

Decision 2022/1

Strengthening Natech risk management in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region and beyond

The Conference of the Parties,

Alarmed by the findings of the second part of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, which articulates with ever-growing confidence the detrimental consequences of projected climate change on humans, societies and the environment,

Noting with concern the elevated risk of climate-related extreme weather events (such as high energy storms, wind gusts, heavy precipitation, flash floods and extreme temperatures), and slow onset climate events¹ (such as sea level rise, permafrost thaw, land degradation and glacial retreat), which may in turn cascade into natural hazard-triggered technological accidents (Natech), including at industrial facilities holding hazardous substances,

Noting with concern also how past Natech events at hazardous industrial facilities, including tailings management facilities, caused accidental air, soil and water pollution, the latter in particular with large-scale and transboundary consequences, affecting countries, regions and transboundary river basins,

Keeping in mind that natural hazards beyond climate-induced natural hazards, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis, among others, may also trigger technological/industrial accidents,

Underlining that adaptation to climate change needs to comprise 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 and its Sustainable Development Goals,

Conscious of the fact that industrial areas are encroaching on human settlements and natural sites, leading to enhanced exposure and vulnerabilities, exacerbated by increased population density and growth in sectors dependent on industrial activities,

Recalling that the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) applies, among others, to industrial accidents caused by natural hazards, requiring Parties to take measures to prevent, prepare for and respond to Natech events,

Recalling also that the Convention's long-term strategy until 2030 calls for consideration of Natech events in risk assessment and evaluation, safety measures and contingency planning, and in relevant guidance, policy and expert dialogues supporting national efforts to strengthen resilience to climate-related and (other) natural hazards,

Noting with concern the lack of reporting of Natech events in the national implementation reports of the Convention and related good practices,

Underlining the importance of achieving synergies between the implementation of the Convention, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and its European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction Road Map 2021–2030, the 2030 Agenda with its Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement and its global goal on adaptation,

Emphasizing that the management of industrial accident risks as part of technological risks, including those related to effects of natural hazards, and possible transboundary risks, should be strengthened, in line with a multi-hazard approach to disaster risk management, to take implementation of the Industrial Accidents Convention and the Sendai Framework forward, as reiterated by the Co-Chairs' Summary: Bali Agenda for Resilience — From Risk

¹ Slow onset climate events are defined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change technical paper on slow onset events. The paper indicates a need to integrate disaster risk reduction, adaptation to climate change and sustainable development efforts to address the impacts of slow onset climate events.

to Resilience: Towards Sustainable Development for All in a COVID-19 Transformed World,²

Taking note with appreciation of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Regional Assessment Report for Europe and Central Asia 2022 (forthcoming), and Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2019, which show the common effort of international organizations, countries and research institutes working together to understand, govern and manage technological risks, including Natech, in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region and beyond,

Commending the highly valuable work by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the ECE Industrial Accidents Convention and the United Nations Environment Programme/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Joint Environment Unit, in particular in relation to the development of resource documents, data sets and guidance on Natech risk management, including on past accidents and lessons learned, as well as good practices,³ and welcoming the strong cooperation among these organizations through the jointly implemented Natech projects,

Committed to preventing Natech events and their disastrous effects on human lives, the environment, infrastructure, regional security and economic development, and to enhancing transboundary cooperation to that effect,

1. *Emphasizes* the important role of the Convention in the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents caused by natural hazards, in line with article 2 (1) of the Convention, in particular by strengthening policy and governance at the national level, promoting transboundary cooperation, and fostering exchange of experience and good practices;

2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the conclusions and recommendations of the seminar on Natech risk management (Geneva, 29 November 2022).⁴ and recommends further exchange of experience and good practices, facilitated by ECE, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and other organizations;

3. *Urges* Parties to strengthen cooperation in understanding, preventing and mitigating the effects of Natech events, including those with transboundary causes or consequences, and strongly encourages all other ECE member States and countries beyond the ECE region to do the same;

4. *Also urges* Parties to enhance their efforts to strengthen industrial safety and prevent accidents arising from Natech risks, in the light of their increasing risk as a result of climate change, and strongly encourages all other ECE member States and countries beyond the region to do the same;

5. *Calls on* Parties to include in their risk assessments current and projected natural hazards and possible cascading technological risks, and to consider these accordingly in their land-use planning and siting procedures so as to effectively manage Natech risks and reduce, as far as possible, the exposure and vulnerability of societies, people and the environment;

² Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (Indonesia, 23–28 May 2022). See www.undrr.org/publication/co-chairs-summary-bali-agenda-resilience.

³ Lessons learned and good practices have been compiled by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the German Environment Agency and are available at www.umweltbundesamt.de/en/topics/economics-consumption/plant-safety/examples-of-good-practice-in-natech-risk-management#why-a-record-of-good-practice-examples; The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe has provided an overview of the Convention's provisions and activities on Natech, and the joint Natech-I, -II and -III Projects implemented with partners, which is available at <https://unece.org/industrial-accidents-convention-and-natural-disasters-natech>; The European Commission Joint Research Centre maintains the eNatech Database and developed the Rapid Natech Risk Assessment Tool, respectively available at <https://enatech.jrc.ec.europa.eu/> and <https://rapidn.jrc.ec.europa.eu>.

⁴ ECE/CP.TEIA/44, annex.

6. *Also calls* on Parties to make information on location-specific Natech risks available to communities and affected stakeholders, including those affected on a transboundary level;

7. *Further calls on* Parties to pursue effective and efficient preparedness and response actions by integrating Natech risks into contingency planning, including by developing joint and harmonized contingency plans on the transboundary level, as well as response measures, including such coordinated measures in the case of accidents with transboundary effects, and invites other ECE member States and countries beyond the region to do the same;

8. *Requests* Parties to ensure the integration of Natech risk management into policies on industrial safety, disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change, and invites other ECE member States and countries beyond the region to do the same;

9. *Also requests* Parties to improve their inter-institutional and stakeholder coordination on managing Natech risks, at the national and local levels, as well as across borders, including through the review of existing, and the establishment of new, joint working groups and joint bodies, such as Sendai Framework National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction, National Policy Dialogues and inter-institutional working groups on the prevention of accidental water pollution, and invites other ECE member States and countries beyond the region to do the same;

10. *Reminds* Parties and committed countries⁵ that the identification and notification of hazardous activities shall comprise hazardous activities capable of causing transboundary effects, including such effects arising from Natech risks, and requests Parties and committed countries to provide information in this regard in the reporting on identification and notification of hazardous activities, as per the updated reporting format for the tenth (and future) reporting round(s) on the implementation of the Industrial Accidents Convention, prepared by the Working Group on Implementation;

11. *Requests* the Working Group on Implementation to analyze the results of the tenth reporting round regarding Natech risks, and to share its findings with the Parties as part of the consolidated report on implementation, to be presented at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and every four years thereafter;

12. *Encourages* all ECE countries to share relevant data on Natech events for inclusion in the eNatech Database, operated and serviced by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, and invites countries beyond the ECE region to do the same;

13. *Encourages* beneficiary countries of the Assistance and Cooperation Programme to use the tools under the Strategic Approach, notably the self-assessments and action plans, to signal needs and request support in overcoming capacity constraints to manage Natech risks, and invites Parties to the Convention to make available funds to strengthen Natech risk management in countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;

14. *Encourages* Parties and all other ECE member States and countries beyond the region to develop good practices on Natech risk management, and share them, along with lessons learned, making use of the policy forums provided by ECE, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Joint Environment Unit and other international and regional organizations;

15. *Requests* the Bureau of the Convention, in cooperation with the Working Group on Implementation and the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents, to prepare, on the basis of the outcomes of the seminar on Natech risk management and for consideration at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties, a road map of actions that Parties and member States could take towards more effective Natech risk management in the ECE region, together with proposals for further actions under the Convention in this field, and to prepare an exchange, to be held in the framework of the thirteenth meeting, on

⁵ Signatories to the commitment declaration (CP.TEIA/2005/10) at the High-level Commitment Meeting (Geneva, 14–15 December 2005).

disaster risk reduction, Natech risk management and climate change and to discuss these findings and proposals.