

First meeting of the Steering Committee to the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) for Industrial Safety in Serbia, Belgrade, 16 March 2022 Summary and Conclusions

Main Meeting Objectives:

- Provide a platform for dialogue in view of advancing policy reforms on industrial safety and related areas in Serbia
- Agree on the approach to the National Programme on Industrial Safety of Serbia, by reviewing a draft concept, sharing views by the different authorities and agreeing on next steps
- Familiarize participants with international approaches to designing and implementing national industrial safety programmes and consider how these can benefit Serbia
- Identify key challenges/gaps related to the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents, and, as a result, determine next steps in the NPD implementation in Serbia

Organizers:

The meeting was co-organized by the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia and the secretariat of the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (hereinafter – Industrial Accidents Convention).

Attendees:

The meeting aimed to establish dialogue between all relevant authorities of Serbia responsible for industrial safety, environment protection, land-use planning and construction, emergency management and response to industrial accidents, chemical and water management, mining and energy, civil protection etc. The representatives all competent authorities for the Convention's implementation¹, namely the Ministry of Environmental Protection (including attendance by the Assistant Minister, Waste and Wastewater Department), Ministry of Interior, Sector for Emergency Management (Head of Department for Risk Management) and Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management – the Republic Water Directorate attended the meeting, as well as the representatives from the Ministry of Construction, Traffic and Infrastructure and Ministry of Mining and Energy.

The meeting was opened the Assistant Minister from the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Head of the Department for Risk Management from the Ministry of Interior, the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) in Serbia and Secretary to the UNECE Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents. It was also attended in person by the national and international consultants to the Industrial Accident Convention, as well as national experts from the above-mentioned authorities and international experts. Representatives of the EU (Directorate-General for the Environment), France, Italy, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ROECA) connected to the meeting remotely.

¹ Serbia nominated the following competent authorities under the Industrial Accidents Convention: Ministry of Environmental Protection, Ministry of Interior and Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

Overview and summary of the meeting:

The meeting, which was held on Wednesday, 16 March 2022, comprised three sessions with presentations and discussions with participants. In the opening, Mr. Abramovic, Assistant Minister from the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and Mr. Babovic, Head of Department for Risk Management from the Ministry of Interior, welcomed participants, highlighting the importance of the NPD process in order to enhanced industrial safety in Serbia. Ms. Jacob, UN RC, underlined the need for continuous efforts to manage existing and prevent new disaster risks from the side of national and local authorities while involving civil society and industry representatives. Besides, she stressed the linkages between the NPD process and implementation of the UN Cooperation Framework when it comes to increased community resilience to technological disasters. Thereupon, Ms. Hirsch, Secretary to the Industrial Accidents Convention, reiterated, among other things, the value of NPD process for Serbia in view of its fostering alignment between the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention, EU Seveso Directive and Union Civil Protection Mechanism and broader policy goals set by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

During the first session, representatives of the Serbian Ministry of Environmental Protection, the lead competent authority, gave a presentation on the NPD implementation process in Serbia. Notably, they highlighted the implemented activities by Serbia to date under the Industrial Accidents Convention, drawing attention to challenges and needs to be addressed, notably stakeholders' cooperation, exchange of information and clarification of responsibilities among national authorities. This was followed by the election of the NPD Steering Committee (SC) Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary (see under "conclusions" below). The Convention's secretariat then presented the Memorandum of Understanding between the competent authorities of Serbia and UNECE and participants agreed with the proposal to seek signing of the Memorandum for the next meeting of the SC, scheduled for early November 2022.

Within the second session, participants actively exchanged views on the Draft Concept of the National Programme on Industrial Safety in Serbia, which was presented by the national consultant engaged by UNECE to support the Serbian NPD Process. In particular, the consultant highlighted the proposed objectives of the Programme, and the related strategic, legal and institutional frameworks. He evoked the need to establish a monitoring and evaluation system to track the progress archived in the implementation of the Programme. This was followed by statements from SC members and representatives of national authorities of Serbia regarding the concept, needs and challenges and a discussion on the next steps and priority topics to be addressed under the NPD process. The SC members noted that the development of the National Programme on Industrial Safety will be a significant step forward for Serbia as it could serve as a means to raise awareness and improve mechanisms related to the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents and as such benefit the population. The SC members stressed that cooperation and coordination remain a challenge for Serbia, therefore, it was crucial to continue its work under the NPD towards strengthening industrial safety. In addition, it was highlighted that the broader engagement of stakeholders should be sought in the NPD process.

The third session was marked by an overview presentation on international approaches of industrial safety programmes, plans and strategies for designing and implementing national industrial safety policy in the UNECE region, presented by the international consultant engaged by UNECE to support the Serbian NPD Process. The international consultant underlined that the approaches varied from country to country, however, they have one distinctive feature in common - well-establish cooperation and coordination. Thereafter, representatives of UNDRR

ROECA informed meeting participants about the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR) Roadmap 2021-2030, which fostered a multi-hazard approach and multi-level governance to implement the Sendai Framework and SGDs and mentioned the Industrial Accidents Convention as an example in this respect. A regional representative of UNDRR referred to the National Programme for Disaster Risk Management (DRM), and the national action plan for its implementation, supported by the Sector for Emergency Management, Ministry of Interior and the Public Investment Management Office. In addition, she presented on the Making Cities Resilient (MCR 2030) initiative, which was tied to the Law on Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management. A representative of the European Union presented on the linkages between the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention and the EU Seveso-III Directive. Notably, the EU representative underlined that implementation of the Industrial Accidents Convention was a steppingstone towards Seveso-III, e.g. it complements Seveso Directive regarding accident notification, mutual assistance, technology exchange, among other areas. Thereafter, international experts, namely from France and Italy, shared the experience of their respective countries, regarding their approaches and good practices in designing national industrial safety programmes. Italy showed strong links between its industrial safety approach, the Industrial Emissions Directive (2010/75/EU) and the Seveso Directive. France highlighted the importance of anticipating and preventing ageing and failure of equipment, awareness, controls and solid knowledge of industrial equipment and its maintenance. OECD presented the key provisions of the Guiding Principles on Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response. The meeting concluded with an agreement on the next steps, both substantively and procedurally, of the NPD process in Serbia.

Key outcomes and conclusions:

- The members of the Steering Committee elected its Chair, Ms. Aleksandra Imširagić Đurić, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Environmental Protection, one of the Vice-Chairs, Mr. Dejan Furjanovic, Assistant Minister, Sector for monitoring and preventive action in the environment and as the Secretary, Ms. Suzana Milutinovic, Head of Section for Major Chemical Accident Protection, until end-2024 (same duration as draft MoU). They agreed to seek the election of additional Vice-Chairs at the next SC meeting, representing in particular the other 2 competent authorities (Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management) preferably at the level of Assistant Minister or the Head of the Section, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the activities under the NPD in Serbia, and to change the ToR to that effect.
- It was agreed to seek signing an MoU between the competent authorities (Ministry of the Environmental Protection; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management) and UNECE at the second meeting of the SC.
- It was agreed to list the nominated members of the SC in the ToR annex II while keeping it as a “living annex,” so as to allow other representatives and other institutions to be added. The SC recommended to update, where feasible, representation with additional higher level representatives (at the level of Assistant Minister or Head of Department), in order to seek a suitable structure enabling to facilitate the policy reforms resulting from discussions and decisions of the SC. Consideration could also be given to the nomination of alternate members. It was agreed to seek the engagement of additional institutions in the NPD process, where useful and relevant. It was also agreed to engage representative(s) local self-governments as a standing member(s) of the SC, in view of the crucial role of municipalities in addressing persistent gaps (e.g. local-level risk assessment, external contingency plans, to be developed in strong collaboration among operator, local authorities and communities i.e. representatives of the public).

- SC members agreed on the elements of a preliminary concept of the National programme on Industrial Safety, based on a legislation gap analysis, presented by the national consultant, and engaged in an active exchange of views incl. on existing gaps and needs on: mining waste data and inventory, mining management (TMFs safety: abandoned historical TMFs, no unified system of issuing permits), prevention of accidental water pollution, among others from mine tailings, Natech risks, risk assessment, inter-institutional cooperation and cooperation. They stressed that the programme should comprise measures on how to address gaps, and strengthen implementation of the Convention, and related EU legislation. They agreed that the Programme be followed by an Action Plan, to be developed in accordance with the Law on planning system. They agreed on the timeline and next steps for the development of the programme in the coming months.
- SC members took note of international approaches and good practices to designing and implementing national industrial safety policy, based on an overview presentation by the international consultant, and representatives of France and Italy, and agreed to consider these in the further development of the programme.
- SC members took note of the presentation by a representative of the European Commission, Director-General for the Environment, notably the strong linkages between the EU Seveso Directive, which Serbia was approximating to (the draft Seveso-III legislation pending adoption), and the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention, and highlighted the importance of considering these in the further development of the national Industrial Safety Programme.
- SC members took note of the OECD Guiding Principles on Chemical Accidents Prevention, Preparedness and Response and agreed to consider them in the development of the Programme.
- SC members took note of activities from the side of UNDRR to strengthen local-level resilience by developing guidance for city governments in planning resilience and decision-making and the development of local DRR plans. The Steering Committee encouraged taking a comprehensive multi-hazard, multi-risk approach in this respect, and to also cover industrial hazardous activities as part of these efforts, fostering linkages with Serbian efforts to implement the Convention.
- The Ministry of Environmental Protection will send to all SC members a list of priority topics to be addressed under the NPD process, for their review within three weeks, and subsequent inclusion as an annex I to the ToR. SC members are requested to comments on these by 15 April 2022.
- It was agreed that the next SC meeting in mid-Oct/early-Nov 2022 last for ½ day, and be followed by a following ½ day stakeholder consultation on the draft industrial safety programme. To this effect, it was agreed to engage with representatives of industry (the Chamber of Commerce, operators and etc.), Academia (Public Health Institute, Hydrometeorological Institute and etc.), and NGOs. The objective of this open segment will be to construct a sound dialogue with these and other stakeholders and receive their feedback.
- The SC members agreed to involve the European Union, the United Nations and other international organizations, such as OECD, EU, UNDRR, UNDP, WHO and development actors (e.g. GIZ), to contribute to the activities under the NPDs and invite them to the open segment of the next Steering Committee meeting, in particular the stakeholder consultation.

The meeting agenda, list of participants, and evaluation summary are available here:
<https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Industrial-Accidents/events/365249>