

**CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION AND
USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERCOURSES
AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES**

Joint ad hoc expert group on water and industrial accidents

Seventh meeting
Geneva, 10-11 April 2006

MINUTES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING ¹

Introduction

1. The expert group held its seventh meeting on 10 and 11 April 2006 in Geneva. Mr. Gerhard Winkelmann-Oei (Germany) and Mr. Peter Kovacs (Hungary) co-chaired the meeting.

2. The meeting was attended by Mr. Mutallim Abdulhasanov (Azerbaijan), Mr. Pavel Danihelka (Czech Republic), Ms. Irma Gurgulani (Georgia), Mr. Ennio Aquilino, Ms. Loretta De Giorgi and Mr. Federico Spadoni (Italy), Mr. Chris Dijkens, Mr. Philip J. Huijser, Mr. Wilfred Van Gogh and Mr. Bas Weenink (the Netherlands), Ms. Svetlan Stibu (Republic of Moldova), Mr. Tomas Trcka (Slovakia), Ms. Kaja Sukova (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Mr. Yuri Yuschenko (Ukraine), Mr. Alberto Susini (Switzerland). Mr. Sergiusz Ludwiczak (Secretary of the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention), Ms. Francesca Bernardini (Secretary of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention), Ms. Francesca Cenni and Mr. Lukasz Wyrowski (UNECE secretariat) also took part in the meeting.

I. Opening of the meeting, adoption of the agenda and of the report of the sixth meeting

3. Mr. Winkelmann-Oei and Mr. Kovacs opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. The joint expert group adopted the agenda for its seventh meeting as contained in document JEG 13/16 March 2006. It also adopted the report of its sixth meeting as contained in document JEG 12/16 March 2006.

II. Review of implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the Hamburg seminar

4. Mr. Kovacs presented a draft report on the implementation of the Hamburg seminar conclusions and recommendations based on the replies to a questionnaire received from EU countries and other countries with market economies. The draft report was based on ten contributions.

¹ Prepared by the Conventions' secretariats in consultation with the Co-Chairpersons.

5. The joint expert group thanked Mr. Kovacs for his work. It raised concerns about the limited number of replies to the questionnaire received and requested the two Co-Chairpersons to send a reminder aiming at receiving a reply from the countries that did not answer by early May. The representative of Italy committed to submit the reply to the questionnaire by the end of April.

6. The joint expert group entrusted Mr. Kovacs with the finalization of the report for submission to the two governing bodies at their meetings in November 2006². In order to facilitate the implementation of the Hamburg recommendations in countries with economies in transition, the group agreed that the report should include examples and good practices from countries with market economies. The new version of the report would be sent to the secretariat by end of July 2006.

III. Safety guidelines/good practices for pipelines

7. Mr. Weenink, Chairman of the steering group, established to draw up the safety guidelines and good practices for pipelines, presented the group's final draft. Within the drafting process, input was received from all key stakeholders: authorities, pipeline operators and non-governmental organizations mainly through the following two workshops: (i) on the prevention of water pollution due to pipeline accidents (Berlin, 8-9 June 2005); and (ii) on the prevention of accidents of gas transmission pipelines (The Hague, 8-9 March 2006).³

8. The joint expert group provided its guidance on a number of issues raised by the steering group and modified the guidelines and good practices accordingly. In order to finalize the guidelines for submission to the two governing bodies at their meetings in November, it agreed that the revised draft version would be open for comments till the end of May 2006.

9. The joint expert group thanked the Governments of Germany and the Netherlands for their support to this activity and the organization of the two workshops, as well as the steering group for its role in the preparation of the guidelines.

IV. Safety guidelines on tailing dams

10. Mr. Winkelmann-Oei presented the draft recommendations for safety of tailings management facilities and the draft checklist. It was agreed that the draft recommendations and the checklist would be finalized through a similar process as the one adopted for the pipelines guidelines, i.e. by a steering group, established for this purpose. The joint expert group was invited to nominate experts for the steering group. It was also agreed that the steering group should include experts from UNEP, UNDP and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. The secretariat informed the joint expert group of the interest of UNEP to cooperate on this activity.

² The Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention will meet in Rome, Italy on 15-17 November 2006. The Parties to the Water Convention will meet in Bonn, Germany on 20-22 November 2006.

³ For the workshops reports and documentation, see:
<http://www.unece.org/env/teia/water/pipeline/berlin%20document.htm> and
<http://www.unece.org/env/teia/water/pipeline/hague-document.htm>.

11. Mr. Winkelmann-Oei also proposed to discuss the draft guidelines at a workshop that could be hosted by Georgia in the third quarter of 2007 and be sponsored by Germany. The practical implementation of the recommendations and the checklist could be tested during a site visit in Georgia.

12. The joint expert group thanked the Government of Germany for the work so far and for the kind offer to support future activities in this area.

V. International response exercises

13. The joint expert group took note of the information by Mr. Kovacs on an international exercise involving accidental pollution of a transboundary watercourse that would take place at the border between Romania and Hungary in September 2006.

VI. Work plan

14. The discussion on the future work plan was introduced by a presentation by the representative of the Netherlands. The joint expert group stressed that in the future work plan there should be a balanced interest on the activities by both Conventions and by Parties from Eastern and Western Europe

15. Taking into consideration the progress made in the current work plan, the joint expert group proposed to develop work in the following areas (in order of decreasing priority) for the period 2007-2009 and beyond:

- a) *Provision of guidance and assistance to countries with economies in transition in the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the Hamburg seminar*

Under this programme area, Parties will make arrangements to promote the sharing of experience and good practices related to the conclusions and recommendations of the Hamburg seminar in order to support their implementation in countries with economies in transition, through capacity building and awareness raising.

The representatives of the Netherlands proposed to develop a programme to build capacity in countries with economies in transition. The joint expert group invited the representatives of the Netherlands to provide further details on this proposal to the Co-chairmen of the expert group.

- b) *Drawing up guidelines and good practices for tailing dams*

This activity will be carried out in 2007 (see paras. 10 and 11) in order to submit the draft guidelines to the fifth meetings of both governing bodies.

- c) *Facilitation of the exchange of information on the functioning of alarm and notification systems at the national, regional and local levels established within the framework of the two Conventions and/or international river commissions (e.g. Rhine, Elbe and Danube)*

The exchange of information under this programme area will be achieved through joint consultations of representatives of points of contact designated under the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification System and representatives of international river commissions responsible for early warning and alarm systems.

Furthermore, under this programme area activities will be developed in cooperation with the Water Convention's Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment to promote the integration of transboundary water monitoring and assessment systems with early warning systems.⁴ Mr. Wilkenmann-Oei invited the joint expert group to participate in a workshop on this topic organized by Germany under the auspices of the Water Convention in Georgia in September 2006.

- d) *Provision of guidance for establishing cross-border contingency plans*

On the basis of the experience gained in the international response exercises already carried out and international projects, Parties will share and disseminate lessons learned and develop guidance for the establishment of cross-border contingency plans.

Parties that have already participated in past response exercises will have a special role in identifying the lessons learned and drawing up the guidance. In particular Italy and Hungary proposed to investigate the possibility to lead this activity.

- e) *Promotion of the organization of response exercises, in particular in the transboundary context*

Under this programme area, Parties will continue to promote the organization of transboundary response exercises and the sharing of the lessons learned with other countries.

- f) *Maintenance and updating of existing safety guidelines and good practices for the prevention of accidental transboundary water pollution and provision of guidance on their adaptation to the specific needs and circumstances in river basins*

Under this programme area, the inventory of existing safety guidelines/good practice available on the UNECE web site will be updated and maintained by the secretariat, on the basis of information submitted by Parties, to include, among others, guidelines developed by the joint expert group as well as guidelines developed by transboundary river commissions.

⁴ At its seventh meeting (Geneva, 3-5 May 2006), the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment agreed to include such an activity in cooperation with the joint expert group in its draft work plan for 2007-2009 to be submitted for adoption by the Parties to the Water Convention at their fourth meeting.

Furthermore, upon request by countries, assistance will be provided to countries to adapt the existing guidelines to their needs, also through on-going or planned international projects.

- g) *Development of methodologies to identify hazardous activities that handle smaller amounts of substances than those specified in annex I to the Industrial Accidents Convention*

Lessons learned from the implementation of the Hamburg seminar conclusions and recommendations showed that small and medium sized enterprises often lack resources to implement environment and safety management systems to prevent damage to human health and the environment. Under this programme area, will share knowledge on how to identify these facilities and to prevent damage to the environment in case of accidents.

- h) *Drawing up guidelines and good practices for the navigation of ships on rivers;*

Activities under this programme area will be linked to progress in the pan-European project on River Information Services (RIS) and will only focus on gaps, if any.

16. In order to submit the draft work plan for adoption by both governing bodies, the joint expert group was invited to submit comments and further suggestions on the proposed work plan by 30 June 2006.

17. The joint expert group also decided to submit to both governing bodies a progress report on its work reviewing the major accomplishments, the proposed areas of future work and the main issues which would be key to its future success, including a wider participation from both sectors and financial implications. It entrusted its two Co-Chairmen, with the assistance of the secretariat, to draft the progress report.

VII. Other business

18. Mr. Susini, Geneva Labour Inspectorate, Environmental Affairs (OCIRT) Canton of Geneva, Switzerland, presented a project for the development of a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) for the identification of chemical and biological technological risks together with the lessons-learned in the project implementation and the future opportunities for the development of an Integrated Risk-Register including natural risks.

19. Mr. Danihelka presented the consequences of two accidental spills that occurred in the Czech Republic (a chlorine release during the floods of summer 2002 from the Spolana factory in Neratovice and a cyanides release to the River Elbe from the LZD Draslovka factory in Kolin, in January 2006). Mr. Wilkenmann-Oei also commented on the accidental cyanide spill in the river Elbe.

20. The Water Convention's secretariat shared information on the project Capacity for Water Cooperation (CWC) in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia - aiming to create a framework for cross-fertilization and exchange of experience between river basins and countries on regulatory, institutional, methodological and other aspects of integrated management of transboundary waters – and the possibility to link future activities in the project to the work of the joint expert group.

21. The joint expert group agreed that the sharing of information and lessons-learned from industrial accidents with impacts on transboundary waters should be a regular point in its agenda.

VIII. Date and venue of future meetings

22. It was agreed that the date and venue of the eighth meeting of the joint expert group would be communicated by the secretariat at a later stage, also taking into account the possibility to hold it back-to-back with the workshop on tailing dams safety (see para. 11).