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Opening statement

By

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at the

Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

Geneva, Switzerland (and online)

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Room Tempus 2

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Welcome to the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention. Since entering into force 20 years ago (in 2000), significant work has been accomplished, which you, the community of Parties, can be proud of! However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the adverse impacts of climate change, the past two years have presented new challenges for the industrial safety community.

Advancing work under the Industrial Accidents Convention and implementing its long-term strategy until 2030 are now more important than ever.

Over the next 3 days, during this shortened meeting of the CoP, you will have a chance to:

- i. Review the implementation of the Convention over the past biennium;
- ii. Take decisions to determine the way forward; and
- iii. Discuss how the pandemic impacts industrial safety.

Let me say a few words on these three important points.

1. Review of implementation

At CoP-10, Parties adopted the long-term strategy for the Convention until 2030. It sets out the Convention's vision to significantly increase industrial safety and reduce the risk of technological disasters by ensuring its full implementation, its wide recognition as a legal instrument for risk reduction under the Sendai Framework and its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

I note with satisfaction that consistent progress has been made. You will here review and have a chance to adopt the 9th report on the implementation of the Convention. It highlights how your efforts have contributed to enhanced implementation at the national level, and across borders. I congratulate you, and encourage you to continue these efforts, as more needs to be done still to secure industrial safety throughout the region.

This biennium has seen an increasing number of sub-regional assistance activities, supporting beneficiary countries in making progress. I am pleased to see that these efforts increasingly address issues that enable good governance and policy-making across sectors, for example in the areas of land-use planning and industrial safety, or the prevention of accidental water pollution. The launch of "National Policy Dialogues on Industrial Safety" in Central Asia and Serbia will enable further progress in this respect. I hope that other countries in the region will follow suit. I congratulate the beneficiary countries for their achievements and continued engagement. And I sincerely thank the countries from throughout the region which have supported this work through financing and expert contributions.

I also note with great satisfaction the growing synergies between the Convention, the Sendai Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goals 3, 6, 9, 11 and 12. I call on all Parties and beneficiary countries to further promote these synergies, and enhance the linkages between national policies in the spheres of both disaster risk reduction and the Convention's implementation.

2. Decisions

To move further towards the Convention's long-term strategy, I strongly encourage Parties to find consensus on the adoption of the decisions to be taken at this CoP.

The first decision you will be invited to take is on operating procedures to facilitate the conduct of this hybrid, predominantly online CoP, which the secretariat prepared at the Bureau's request. In fact, the Industrial Accidents Convention is the first of UNECE's multilateral environmental agreements to have prepared such procedures, while ensuring alignment with the Rules of Procedure. I encourage Parties to adopt the procedures at the beginning of this CoP, in order to move forward with the substantive agenda items.

The seminar on mine tailings safety in the UNECE region and beyond showed us that tailings management facilities (TMFs) can pose high risks to societies and the environment, especially if they are not adequately constructed or maintained. The decision on strengthening mine tailings safety provides support to countries in the UNECE region and beyond to reduce risks of TMF failures.

The decision on strengthening the implementation of the Convention calls on Parties and on beneficiaries of the Assistance and Cooperation Programme, to take further actions to strengthen implementation. In particular to enhance transboundary cooperation, which is still lagging behind - be it through the notification of hazardous activities or harmonized contingency planning across borders.

The workplan for 2021–2022 will ensure that the Convention will be able to pursue the direction of the long-term strategy. I would like to recall that this is your workplan and strongly encourage you to make the necessary financing and in-kind resources available to enable its implementation, so as to ensure continued progress.

3. COVID-19

On the last day of the CoP, you will have the opportunity to share experiences on how the pandemic has impacted industrial safety. The pandemic has placed additional pressure on industrial operations, including maintenance, monitoring, inspections, and contingency planning. Governments must integrate the risks and disruptions caused into risk assessments and management. Moreover, the effects of industrial accidents are more difficult to mitigate during the pandemic, as countries already face significant health and socio-economic burdens. We saw this in Beirut this August. That disaster has shocked the entire industrial safety community. I strongly encourage you to actively take part in mutual experience-sharing and to make all necessary efforts to place accident prevention at the

forefront – despite, and even more so due to the pandemic and its wide-ranging impacts.

I encourage you to finish this biennium on a positive note, working to save more lives and avoid technological disasters with devastating, and at times transboundary, consequences. Let's move towards implementing the Convention's long-term strategy, by continuing to address safety hotspots, being conscious of persisting and additional risks caused by the pandemic and climate change, and by shaping more integrated, sound policies across sectors! This will enable full implementation of the Convention as a legal instrument for technological disaster risk reduction, through strengthened transboundary cooperation in accident preparedness and response. It will also move us closer to achieving the Sendai Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals – we only have another decade to go!

I wish you a very successful CoP-11 and look forward to hearing the outcomes.

Thank you.