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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Report of the Bureau on its activities since the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties

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Submitted by the Bureau of the Convention

Summary

At its eleventh meeting (Geneva (hybrid), 7–9 December 2020), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents requested the Bureau to report to it at its twelfth meeting on the Bureau's activities in the intersessional period.

Pursuant to paragraph 3 of its terms of reference (ECE/CP.TEIA/32/Add.1), the Bureau, among its other main responsibilities, shall: "(a) carry out the tasks entrusted to it by the Conference of the Parties; (b) take the lead in, and take initiatives to strengthen and facilitate the implementation of, the Convention; and (c) prepare the draft programme of work, monitor its implementation and take appropriate decisions, if needed, to strengthen its implementation".

The present report details the Bureau's activities since the eleventh meeting, including regarding the long-term strategy for the Convention until 2030 (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1), the communication, outreach and engagement strategy of the Convention (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1), implementation of the sustainable financial mechanism (ECE/CP.TEIA/24, annex I), implementation of workplan activities during the biennium 2021–2022 and preparations for the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.



Introduction

1. The present report summarizes the activities of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) during the biennium 2021–2022, as mandated by the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh meeting (Geneva (hybrid), 7–9 December 2020).¹
2. The report is based on and includes outcomes of the forty-sixth meeting of the Bureau (Geneva (online), 23 February 2021), and its forty-seventh meeting, held jointly with the forty-second meeting of the Working Group on Implementation (Geneva (online), 24 February 2021), as well as its forty-eighth (Geneva (online), 14–15 October 2021) and forty-ninth (Geneva (hybrid), 28–29 June 2022) meetings.
3. The Bureau for this biennium was composed of the following members, elected by the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh meeting (Geneva (hybrid), 7–9 December 2020): Ms. Torill Tandberg (Norway), Chair; Mr. Michael Struckl (Austria), Vice-Chair; Mr. Martin Merkofer (Switzerland), Vice-Chair; Mr. Evgeny Baranovsky (Belarus); Mr. Camille Siefrikt (European Union); Ms. Wivi-Ann Wagello-Sjölund (Finland); Ms. Marie-Claire Lhenry (France); Ms. Margarita Redina (Russian Federation); Ms. Suzana Milutinovic (Serbia); and Ms. Jasmina Karba (Slovenia).²
4. The Bureau expresses its appreciation for the support and assistance provided by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) secretariat, which serviced all the meetings in the biennium 2021–2022.
5. At its first meeting in the biennium, the Bureau decided to continue or establish the:
 - (a) Small group on financing;
 - (b) Small group on risk assessment; (c) Small group on disaster risk reduction and natural hazards triggering technological disasters (Natech);
 - (d) Advisory group, to support the preparation for the United Nations/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) seminar in follow-up to the 2020 Beirut port explosion (Geneva (online), 14 December 2021); and
 - (e) Small group on mine tailings safety (converted into an informal, loose network acting in an advisory capacity).³
6. At the respective meetings of the Bureau, milestones of the above-mentioned small groups' activities were presented.
7. Due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, most meetings and seminars were held in an online or hybrid form during the biennium. While this represented challenges for both the secretariat and the Bureau, the preparation and implementation of digital meetings were carried out according to schedule, using innovative and effective solutions. In this respect, the workload of the secretariat was significant, and the Bureau is extremely grateful for its efforts throughout this demanding biennium. Digitalization of meetings brought with it several advantages, including the ability to accommodate more participants. The United Nations/OECD seminar in follow-up to the 2020 Beirut port explosion and the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction focused thematic session (Matosinhos, Portugal (online), 24 November 2021) are examples of events attracting significant numbers of participants.
8. The level of activities during the biennium was very high, even though many travel plans and in-person meetings had to be cancelled or postponed and not all envisaged workplan activities could be carried out, in the absence of sufficient financial resources.

¹ ECE/CP.TEIA/42, para. 40.

² *Ibid.*, para. 22.

³ CP.TEIA/2021/B.1/Minutes, paras. 22–23, available at <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Bureau46-Minutes.pdf>.

I. Implementation of Long-term Strategy for the Convention

9. In monitoring the workplan's implementation, the Bureau discussed the alignment of activities with the long-term strategy. It guided the preparation of a new format for the draft workplan 2023–2024, which better reflects this alignment, along with the alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 priority areas. At its meetings, the Bureau recognized that significant progress had been made across several areas in moving towards implementing the long-term strategy, and wishes to thank the countries that have fostered such progress, and those that have provided financial and in-kind support to enable the conduct of the respective activities.

A. Improving industrial safety and enhancing transboundary cooperation

1. Accession of Ukraine

10. Ukraine has been working towards accession following the High-level awareness-raising meeting on the Convention (Kyiv, 19 April 2018),⁴ which prompted the Government of Ukraine to consider accession, announcing its related intentions at the tenth (Geneva, 4–6 December 2018) and eleventh meetings of the Conference of the Parties.⁵

11. The draft law on accession was prepared by the Ukrainian State Emergency Service, the competent authority, subsequently approved by all relevant authorities and then submitted to Parliament by the President of Ukraine on 29 December 2021, where it was approved by the relevant parliamentary committees by end-January 2022. The Law was voted on by Parliament on 3 May and signed by the President of Ukraine on 17 May 2022. Ukraine then deposited its instrument of accession to the Convention on 6 July 2022. The Convention will accordingly enter into force for Ukraine on 4 October 2022, when Ukraine will become the Convention's forty-second Party.⁶ The Bureau wishes to thank Ukraine for the steps taken towards accession, and appreciates the support provided by the Convention's secretariat to the country in this process. The Bureau welcomes Ukraine to the community of Parties to the Convention and looks forward to collaborating with the country in enhancing industrial safety and related transboundary cooperation in order to safeguard the well-being of people and the environment.

12. The accession of Ukraine builds on a strong engagement with the Convention and is the culmination of years of work in the area of industrial safety, seen as extremely important in the light of the country's high level of industrialization, sizable chemical industry and rich mineral resources. An Assistance and Cooperation Programme beneficiary since 2004, Ukraine has participated in activities and projects over the years. In the current biennium, Ukraine has been actively working on the implementation of the Convention's Strategic Approach, having undergone the process of self-assessment of the six main working areas under the Convention.⁷

13. Based on the example of the accession by Ukraine, the Bureau encourages non-Parties in the Caucasus, notably Georgia, and in Central Asia, notably Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, to accelerate progress towards accession and increase their application of the Convention's provisions. In this respect, the Bureau recalls the high-level commitment made in 2005.⁸

14. The successful completion of the Project on strengthening industrial safety in Central Asia through the implementation of and accession to the Convention (2016–2019)⁹ in the five Central Asian countries and the development of the Implementation Guide for Central

⁴ See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/349754>.

⁵ ECE/CP.TEIA/38, para. 86; and ECE/CP.TEIA/42, para. 43 (d).

⁶ See <https://unece.org/media/press/367934>.

⁷ For more information, see ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/6.

⁸ CP.TEIA/2005/12, annex.

⁹ Implemented with financial support from the Russian Federation. See <https://unece.org/project-strengthening-industrial-safety-central-asia-through-implementation-and-accession>.

Asia on the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents¹⁰ under the Project's auspices can serve as an inspiration and a practical tool to further foster implementation and progress towards accession for Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

2. United Nations/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development seminar in follow-up to the 2020 Beirut port explosion

15. On 4 August 2020 a devastating explosion involving ammonium nitrate in the port of Beirut led to approximately 300 deaths, 6,500 injuries, the displacement of an estimated 300,000 persons and severe material damage. Accidents involving the handling, storage and transport of ammonium nitrate have been frequent in the past.

16. At the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the European Union proposed the facilitation an exchange of views on lessons learned from the Beirut port explosion.¹¹ The Bureau agreed with the secretariat's proposal to organize such an exchange through an online seminar, organized in cooperation with the secretariat to the Subcommittee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, and other partner organizations.

17. In the light of the above, the United Nations/OECD seminar in follow-up to the 2020 Beirut port explosion: Lessons learned, experiences and good practices in managing risks of ammonium nitrate storage, handling and transport in port areas, preventing accidents and mitigating their consequence (Geneva (online), 14 December 2021)¹² was co-organized under ECE leadership, in partnership with the International Maritime Organization, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Joint Environment Unit, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) the Regional Office for Arab States and OECD. Under the secretariat's leadership, an Organizing Group representing these organizations was formed to guide the elaboration of the programme, the seminar's conduct and its conclusions. Additionally, the Bureau and the Working Group on Implementation endorsed at their first joint meeting in the biennium (Geneva (online), 24 February 2021) the establishment of an advisory group to support the preparation of the seminar and a preceding survey with targeted expert advice. The advisory group was composed of representatives of Austria, Canada, Germany, France, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the European Commission Joint Research Centre, nominated through the Bureaux to the Industrial Accidents Convention and the OECD Working Party on Chemical Accidents. It also included contributions from representatives of four industry associations as observers.

18. One vital step in preparing the seminar was a survey that resulted in over 100 responses from 43 countries worldwide, academia and industry, based on which speakers representing 13 countries, international organizations and four industry associations were identified. The speakers delivered a strong message that action is needed to strengthen risk management of hazardous substances in port areas and beyond. The Bureau was impressed by the wide range of participation: over 500 participants from 48 countries, various national and local government authorities, academia, the private sector and other stakeholders.

19. The seminar specifically focused on the storage, including intermediate storage, as well as handling and transport of ammonium nitrate and ammonium nitrate-based fertilizers within the context of accident prevention, preparedness and response. Equally, it was recognized that the majority of the issues highlighted were relevant for the storage, handling and transport of hazardous substances overall. In conclusion, the hazard potential of ammonium nitrate and ammonium nitrate-based fertilizers is still underestimated because even small changes in their contents lead to extraordinary changes in their properties. This requires sufficient testing and labelling, training of staff, general awareness and respective tools such as risk assessment and land-use planning precautions. The Bureau welcomes the

¹⁰ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.II.E.1.

¹¹ ECE/CP.TEIA/42, para. 87.

¹² See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/358445>.

extensive seminar conclusions¹³ and urges countries within the ECE region and beyond to take the necessary actions to address challenges and gaps, so as to prevent future accidents similar to the one in Beirut, and to mitigate their consequences, thereby saving lives and safeguarding the environment.

20. The organization of the seminar was possible thanks to financial contributions from the French Ministry of Ecological Transition and the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection. Additionally, UNDRR and OECD provided in-kind contributions through the Arabic and French translations of the seminar programme, respectively. The preparations for the seminar, including an extensive survey, and elaboration of its conclusions were led by the Convention secretariat, in consultation with the Organizing Committee and advisory group. The Bureau recognized the huge amount of work done by the secretariat and welcomed the successful conduct of the seminar, the first global event held under the Convention's auspices.

21. The Bureau has taken note of the follow-up actions envisaged by the different international organizations, pending the availability of dedicated financing, and appreciates the agreement among them to continuously cooperate in the conduct of such actions. It encourages Parties to consider providing dedicated financing to enable the envisaged follow-up activities to the seminar as included in the workplan for 2023–2024.¹⁴

3. Risk assessment

22. Following the seminar on risk assessment methodologies held at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the small group on risk assessment comprised of representatives of Austria, Belarus, Latvia, Serbia, Slovenia and Switzerland, developed a two-part report on risk assessment in collaboration with a contractor. The Bureau wishes to thank Switzerland for funding the project and taking the lead of the small group, in close cooperation with the secretariat.

23. The first part of the report (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/8) provides a general overview of risk assessment methodologies applicable to risks arising from hazardous activities. The second part (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/9) presents several case studies where a risk assessment methodology was applied to chemical facilities in the ECE region. In all, 18 out of 30 submitted case studies, including three transboundary examples, were selected based on geographical location, facility type and transboundary considerations. Some countries, including those of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, did not submit case studies due to the sensitivity of requested information. Once the Conference of the Parties has taken note of the two respective official documents, they will be transformed into a publication in the biennium 2023–2024, translated into French and Russian, issued in all three of the ECE official languages, and promoted with focal points, partners and stakeholders, thanks to financing provided by Switzerland.

24. The Bureau invites Parties and non-Parties to refer to the examples of risk assessment methods and available software tools collected, with the objective of strengthening their understanding, the application of such methods and usage of their results, for example, in the process of consultations linked with the notification of hazardous activities. It wishes to thank: Switzerland for its excellent leadership and for financing the work on risk assessment; the members of the small group on risk assessment and the secretariat for their work; and the Parties that submitted relevant case studies.

4. Guidelines to facilitate the identification of hazardous activities for the purposes of the Convention (Location criteria)

25. At the forty-eighth meeting of the Bureau, the secretariat provided information on a proposal by Germany to consider updating or enhancing the Guidelines to facilitate the

¹³ Available in English, French and Russian (forthcoming), see <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/unoecd-seminar-follow-2020-beirut-port-explosion-lessons-learned>.

¹⁴ ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/11, table 1, activity 2.7. *Risk management in relation to the storage, handling and transport of hazardous substances, such as ammonium nitrate, and related accident prevention, preparedness and response.*

identification of hazardous activities for the purposes of the Convention (Location criteria)¹⁵ for the air path to at least 50 km, in view of the accident in Leverkusen (Germany) on 27 July 2021 that carried sooty particles much further than 15 km. The Bureau discussed the proposal of Germany, stressing the fact that such a decision would need to be carefully prepared due to its political nature, especially if an extension of the location criterion for the air path to 50 km or more were to be considered. The Bureau requested the small group on risk assessment to review the matter in more detail.¹⁶

26. At its forty-ninth meeting, the Chair of the small group reported back to the Bureau that the small group had concluded that an extension of the location criterion for the air path to at least 50 km was inappropriate for the following reasons:

(a) According to calculations for toxic and highly flammable substances, an extension over 15 km was not plausible, as 15 km was already conservative;

(b) In accordance with the Convention (art. 1 (d)): “‘Transboundary effects’ means serious effects within the jurisdiction of a Party as a result of an industrial accident occurring within the jurisdiction of another Party.” It is doubtful whether such a serious effect could possibly be caused by an accident resulting in smoke, releasing gases from a fire over 50 km away;

(c) It was difficult to estimate the components, concentrations and effects of smoke gases at such a long distance;

(d) The scope of application of the Convention would thus presumably increase significantly. The notification burden on the Parties would significantly increase, which could lead to personnel and political consequences;

(e) Article 5 of the Convention already allowed for a voluntary extension of the scope of application.

27. The Bureau discussed and agreed with the conclusion of the small group on risk assessment and proposed not to adapt the location criteria regarding the air path.

28. Furthermore, at its forty-ninth meeting, the Bureau also discussed a possible update of the location criteria in relation to the water path, in view of the recommendation by the Working Group on Implementation — arising from its special session: seminar on good practices and lessons learned in implementing the Convention (Geneva (hybrid), 3–4 February 2022) — to Parties to consider such an updating in relation to tailings management facilities, notably the water path criterion, in order to enhance implementation of the Convention and the prevention of accidental water pollution.¹⁷

29. Such a recommendation arose from the presentation made by a representative of Germany at the above-mentioned special session, during which he highlighted the danger of accidents at tailings management facilities, whether or not the hazardous substances they hold fall within the present scope of the Convention’s annex I, given that they can cause devastating and widespread effects mainly due to oxygen depletion after contamination with tailings management facility mud.¹⁸

30. The Working Group on Implementation had considered this matter at its forty-sixth meeting (Geneva (online), 20–21 June 2022), and suggested that the Bureau recommend that the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents further consider the matter, in cooperation with the Working Group, while noting that it touched upon the scope of the Convention. Decision 2020/1 on strengthening mine tailings safety in the ECE region and beyond (ECE/CP.TEIA/42/Add.1), in its paragraph 8, already encourages Parties to include mine tailings facilities in the identification and notification of hazardous activities and, in its

¹⁵ The consolidated version of the Guidelines is available at the section “Guidelines and templates”, see <https://unece.org/guidelines-and-templates>. It is based on the original decision adopted in 2000 (ECE/CP.TEIA/2, annex IV, decision 2000/3) and the subsequent amendments in 2004 (ECE/CP.TEIA/12, annex II, decision 2004/2) and 2018 (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1, decision 2018/1).

¹⁶ CP.TEIA/2021/B.3/Minutes, paras. 38–39, available at <https://unece.org/info/events/event/355311>.

¹⁷ ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/5, annex, para. 17.

¹⁸ See https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/3_Germany_TMF%20Methodology_FINAL.pdf.

paragraph 2, to make use of the Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for Tailings Management Facilities¹⁹ and the Methodology for improving tailings management facility safety (TMF Methodology)²⁰ to identify, map and understand risks in relation to tailings management facilities. At its above-mentioned special session, the Working Group also recognized the importance of notifying all potentially affected countries about all types of identified hazardous activities, including tailings management facilities, and recommended the use of the template for the notification of hazardous activities in accordance with article 4 of and annex III to the Convention.²¹

31. **In the light of the Working Group on Implementation recommendation, the Bureau recommends that the Conference of the Parties mandate the Joint Expert Group, in cooperation with the Working Group on Implementation and the Bureau, to assess, in the next biennium, whether there exists a need for the Guidelines to facilitate the identification of hazardous activities for the purposes of the Convention to be revised and updated in order to cover more comprehensively the hazards and risks arising from tailings management facilities.** Should it be concluded that such a need does exist, a related draft decision could then be presented to the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. At that point in time, the Conference of the Parties could also decide whether to embark on a related update of annex I to the Convention.

5. Tailings management facilities

32. By means of paragraph 11 of decision 2020/1, the Bureau was requested by the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh meeting to prepare, on the basis of the discussions held at the seminar on mine tailings safety in the ECE region and beyond (Geneva (online), 1 December 2020), an orientation paper for consideration at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of Parties, containing proposals for further actions under the Convention in the field of mine tailings safety, taking into account the activities of other international organizations.

33. The preparation of the orientation paper was guided by the small group on mine tailings safety, comprising representatives of Austria, Germany, Norway (Chair), Serbia (Co-Chair of the Joint Expert Group) and Switzerland, in close cooperation with the secretariat. It was agreed to entitle the orientation paper “Road map for action to strengthen mine tailings safety in the ECE region and beyond” (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/7) as it outlines key objectives to further strengthen mine tailings safety and calls upon Parties and member States within the ECE region and beyond to take specific actions until 2030 to do so. In this regard, the road map supports progress towards the Convention’s long-term strategy for 2030, which contains actions to strengthen implementation, address industrial safety hotspots and continuously work to prevent accidental water pollution.

34. The Bureau wishes to thank the small group, in cooperation with the secretariat, for the preparation of the road map — an extensive additional undertaking in this biennium. Its elaboration involved numerous consultations by the secretariat with partner organizations, notably the European Commission Joint Research Centre, UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNDRR, OECD and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and with the ECE secretariats to the Water Convention and the Committee on Sustainable Energy. **The Bureau invites Parties to endorse the road map for action at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and to embark upon the implementation of the actions set out therein. It also encourages member States in the ECE region and beyond to implement the respective actions to strengthen the safety of mine tailings and address persistent disaster risks.**

¹⁹ United Nations publication, ECE/CP.TEIA/26.

²⁰ Adam Kovacs and others, Safety of the Tailings Management Facilities in the Danube River Basin, Technical Report No. 185/2020 (Dessau-Roßlau, German Environment Agency, 2020).

²¹ Available at https://unece.org/DAM/env/documents/2020/TEIA/Guidelines_and_good_practice/ENG_sample_HA_notification.pdf.

6. Land-use planning and industrial safety

35. During the past biennium, the secretariat developed, in close cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB), an Information Repository of Good Practices and Lessons Learned in Land-Use Planning and Industrial Safety.²² This online hub consolidates the good practices and lessons learned over the past decade by ECE countries and beyond. **The Bureau encourages countries to make use of the Information Repository for building knowledge and learning from each other. It also encourages Parties to submit case studies to the Information Repository, in order to share their own experiences.**

36. The Bureau welcomes the organization of the subregional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for countries in South-Eastern Europe (Belgrade (hybrid), 27–29 October 2021).²³ Representatives from all countries of the subregion recognized that land-use planners need to take into account accident risks posed by industrial activities, and that industrial safety experts need to consider urban developments and land-use plans when making decisions on siting (such as the location of industrial plants), in order to limit the exposure of the population. They agreed to enhance cooperation among the two areas nationally and in a transboundary context, to mitigate the disaster risk arising from industrial activities involving hazardous chemicals, including in the automotive, agrochemical, textile and mining sectors.

37. The Bureau appreciates the co-organization and hosting of the workshop by the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia, together with the secretariat. It wishes to thank France, the donor country, for its dedicated financial contribution as part of overall funding to land-use planning and assistance, which made the organization of the workshop feasible. **The Bureau encourages Parties in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, as well as Kazakhstan, to progress in their implementation of article 7 of the Convention, and in the necessary coordination among authorities.** It similarly encourages Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to increase their application of the Convention's provisions, including article 7.

38. Lastly, the Bureau welcomes the initiative taken by Norway to include a session on land-use planning and industrial safety at the Baltic Excellence Programme 2022 (Oslo (hybrid), 1–3 March 2022), arranged for the Civil Protection Network under the Council of the Baltic Sea States. During the session, the ECE secretariat provided information on the Convention and its Natech-related activities, which led to increased awareness of the role of ECE and its linkages with international (Sendai Framework) and regional efforts. The Bureau appreciated the willingness of the secretariat to participate and to share important information from the work under the Convention. **The Bureau invites other Parties to adopt an approach similar to that taken by Norway to foster the Convention's implementation at the subregional level.**

7. Seminar on good practices and lessons learned on the implementation of the Convention

39. The Bureau welcomes the Working Group on Implementation special session: seminar on good practices and lessons learned in the implementation of the Convention (Geneva (hybrid), 3–4 February 2022),²⁴ which aimed to help overcome implementation gaps by facilitating the exchange of information among countries. Among the conclusions of the seminar was the recommendation to develop a guide of good practices in implementing the

²² See <https://unece.org/information-repository-good-practices-and-lessons-learned-land-use-planning-and-industrial-safety-1>.

²³ More information on the workshop and its conclusions is available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/sub-regional-workshop-land-use-planning-and-industrial-safety-south>.

²⁴ More information about the seminar, including all presentations delivered, is available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/wgi-special-session-seminar-good-practices-and-lessons-learned>.

Convention, to further explain its provisions and showcase concrete examples of countries implementing them, and to develop an interactive network of experts.²⁵

40. The seminar was an important event in this biennium, being the first of its kind. It was organized in line with the Working Group for Implementation mandate to facilitate an exchange of information between countries. The Bureau wishes to thank the Working Group, its preparatory group and the secretariat for planning and organizing the Seminar, which was of great interest to countries and their various competent authorities. **The Bureau encourages Parties and non-Parties to make use of the experiences and good practices presented at the seminar in the pursuit of progress towards the Convention's full implementation, in line with its long-term strategy. It encourages Parties to support and consider financing the development of a guide of good practices, as envisaged in the workplan 2023–2024.**

8. Assistance and Cooperation Programme

41. The Bureau wishes to express its appreciation to the Assistance and Cooperation Programme beneficiary countries for their engagement in assistance activities and continuous progress made in the Convention's implementation. At the same time, it recognizes the continuing desire of donor countries to support the activities under the Programme and expresses its gratitude for their support.

42. Information provided to the Bureau by the secretariat on the different projects has been important in monitoring progress, especially in the light of pandemic-related travel restrictions. The Bureau has taken note of the assistance activities implemented and endorsed the conduct of activities for the biennium, as proposed by the secretariat. It welcomed the development of the Programme in line with the long-term strategy, while recognizing that further financing was required to sustain this progress.

43. The Bureau recognizes that the development of tools, such as the Online toolkit and training for strengthening mine tailings safety,²⁶ launched in February 2021, was important during the pandemic situation. The Online toolkit and training include three-step training on the Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for Tailings Management Facilities and a related methodology for improving tailings management facility safety.²⁷ This is an outstanding example of how to continue building capacity in a situation where face-to-face meetings are impossible. The Bureau wishes to thank the secretariat for its additional efforts to produce this online toolkit and training thanks to additional resources from the United Nations regular budget. **The Bureau encourages countries to actively refer to and make use of the information contained in the Online toolkit and training for strengthening mine tailings safety in pursuing implementation of decision 2020/1 on strengthening mine tailings safety in the ECE region and beyond.**

44. Overall, the Bureau noted with satisfaction that the activities under the Programme made it possible to significantly move forward with the implementation of the Convention's long-term strategy. Most notably, the Bureau welcomes the launch and implementation of a National Policy Dialogue for Industrial Safety in Serbia — initiated in the last biennium and

²⁵ The seminar conclusions are available in document ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/5, annex. The proposed follow-up activities are included in the draft workplan for 2023–2024 (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/11), notably: table 1, items 2.5 *Identifying and compiling good practices to foster the Convention's implementation*, which entails initiating preparation of a guide to good practices, and 2.6 *Fostering exchange of information and sharing of experiences*, which involves the establishment of an interactive network for exchanging information and sharing of experiences on the Convention's implementation; and table 3, item 1.2 *Full development of a guide of good practices on the implementation of the Convention*.

²⁶ See <https://unece.org/environment-policy/industrial-accidents/online-toolkit-and-training-strengthening-mine-tailings>. For more information, see <https://unece.org/media/environment/Industrial-Accidents-Convention/press/352614>.

²⁷ Kovacs, *Safety of the Tailings Management Facilities* is the latest update of the methodology for improving tailings management facility safety, and was completed in cooperation with the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River through a project in the Danube River basin. The methodology is available at <https://unece.org/info/Environment-Policy/Industrial-accidents/pub/369164>.

continued actively during the current biennium. Serbia is the first country in the pan-European region to implement such a process, called for by the long-term strategy.²⁸ The Bureau is convinced that the National Policy Dialogue process will help the country advance towards a more comprehensive implementation of the Convention, with the engagement of relevant authorities and key stakeholders. The development of a National Programme for Industrial Safety by Serbia, under the auspices of the National Policy Dialogue, will help advance policy reforms.

45. The Bureau wishes to express its appreciation to France for its financial support to this activity, through a dedicated financial contribution to support progress towards the implementation of the long-term strategy provided back in 2019, which was utilized to finance respective activities until the end of 2021. Activities in 2022 were financed thanks to the regular contributions provided by Parties, as well as additional financing from the United Nations regular budget. Additionally, cooperation with OECD is of great importance for the process. The Bureau recognizes the high level of commitment to this work on the part of the Serbian authorities, and the secretariat's efforts to support it, and looks forward to the results of this process.

46. Furthermore, the Bureau welcomes the initiation of the Project on National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Central Asia — launched in the previous biennium with the aim of strengthening policymaking and governance in the five Central Asian countries. The Bureau appreciates the preparation of national reports for all five Central Asian countries identifying gaps and making related recommendations to further progress in the Convention's implementation. A subsequently envisaged step is the organization of outreach missions. The Bureau wishes to express its appreciation to the Russian Federation for having supported this project with a financial contribution provided in 2020. It noted the donor country's request to suspend activities, which was received by the secretariat in April 2022.

47. The ongoing processes of National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Serbia and Central Asia represent initial steps in strengthening policies and governance and creating sustainable coordination mechanisms, initiated with the support of ECE and eventually to be sustained by the countries themselves.

48. The Bureau also learned with satisfaction that selected Central Asian countries, notably, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, will benefit from a joint ECE/UNDRR project on addressing technological/industrial accident risks in national strategies and disaster risk reduction plans. The project aims to support countries in strengthening existing policies and the adoption of a multi-hazard/multi-risk approach in the transboundary context, while strengthening their implementation of the Convention and the Sendai Framework. The project, which will be implemented in August 2022–January 2023, is an important strategic endeavour to strengthen policies and governance of Central Asian countries while the activities under the National Policy Dialogue Project (Phase I: Launch) are suspended.

49. Moreover, the Bureau welcomed moves to implement projects to strengthen the safety of tailings management facilities, with a focus on Tajikistan (completed in end-2021), Uzbekistan (ongoing, until end-2023) and governance in Central Asia (ongoing, until end-2023). It was impressed by the conduct of an on-site training session and a resulting evaluation workshop on strengthening the safety and governance of mine tailings in Central Asia (Penjikent, Tajikistan (hybrid), 2–4 June 2021),²⁹ with the participation of all Central Asian countries, and the progress made in the field of governance, through the establishment by Kazakhstan of an inter-institutional working group on tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have also begun setting up such working groups. The Bureau wishes to express its appreciation to Switzerland for its financial support to these three respective projects, including support for a new project focusing on Uzbekistan provided during this biennium.

²⁸ ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/5, para. 25.

²⁹ The full summary of the on-site training session and evaluation workshop, the key conclusions and more information are available at <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Industrial-Accidents/events/356600>.

50. In addition, the Bureau recognizes the ongoing cooperation between four Central Asian countries under the Project on the development of joint measures to prevent and respond to pollution of the Syr Darya River in emergency situations (Phase I), aiming to identify and mitigate industrial accident and water-related hazards and risks. This Project is an example of addressing industrial accident risks in addition to natural water-related hazards and risks, taking account of cascading effects and transboundary implications. The Bureau appreciates the close cooperation with the Water Convention and wishes to thank the European Union for its financial support to this project provided through the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resource Management.

51. Furthermore, the Bureau welcomes progress made by countries in line with the Strategic Approach, notably Azerbaijan, which benefited from an online meeting with the Working Group on Implementation (Geneva (online), 21 September 2021),³⁰ and Montenegro, which benefited from a technical mission (Podgorica (hybrid), 30 November–1 December 2021).³¹ Both activities resulted in the subsequent submission of updated national self-assessments and action plans. In addition, Ukraine also updated its self-assessment based on feedback received from the Working Group. Lastly, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan updated their self-assessments and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan updated their action plans as a result of the assistance provided by the secretariat in the framework of the above-mentioned Swiss-funded Project on strengthening tailings management facility safety in Central Asia, and thanks to co-funding from the United Nation regular budget.³²

52. At the same time, the Bureau recognized that there are numerous requests from beneficiary countries for activities to which the Convention has thus far been unable to respond positively in the absence of respective financing, notably from Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro (follow-up activity), North Macedonia and Ukraine. **Against this background, the Bureau encourages Parties to provide financing to enable the carrying out of activities aimed at supporting beneficiary countries in strengthening their implementation of the Convention.**

9. Consideration of gender, age and disability

53. At its forty-eighth meeting, the Bureau held discussions on moving towards more inclusive policy and governance of industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response, particularly with regards to gender, age and disability aspects. A background note from the secretariat outlined the long-term strategy's objective of applying article 9, regardless of age and gender,³³ and United Nations and ECE mandates and strategies, including the *UNECE Policy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women: Accelerating the attainment of SDGs with a gender lens in the UNECE region (2021–2025)*,³⁴ and the related UNECE Gender Action Plan 2021–2022,³⁵ the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing +5 Political Declaration and Outcome*,³⁶ the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy³⁷ and the *ECE Guidelines for Mainstreaming Ageing*.³⁸ The Bureau alluded to certain scenarios where people in vulnerable situations should be considered within public information and participation, contingency planning and training

³⁰ More information about the meeting is available at <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Industrial-Accidents/events/359356>.

³¹ The full summary of the technical mission, the key conclusions and more information are available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/technical-mission-support-montenegro-implementation-unece-convention>.

³² Further information on the implementation of the Strategic Approach in 2021–2022 is provided in section II of document ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/6.

³³ ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1, long-term strategy for the Convention until 2030, section III.1 (d): “The Parties will ensure inclusive public information and participation by implementing article 9 of the Convention with the involvement of the population, regardless of age and gender (Goal 16)”.

³⁴ United Nations publication, ECE/INF/2021/2.

³⁵ Available at <https://unece.org/isu/documents/2021/07/working-documents/unece-gender-action-plan-2021-2022>.

³⁶ United Nations publication, 1995.

³⁷ Available at www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/.

³⁸ United Nations publication, ECE/WG.1/37.

sessions for emergency responders. Norway had, for example, developed a guideline for cooperation between municipal service providers on fire safety for vulnerable groups and for other at-risk groups. Moreover, the Working Group on Implementation had decided to consider adding a question on inclusivity (gender, age and disability) in the updated reporting template for the next reporting round.³⁹

54. **The Bureau encourages Parties to be continuously mindful of the importance of inclusion in the implementation of the Convention and its provisions, and to promote, to the extent feasible, respective considerations regarding gender, age and disability, within their authorities.** In this respect, the Bureau considered it important take into account the work done on gender and inclusion at other levels within the United Nations or the respective Governments.

10. Thirtieth anniversary of the Convention

55. The year 2022 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention's signature in Helsinki on 17 March 1992. This anniversary provides an occasion to take stock of progress achieved since the Convention's text was agreed upon and to look forward at the remaining challenges and actions needed to enhance its implementation and industrial safety in the ECE region and beyond.

56. The Bureau agreed at its forty-ninth meeting to invite representatives of Parties, non-Parties and partner organizations to reflect on the Convention's anniversary, highlighting key achievements in the Convention's implementation attained since its adoption in 1992, and indicating priority actions they intend to take toward accelerating implementation and making progress in line with the long-term strategy. In addition, the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva will host a reception to celebrate the anniversary. The Bureau wishes to thank Norway for hosting the reception. **It also invites Parties to take advantage of this invitation to speak on the thirtieth anniversary.**

11. Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents

57. At its first meeting in the biennium (Geneva online, 23 February 2021), the Bureau elected Mr. Bojan Srdic (Serbia) as new Co-Chair of the Joint Expert Group. As such, he attended the parts of Bureau meetings dedicated to the Joint Expert Group, to report on the implementation of ongoing and completed activities, both from a substantive and a financial point of view. The Bureau appreciates the close cooperation with the Water Convention in the implementation of the Group's activities. It welcomes the renomination of members to the Group in 2021, and the nomination of a new member from Ghana.

58. The Joint Expert Group's work on strengthening the prevention of accidental water pollution fosters the implementation of both the Industrial Accidents Convention and the Water Convention and is fully in line with the long-term strategy. In this regard, the Bureau welcomes the Group's addressing of Natech at its teleconference (Geneva (hybrid), 10 February 2022) and the organization of the Joint Expert Group Seminar entitled "Emerging risks in accidental water pollution: focus on Natural hazard-triggered accidents" (Budapest (hybrid), 5 October 2022).⁴⁰ It wishes to thank Hungary for hosting the Seminar and Germany for its continued financing of the Group's activities.

59. Lastly, the Bureau welcomes the fact that the Joint Expert Group gives continuous guidance regarding tailings management facility-related activities and the implementation of decision 2020/1. **The Bureau encourages Parties to continue to focus on preventing accidental water pollution, paying particular attention to tailings management facility safety and the prevention of Natech events.**

³⁹ CP.TEIA/2021/B.3/Minutes, para. 41.

⁴⁰ More information is available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/emerging-risks-accidental-water-pollution-focus-natural-hazard>.

12. Industrial Accident Notification system

60. The Bureau welcomes the holding of the Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) system connectivity test in summer 2022 and the organization of the forthcoming eighth consultation of the Points of Contact (Geneva (online), date to be determined). **It encourages Parties and non-Parties to take part in the online consultation and to conduct tests of the IAN system at the subregional level.**

61. The Bureau is aware of the need to upgrade the IAN system, as recommended at the seventh consultation of the Points of Contact (Geneva (online), 10 June 2020).⁴¹ Such an upgrade would require additional funding in order to fix existing bugs, develop new functionalities (such as allowing multiple email addresses for one account, creating a mobile application, or sending short messages), and ensure full compliance with cybersecurity standards and requirements.

62. At the Bureau's request, the secretariat sent a related letter to the Points of Contacts nominated under the Convention. **In this regard, the Bureau encourages responsible authorities, including the authorities hosting the Points of Contact, to provide funding for and support the upgrade of the IAN system.**

13. Cooperation with European Union

63. The Bureau welcomes the secretariat's presentation to the European Council Working Party on Civil Protection (Brussels (hybrid), 14 September 2021), in which the secretariat highlighted the Convention's linkages with the European Union Seveso-III Directive⁴² and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.⁴³ The Bureau also welcomes the secretariat's presentation on activities and future plans to the eighth (Brussels (online), 16 February 2021) and ninth (Colmar, France (hybrid), 23 June 2022) meetings of the Seveso Expert Group.

64. The Bureau stresses the importance of continuing to engage in awareness-raising of the Convention's work and achievements with Parties, including the European Union. To that effect, it welcomes the organization of a meeting of the members of the Bureau representing European Union member States and the member of the Bureau representing the European Union itself, together with the Chair and secretariat, with representatives of different Directorate-Generals of the European Commission (online, 28 September 2022). The meeting aims to lead to a better understanding of mutual linkages and enhance European Union support for the Convention's implementation.

B. Supporting implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sendai Framework

65. The Bureau appreciates the close cooperation by the secretariat with strategic partners, such as EIB, OECD and UNDRR. Cooperation with UNDRR has resulted in several events in this biennium, with the opportunity to raise awareness of the Convention as a widely recognized instrument for reducing technological disaster risks and fostering transboundary cooperation. Additionally, the Convention's implementation will support national efforts to implement the four Sendai Framework priorities for action.

66. In the framework of the 2021 European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction, a focused thematic session entitled "Preventing another Sandoz, Baia Mare or Beirut accident: Perspectives on risk management in the context of the Sendai Framework" was co-organized by ECE, OECD, EIB, Norway and Slovenia (24 November 2021). The preparation of the event was closely guided by the small group on disaster risk reduction and Natech, with the

⁴¹ See presentation, p. 10, available at <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/seventh-consultation-points-contact>.

⁴² Directive 2012/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directive 96/82/EC, Official Journal of the European Union, L 197 (2012), pp. 1–37.

⁴³ Decision 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, Official Journal of the European Union, L 347, pp. 924–947, and its subsequent amendments.

active participation of its members from Belarus, Finland, Norway (Chair) and Slovenia, in cooperation with EIB, OECD and the European Commission Joint Research Centre. The objectives of the focused thematic discussion were to:

- (a) Brief the Sendai Framework community on specifics of chemical/industrial risk;
- (b) Provide good examples on accident prevention and mitigation;
- (c) Support and call for increased policy coherence;
- (d) Place chemical/industrial risk in a broader context by addressing recent challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the energy transition.

67. Addressing disaster risks in a systemic manner by mainstreaming them into relevant policies, as well as responding to new and emerging risks, are common challenges regarding all types of disasters. Consequently, the industrial accidents community aims to continue to be present in future actions taken under the auspices of UNDRR.

68. The Bureau welcomes the secretariat's initiative to promote the Convention at the global level where issues relating to disaster risk reduction and transboundary cooperation are discussed. In this regard, the co-organization of the session on disaster risk reduction through transboundary cooperation at the Global workshop on building climate resilience through improving water management and sanitation at national and transboundary levels (Geneva (hybrid), 29–31 March 2021)⁴⁴ is illustrative. Furthermore, the secretariats to the Industrial Accident Convention and the Water Convention organized a side event on 27 May 2022 at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, entitled "Governance of climate and technological risks in transboundary water bodies" (Bali (hybrid), 23–28 May 2022).⁴⁵ Speakers and participants discussed approaches to effectively integrate multi-hazard/multi-risk approaches in an effort to effectively manage disaster risks, reduce exposure and vulnerabilities, and adapt to climate change. The implementation of existing legal and policy instruments was highlighted as supporting countries in achieving these goals.⁴⁶

69. The Bureau finds the above to be of great importance in order to demonstrate to other communities the relevance of the Convention and to provide concrete examples of a multi-hazard/multi-risk approach in a transboundary context. The Bureau encourages the Parties to highlight the linkages between the Convention and the Sendai Framework and establish cooperation between sectors responsible for disaster risk reduction.

C. Emerging risks and developments

70. At its forty-ninth meeting, the Bureau reviewed and reflected on progress in implementing the long-term strategy. It recognized that emerging risks and developments will play a significant role in the coming years, in line with the strategy, as the Convention seeks to address both present and future challenges. This relates to the following examples, among others:

- (a) Urbanization and infrastructure developments, including with smart technology, have an impact on industrial safety;
- (b) Increasing demands for metal and minerals pose a challenge for the safe storage and handling of hazardous substances at mine tailings and with mine waste;
- (c) Increased risk of Natech events, which must already be taken into account during risk assessments and evaluations, technological safety measures, land-use planning and emergency and contingency planning.

⁴⁴ See https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Programme_climate_workshop_29-31March2021_final_ENGL_0.pdf.

⁴⁵ See <https://globalplatform.undrr.org/conference-event/governance-climate-and-technological-risks-transboundary-water-bodies>.

⁴⁶ See <https://unece.org/climate-change/news/unece-and-partners-showcase-examples-integrated-governance-climate-and>.

71. **The Bureau urges industry owners and national authorities to adopt disaster risk management for the above-mentioned and other emerging risks.** The Bureau wishes to address emerging risks and developments in the Convention's future workplans. In the workplan 2023–2024, emerging risk-related issues, such as Natech risks and urbanization, continue to be prominent, further to continued activities on risk assessment.

1. Natech risk management

72. The Bureau has taken note of the dire warnings contained in *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability — Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*.⁴⁷ This report calls for action, and it is crucial that the work conducted under the Convention correspond to the challenges outlined in the report.

73. The Bureau welcomes the preparation of a draft decision on strengthening Natech risk management in the ECE region and beyond (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/4) **and invites Parties to adopt it at the forthcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties.** The decision emphasizes that Natech is no longer an emerging risk, but one with which humankind is currently confronted. Consequently, adaptation to climate change needs to encompass the prevention of, preparedness for and response to Natech events, in efforts to pursue sustainable development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its Sustainable Development Goals. **The Bureau therefore encourages all ECE member States and countries beyond the ECE region to develop good practices on Natech risk management, and to share them, along with lessons learned, making use of the policy forums provided by ECE, OECD, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit and other international and regional organizations.**

74. The Bureau considers the ECE/OECD seminar on effective management of technological risks of accidents triggered by natural hazards at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties⁴⁸ to be an outstanding opportunity to share knowledge and best practices. It can be seen as a more concrete follow-up to the joint ECE/OECD seminar on fostering implementation of the sustainable development agenda for industrial accidents prevention, preparedness and response held on 28 November 2016 during the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Ljubljana, 28–30 November 2016), in which participants examined how the work of ECE and OECD on industrial and chemical accident prevention, preparedness and response could contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda, as well as the Sendai Framework priority actions.

75. The Bureau welcomes the secretariat's efforts in setting up an extensive web page on Natech issues, with important examples and links for further reading.⁴⁹ It encourages Parties to take advantage of this information source.

2. New energy sources

76. The Bureau recognizes that the use of new energy sources has significantly increased in recent years. The use of new energy sources, such as liquefied natural gas, biogas, hydrogen and lithium batteries/accumulators, will have an impact on the safety and sustainability of the chemical industry in general. The Bureau highlighted that future risk scenarios may involve complex sequences, such as energy blackouts caused by natural disasters or pandemic situations, and must therefore be viewed in a broader context. This has a direct impact on safety and sustainability for the chemical industry in general. The current political situation in the European region makes this even more relevant, as the supply of traditional forms of energy is affected, and future risk scenarios might become even more serious and complicated.

⁴⁷ Hans-Otto Pörtner and others, eds. (Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2022). Available at www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-ii/.

⁴⁸ For additional information see document ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/3.

⁴⁹ Available at <https://unece.org/industrial-accidents-convention-and-natural-disasters-natech>.

3. Waste treatment

77. During the previous biennium, several major incidents occurred that involved waste treatment in the industrial sector. It is essential to draw lessons from these accidents and ensure that the continuous prevention of accidents, including those with the potential for transboundary effects, is a primary focus for both industry and the authorities. The Bureau emphasizes the significance of the Convention's measures and its valuable guidance in this area. This relates to safety distances that must be considered in land-use planning and information to the public.

4. Coronavirus disease and implications for industrial safety

78. The Bureau was satisfied with the discussions and interventions at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the implications of the pandemic for industrial safety.⁵⁰ The pandemic had an impact on authorities' contact with industries and the conduct of inspections. However, the Bureau noted that a number of countries had found solutions to solve these issues in times when travel was impossible. The pandemic exemplifies a risk that must be addressed, not only as a health crisis but also as a crisis with widespread global impacts.

II. Communication, outreach and engagement strategy

79. The Bureau welcomes the presentation of the Convention's ECE website,⁵¹ which contains a wealth of useful information and knowledge, presents the Convention's work areas in a clearly accessible manner and provides links to guidelines, good practices and press releases. The Bureau welcomes the secretariat's efforts to extensively promote the Convention by issuing numerous press releases during this biennium, in addition to social media posts (Facebook, Twitter). The ECE website also includes information on the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Chemical and Industrial Accidents, including on partner organizations involved and their respective processes and resources.⁵² The Bureau welcomes the secretariat's continued guidance to the organizations hosting the regular inter-agency coordination meetings, as well as its leadership in the organization of an additional inter-agency coordination meeting following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.⁵³

80. The Bureau calls on focal points to familiarize themselves with the contents of the website, how it can be used and promoted with relevant stakeholders. It also encourages the Focal Points and other representatives of the Parties to promote, where feasible, relevant press/news releases and social media posts.

III. Financing

81. The financial situation of the Convention is of major concern to the Bureau. In this regard, at each of its meetings, the Bureau reviews the situation on the basis of information shared by the secretariat about the financial situation and the resources made available by Parties.

82. The Bureau wishes to thank the Parties for their financial contributions, in particular the Parties that provided predictable multi-year contributions, mostly following their indications and pledges at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, European Union, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Russian Federation, Slovenia and Switzerland).⁵⁴ Pledges at the meetings of the Conference

⁵⁰ ECE/CP.TEIA/42, paras. 68–72.

⁵¹ See <https://unece.org/environment-policy/industrial-accidents>.

⁵² See <https://unece.org/inter-agency-coordination>.

⁵³ See <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/eighth-meeting-inter-agency-coordination-group-chemical-and-industrial>.

⁵⁴ ECE/CP.TEIA/42, paras. 31–32.

of the Parties are essential to provide certainty as to the minimum amount of contributions that will be available for the biennium.

83. The Bureau also wishes to thank the Parties that confirmed additional contributions during the biennium (Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Switzerland). Overall, these contributions, together with remaining amounts of larger contributions from donor countries provided previously (mainly from France and Switzerland), enabled significant progress to be made towards the implementation of the workplan and the development of key areas of the long-term strategy.

84. **The Bureau calls attention to the fragility of the Convention's financial situation and reminds Parties that they are primarily responsible for financing the activities and projects included in the workplan.** The contributions provided in this biennium enabled the Convention's growth, which was mainly based on previously provided funding. The current level of ambition in line with the long-term strategy does not match the level of financing provided. The Bureau recognizes that the small group on financing has been pursuing efforts to encourage more Parties to take an active part in the financing scheme and on the possibility of making use of other financial sources, such as available project-related financing, for example from the European Union.

85. In reviewing the implementation of the sustainable financial mechanism (ECE/CP.TEIA/24, annex I) and decision 2018/2 on fostering implementation of the sustainable financial mechanism under the Convention (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1), the Bureau noticed that some progress has been made, but significant challenges remain to progress towards a system of longer-term, sustainable and predictable financing. Noting that merely half of the Parties have contributed financially to date, the Bureau reminds the Parties of their responsibilities when it comes to the financing of the workplan. **The Bureau thus urges Parties that have not yet made financial contributions to do so as of the biennium 2023–2024. It welcomes contributions by Parties thus far and encourages them to maintain, or, where feasible, increase their contributions in the coming biennium.**

IV. Preparations for the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties

86. The Bureau welcomed the co-organization by Norway of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It wishes to thank Norway for its additional financial contribution, which covers the participation of representatives of countries with economies in transition, and contributes to support some of the preparatory work done by the secretariat prior to the Conference. It also wishes to thank Germany for its forthcoming financial contribution enabling the participation of countries with economies in transition.

87. The Bureau is satisfied that the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be an in-person-meeting, while there will be a possibility for participants to connect to the meeting remotely, noting that there will be limited time available for remote interventions and that decision-making is envisaged to take place in person.⁵⁵

88. Regarding the provisional agenda for the twelfth meeting, the Bureau decided the following:

(a) The twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will mark the thirtieth anniversary for the Convention's signature in Helsinki on 17 March 1992, during which delegations will be invited to reflect on this anniversary. In addition, the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva will host a reception celebrating the anniversary;

(b) An ECE/OECD seminar on effective management of technological risks of accidents triggered by natural hazards will be organized on the first day of the twelfth

⁵⁵ Interventions by participants connected remotely shall not exceed 30 minutes for each 3-hour session, in order to allow for interpretation into the ECE official languages, in accordance with the rules of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

meeting. The main objective of the Seminar is to provide support to ECE member States, OECD countries and others to implement the Convention and the OECD Guiding Principles for Chemical Accident Prevention, Preparedness and Response: Guidance for Industry (including Management and Labour), Public Authorities Communities and other Stakeholders,⁵⁶ review elements of the joint OECD/United Nations guidance under development and inspire action to strengthen the management of Natech risks. On the basis of the Seminar, the Conference of the Parties will be invited to consider and adopt a decision on Natech risk management in the ECE region and beyond (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/4);

(c) The twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will take stock of the outcome of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction focused thematic discussion on industrial/chemical accident risk (24 November 2021) and the summary and conclusions of the United Nation/OECD seminar in the follow-up to the 2020 Beirut port explosion (14 December 2021);

(d) The twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will also entail the presentation of two reports on risk assessment methodologies;

(e) The Working Group on Implementation will report on the special session: seminar on good practices and lessons learned in implementing the Convention (Geneva (hybrid), 3–4 February 2022), and the Conference of the Parties will be invited to endorse its conclusions and recommendations;

(f) The Conference of the Parties will be briefed on assistance activities, and will be invited to endorse the progress report on the implementation of assistance activities in 2021–2022 (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/6), and to support the future work;

(g) The Bureau wishes to invite the Parties to endorse the road map for action to strengthen mine tailings safety within the ECE region and beyond (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/7), which will be an important follow-up to the last Conference of the Parties and decision 2020/1, which sets out important directions until 2030;

(h) The workplan for the biennium 2023–2024 (more aligned than previously with the long-term strategy) will be discussed and decided upon. The Parties will be invited to share information about their pledges and leadership of workplan items; to adopt the workplan (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/11) and the decision on guiding principles for financial assistance (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/12).

89. At the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, a new Bureau will be elected. Keeping in mind the need for balance between geographic subregions, the Bureau encourages Parties to put forward their candidatures for membership in the Bureau during the next biennium 2023–2024 in due time, notably by 4 October 2022 — in accordance with the Bureau's terms of reference (ECE/CP.TEIA/32/Add.1) and the rules of procedure for the meetings of the Conference of the Parties (ECE/CP.TEIA/37).

V. Conclusions and observations

90. The Bureau, in steering the work under the Convention during the biennium 2021–2022, has taken account of the directions set out in the three strategic documents, namely:

- (a) The long-term strategy for the Convention until 2030;
- (b) The communication, outreach and engagement strategy; and
- (c) The sustainable financial mechanism.

91. The Bureau noted with satisfaction the Parties' willingness and efforts to support and engage in the longer-term priorities set by the long-term strategy and the concrete activities of the 2021–2022 workplan.

92. The Bureau appreciated the continued interest in the work on risk assessment, land-use planning and increasing safety at tailings management facilities. Addressing tailings

⁵⁶ Paris, OECD, 2003.

management facility safety issues has been an important regional assistance activity. It strongly supports the road map for action to strengthen mine tailings safety within the ECE region and beyond and encourages its endorsement by Parties. In addition, the implementation of National Policy Dialogues in Serbia is a milestone, and the review of national policies and legislation of Central Asia an important step towards alignment with the Convention's requirements.

93. The Bureau noted that the pandemic had an impact on the work under the Convention. In the light of the pandemic and the lockdown in multiple countries, the Bureau is pleased that the secretariat and the Parties have been able to adapt to the current situation, including through meetings of the Bureau and Working Group on Implementation held online, as well as their respective small groups, including on risk assessment, disaster risk reduction and Natech, tailings management facility safety and financing. In addition, innovative solutions and formats to address the limitations of in-person meetings have been explored.

94. The Bureau recognized and appreciated the work done by the Working Group on Implementation by organizing the first-ever seminar on good practices and lessons learned in implementing the Convention based on the analysis and evaluation of the ninth report on the implementation of the Convention (2016–2018) (ECE/CP.TEIA/2020/5), with support from the secretariat. The Bureau welcomed the fact that a large number of good practices shared by the Parties were made available on the Convention's web page.⁵⁷ It calls on the Parties to review this information and to take the opportunity to learn from each other.

95. The Bureau noted with satisfaction the continued cooperation with other international organizations, and welcomed the significant expansion of strategic partnerships. The work under the Convention benefits from good cooperation with strategic partners.

96. The Bureau welcomed the secretariat's active engagement in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Industrial and Chemical Accidents, including through its initiation of the organization of an additional inter-agency coordination meeting following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

97. Furthermore, it welcomed the secretariat's close cooperation with UNDRR, and its continued awareness-raising work on the linkages of the Convention with the Sendai Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, the Bureau noted the recognition of the Convention as an instrument for technological disaster risk reduction, including in the context of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

98. While welcoming the support for implementation of the Convention's workplan, the Bureau regretted the concerning reliance on a relatively small number of donors, the absence of contributions from about half of the Parties and the low share of pledges in advance of meetings of the Conference of the Parties. It therefore urges Parties to continue, renew or begin active participation in the Convention's activities that require financial contributions in order to be realized.

99. Lastly, the Bureau welcomed the growing recognition of the Convention in the context of policymaking and governance at the national and transboundary levels, and its role in expanding cooperation between countries and societies beyond the exchange of technical information.

⁵⁷ See <https://unece.org/environment-policy/industrial-accidents/good-practices-implementing-industrial-accidents-convention>.