (11:10 a.m.), Netherlands (11:25 a.m.), Norway (11:28 a.m.), Monaco (11:41 a.m.) and Romania (11:47 a.m.).

⁴ In the order of confirmations received: the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (11:56 a.m.), Denmark (12:09 a.m.) and Slovenia (12:22 a.m.).

⁵ In the order of confirmations received, these are the following countries: Hungary (16 November 2018 at 12:09 a.m.), Poland (19 November 2018 at 12:23 a.m.), Lithuania (20 November 2018 at 06:51 a.m.) and Spain (20 November 2018 at 11:01 a.m.).

⁶ In alphabetical order: Albania, Armenia, Austria (technical issues), Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia (non-Party), Greece, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan (non-Party), Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Tajikistan (non-Party), Turkey (non-Party), United Kingdom, Uzbekistan (non-Party).

Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan) are registered in the IAN System on a voluntary basis. None of the non-Parties acknowledged receipt of the accident report;

(f) Compared with the previous exercise in 2016 and bearing in mind that in 2016 the exact date was known to the countries in advance, the number of countries that responded to the 2018 connectivity test is lower (29 responses in 2016 compared with 20 responses in 2018) and the percentage of countries which responded within the recommended time limit of one hour has decreased (from 85 per cent in 2016 to 65 percent in 2018);

(g) Lost access information (forgotten login names and/or passwords) prevented several countries from logging in on time to the IAN System.

II. Discussion on lessons learned from the connectivity test

9. Some countries reported that they could not log in due to lost access information. The secretariat clarified that it was countries' responsibility to keep login data up to date and recalled that the IAN System instructions were attached for use by countries to the secretariat message sent on 26 October 2018 and available on the Convention's website.⁷ One country (Latvia) reported that it had registered a new account due to not having been able to restore access to the existing one but that the new account did not get activated before the exercise. Countries agreed that login issues due to lost access information could be solved by more regular tests and training of the Points of Contact, which would also increase the level of effective preparedness and response to industrial accidents in case of a real event.

10. Switzerland reported that it had also conducted two exercises in the IAN System at the subregional level in 2018, with Germany (11 September 2018) and France (12 September 2018), respectively. Participants acknowledged that this was a good practice example and recommended that such exercises be more regularly conducted at the subregional level by lead countries, including back-to-back with assistance activities. Several lead countries volunteered to do subregional tests in the next biennium, including Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland. Participants recommended that the secretariat be included as recipient of the test message in these exercises to be kept informed and agreed that the results of these tests be presented for discussion at the next consultation of the Points of Contact.

11. Some countries reported that they experienced technical problems by the IAN System that prevented them to connect on time (Poland) or participate in the exercise (e.g. Austria). The secretariat reported that in the case of Austria the problem had been successfully solved in the aftermath of the test and clarified that it had been related to the registration of the same email address twice in the System which did not allow resetting the password. The secretariat also informed participants about two inconsistencies in countries' acknowledgements of the accident report in the user interface leading to the fact that for Belgium and Germany later reaction times were reported initially. It clarified that these inconsistencies had been successfully erased by basing the reaction times on the log files of the IAN System, resulting in Belgium being the second quickest country to react and Germany being among the countries that reacted within the recommended time limit of one hour. Poland reported that it did not receive an automatic email by the IAN System inviting the Point of Contact to confirm receipt of the accident and that Poland confirmed receipt only once it had seen the secretariat email with the results.

12. With regard to the above, participants recommended that the IAN System be upgraded to increase its efficiency and operability, if dedicated funding becomes available. Switzerland

⁷ Available from <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/industrial-accidents/envteiaguidelines/listing-of-guidelines.html>.

also suggested that the secretariat contact those Parties and other registered ECE member countries that did not react to the test to understand why. Participants agreed with this recommendation.

13. In addition, a number of countries made other proposals at the online consultation. Slovenia, based on its own experience during the recent connectivity test, suggested that the button to confirm the accident report be made more visible or coloured in the IAN System to avoid that it is not seen by the user. Belarus proposed that further training of the Points of Contact should be conducted and agreed to submit further information about such a proposal to the secretariat. Poland suggested that a future meeting of the Points of Contact to the IAN Systems be held face-to-face, if funds were available.

14. Countries also reviewed previous recommendations from the fifth online consultation of the Points of Contact (15 February 2016) and took note of the information provided by the secretariat on its actions taken to follow-up on these recommendations in the meantime. On the previous proposal to consider the organization of a joint meeting in the biennium 2017–2018 of the Points of Contact nominated under the IAN System and the European Union Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), the secretariat reported that such a possibility had been explored, in cooperation with the European Commission (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations), and that it had resulted in the conclusion that this would not be useful due to the different substantive and geographic scopes of the two systems. The secretariat explained that the ERCC covered all emergencies (not just industrial/chemical accidents like the IAN System), while it had less countries participating in it than the IAN System. The secretariat also reported that the ERCC had restrictive security settings which would not allow UNECE or its countries that are not European Union member states to be an observer.

15. Following a previous recommendation to actively disseminate the training and information materials on the IAN System, notably the information and instructions prepared by the secretariat, the secretariat reported that it had made the instructions available on the Convention website, that it had also shared them by email on 26 October 2018 with all Points of Contact and Focal Points to the Industrial Accidents Convention and that it had disseminated them during various assistance activities held in the current biennium. Participants welcomed this.

III. Recommendations and conclusions

16. The following main recommendations and conclusions were drawn from the connectivity test and discussion at the sixth online consultation:

(a) There is a need for continuous exercises on the bilateral and multilateral level to increase the number of countries who respond to connectivity tests, including within the recommended time limit of one hour; Countries are encouraged to test the IAN System jointly in the framework of table-top exercises, independently and back-to-back with assistance activities;

(b) In order to increase the level of preparedness and effective response to industrial accidents with possible transboundary effects more regular tests and training of the Points of Contacts be conducted at the subregional level by lead countries;

(c) Points of Contact from potentially affected countries were encouraged to participate in the connectivity tests and all points of Contact, especially from those subregions where no volunteers have yet been designated (Caucasus and Central Asia), were invited to volunteer to act as lead countries for the subregional connectivity tests;

(d) It was agreed that those countries which conduct tests at the subregional level should implement them in the next biennium, with the secretariat in copy, and present the results at the next consultation of the Points of Contact;

(e) Points of Contact are responsible to keep their contact details in the IAN System up to date and to ensure that they know their access information (login name and password) and how to use the IAN System (using the instructions) to be able to react to an accident or request for mutual assistance without delay;

(f) The secretariat should contact the Points of Contact from Parties and other registered ECE member countries that did not react to the connectivity test on 14 November 2018 to understand the reasons for their inaction;

(g) Possible technical improvements of the IAN System should be further considered, depending on the availability of funds;

(h) All Parties should nominate a Point of Contact, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in accordance with article 17 of the Industrial Accidents Convention.
