

Mission to support the accession of Georgia to the UNECE Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

Main Objectives:

- Inform the relevant authorities of Georgia about UNECE’s work in the field of environmental governance, industrial safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution
- Raise awareness of the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and benefits of accession
- Explain the linkages and complementarities of the Convention and the relevant EU legislation
- Showcase some of the good practices of the Convention’s implementation
- Determine next steps for Georgia for the accession to the Convention and enhanced industrial safety and transboundary cooperation in this regard

Dates: 7-9 November 2023

Venue: Environmental Information and Education Centre (EIEC) of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, 32G Marshal Gelovani Ave., 0159, Tbilisi

Organizers:

The meeting was co-organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia with financial support by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection.

Beneficiaries from Georgia:

Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture	State Security Service
Ministry of Internal Affairs and its Emergency Management Agency	Parliament - Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and its Technical and Constructions Supervision Agency	Government Administration
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	JSC “Rustavi Azot”
	RMG Rich Metals Group
	JSC “APM Terminals Poti”

Engaged experts:

The meeting was opened by the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, the Director in the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, Germany and the Chair of the Industrial Accidents Convention from Norway. The Convention’s Chair as well as the Chair of the Convention’s Working Group on Implementation (WGI) from Sweden and the co-Chair of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents from Serbia, along with the Bureau member from the European Union and WGI members from Estonia and Switzerland have actively contributed to the meeting by sharing their knowledge, experience

and best practices of the Convention's implementation in their respective countries. Representatives of the above authorities and operators of Georgia actively contributed to the discussions and Q&A sessions, and the representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture delivered presentations and moderated selected sessions. The meeting was serviced by the Convention's secretariat (Secretary to the Convention and Manager of the Assistance and Cooperation Programme).

Main Findings and Outcomes:

- Georgia is one of the very few countries in the UNECE region which is not yet a Party to the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention and is the only non-Party in the Eastern Europe and Caucasus subregion
- Accession to the Convention and its implementation would enable Georgia not only to improve industrial safety at the national level, but also to play an important role in enhancing regional and cross-border cooperation
- Georgia has several industrial activities that fall under the Convention's scope. The Convention's Chair, the Chair of its Working Group on Implementation and the co-Chair of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents have encouraged Georgia to accelerate its accession efforts in order to enhance the safety of its hazardous activities and be better prepared for accidents which can originate from its territory or from one of the neighbouring or riparian countries
- As acknowledged by the representatives of Georgia, acceding to the Convention would support Georgia's accession and law approximation efforts as an EU candidate in multiple areas, including the Seveso III Directive and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. The Convention has the same upper-tier requirements for dangerous substances as the ones covered in the Seveso Directive; the respective annexes are aligned
- Georgia has been a beneficiary country of the Convention's Assistance [and Cooperation] Programme since 2005. As a signatory to the High-level Commitment Declaration (CP.TEIA/2005/12), Georgia has committed to making the necessary efforts to implement the Convention and regularly report on its implementation. As such, the country is already fulfilling some of the key requirements under the Convention
- The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture acts as the competent authority under the Convention and will lead the accession efforts. However, strong engagement by other relevant authorities, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and others is needed to ensure the necessary coordination for the accession to and further implementation of the Convention. Support by the Convention's secretariat and its community of Parties will also be crucial
- Harmonization of the national industrial safety legislation is a necessary step which can be done in parallel to the accession process and can continue following Georgia's accession, as it is the case with some other Parties to the Convention as long as the necessary legislative changes have been defined and submitted along with the accession bill, as required by the Georgian legislation
- Capacities of the national authorities and operators for strengthened prevention of, preparedness and response to industrial accidents need to be enhanced.

Proposed next steps of the roadmap to accession:

- The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture to continue leading the work under the Convention, including on the accession with support by an inter-agency group of relevant

stakeholders responsible for the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents

- The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture to submit its proposal for accession to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The Government of Georgia to consider acceleration of its accession to the Convention
- The Government of Georgia to inform the Convention secretariat, should it require any additional assistance in the process of accession to and implementation of the Convention. The Convention's Bureau, Working Group on Implementation and secretariat stand ready to support Georgia in this process. Such support [subject to the availability of funding] can be provided, *inter alia*, in the form of:
 - review and analysis of the national industrial safety legislation with recommendations on its alignment with the main requirements of the Convention and a roadmap for full implementation;
 - capacity building activities for authorities and operators;
 - support with establishing inter-institutional cooperation and coordination mechanisms among relevant authorities; etc.
- Once Georgia has ratified, accepted, approved or acceded to the Convention, it should send its instrument for ratification, acceptance or approval to the Depository – the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Acceding to the Industrial Accidents Convention will enable Georgia to:

- Strengthen its capabilities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to industrial accidents, including those that may originate from or affect neighbouring or riparian countries
- Strengthen its capacity to manage the risks of Natural hazards triggering technological disasters (Natech), to which the country is particularly susceptible due its geographic and climatic conditions, and thus be able to better protect its citizens, critical infrastructure and the environment from the cascade effects of Natech disasters
- Support approximation to EU law in multiple areas including the Seveso III-Directive and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)
- Align with international standards and expand international cooperation, including with the European Union, which is also a Party to the Convention, along with 25 of its Member States
- Foster closer collaboration and exchange of information across regional and national borders
- Contribute to the implementation of global commitments, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and enjoyment by its citizens of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment thus demonstrating commitment to international obligations and human rights
- Join the community of Parties and benefit fully from the existing platform for cooperation and mutual support as well as be able to take part in decision-making by the Parties and influence the future development of the Convention and workstreams within its framework
- Minimize the economic burdens associated with industrial accidents and secure additional support from donors, thereby increasing opportunities to obtain necessary funding for addressing industrial safety issues in Georgia.

More information, including the meeting agenda, list of participants, presentations and evaluation summary is available here:

<https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Industrial-Accidents/events/385940>