

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Ninth meeting

Ljubljana, 28–30 November 2016

Item 10 of the provisional agenda

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Industrial Accident Notification System

Results of the fifth online consultation of the Points of Contact

Report by the Points of Contact

Summary

The Conference of the Parties of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) at its eighth meeting (Geneva, 3–5 December 2014) requested the secretariat and the Points of Contact to the Industrial Accident Notification System (IAN System) to perform tests and exercises, to discuss the results at their next consultation (either electronically or in person) and to report to the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting (ECE/CP.TEIA/30, para. 70).

The present document contains a summary of the fifth online consultation for the Points of Contact to the IAN System, conducted on 15 February 2016, following a connectivity test of the System.

Introduction

1. The Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) at its eighth meeting (Geneva, 3–5 December 2014) requested the secretariat and the Points of Contact to the Industrial Accident Notification System (IAN System) to perform tests and exercises, to discuss the results at their next consultation (either electronically or in person) and to report to the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting.
2. The participants in a connectivity test of the IAN System (October/November 2014) recommended that the test of the IAN System should be announced in advance in order to check the connectivity of the System. In accordance with the request of the Conference of the Parties and the recommendations of the Points of Contact, the secretariat of the Industrial Accidents Convention performed an announced connectivity test of the IAN System on 15 January 2016.
3. After the connectivity test, the secretariat processed its results and organized an online consultation for the Points of Contact to the IAN system. The online consultation was held by the means of WebEx internet teleconference on 15 February 2016.

I. Agenda, participation and presentations

4. The online consultation was open to all Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention and to non-Parties in the UNECE region.
5. The consultation was attended by representatives of Albania, Azerbaijan, Italy, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Switzerland, the Emergency Response and Coordination Centre (ERCC) of the European Union and the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine.
6. The online consultation was opened by the secretariat, which welcomed the participants. The secretariat outlined the goal of the meeting, which was to focus on the need to discuss the linkages with other early warning notification and mutual assistance systems, while taking into account the conclusions and recommendations of previous meetings of the Points of Contacts, with regard to the information exchange between and standardization across various systems.
7. The secretariat then gave a short overview of the main functionalities of the IAN System and presented the results of the connectivity test, performed on 15 January 2016. The exercise accident report was sent to 51 contacts in 44 UNECE member States and international organizations.
8. The main test results were:
 - (a) There were 29 responses acknowledging receipt of the accident report;
 - (b) 25 of the responses were within the recommended time limit (1 hour);
 - (c) There were responses from 25 Parties, one committed country under the Assistance Programme (Georgia) and one international organization (the Joint United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Office Coordinating Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Environment Unit);
 - (d) The response rate corresponded to the response rates from previous exercises;
 - (e) The response times were significantly better than for previous exercises;
 - (f) There were lots of outdated contacts and problem with logging on to the IAN System.
9. Ms. Svetlana Stirbu, national project coordinator and Bureau member from the Republic of Moldova, shared the experience gained and the lessons learned from the tests of the IAN System during the UNECE Danube Delta project, implemented under the Industrial Accidents Convention. Under the project, both the IAN System and the Accident Emergency Warning System (AEWS) operated under the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River with its Principle International Alert Centres (PIACs) were tested through a table-top exercise.
10. Ms. Stirbu highlighted several problems related to the operation of the IAN System during the project, such as with the interface of the online application (e.g., problems defining wind direction) and the availability of trained personnel at the national level. She also suggested some possible improvements, such as expanding the systems functionality with option to send Short Message Service (SMS) messages to the Points of Contact, increasing the number of national contacts and streamlining and simplifying notification reports. She also mentioned that the AEWS PIACs offered the functionality to have multiple contacts for a single Point of Contact, compared to the IAN System, and suggested such an improvement.

11. Mr. Cristian Iacob, representing the European Commission, Directorate General Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO) provided insight into the background, legal foundations and functionalities of ERCC, highlighting the capacity of the Centre, the tools and resources available and the possibilities for outreach to and cooperate with partners and stakeholders. He highlighted that ERCC was accessible to all countries, which could request assistance from participating states in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism or from the European Commission itself for any type of accident. Memoranda of understanding between the European Union ERCC, the Russian Federation (Ministry of Emergency Situations), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other regions existed. Mr. Iacob stressed the active requests for assistance by countries as a prerequisite for delivering that assistance through ERCC.

II. Discussion

12. The participants discussed the test results and the linkages to other early warning, notification and mutual assistance systems, in particular ERCC and existing alarm systems within international river commissions. They highlighted the complementarities between different systems, based on the differences in their scope, triggering criteria and purposes. ERCC was much larger in its scope, covering all types of accidents, including chemical accidents falling under the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention, and providing for the possibility to request assistance not only from other individual countries, but also from the European Union. The systems of the international river commissions were more dedicated to the needs of accident notification among riparian countries, with Points of Contacts at the local level, whereas there was mostly one national Point of Contact for the IAN System. At their fourth meeting, the Points of Contacts had considered that:

- (a) For water-path scenarios, the early warning systems of the international river commissions should be used, if existing, whereas the IAN System should be used where more dedicated systems were absent and for mutual assistance requests;
- (b) For air-path scenarios, the IAN System should be used.

13. The consultation discussed the importance of testing the IAN System, as well as other systems, if possible simultaneously, including through different projects comprising table-top and field exercises.

14. The importance of coordination and networking was stressed – on a national level, as well as with neighbouring countries, countries within international river basins and international organizations – to ensure that Points of Contacts are mutually aware of their nomination and the purposes and functionalities of the different systems. The discussion also touched upon the training of the Points of Contact, including dissemination of training materials, and raising the awareness of the countries of the opportunities that the IAN System offers with regard to emergency response and mutual assistance.

III. Conclusions

15. The main conclusions with regard to the IAN System connectivity test were the following:

- (a) While the response rate to the connectivity test corresponded to the response rates from previous exercises, there was room for improvement, bearing in mind that the connectivity test was announced in advance;
- (b) Points of contacts are encouraged to participate in such connectivity tests;

(c) Points of contacts are encouraged to keep their contact details up to date, to notify the secretariat (ian@unece.org) of any changes and to nominate Points of Contact operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;

(d) There is a need for additional training of the Points of Contact in order to ensure full operability of the IAN System.

16. The main conclusions with regard to the test of the IAN System, conducted in the framework of the UNECE Danube Delta project, and the coordination with other notification and mutual assistance systems, were the following:

(a) Possible improvements of the IAN System should be further considered;

(b) The available training and information materials on the IAN System, notably the information and instructions prepared by the secretariat, should be actively disseminated;

(c) There is a need for enhanced coordination and networking on national level, but also with neighbouring countries, countries sharing international river basins and international organizations;

(d) There is a need for continuous exercises on the bilateral and multilateral level;

(e) Countries are encouraged to test the IAN System, as well as possibly ERCC and the early warning systems of international river commissions, jointly, in the framework of table-top exercises, including through European Union-funded or other bi- or multilateral projects;

(f) A future consultation of the Points of Contacts could be carried out jointly with a consultation of the Points of Contacts nominated under ERCC for the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism participating countries, in order to take advantage of the fact that Points of Contacts for the European Union were largely the same and to examine further possible synergies. This possibility should be further explored, in cooperation with the European Commission, DG ECHO, for the 2017–2018 workplan of the Industrial Accidents Convention.
