

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

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

Joint ad hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents

**16th MEETING OF THE JOINT AD HOC EXPERT GROUP
ON WATER AND INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS**

18 May 2017
Dnipro, Ukraine

Meeting Minutes



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1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Gerhard Winkelmann-Oei and Mr. Peter Kovacs, co-Chairs of the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (JEG) from the Industrial Accidents and Water Conventions respectively, who opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. Mr. P. Kovacs highlighted the importance of the work of the JEG which had brought a number of benefits and reiterated the Water Convention's commitment to continue the good cooperation on preventing accidental water pollution. Mr. Winkelmann-Oei agreed with Mr. P. Kovacs, stressing the importance of cooperating also with the international river commissions and expressing his appreciation for the participation of representatives from the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) at the meeting. Ms. Claudia Kamke (UNECE) serviced the meeting which was attended by the following participants:

- Mr. Gerhard Winkelmann-Oei (JEG co-Chair, Germany)
- Mr. Peter Kovacs (JEG co-Chair, Hungary)
- Ms. Lubov Hertman (Belarus)
- Mr. Adam Kovacs (ICPDR)
- Mr. Medetbek Omurbekov (Kyrgyzstan)
- Mr. Dusan Kostic (Jaroslav Černi Institute for Development of Water Resources in Serbia)
- Mr. Septimius Mara (Romania)
- Mr. Yurii Nabyvanets (Ukraine, co-Chair of the Accident Prevention and Control (APC) Expert Group at ICPDR)
- Ms. Claudia Kamke (UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention)

2. Evaluation of the project on tailings safety in Ukraine

Participants discussed the implementation of the project on tailings safety in Ukraine in 2016-2017, including their observations and findings from the final project workshop (Dnipro, Ukraine, 16-17 May 2017). They concluded that the project had been successful, among others, by raising awareness about tailings safety among students and professors, by teaching students in the use and practical application of the tailings methodology and by developing a practical teaching module for inclusion into future curricula at the university. The Group acknowledged the positive impact of the project and recommended that the methodology be applied in other countries too, serving as an effective tool for improving the safety of tailings facilities and preventing accidental water pollution.

Participants also discussed lessons learned from the project and ideas for improving the methodology, taking into consideration the feedback received by the students. Among others, they suggested that the tailings hazard index (THI) should be adjusted in the future to take into account also possible threats in the vicinity of the facility, linking the results of the application of the methodology with the impact on the environment. The experts also concluded that an online training course on tailings safety for competent authorities and operators, building on the UNECE/UNEP/OCHA introductory online course on industrial safety from 2013, would be helpful and encouraged the development of such a course. The experts also recommended that the cooperation between universities should be strengthened in the future, in order to ensure the transfer knowledge on this topic and ensure the training of trainers. Participants recommended that the JEG should support future work on tailings safety.

3. Possible follow-up projects on tailings safety in the UNECE region

The JEG discussed possible follow-up projects on tailings safety in Armenia and Georgia, on the one hand, and Romania and Serbia, on the other. Mr. Winkelmann-Oei informed participants that the tender for the planned project in the Caucasus (Armenia and Georgia) would be reissued, given that the previous one did not lead to the identification of an eligible partner. He provided further information about the planned project, highlighting the organization of a training for inspectors with 10 participants being from Georgia, 10 others from Armenia and another 10 from countries with economies in transition. The representatives from Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Serbia expressed interest in participating in the training and agreed to send their nominations of English-speaking experts on tailings safety.

Regarding the planned follow-up project in South-Eastern Europe (Serbia and Romania), Mr. Nabyvanets informed participants that the APC EG of ICPDR had agreed at its meeting in April 2017 that the tailings methodology be used within the Danube Basin. He welcomed the planned project in Serbia and Romania, expressing hope that funding could also be made available for other countries of the Basin which had expressed interest in applying the methodology (besides Romania and Serbia this was Hungary and Ukraine). Mr. A. Kovacs added that a number of countries in the Basin that did not have tailings facilities (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia and the Republic of Moldova) also expressed interest in cooperating on this issue at a regional level due to the presence of tailings facilities in neighbouring countries.

The Group welcomed the planned follow-up activities, expressing its support to their implementation, and suggested that UNECE and ICPDR further cooperate on tailings safety.

4. National database on TMFs in JEG countries

Experts from Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Serbia reported back on the existence of national databases on tailings facilities in their countries, indicating difficulties in this regard. Mr. Winkelmann-Oei suggested that those countries wishing to participate in the training should provide an overview of tailings facilities in their countries, showing the name, location, capacity and stored material of the tailings facilities. The Group agreed with the proposal and suggested to provide this information as soon as feasible and, if possible by mid-June 2017.

5. Development of guidance on fire water retention in 2017–2018

Mr. Winkelmann-Oei provided an update on the work done to date regarding the development of guidance on fire-water retention. He recalled that an initial draft of the guidance had been prepared and shared with the Group in advance of the meeting, reporting that the expert group on fire-water retention would discuss and further refine the draft at its second meeting (Budapest, 20-21 June 2017). A first solid draft be presented at the international seminar on fire-water retention (Slubice, Poland, 5 September 2017).

The Group welcomed the good progress made with the development of the guidance and supported the idea to present the final guidance to the governing bodies of the Water and Industrial Accidents Conventions at their meetings in 2018. The Group agreed to review the draft guidance and send its feedback to the secretariat for discussion at the second meeting of the expert group on fire-water retention.

6. Transboundary exercises in 2017-2018

Mr. Winkelmann-Oei provided an update on the preparations for the German-Polish exercise (Slubice, Poland, 4 September 2017), inviting JEG experts to attend the event and to confirm their participation as soon as possible. He suggested that, following the transboundary exercise and international seminar on fire-water retention, a half-a-day meeting of the JEG be held, possibly together with the Expert Group on Fire-water Retention.

Mr. P. Kovacs informed participants about the progress made with the preparations of the transboundary exercise on the Danube River planned for spring 2018, led by Hungary. He reported that the exercise be conducted jointly with the Disaster Management Authority and that they were currently looking for a company at which the exercise could take place. He also reiterated the commitment to organize the transboundary exercise back-to-back with an international workshop on contingency planning.

The JEG welcomed the information provided by the two co-Chairs and agreed with their proposals and planning, including to hold the next JEG meeting on 6 September 2017.

7. Further activities by JEG

The JEG discussed how it could best support the prevention of accidental water pollution in the future, concluding that countries would benefit from additional support in the implementation of the UNECE Safety Guidelines previously developed, e.g. in the form of a checklist. The Group agreed to further discuss its future support to Parties and other countries, taking into consideration their needs, at one of its next meetings.

The secretariat informed the experts that the JEG will celebrate its 20 anniversary in 2018, asking for ideas how to celebrate this occasion, if desired, such as through a side event, publication or other. The JEG co-Chairs thanked the secretariat for pointing this out and encouraged all JEG members, particularly the co-Chairs, to present some ideas for discussion at the next meeting.

8. Closing of the meeting

The Co-Chairs thanked the secretariat for the preparation of the meeting and the JEG members for their active participation, before closing the meeting at 1 pm.