

**CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION AND  
USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATERCOURSES  
AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES**

**Joint ad hoc expert group on water  
and industrial accidents**

**MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING<sup>1</sup>**

**Introduction**

1. The first meeting of the Joint ad hoc expert group on water and industrial accidents<sup>2</sup> (joint expert group) was held in Berlin on 18-19 October 2001. A technical visit to the BEHALA Berlin Port facilities took place in the afternoon of 18 October.
2. It was attended by Mr. Ludwig Dinkloh, Mr. Gerhard Winkelmann-Oei and Mr. Rainer Kornek (Germany), Mr. Péter Kovács and Mr. Tamas Köszeghy (Hungary), Mr. Philip J. Huijser (Netherlands), Mr. Aurel Varduca (Romania) and Mr. Martin Schiess (Switzerland). The meeting was serviced by Mr. Rainer Enderlein and Mr. Sergiusz Ludwiczak (Secretaries of the two Conventions).

**I. Opening, adoption of the agenda and election of officers**

3. Mr. Dinkloh from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety opened the first meeting of the expert group welcoming all its members. He recalled that Germany was the lead country in the hitherto joint activities between the two Conventions on water and industrial accidents and expressed his country's continued support and willingness to further participate in the work of the joint expert group. However, he invited other countries to take a more active role. In referring to the tasks of the joint expert group, he suggested that the group should also come up with proposals to enlarge and strengthen international law in the field of its competence.
4. Mr. Enderlein and Mr. Ludwiczak recalled the outcome of the work done by the joint expert group prior to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention, in particular the conclusions and recommendations

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Chairpersons of the Joint ad hoc expert group.

<sup>2</sup> Under the auspices of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) and the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention).

of the Hamburg seminar which were adopted/endorsed by the Parties to both Conventions. They also pointed out that both governing bodies extended the mandate of the joint ad hoc expert group and agreed on its work plan (ECE/CP.TEIA/2, Annex VI, Decision 2000/5). They highlighted the future tasks of the group. They also expressed their disappointment that many countries that nominated experts to the joint expert group (Finland, France, Italy, Poland, Republic of Moldova, and the Russian Federation) were not represented at its first meeting.

5. The joint expert group adopted the agenda for its first meeting as prepared by the secretariat and contained in JEG1.

6. The joint expert group elected Mr. Martin Schiess (representing the Industrial Accidents Convention) and Mr. Kovács (representing the Water Convention) as its Co-Chairmen. Mr. Schiess chaired the first meeting.

## **II. Recent developments of relevance to the joint expert group**

7. Mr. Winkelmann-Oei introduced the main elements of the project “Technology transfer for plant-related water protection in Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine”, sponsored by the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the Federal Environmental Agency. The project’s aim is to assist countries of central and eastern Europe to implement recommendations<sup>3</sup> to introduce safety measures for hazardous activities with special emphasis on the protection of transboundary rivers.

8. Mr. Kornek introduced the results of work undertaken within the framework of the above project aimed at developing “Checklists for the investigation and assessment of industrial plants with substances and preparations, which are hazardous for waters” as an aid in implementing the ICPR/ICPE recommendations.

9. Mr. Varduca introduced the recent developments at the Danube in creating an orientation scheme for the International Alert System. Based on this methodology an Accidental Risk Spot (ARS) inventory has been performed at the Danube by analysing more than 600 hazardous locations. The analysis took only note of the potential danger of these ARS. The next step will be to investigate the established safety measures at the ARS. For this reason the checklist-methodology based on the ICPR/ICPE-recommendation will be the suitable basis.

10. Mr. Winkelmann-Oei introduced the methodology for an analysis of accidental risk spots in the catchment area of the Danube in detail. The method consists of the transposition of hazardous substances for water into water risk classes (WRC 3-equivalents). From the sum of the WRC 3-equivalents a so-called water risk index (WRI) can be calculated, as an analogy to the Richter scale. On this basis it is possible to analyse the accidental risk spots (ARSs) in the Danube catchment area and assess their relative significance. The investigation was able to identify top-priority ARSs in the various member states of the ICPDR<sup>4</sup>, which should prompt the

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<sup>3</sup> Developed within the framework of the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR) and the International Commission for the Protection of the Elbe (ICPE).

<sup>4</sup> International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River.

authorities to take urgent safety measures in these installations. The analysis clearly demonstrated that sedimentation basins, or tailing ponds, present an enormous potential hazard. In view of the catastrophic accidents that have happened in the past (Donana, Baia Mare, Baia Borsa, etc.), this conclusion was to be expected.

### **III. Work plan and work sharing arrangements**

11. The joint expert group discussed its work plan as contained in paragraph 7 of Decision 2000/5 on the prevention of accidental water pollution (ECE/CP.TEIA/2, Annex VI). Based on this discussion, it decided to commence work on certain priority issues so that its results could be submitted for consideration by the Conference of the Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention at its second meeting in November 2002 and by the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention at its third meeting later in 2003. To this end, the joint expert group agreed on the following priorities and related tasks:

- (a) *Drawing up an inventory of already existing safety guidelines/best practices for the prevention of accidental transboundary water pollution and making these guidelines/best practices available to the competent authorities and focal points designated under this Convention*

Requested all ECE member countries to submit to the secretariat relevant safety guidelines in a transboundary context (the secretariat will coordinate this activity). The joint expert group would review the received material at its next meeting and decide on ways and means to draw-up the inventory.

- (b) *Assisting in the adaptation of these guidelines/best practices to the specific needs and circumstances in river basins in the UN/ECE region*

This activity has to be demand driven. It is being implemented, among others, through a German project “Technology transfer for plant-related water protection in Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine” and can be used as an example for future activities. The results of the project together with the results of work undertaken by Germany on “Checklists for the investigation and assessment of industrial plants with substances and preparations, which are hazardous for water” would be submitted to the Conference of the Parties. The group invited also others (like the Italian Ministry for Environment and/or the WHO/EURO) to present the results of projects aimed at developing a rapid environmental and health risk assessment for hazardous installations at transboundary rivers. It also invited those responsible for the pilot projects on monitoring and assessment under the Water Convention to present their results at one of the meetings of the joint expert group (without financial implications to the country hosting and/or sponsoring the meeting).

*(c) Drawing up safety guidelines/best practices concerning installations or activities for which they are not available so far, such as: tailing dams, pipelines and the navigation of ships on rivers, to be used by UN/ECE member countries and/or joint bodies*

The group will focus on tailing dams in the immediate future. To this end it invited Mr. Fritz Balkau (UNEP) to inform the group at its next meeting about the outcome of relevant activities undertaken by UNEP (Mr. Schiess will coordinate this action). Furthermore, the group invited a representative of the Russian Federation to inform the group at its next meeting on the situation with pipeline accidents in that country (Mr. Winkelmann-Oei will coordinate this action). The secretariat would provide a map showing shipping activities on major European rivers.

*(d) Facilitating the exchange of information on the functioning of existing alarm and notification systems at national, regional and local levels within the framework of this Convention and the international river commissions (Rhine, Elbe and Danube) through joint consultations of points of contact and river alarm experts*

As a first step, Mr. Huijser, Mr. Schiess and Mr. Kovács will coordinate a consultation between the focal points from the Rhine or the Danube Alarm Systems and the points of contact under the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification System in their respective countries to investigate issues of common interest and/or possible areas for joint action. Based on the results of these consultations, the group would decide on its possible future activities in this area. Future activities could include the development of a specific web site under the Conventions' home pages or that of the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), established under the Water Convention.

*(e) Initiating of an international response exercise within the framework of this Convention and one of the international river commissions*

The group welcomed the outcome of the International Workshop and Exercise on Industrial safety and water protection in transboundary river basins, held on 3-5 October 2001 in Tiszaújváros, Hungary and took note of the recommendation to organize further exercises in a transboundary context. The secretariat informed the group that Poland expressed its willingness to organize such an exercise with one or more of its eastern neighbours in 2002. The group supported this initiative.

*(f) Drawing up guidelines for establishing model cross-border contingency plans and disseminating them widely among UN/ECE member countries. This work will be based on experience gained with the pilot study to draw up a joint contingency plan for the Samos River shared between Hungary and Romania*

Mr. Kovács and Mr. Varduca informed the group that work is in progress and that a report will be made at the next meeting.

(g) *Drawing up guidelines to identify dangerous facilities handling smaller amounts of hazardous substances than specified in annex I to the Convention*

This item was initially discussed in conjunction with the ARS-analysis at the Danube. The applied and proofed methodology used at the Danube could be the basis for possible modifications of the scope of both Conventions in respect to water hazards. The joint expert group decide to continue this discussion at one of its next meetings.

### **III. Date and venue of future meetings**

10. The meeting agreed that future meetings should be hosted by countries represented by experts in the joint expert group on a rotation basis. The group decided to meet twice in 2002. Mr. Kovács confirmed that Hungary will host the second meeting of the group. It will take place on 15-16 April 2002. Budapest was suggested as the preferred venue due to a number of invited participants who may wish to attend only parts of the meeting. The third meeting of the group was tentatively scheduled for the second week of September 2002. Mr. Winkelmann-Oei agreed to coordinate the consultations on the venue (possibly the Russian Federation or Ukraine). The final decision on the venue and exact dates for the third meeting will be take at the next meeting.

### **IV. Closing of the meeting**

11. The Chairman, on behalf of all participants, thanked the host authorities for the excellent arrangements made for the first meeting of the joint expert group in Berlin and closed the meeting.