

5 April 2023
English only

Economic Commission for Europe

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

Bureau

Fiftieth meeting

Geneva, 28 November 2022

Minutes of the meeting

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the Bureau members. The following Bureau members attended the meeting, which was held in person: Torill Tandberg (Norway), Chair; Michael Struckl (Austria), Vice-Chair; Martin Merkofer (Switzerland), Vice-Chair; Evgeny Baranovsky (Belarus); Camille Siefriid (European Union); Marie-Claire Lhenry (France); Suzana Milutinovic (Serbia); and Jasmina Karba (Slovenia).¹ Bojan Srdic (Serbia), Co-Chair of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (JEG) for the Convention, attended the meeting for the JEG-related item. The meeting was serviced by the ECE secretariat.

2. The Chair of the Bureau and the Secretary of the Convention welcomed the members of the Bureau and mentioned the importance of this meeting in preparation for the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

3. The Bureau adopted the agenda without changes.

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

4. The Bureau reviewed and made final arrangements for the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in the Palais des Nations (Room XXII) in Geneva and on Zoom, 29 November - 1 December 2022.

(a) Practical arrangements

5. The secretariat provided an update on the practical arrangements for the Conference, including about its hybrid nature and the organization of the joint UNECE/OECD Seminar on effective management of technological risks of accidents triggered by natural hazards (hereinafter – the Natech seminar) to be held on 29 November 2022 from 13:00. The Chair shared information on the opening reception of the Conference and celebration of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Convention to be held on 29 November 2022 at 18:00. Norway, as a co-organizer of the Conference, was to host the reception.

¹ The following members were not in attendance: Wivi-Ann Wagello-Sjölund (Finland) and Margarita Redina (Russian Federation).

(b) Representation and credentials

6. The secretariat reported on registration by Parties and others for the Conference. At that time, 169 participants had registered for the Conference, including the Natech seminar. 95 of them registered to attend the meeting in-person and 74 registered to attend remotely via Zoom. In addition, 21 participants registered to attend the seminar only. The Parties that had not registered for the Conference were: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Luxembourg, Monaco and Spain.

7. The secretariat shared that among the participants were more high-level participants than previously: The Minister of Labour and Social Insurance of Cyprus was attending the Conference for agenda item 2 on the 30th anniversary and planning to deliver a statement. The Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Environment of Serbia was planning to attend.² In addition, three Deputy Heads of the competent authorities of Armenia, Georgia and Tajikistan were present, thanks to the financial support for participants from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, which enable financing the 26 participants from countries in these regions in total.

8. The secretariat also reported on the status of credentials. It had received 33 advance copies of credentials from Parties. The nine Parties that had not submitted advance copies included: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Monaco, Russian Federation, Serbia,³ Slovakia and Spain. The secretariat had also received three copies of originals of credentials from: Greece, Portugal and the Republic of Moldova. The secretariat confirmed that the Convention had 42 Parties, following Ukraine's accession in 2022, so the number of Parties that needed to be represented at the meeting for the Conference to make decisions was 22, as per Rule 27 of the Rules of Procedure. The secretariat confirmed that most Parties that had sent advance copies were intending to bring their originals at the start of the meeting, and therefore anticipated that quorum would be met.

9. The Bureau agreed that the Vice-Chair from Austria would report on the credentials at the meeting.

(c) Election of officers and members of the Bureau

10. The secretariat recalled the nominations received for candidatures for membership of the Bureau for the period of 2023-2024, as outlined in ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/INF.2. It had received ten nominations, including three new members, from the following Parties: Armenia (new), Austria, the European Union, Finland, France, Montenegro (new), Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (new). The Chair and secretariat expressed their appreciation to the outgoing members from Belarus, the Russian Federation and Slovenia, and welcomed the expected incoming members from Armenia, Montenegro and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Chair informed the Bureau of the interest of Estonia and Germany joining the Bureau in the future, as of 2024. The Chair recalled the proposal by the Bureau for the election of Officers, which the Bureau welcomed: Norway for the Chair; and France and Switzerland for the Vice-Chairs. The Chair and secretariat expressed their appreciation for the outgoing Vice-Chair from Austria and welcomed the expected incoming Vice-Chair from France.

11. The Chair reiterated the issue of awaiting Latvia to appoint a replacement representative to serve as a member of the Working Group on Implementation until the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, since its previously nominated representative could not finish the four-year term. She informed the Bureau that she had sent, together with the Chair of the Working Group on Implementation, a message to the five nominated competent authorities of Latvia regarding this issue, which to date had not

² She then had to cancel unexpectedly due to unforeseen circumstances.

³ Serbia submitted its advance credentials following the report by the secretariat on 28 November 2022.

received a response. The Bureau requested the secretariat to raise the issue with the newly appointed Focal Point of Latvia.

(d) Provisional agenda and draft list of decisions taken

12. The Bureau reviewed the provisional agenda (ECE/CP.TEIA/43) and timetable (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/INF.1) for the meeting and discussed the handling of items requiring particular attention, as proposed by the Chair. The secretariat informed the Bureau of the statements it had received in advance, following a request for participants to submit statements early, and that it had received a very limited number of statements for the Conference and indications regarding the workplan and financial pledges, by the deadlines indicate. Receiving further statements had required substantial follow-up. The secretariat also informed the Bureau of its ongoing exchanges with some Parties that provided advance statements. The Bureau decided to return to discussion on how such advance submissions could work for future meetings. The Bureau agreed on the provisional agenda of the Conference.

13. The Bureau reviewed the draft list of decisions to be taken by the Conference, based on an advance list prepared and presented by the secretariat to be updated during the meeting. In particular, the Bureau discussed the following points:

(i) Political issues that may arise during the meeting, in particular in relation to the war in Ukraine: The Bureau agreed that the secretariat make related statements by Parties in the beginning of the meeting available on the meeting webpage, in line with the practice of other UNECE MEAs and subsidiary bodies.

(ii) Guidelines to facilitate the identification of hazardous activities for the purposes of the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention (Location Criteria): The Bureau recalled past discussions on the possible updating of the Location Criteria, including considerations for it to cover all tailings management facilities (TMFs) and to extend the distances of air and water paths. The Bureau agreed that the Conference request the JEG, in cooperation with the Working Group on Implementation and the Bureau, to assess in the next biennium, whether there exists a need for the Location Criteria to be revised and updated in order to cover more comprehensively the hazards and risks arising from TMFs, and to share its findings in the form of an official document with the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting.

(iii) Road map for action to strengthen mine tailings safety within and beyond the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/7): The secretariat informed the Bureau that a Party may have an issue regarding one aspect mentioned in the roadmap, and the Chair and secretariat reiterated that the roadmap's purpose was to serve as a guide for countries to apply in accordance with their national and transboundary contexts.

(iv) Risk assessment for industrial accident prevention (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/8 and ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/9): The secretariat proposed that the decision of the Conference to note the reports should express appreciation to Switzerland for leading and supporting this work.

(v) Work under the Convention regarding the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Sustainable Development Goals and the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction: The Chair emphasized that such work has supported the implementation of the long-term strategy until 2030 (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1).

(vi) Implementation of the decisions to be taken by the Conference: The secretariat informed the Bureau that implementing some of the decisions, such as the follow-up activities to the UN/OECD Seminar in follow-up to the 2020 Beirut port explosion (Geneva and online, 14 December 2021), among others, would be dependent on financing and support provided by Parties and partner organizations.

(vii) Implementation and financing of workplan activities: The secretariat informed the Bureau that numerous workplan activities had not yet secured lead Parties or financial support. In relation to the European Union's request to prioritize activities, some Bureau members expressed interest in further discussing the process of prioritizing activities in the absence of sufficient financing by the newly elected Bureau following the Conference meeting. The secretariat recalled that funding for the Convention's workplans had never been sufficient, and that the Parties in effect decide on the prioritization of activities through their financial contributions, including in relation to the activities listed in Tables 1 and 3 of the workplan. The Chair emphasized the importance of enlarging the number of Parties to the Convention which provide financial contributions and that some Parties might be interested to provide more targeted financial contributions to support accession processes.

14. The Bureau agreed on the draft list of decisions, including with regards to the above discussion points. It confirmed that all information needed for the Conference to take those decisions had been made available to delegates and that additional relevant information would be provided through presentations during the meeting. It also agreed that the Chair should recap all the decisions taken by the Conference during the meeting before closing each agenda item. The Chair and Bureau thanked the secretariat for its hard and effective work preparing the Conference and its decisions in advance.

(e) **Conclusions of UNECE/OECD Seminar on effective management of technological risks of accidents triggered by natural hazards**

15. The secretariat presented the agenda and the draft conclusions of the joint UNECE/OECD Seminar on effective management of technological risks of accidents triggered by natural hazards. The secretariat and OECD had planned to update the draft conclusions during the seminar to reflect the actual outcomes. The Bureau took note of some key conclusions, including:

(i) Although the risks of natural hazards triggering technological disasters (Natech events) are not new, the adverse impacts of climate change are presenting new challenges in managing those risks;

(ii) The importance of early warning systems, including in line with the United Nations Secretary-General's executive call for these systems for all;

(iii) The importance of aligning Natech risk management under the Convention with the international agenda, such as the Bali Agenda for Resilience; and

(iv) Recommendations for strengthening the capacity of public authorities and industry to prevent, prepare for and respond to Natech events, including through:

- (a) Developing maps with the results of integrated risk assessments that cover at least the key natural hazards and industrial/tailings facilities of a country;
- (b) Government activities on land-use planning and on the development of infrastructure that take account of local natural hazards and their potential impacts, including with a focus on resilience and avoiding an increase of the exposure of hazardous installations to natural hazards;
- (c) Operators of hazardous installations making use of hazard maps with their own specific local information, so as to assess the risks of the potential impact of natural hazards on their activities;
- (d) Operators being aware of the need to pursue resilient approaches to Natech risk management, including with the likelihood of major natural hazard events affecting local communities and governmental civil protection resources; and

- (e) Inspections by public authorities ensuring that operators are aware of their responsibilities to understand their specific local natural hazards, to regularly assess the related risks and to take appropriate measures to mitigate the impacts and respond in the event of a natural hazard event.

16. The Bureau welcomed the joint UNECE and OECD organization of the seminar and their engagement with the high-level panellists and the other speakers.

17. In this context, the JEG Co-Chair from Serbia presented highlights of the conclusions from the JEG Seminar on emerging risks in accidental water pollution: focus on natural hazard-triggered accidents (Budapest and online, 5 October 2022), hosted by Hungary. The Bureau took note of key conclusions presented, including, among others:

- (i) The importance of establishing legal frameworks to enable integrated risk assessment, land-use planning and life-cycle design;

- (ii) The importance of intersectoral national and transboundary dialogue, stakeholder engagement and dissemination to local communities to increase national capacities to prevent and minimize Natech events and accidental water pollution; and

- (iii) That historical statistics are insufficient to understand, forecast and adapt to future Natech events within the context of climate change.

18. The JEG Co-Chair also reported on the twenty-first meeting of the JEG (Budapest and online, 6 October 2022), which discussed the seminar conclusions and their implications for ongoing policy developments and JEG activities for the 2023-2024 biennium. The Bureau noted the information presented and thanked the JEG Co-Chair. The Bureau and secretariat discussed the resources allocated to the JEG and the goal of having one JEG teleconference per year and one JEG seminar per biennium.

3. Use of financial and in-kind resources for 2021-2022 and requirements for 2023-2024

19. The secretary presented information on the use of financial and in-kind resources for 2021-2022 and the resource requirements for 2023-2024, in view of the expected pledges for the workplan and information on the lead countries received to date.

20. The resources provided by Parties to the main Convention trust fund for the biennium 2021-22 at the time of the Bureau meeting totalled USD 1,157,321. An additional USD 225,000 from a contribution by the Russian Federation to the trust fund for the Project “National Policy Dialogues for Central Asia (Phase I: launch)” were available for the Project’s implementation during the biennium. Moreover, USD 53,000 were awarded by UNDRR, with funding from the EU’s Central Asia Initiative, through a joint UNECE-UNDRR agreement to implement the Central Asia initiative for implementation during the period 15 August 2022 – 15 January 2023. Furthermore, the majority of additional project funding available from previous periods (from France and Switzerland) was spent by the end of 2021. Only contributions from Switzerland for Projects on TMF safety in Central Asia were still available for the implementation of activities in 2022 and 2023. The estimated expenditures of the main Convention trust fund were at USD 1,360,000 for the biennium, further to expenditures arising from the implementation of activities under first two above-mentioned projects, with contributions to separate trust funds.

21. Considering all financial and in-kind contributions⁴ provided, workplan implementation was at over 70%. While this was a higher implementation rate than in previous years, it was

⁴ In-kind contributions for the biennium to support activities included in the Table 1 of the workplan totalled approx. USD 160,000. In addition, Germany provided an in-kind contribution to the Project on TMF safety in Kyrgyzstan of about USD 175,000.

only possible due to the implementation of ongoing Projects based on remaining contributions previously provided. Numerous activities to meet countries' needs could thus not be implemented, and the staff support needed could not be fully engaged. Consultants supported a bulk of strategic workplan activities for which staff support should be envisaged, including the work on disaster risk reduction and Natech.

22. With regard to the Conference, the secretary mentioned not yet having received information from all Parties on the contributions they were planning to pledge and provide in the next biennium, despite the request and reminder sent to share this information in advance of the twelfth meeting. The secretary highlighted that should the financing pledged at the meeting for the biennium remain at previous levels, additional contributions from either new Parties not yet contributing or from contributing Parties (e.g. from additional budget available within the same or other authorities) would be essential to increase the Convention's financial resource base again, aiming to build on achievements and progress made in the implementation of the long term strategy.

23. Bureau members then shared information on pledges their country was planning to make. The Bureau took note of the information provided and agreed to take actions to approach other delegations in the margins of the twelfth meeting, and to seek further opportunities for financing the Convention's future workplan.

4. Other business

24. No other business was discussed.

5. Date and venue for the next meeting of the Bureau

25. The Bureau confirmed the date and location of its next session, with the understanding that a new composition of the Bureau would be elected by the Conference. It agreed to hold its next meeting, jointly with the Working Group on Implementation, in Geneva on 14 February. The Bureau only will be meeting on 15 February 2023, following the Working Group's meeting on 13 February and the joint meeting.
