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

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Long-term strategy for the Convention

Draft long-term strategy for the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

Introduction

1. The 1992 Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, being part of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) multilateral environmental legal framework, aims to prevent industrial accidents from occurring, reduce their frequency and severity, and mitigate their transboundary effects.
2. The Convention requires that Parties establish and maintain a high level of safety in industrial activities and to seek continuous improvement through:
 - (a) Enhancing preventive measures;
 - (b) Strengthening preparedness for industrial accidents;
 - (c) Improving mechanisms for response and mutual assistance to mitigate the effects of accidents; and
 - (d) Exchanging information and cross-border cooperation.
3. The work performed within the framework of the Convention has contributed to the improvement of industrial safety in many countries and to a more safety-conscious culture within their authorities and industries. This is mostly a result of activities to: (i) raise awareness and increase understanding about industrial safety; (ii) improve national legislation on industrial safety; and (iii) enhance institutional capacities.
4. The Convention has also facilitated cooperation between different authorities in working together on industrial safety, both in the national and international contexts.
5. Many of the above results were achieved by the beneficiary countries of the Convention's Assistance Programme.

6. The Conference of the Parties now needs to prevent complacency and facilitate further improvement for countries with a high level of industrial safety and to continue providing support to countries less advanced in implementing the Convention.

7. In order to reach those objectives, the Conference of the Parties needs to build on its experience and achievements and be ready to address effectively any challenges that may arise. The purpose of this long-term strategy is to give directions for further work under the Convention, which will be specified in two-year workplans.

8. Furthermore, the Conference of the Parties will look proactively at developments in the context of the Convention and, if necessary, respond to them appropriately.

Objectives and directions

9. The long-term strategy defines the following five issues as priority areas of work under the Convention for the coming years.

I. Involvement of Parties and other stakeholders

Objective: to achieve comprehensive involvement of all Parties and other stakeholders

Active involvement of Parties and other stakeholders is essential to maintain and further improve the level of implementation of the Convention. Some Parties, through their competent authorities, have been actively involved in the work of the Convention. There are also some examples of involvement of other stakeholders. Nevertheless, the number of active Parties and other stakeholders has been rather low and should be increased.

Directions

The Conference of the Parties will:

(a) Regularly use targeted communication (e.g., newsletters, press releases, leaflets, website, participation in forums) to reach competent authorities and other stakeholders (e.g., authorities at regional or local levels, industry, other organizations) and to promote and further increase the understanding of the work under the Convention; and

(b) Organize working visits and high-level meetings to activate the less involved competent authorities and other stakeholders and to support related national and international activities.

II. Exchange of information

Objective: to consolidate and enhance the exchange of information

Exchange of information is crucial to further strengthen the implementation of the Convention across the UNECE region. In the past, activities have been organized under the Convention to exchange knowledge, good practices and experience. However, the number and scope of such activities should be extended.

Directions

The Conference of the Parties will:

(a) Organize, on a needs-driven basis, the exchange of information between competent authorities and other stakeholders by organizing seminars, consultations, and round tables on relevant topics (e.g., technologies, scientific knowledge, trends and developments, good practice in prevention, preparedness and response); and

- (b) Stimulate cross-border exchange of information among Parties.

III. Assistance Programme

Objective: to facilitate the implementation and ratification of the Convention by the beneficiary countries of the Assistance Programme

The Assistance Programme is necessary to support the efforts of the countries of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in implementing the Convention. There is a need to continue and further provide efficient assistance on a needs-driven basis.

Directions

The Conference of the Parties will:

(a) Ensure an adequate use of the Strategic Approach by the means defined therein and in particular tools such as the set of indicators and criteria for assessment and identification of future steps to be undertaken under the Assistance Programme; and

(b) Facilitate the transfer of knowledge to support the beneficiary countries in addressing challenges faced in implementing the Convention by providing them with relevant and needs-driven capacity-building activities.

IV. Strategic partnerships

Objective: to enhance the Convention's relevance through strategic partnerships

Strategic partnerships are necessary to improve effectiveness and efficiency and to avoid duplication of work in maintaining and enhancing industrial safety. In a number of situations the Conference of the Parties has been working jointly with other organizations, Conventions and programmes to this end. However, this approach should be enhanced.

Directions

The Conference of the Parties will approach partners, such as the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, other United Nations Convention bodies, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Commission (EC) and industrial associations, to explore and form, if possible, strategic partnerships to coordinate joint activities for strengthening industrial safety and complement each other's work.

V. Financing

Objective: to ensure sustainable financing

Robust financing is necessary to ensure that the increasing demands for assistance activities from Parties and other countries are met and that other workplan activities are implemented. In the past, financing for activities under the Convention has come from only a few of the Parties and on an ad hoc basis. There is a need for a higher number of Parties and for other stakeholders to provide regular financial and/or in-kind support to the Convention's activities. Also, human resources in the secretariat need to be increased which would allow, among others, for the implementation of the tasks mentioned in this strategy and address the increasing demands for activities.

Directions

The Conference of the Parties will establish and continuously improve a mechanism through which financial and in-kind support is obtained from Parties and other stakeholders, such as the EC, industry and others. The mechanism will differentiate between funding for the core activities of the Convention and its assistance activities. The Conference of the Parties invites UNECE to make available an additional regular budget P-4 post; pending its establishment, the post will be financed through extrabudgetary resources.
