

# **UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents**

## **Awareness-raising Mission to Albania**

Organised under the Assistance Programme

20-21 May 2009

### **Report on the awareness-raising mission to Albania**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. An awareness-raising mission<sup>1</sup> meeting was held in Tirana on 20 and 21 May 2009. It was organized in the framework of the Assistance Programme's preparatory phase for countries in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe, pursuant to a decision made by the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting (Geneva, 25–27 November 2008; ECE/CP.TEIA/19, paras. 24, 30 (b) and (e) and 78 (k)). The activity was part of the Convention's workplan for 2009–2010 (ECE/CP.TEIA/19, annex I, 1.2.2). The Conference of the Parties requested that written reports of the activities carried out under the Assistance Programme be provided (ECE/CP.TEIA/19 para. 78 (n)).
2. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Water Administration of Albania (Ministry of the Environment).
3. The aim of the meeting was to support Albania in its implementation of the basic tasks under the Convention, as requested by the country at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
4. During the two-day meeting, participants had the opportunity:
  - (a) To become familiar with the main provisions and requirements under the Convention, as well as its structure;
  - (b) To hear about the good practices of other Parties related to implementation of the main areas under the Convention;
  - (c) To start preparations for an action plan aiming at completing the implementation of the basic tasks under the Convention.

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<sup>1</sup> An awareness-raising mission consists of a two-day meeting between the team of experts and representatives of authorities responsible for the Convention in a country.

### **A. Attendance**

5. The representatives of the following institutions were present at the meeting: the Ministry of the Environment; the Ministry of the Interior; the Ministry of Public Affairs, Transport and Telecommunications; the Ministry of the Economy, Trade and Energy (Ministry of the Economy); and the Regional Environmental Agencies for the cities of Saranda, Vlora and Tirana.

6. The team of experts was led by Ms. Jasmina Karba (member of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties, Slovenia), and was composed of Ms. Katalin Gorog (Hungary), Mr. Giorgio Mattiello (Italy) and Ms. Virginia Fusé (secretariat).

### **B. Organizational matters**

7. Mr. Pellumb Abeshi, General Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment, welcomed the participants and the team and opened the meeting. He thanked the team members for participating in the meeting and highlighted the need of Albania to receive support with implementation of the basic tasks. He also expressed the wish that Albania would be able to implement the basic tasks and soon join the second phase of the Assistance Programme.

8. The team leader, on behalf of the Bureau, expressed satisfaction with the fact that Albania was committed to implementing the basic tasks, had requested the awareness-raising mission and had shown determination to work actively under the Assistance Programme.

## **II. PROCEEDINGS**

### **A. Presentation of the main provisions under the Convention, indications of the full implementation of the provisions and indications of basic implementation**

9. The team members presented the Convention's main provisions. The first presentation focused on the Convention's structure, its main requirements and the basic tasks needed to initiate implementation.

10. Other presentations focused on, in particular: (a) identification of hazardous activities; (b) notification of hazardous activities to neighbouring countries; (c) prevention; (d) preparedness and response, including the Industrial Accidents Notification System; and (e) information to and participation by the public.

### **B. Practices for implementing the provisions of the Convention: the examples of Slovenia, Hungary and Italy**

11. In the second part of the meeting, participants heard about the experiences of Slovenia, Italy and Hungary in implementing the Convention, with particular attention paid to the main provisions presented in the meeting's first part. The experts also learned about the challenges facing these three countries vis-à-vis the implementation of the Convention, and how these challenges were being addressed.

12. The attention of the Albanian experts was drawn to a number of issues:
- (a) Political commitment is essential for implementing the Convention, and should be ensured before discussing the possible implementation model;
  - (b) Political commitment is also the basis for creating effective and long-lasting coordination and cooperation between authorities;
  - (c) In each country, the Convention's implementation should be adapted to the specific characteristics of the administrative systems that will support it;
  - (d) The designation of a Competent Authority is needed because implementing the Convention is complex and involves different authorities. The designation process should therefore be thoroughly considered;
  - (e) A strong legal basis is essential for enforcing the Convention's provisions. It is important that laws and regulations are not only in place, but also implemented. Staff of the authorities concerned needs to be acquainted with the legislation and to be able to explain the law to the operators;
  - (f) The characteristics needed for the Points of Contact designated for communications under the Industrial Accidents Notification System;
  - (g) Keeping the public informed and involved in the matters under the Convention is a complex task and requires the coordination of different actors (e.g. national and local institutions, industry).
13. The team informed the Albanian experts that, through the implementation of the Convention, the country could comply with the Seveso II Directive<sup>2</sup> (96/82/EC) of the European Union. This would mean that a thorough procedure initiated to implement the Convention, would also ensure compliance with other multilateral agreements.

### **C. Steps to be taken in Albania to implement the Convention's requirements**

#### **1. Current situation in Albania and the implementation of basic tasks**

14. Representatives from the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of the Economy gave an overview of the roles their Ministries play in ensuring industrial safety in Albania; this highlighted provisions linked to requirements of the Convention.

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<sup>2</sup> Council Directive 96/82/EC of 9 December 1996 on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances.

15. The presentations were followed by discussions with the following conclusions:
- (a) The Ministry of Environment is operating on the basis of a comprehensive set of laws matching with the requirements of the Convention;
  - (b) The Ministry is in the process of creating a preliminary list of hazardous installations present in Albania;
  - (c) The Ministry of Interior is responsible for emergency response. The emergency response system in the country has a comprehensive structure that operates at both the national and local levels;
  - (d) In 2006, the Ministry of Economy created a technical inspectorate to cover both operational installations and no longer operational installations. Under this framework, in the past year ad hoc integrated inspections have been carried out (involving the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Interior, among others), especially of oil storage installations;
  - (e) The environmental performance monitoring of industrial installations in the country is not yet fully operational. Two reasons for this are the limited number of accredited laboratories and the lack of instructions enabling harmonized monitoring;
  - (f) In 2009, a national centre for issuing permits was created. The centre is not yet operational. Its main responsibilities will be to issue permits for industrial installations capable of causing environmental pollution and/or major accidents. There is still some legislation to be adopted and the experts who will work in the centre still need training. Experts from the Ministry of the Environment will be in charge of preparing the technical regulations for the centre's functioning.
16. The team leader moderated a discussion focused on the implementation of the basic tasks, explaining some of them in more depth. During the discussion, team members responded to the questions asked by the Albanian experts. In addition, the team encouraged Albanian authorities to implement the basic tasks as much as possible without external assistance, and to cooperate with one another to achieve this result.
17. The discussion led to the following conclusions:
- (a) Albania has already implemented some of the basic tasks;
  - (b) The different authorities responsible for prevention, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents should jointly agree how to share, amongst themselves, responsibilities under the Convention;
  - (c) Consequently, Albania should discuss how many Competent Authorities should be designated for the Convention's implementation, and what will be their respective competences;

(d) Albania should estimate the number of industrial sites that could fall under the Convention regime;

(e) Albania should designate Points of Contact and start to use the Industrial Accidents Notification System.

## **2. The way forward for Albania**

18. Albanian authorities were encouraged:

(a) To prepare a report assessing the current situation in Albania, referencing the basic tasks and preliminarily identifying possible gaps;

(b) To prepare an Action Plan, which should include steps to be taken to implement all the basic tasks and to eliminate the gaps, together with a timeline for the implementation of these tasks;

(c) To submit the report and the Action Plan to the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties upon its completion;

(d) To regularly report to the Bureau, through the secretariat, on the progress made.

19. The team strongly recommended that the country representatives work together to create the report and Action Plan, and encouraged them to follow this path.

### **III. CONCLUSIONS**

20. On behalf of Albania, the General Secretary committed to preparing a report and an Action Plan and to submitting it to the Bureau, through the secretariat, by the end of September 2009. To demonstrate the country's commitment, the General Secretary also agreed to inform the secretariat of the name of the Albanian focal point under the Convention by the beginning of July 2009. The secretariat would report to the joint meeting of the Bureau and the Working Group on Implementation.

21. The Albanian authorities acknowledged the importance of cooperation between the different Ministries and institutions responsible for work under the Convention, and expressed their wish that the work commenced would lead to improvements in the situation in Albania.

### **IV. CLOSING OF THE MEETING**

22. The General Secretary thanked the team members and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for the organization of the meeting and for their participation. He expressed his hope that the role of Albania in the activities under the Convention and in the Assistance Programme would be more dynamic, and that it would help enhance industrial safety.

23. The team leader thanked the General Secretary for hosting and organizing the meeting, and the participants for their attentive participation and for their presentations. For the team, she encouraged the representatives of different authorities to work together to complete the report and Action Plan. She expressed her satisfaction with the commitment of Albania and encouraged the country to stay in contact with the secretariat and to report on the progress. She also invited the Albanian experts to contact the team members by e-mail should further questions arise.

24. The General Secretary closed the meeting.

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