



## **Seminar on accidental transboundary water pollution prevention – contingency planning, early warning, mitigation (4-5 November 2019, Budapest, Hungary)**

*Co-organised by Hungary and UNECE, under the auspices of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (JEG) and ICPDR, and hosted by the Ministry of Interior, Hungary*

### **BACKGROUND**

Industrial accidents causing water pollution, including those with far-reaching and transboundary effects, can occur anytime and in any country, no matter how stringent the safety standards. The effects of **accidental water pollution** pose significant challenges in many parts of the world, including in the **UNECE region**, as countries rely more and more on **transboundary water resources** to meet their growing demands. Therefore, effective **cooperation at the international level**, especially between neighbouring states, is crucial in preventing, preparing for and responding to industrial accidents affecting transboundary waters and minimizing the consequences of depleted water quality and/or availability on humans and the environment.

**Transboundary contingency planning is complex and involves the coordination of many actors at the national and cross-border levels** to ensure that countries are well-prepared to immediately detect and deal with emergencies, respond to them and request and/or provide mutual assistance accordingly. The establishment and use of **early warning systems** and **transboundary contingency plans** between countries are fundamental elements of effective **emergency preparedness and response** to industrial accidents. To support countries in coordinating this process and preventing accidental water pollution, a [Checklist for contingency planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters](#) was developed by the **Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents**, a joint group under the Water Convention<sup>1</sup> and the Industrial Accidents Convention<sup>2</sup>, both serviced by UNECE. The checklist, which provides a systematic approach to assess the risks of transboundary pollution, has been applied by some UNECE countries and supported, among others, the development of a joint contingency plan for the Danube Delta between the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. Through the application of the checklist, countries work towards the achievement of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, notably **Sustainable Development Goal 6** on ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, and the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030**.

The UNECE Joint Expert Group, co-chaired by Hungary for the Water Convention and by Germany for the Industrial Accidents Convention, provides support to countries in the application of guidance materials and checklists developed under its auspices. The Group has in recent years developed connections with the growing number of **international river basin commissions** in the region who are working to ensure the implementation of bi- and multi-lateral agreements to regulate the use and protection of transboundary waters. A closer cooperation between the Joint Expert Group and the river commissions will help to enhance the prevention of accidental water pollution and improve cross-

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<sup>1</sup> Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

<sup>2</sup> Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

national dialogue, decision-making and the **harmonization of safety standards** between countries, making the region safer and more agile to react in the case of accidental water pollution.

## OBJECTIVES

The seminar (**see attached draft agenda**) will bring together representatives from international river commissions (secretariat and member countries), experts on contingency planning from UNECE member States, the UNECE Conventions' secretariat, representatives of the UNECE Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents, NGOs, and other stakeholders, to discuss good practices and challenges in transboundary contingency planning and preventing accidental water pollution. In particular, the objectives of the seminar are to:

- Exchange experiences and challenges in (national and transboundary) contingency planning, accidental transboundary water pollution prevention, and early warning systems
- Share good practices and challenges in the application of the [Checklist for contingency planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters](#)
- Promote good practices, tools and lessons learned from international River Basin Commissions in preventing transboundary water pollution
- Strengthen cooperation between the Joint Expert Group, UNECE countries and the River Basin Commissions

The seminar will also feature two panel discussions on:

- Good practices and lessons learned by UNECE and the River Basin Commissions in preventing transboundary water pollution, including synergies and possibilities for strengthened cooperation
- Countries' good practices and challenges in transboundary contingency planning

It will be held back-to-back with a meeting of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (Budapest, 5 September 2019, in the afternoon). Representatives of international River Basin Commissions are invited to attend the Group's meeting, further to the experts from the Joint Expert Group.

## LANGUAGE

The seminar and back-to-back meeting of the Joint Expert Group will be held in English only.