

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Eleventh meeting

Geneva, 7–9 December 2020

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Industrial Accident Notification System

Results of the online consultation of the Points of Contact

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Conference of the Parties of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) at its ninth meeting (Ljubljana, 28–30 November 2016) called upon all Parties and invited other States to keep the contact details of their Points of Contacts, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, up to date and to carry out and participate in tests of the Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) System (ECE/CP.TEIA/32, para. 66). The Conference of the Parties, at its tenth meeting, adopted a workplan for 2019-2020, which included as a non-core activity an Electronic consultation for Points of Contact on the ECE Industrial Accident Notification System (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1).

The present document contains a summary of the seventh online consultation for the Points of Contact to the IAN System, conducted on 10 June 2020, following a connectivity test of the System on 4 May 2020.

Introduction

1. The seventh online consultation for the Points of Contact to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) System was held on 10 June 2020; it discussed the results of the preceding connectivity test. The results of both the online consultation and the test are included in this document.
2. In order to allow countries to verify their access to the IAN System in advance, the secretariat announced on 24 April 2020 by email¹ that a connectivity test would be held in the following weeks and that the test results would be discussed during the online consultation for the Points of Contact to the IAN system following the test. The exact date of the test was not known to the countries in advance. The secretariat conducted the connectivity test on 4 May 2020.
3. After the connectivity test, the secretariat processed the results and presented them at the online consultation. The consultation was held by the means of a WebEx internet teleconference on 10 June 2020 in English, with support provided to the Russian-speaking participants by the secretariat. The secretariat's presentation of the final test results² was made available on the Convention website at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=54534>.

I. Agenda, participation and test results

4. The online consultation was open to all Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention and to non-Parties in the ECE region.
5. The consultation was attended by 30 representatives from the following 22 countries: Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine. In addition, two representatives from the European Union attended the consultation. The meeting was moderated by the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention secretariat.
6. The secretariat opened the online consultation and outlined the objectives of the meeting, which were to:
 - (a) Discuss the results from the connectivity test held on 4 May 2020 and draw recommendations for future such tests;
 - (b) Share experiences among Points of Contact about the lessons learned from conducting subregional tests in the IAN System in the biennium 2019–2020; and to
 - (c) Review the conclusions and recommendations from the last (sixth) online consultation of the Points of Contacts, which was held on 28 November 2018.
7. The secretariat reported that on 4 May 2020 at 11:56 a.m., Central European Time, an early warning report was sent in the exercise mode of the IAN System to 46 registered ECE member States. In addition, the report was sent for information to the European Union (European Commission – Civil Protection Monitoring and Information Centre). The below statistics are based on the country responses only.
8. The main test results were the following:

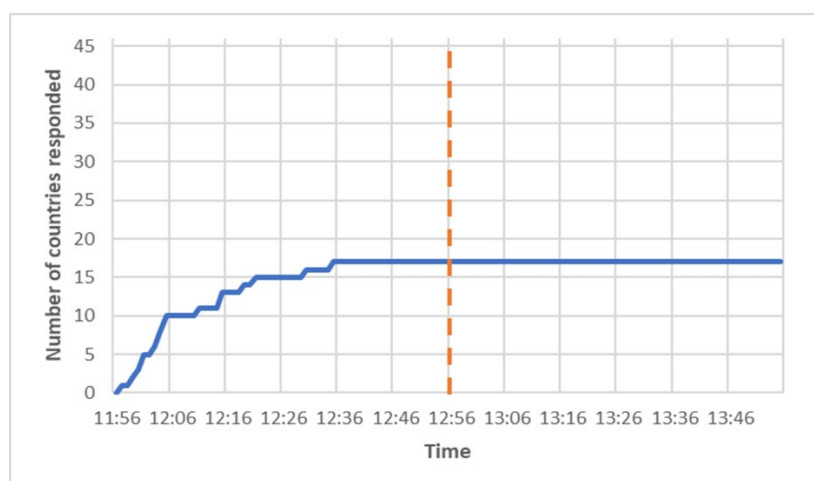
¹ The email was sent to all Points of Contact registered in the IAN System, with their Focal Points in copy.

² The analysis of the test results reflects the state of information as of 22 May 2020.

(a) 25 countries acknowledged receipt of the accident report,³ which is more than half of the 46 registered ECE member States in the IAN System and more than at the previous test (20 countries out of 43 registered in 2018);

(b) Out of those countries that responded, 17 acknowledged receipt within the recommended time limit of one hour (see figure 1 below),⁴ representing 37% of those registered in the IAN System which is 7% higher than the same indicator last time (2018). In addition, three countries reacted still on the same day,⁵ three countries acknowledged receipt on the following day⁶ and two more later;⁷

Figure 1: Number of countries which responded within one hour



(c) Out of the registered ECE member States, 21 countries did not acknowledge receipt of the accident report,⁸ which represents less than a half of the registered ECE member States in the IAN System;

(d) In the biennium 2019-2020, two more Parties to the Convention (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Finland) and one non-Party (Ukraine) registered in the IAN System. One Party (Montenegro) and one non-Party of the UNECE region (Turkmenistan) are still not registered in the IAN System;

³ In the order of confirmations received: Germany, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Estonia, France, Czechia, Malta, Austria, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Romania, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Latvia, Belgium, Italy, Belarus, the Russian Federation, Denmark, Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

⁴ In the order of confirmations received: 11:57 a.m. – Germany, 11:59 a.m. – Hungary, 11:59 a.m. – Poland, 12:00 p.m. – Switzerland, 12:01 p.m. – Slovenia, 12:03 p.m. – North Macedonia, 12:03 p.m. – Estonia, 12:04 p.m. – France, 12:05 p.m. – Czechia, 12:05 p.m. – Malta, 12:11 p.m. – Austria, 12:14 p.m. – Luxembourg, 12:15 p.m. – Netherlands, 12:19 p.m. – Spain, 12:21 p.m. – Romania, 12:30 p.m. – Lithuania, 12:34 p.m. – Azerbaijan.

⁵ In the order of confirmations received: 14:27 p.m. – Latvia, 14:32 p.m. – Belgium, 16:19 p.m. – Italy.

⁶ In the order of confirmations received: 5 May at 09:22 a.m. – Belarus, 5 May at 09:30 a.m. – Russian Federation, 5 May at 11:32 a.m. – Denmark.

⁷ In the order of confirmations received: 6 May at 09:07 a.m. – Ukraine (non-Party), 13 May at 12:21 p.m. – Kazakhstan.

⁸ In alphabetical order: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Georgia (non-Party), Greece, Kyrgyzstan (non-Party), Monaco, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Tajikistan (non-Party), Turkey (non-Party), United Kingdom, Uzbekistan (non-Party).

(e) Six non-Parties in total (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan) are registered in the IAN System on a voluntary basis. Only one non-Party (Ukraine) acknowledged receipt of the accident report;

(f) Compared with the previous exercise in 2018, the number of countries that responded to the 2020 connectivity test was higher (25 responses in 2020 compared with 20 responses in 2018) and the percentage of total number of countries which responded within the recommended time limit of one hour has increased (from 30 per cent in 2018 to 37 percent in 2020);

(g) 15 countries registered in the IAN System did neither react to the 2018, nor to the 2020 IAN connectivity tests. Among these were ten Parties (Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom) and 5 non-Parties (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan);

(h) Lost access information (forgotten login names and/or passwords) prevented several countries from logging in on time to the IAN System.

II. Discussion on lessons learned from the connectivity test

9. Twenty-two countries or Parties⁹ participated in the seventh online consultation of the Points of Contact organized by the secretariat on 10 June 2020. The secretariat presented the results of the UNECE IAN System connectivity test and all attendees discussed the test results, including lessons learned and recommendations. The attendees also discussed the conduct of subregional tests in the IAN System in the biennium 2019-2020 and reviewed the conclusions from the previous (6th) online consultation of the Points of Contact.

10. Some countries reported that they could not log in or logged in later due to lost access information or the absence of the person who had the access information to login at the time of the test. However, there were fewer cases of that kind compared to the previous test. The secretariat clarified that it was countries' responsibility to keep login data up to date and recalled that the IAN System instructions were attached for use by countries to the secretariat message sent on 24 April 2020 and available on the Convention's website.¹⁰

11. Out of the 21 countries that did not acknowledge receipt of the test, seven participated in the seventh online consultation and all, except for one, explained their lack of reaction. Cyprus reported that there was a change of the person in charge and therefore the password could not be restored timely. Armenia reported a similar issue with accessing the IAN System. Slovakia informed that it could not respond to the test due to some technical complications. The Republic of Moldova mentioned some organizational and institutional problems for not having acknowledged receipt of the test message, requesting the secretariat to grant personal accounts and/or NGOs access to the IAN system s. The secretariat reiterated that access to the IAN System can only be granted to institutions (not physical persons) appointed by Member States as Points of Contact for the IAN System. Serbia reported an issue with its login name and password and confirmed that access to the IAN System had since been regained. Sweden explained that it did not react to the test due to a misunderstanding by the duty officer. In addition, some countries that reacted late to the test explained why. For example, Denmark explained that it experienced similar issues to

⁹ Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, European Union, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine.

¹⁰ Available from <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/industrial-accidents/envteia-guidelines/listing-of-guidelines.html>.

Sweden. The Russian Federation reported that it had received the test notification on time but due to technical problems could not acknowledge receipt promptly; however, it had since regained access to the IAN System with the help of the secretariat.

12. The countries were reminded of the conclusions of the previous (sixth) online consultation of the Points of Contact. One such conclusion was that selected lead countries would conduct IAN System tests at the subregional level.¹¹ While none of the selected lead countries had conducted any tests to date of the seventh online consultation, several reported that they were still planning to do so before the end of 2020. This included Belarus, Poland (with Czechia and Germany), Slovenia (possibly with Italy) and Switzerland (with France, Germany and Italy). In addition, the Russian Federation reported on its intention to conduct a test in 2020; Serbia indicated it would possibly conduct a test together with Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020 and, if by that time registered, also with Montenegro. The Republic of Moldova voiced a need for tests together with Romania and Ukraine and the desire to conduct such tests in the framework of the Danube Delta II Project, which it hoped could start in the following biennium. The attendees agreed that the need of more frequent tests was obvious and committed to conducting such tests in the future among themselves, while duly informing the secretariat. In response to a European Union proposal to develop a lead rotation system for coordinating tests, the secretariat stressed that conducting subregional tests should be country-driven and confirmed its availability to support lead countries in conducting such tests. Several countries supported this view.

13. Sweden raised a concern that the messages automatically generated by the IAN system were not obvious enough to cause a duty officer to react. It was proposed that the message be amended to be more explicit. This proposal was supported by Denmark and Poland, while other countries did not seem to face similar problems and Austria confirmed that the e-mail appeared rather clear. The secretariat informed participants that an upgrade of the IAN System would be needed in order to allow for any possible change of the incoming message. Poland also raised a concern regarding phishing and malicious messages and the fact that some of the authentic messages go to spam. The secretariat encouraged all Points of Contact to add the secretariat's e-mail addresses (admin.system@unece.org; ian@unece.org; and ece-teia.conv@un.org) to the list of trusted senders in order to avoid such situations.

14. A question was raised about the European Union's account being configured to a "read only" mode, meaning that the Point of Contact from the European Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) could receive messages from the IAN System but could not respond to them. It was thus agreed to change the account settings to full functionality, which would allow the ERCC to conduct tests and confirm notification receipts in the future. With this new functionality, the ERCC suggested to explore possibilities to consider conducting a subregional test in the next biennium.

15. Belarus suggested that messages from the IAN System be duplicated through another means of communication, such as fax. Austria supported this proposal, while indicating that fax should only be considered as a last means of communication if the internet did not work. The secretariat explained that fax was out-phased internally and unlikely to be used. In reply to many requests voiced by the participating countries to allow for multiple e-mail addresses for one account, the secretariat explained that, at present, the IAN System did not allow for this, but that an upgrade could fix this functionality as well as several other glitches inside the IAN System. With regard to the above, participants recommended that the IAN System be upgraded to increase its efficiency and operability, if dedicated funding becomes available. The creation of a mobile application or, as previously suggested, the sending of short messages could be considered as a part of such future upgrade.

¹¹ The lead countries were Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland.

16. Romania proposed to change a scenario of the test allowing to request/provide assistance. The secretariat clarified that the intention of its region-wide test was to conduct a connectivity test to help resolve the most common problem – no or late reactions by countries due to access issues. It was further clarified by the secretariat that indeed the IAN System allows for two types of notifications – “Early warning report” and “Assistance request report” – and that the countries are encouraged to use either of these two in their future subregional tests, to be conducted with neighbouring and/or riparian countries.

17. Finally, it was agreed that the secretariat would capture the results of the test and the consultations in the present document, share them with all attendees of the consultations and provide them at the upcoming eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Bonn, Germany, 1-3 December 2020).

III. Recommendations and conclusions

18. The following main recommendations and conclusions were drawn from the connectivity test and discussion at the seventh online consultation:

(a) There is a need for continuous exercises on the bilateral and multilateral levels to increase the number of countries which respond to connectivity tests, including within the recommended time limit of one hour. Points of Contact are encouraged to test the IAN System jointly in the framework of table-top exercises, independently and back-to-back with assistance activities;

(b) In order to increase the level of preparedness and effective response to industrial accidents with possible transboundary effects more regular tests and training of the Points of Contacts should be conducted at the subregional level by lead countries;

(c) Points of Contact were invited to volunteer to act as lead countries for the subregional connectivity tests;

(d) It was agreed that those countries which conduct tests at the subregional level should implement them before the end of the current biennium (2019-2020) as well as in the next biennium (2021-2022), with the secretariat in copy, and present the results at the next consultation of the Points of Contact as well as at the respective meetings of the Conference of the Parties in 2020 and 2022;

(e) Points of Contact are responsible to keep their contact details in the IAN System up to date and to ensure that they know their access information (login name and password) and how to use the IAN System (using the instructions) to be able to react to an accident or request for mutual assistance without delay;

(f) Technical improvements of the IAN System should be further considered, depending on the availability of funds;

(g) Montenegro should be requested and Turkmenistan encouraged to register in the IAN System a Point of Contact, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in accordance with article 17 of the Industrial Accidents Convention;

(h) Participants considered the online exchange among the Points of Contact as very useful and suggested that such be held again in the next biennium.
