



# UNECE Weekly

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*It's just happened ...*

## Industrial safety high on the agenda following still another accident

Forty-three people were injured on Sunday, 11 December 2005 as a result of a series of explosions and resulting massive fires



at the Hertfordshire Oil Storage Terminal north-west of London, which is part of an important oil network, including a direct pipeline to Heathrow airport. More than 2,000 residents had to be evacuated from the area of the accident and neighbouring roads were closed to traffic. The accident, involving tens of huge petrol tanks, was described by one of the chief fire officers to be "possibly the largest incident of its kind in peacetime Europe".

### Preparedness and effective response

Other industrial accidents of smaller magnitude also occurred recently in the eastern and western part of the UNECE region raising concern and awareness among authorities of the importance of enforcing sound preventive measures at hazardous industrial installations. Preparedness for and effective response to an accident is essential in reducing the consequences of an accident as shown by the rescue operation in southern England. All this is at the core of the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.

The accident in England, contrary to the one in November at a petrochemical plant in Girin in the Jilin Province in China seriously affecting aquatic life in Songhua River,

gave rise to a plume of smoke stretching, after 24 hours, for more than 70 miles across southern England. This is an issue of concern also to the Convention on the Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, another UNECE treaty. Although there is no direct border and a transboundary scenario may have not been foreseen in this case, satellite images indicated that the plume was heading for France.

### Improving industrial safety

In the wake of these incidents, high-level representatives of the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian and South-East European countries met in Geneva on 14-15 December, together with their counterparts from Central and Western Europe to commit themselves to improving industrial safety by fully applying the Industrial Accidents Convention. At the same time, representatives of other European countries, having more



resources and experience in preventing and effectively responding to accidents, are expected to support the efforts of their colleagues within an assistance programme adopted by the governing body of the Convention in 2004. ❖

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### *Did you know that ...*

*Firefighters used 32,000 litres of water per minute to extinguish the blaze.*

## Armenia signs trans-Europe Agreements

On 9 December 2005, Ambassador Zohrab Mnatsakanian, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations in Geneva, signed the TEM and TER Trust Fund Cooperation Agreements. These signatures bring the total number of countries participating in the Trans-European North-South Motorway Project (TEM) Project and to the Trans-European Railway (TER) Project to 14 and 17 respectively.

The TEM and TER Projects are sub-regional UNECE-sponsored cooperation frameworks for the development of



coherent road and motorway networks and rail and combined transport networks in Central, Eastern and south Eastern European countries as well as in the Caucasus countries.

A TEM and TER Master Plan, recently adopted by the Steering Committees of both Projects, has identified the backbone road and rail networks in 21 countries in the region and, on the basis of a commonly agreed methodology, evaluated and prioritized as many as 491 infrastructure projects of a total value of US\$ 102 billion.

The TEM and TER Master Plan was presented to the EU High Level Group on transport links with neighbouring countries on 25 October and has been taken into account in the final report. ❖

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## EU replaces directives with UNECE regulations

The international harmonization of technical requirements for cars and other vehicles is a high priority for the EU, and on 12 December the CARS 21\* High Level Group agreed to recommend the replacement of 38 EU directives by UNECE regulations, such as Directive 71/320/EEC on braking, Directive 92/23/EC on tyres and Directive 2001/85/EC on buses and coaches.

### Close links

The European Community is a Contracting Party to the 1958 Agreement elaborated by UNECE on international



technical harmonization in the motor vehicle sector and to the 1998 Agreement on the Establishing of Global Technical Regulations. It is now consolidating the close links that already existed between the EC Directives and the UNECE Global Regulations in the field of motor vehicles.



For more information see [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/automotive/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/automotive/index_en.htm)

\* *Competitive Automotive Regulatory System*

## Central Asia: Mainstreaming gender into economic cooperation

A new initiative under the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECAs)\* will contribute to reducing poverty and address development challenges through integrating women into the regional and world economy.



### Economic potential

The SPECAs Working Group on Gender and Economy, supported by UNECE and UNESCAP, will raise awareness on women's economic potential, and will link gender equality with efficient allocation of resources and economic growth. It will also provide a unique forum to exchange good practices on how to support women's self-employment, close the wage gap and establish gender sensitive budgetary policies.

## Multi-stakeholder approach needed

A Meeting on the Group, 8-9 December, discussed concrete ways to improve women's position in the economy of member countries in the context of proposals for its work programme. It emphasized that mainstreaming gender into economic policies at national and regional level requires a multi-stakeholder approach and closer cooperation among international organizations active in the region. Two workshops are already planned, on micro-credit and ICT for policymakers and women entrepreneurs (in Russian) supported by the Government of Israel, which will be organized in 2006 by the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center in cooperation with UNECE. ❖

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\* *Member countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.*

## Aarhus Convention: Strengthening participation at international level

On 24-25 November a task force mandated by the Parties to the Convention consulted with relevant international forums regarding Guidelines

adopted by the Parties in May 2005 on promoting application of the principles of the Convention – access to information, public participation and access to justice – in international forums dealing with environmental issues.

### Implementation and feedback

Experts from governments, NGOs and regional organizations broadly agreed upon a draft plan of consultation. The process is expected to elicit information on selected international forums' experiences regarding access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. This will assist Aarhus Parties in implementing their obligation to promote the principles of the Convention in international forums, and at the same time to provide feedback on the applicability of the Guidelines in other international environment-related forums. ❖

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## UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents Current ratification status

Norway	10 April 1993	Estonia	17 May 2000
Republic of Moldova	4 January 1994	Czech Republic	12 June 2000
Albania	5 January 1994	Lithuania	2 November 2000
Russian Federation	1 February 1994	Kazakhstan	11 January 2001
Hungary	2 June 1994	Denmark	28 March 2001
Luxembourg	8 August 1994	Monaco	28 August 2001
Bulgaria	12 May 1995	Slovenia	13 May 2002
Armenia	21 February 1997	Italy	2 July 2002
Spain	16 May 1997	United Kingdom	5 August 2002
Greece	24 February 1998	Romania	22 May 2003
European Community	24 April 1998	Belarus	25 June 2003
Germany	9 September 1998	Poland	8 September 2003
Switzerland	21 May 1999	Slovakia	9 September 2003
Austria	4 August 1999	France	3 October 2003
Finland	13 September 1999	Azerbaijan	16 June 2004
Sweden	22 September 1999	Latvia	29 June 2004
Croatia	20 January 2000	Cyprus	31 August 2005

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