

**UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of  
Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes**

Consultative meeting of the Chairpersons of the governing bodies,  
Geneva, 25 April 2006

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING<sup>1/</sup>**

**Introduction**

1. Mr. Ryszard Grosset (Poland), Chairperson of the Conference of the Parties (CoP) to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention), and Mr. Manuel Varela (Spain), Chairman of the Meeting of the Parties (MoP) to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), met in Geneva on 25 April 2006 in order to exchange information and discuss issues of common concern to both Conventions as preparations for the meetings of the governing bodies. <sup>2/</sup>

2. The consultative meeting was also attended by: Ms. Francesca Bernardini, Secretary of the MoP, Mr. Sergiusz Ludwiczak, Secretary of the CoP, Ms. Francesca Cenni and Mr. Lukasz Wyrowski (UNECE).

**I. Activities related to the Protocol on Civil Liability**

3. Mr. Grosset and Mr. Varela, on behalf of the Bureaux, expressed concern over the current ratification status of the Protocol – one UNECE member country ratified it so far. In view of this situation, they both agreed that the governing bodies should discuss this issue at their upcoming meetings, in particular a proposal to organize a consultation (in place of a formal third joint special session of the two governing bodies) among the Parties to both/or one of the Conventions in order to review the reasons for the current ratification status of the Protocol and the steps taken by UNECE member countries to ratify it.

4. This consultation could take place in the spring of 2006. Its outcome could be an input to the fifth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, which will be held in Belgrade in 2007.

5. The Chairpersons agreed that they would consult each other following the meetings of the CoP and the MoP regarding the implementation of possible decisions taken by the governing bodies.

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<sup>1/</sup> Prepared by the secretariats in consultation with the Chairpersons of the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention and the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention.

<sup>2/</sup> The CoP will meet in Rome on 15-17 November 2006, and the MoP in Bonn on 20-22 November 2006.

## II. Joint expert group on water and industrial accidents

6. The Chairpersons took note with satisfaction of the progress achieved by the joint expert group in accomplishing the tasks in its work plan. They especially welcomed the safety guidelines/good practices for pipelines, which were subject to final round of consultations and will be submitted for consideration and adoption by both governing bodies. They expressed appreciation to the steering group, which was given the task to elaborate the guidelines.

7. The Chairpersons took note of two workshops held within the process of drawing up the above-mentioned guidelines and their successful outcomes; namely on the prevention of water pollution due to pipeline accidents (Berlin, 8-9 June 2005) and on the prevention of accidents of gas transmission pipelines (The Hague, 8-9 March 2006).

8. The Chairpersons also welcomed the preparation of the report on the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the Hamburg seminar by countries of Central and Western Europe. They agreed that this document, apart from the reporting aspect, should play an important role providing guidance to the countries with economies in transition on how to implement these conclusions and recommendations (the deadline set for them is 2010).

9. At the same time, they expressed serious concern over the fact that only around half of the market economy countries submitted their reports. Following their joint reminding letter of December 2005, the Chairpersons encouraged the Co-Chairmen of the joint expert group to take additional steps to secure reports from as many countries as possible before finalizing the implementation report.

10. The Chairpersons discussed the tasks/elements of the joint expert group's future work plan, elaborated by the group at its seventh meeting in Geneva on 10-11 April 2006. The proposed work plan will be submitted, as part of the group's progress report, for consideration and adoption by the governing bodies at their meetings in 2006. They, in principle, agreed with the plan's elements, however, suggested the following order of priority:

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

(b) Drawing up guidelines/good practices for tailing dams;

(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) through joint consultations of representatives of points of contact designated under the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification System and river alarm systems;

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

(e) Promotion of the organization of response exercises, in particular in the transboundary context;

(f) Drawing up guidelines/good practices for the navigation of ships on rivers;

(g) Maintenance and updating of existing safety guidelines/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;

(h) Development of methodologies to identify hazardous activities that handle smaller amounts of substances than those specified in annex I to the Industrial Accidents Convention.

11. The Chairpersons considered the key challenges, which the joint expert group is faced with, in particular:

(a) More countries should be represented at the meetings of the expert group;

(b) More experts from representing the Water Convention should participate and contribute to the work of the joint expert group;

(c) The experts from the countries with economies in transition need to be supported financially to be able to participate in the group's meetings and activities. Both governing bodies should secure the required financial resources equally.

12. The Chairpersons agreed to take up these concerns at the meetings of the governing bodies and seek the necessary support.

### **III. Exchange of information on major achievements under the two Conventions**

13. The Chairpersons informed each other on major activities under the two Conventions, in particular on:

(a) Mr. Grosset provided up-to-date information on the status of the assistance programme under the Industrial Accidents Convention; on the outcome of the High-level Commitment Meeting; on the fact-finding missions to EECCA and SEE countries;

(b) Mr. Varela informed on activities under the Water Convention's Capacity for Water Cooperation Project.

### **IV. Participation at the meetings of the governing bodies**

14. Mr. Grosset and Mr. Varela exchanged invitations for the Chairpersons to participate and take part in the deliberations of the CoP and the MoP, respectively, in particular under agenda items of common interest to both Conventions (prevention of accidental water pollution and civil liability). The invitations were accepted. Mr. Grosset accepted the invitation on behalf of the CoP Chairperson to be elected on 15 November 2006.