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## Economic Commission for Europe

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

#### **Thirteenth meeting**

Geneva, 27–29 November 2024

Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Bureau: Report of the Bureau on its activities since  
the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties**

## **Report of the Bureau on its activities since the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties**

**Submitted by the Bureau of the Convention**

### *Summary*

At its twelfth meeting (Geneva, 29 November–1 December 2022), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents requested the Bureau to report at its thirteenth meeting on the Bureau's activities in the intersessional period.

The present report details the Bureau's activities since the twelfth meeting, which the Conference of the Parties is invited to take note of.

## 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 2023–2024, as mandated by the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth meeting (Geneva, 29 November–1 December 2022).<sup>1</sup>
2. The report is based on and includes outcomes of the Bureau’s fifty-first meeting, held jointly with the forty-eighth meeting of the Working Group on Implementation (Geneva (hybrid)), 14 February 2023),<sup>2</sup> fifty-second (Geneva (hybrid), 15 February 2023),<sup>3</sup> fifty-third (Helsinki, 11–12 October 2023)<sup>4</sup> and fifty-fourth (Geneva, 13–14 June 2024)<sup>5</sup> meetings.
3. The Bureau for this biennium was composed of the following members, elected by the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth meeting: Ms. Torill Tandberg (Norway), Chair; Ms. Marie-Claire Lhenry (France), Vice-Chair; Mr. Martin Merkofer (Switzerland), Vice-Chair; Ms. Armine Hayrapetyan (Armenia); Mr. Michael Struckl (Austria); Mr. Camille Siefriid<sup>6</sup> (European Commission); Ms. Wivi-Ann Wagello-Sjölund (Finland); Ms. Dragana Raonić Popović (Montenegro); Ms. Suzana Milutinovic (Serbia); and Ms. Gill Smart (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).<sup>7</sup>
4. The Bureau expressed its appreciation for the support and assistance provided by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) secretariat in servicing all the meetings in the 2023–2024 biennium.
5. At its fifty-second meeting, the Bureau decided to continue the small groups on: (a) financing; (b) mine tailings safety; and (c) disaster risk reduction (DRR) and natural hazard triggered technological accidents (Natech).<sup>8</sup> At its fifty-third meeting, it decided to establish a small group on the industrial safety of the energy transition (ISET).<sup>9</sup>
6. At its respective meetings, the Bureau provided guidance to the above-mentioned small groups. In the absence of sufficient extrabudgetary financing to develop a road map on Natech risk management, the ECE secretariat, in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union Joint Research Centre (JRC), prioritized the finalization of the *Joint OECD/UNECE/JRC Guidance on Managing Risks from Natural Hazards to Hazardous Installations (Natech): A Guide for Senior Leaders in Industry and Public Authorities*. Against this background and given the biennium’s emphasis on activities linked with the energy transition and mine tailings safety, the small group on DRR and Natech did not convene.
7. The level of activities during the biennium remained high, despite limited extrabudgetary financial resources that were lower than the adopted workplan budget (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/11) and ongoing measures regarding the United Nations liquidity crisis.

<sup>1</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/44, para. 29.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/374971>.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/374972>.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/378701>.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/391373>.

<sup>6</sup> Replaced by Ms. Maud Casier from the Bureau’s fifty-fourth meeting onwards, see CEP.TEIA/2024/B.1/Decisions Report, decision 2, available at [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Decisions\\_54th\\_Bureau\\_13\\_14June2024\\_final.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Decisions_54th_Bureau_13_14June2024_final.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/44, para. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of the meeting (CP.TEIA/2023/B.2/Minutes), para. 20 (i)–(iii), available at [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Minutes-Bureau%20meeting%2052nd\\_0.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Minutes-Bureau%20meeting%2052nd_0.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> List of decisions (CP.TEIA/2023/B.4/Decisions Report), decision 35, available at [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/Decisions%20Report\\_53rd%20meeting%20of%20the%20Bureau\\_11-12%20October%202023.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/Decisions%20Report_53rd%20meeting%20of%20the%20Bureau_11-12%20October%202023.pdf).

## I. Implementation of the Convention's Long-term strategy and its 2023–2024 workplan

8. In monitoring the workplan's implementation, it has been important for the Bureau to reflect on the alignment of activities with the Long-term strategy for the Convention until 2030 (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1), the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. Overall, the Bureau acknowledges significant progress in implementing the Long-term strategy. It expresses gratitude to the countries that have fostered this progress through their leadership of and active engagement in the activities.

### A. Industrial safety of the energy transition

9. At its twelfth meeting, the Conference of the Parties recognized the need to address emerging issues of concern for industrial safety, including the energy transition and changes in energy sources, as well as the Convention's relation to those issues.<sup>10</sup> In line with the objectives of the 2023–2024 workplan and complementary to the Long-term strategy, the Bureau, at its fifty-third meeting, established the small group on ISET, comprised of Mr. Struckl (Austria), Ms. Tandberg (Norway), Mr. Merkofer (Switzerland), Ms. Smart (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and Mr. Siefrikt (European Commission). The Bureau expresses its appreciation to Norway for leading the small group from its second meeting (online, 16 April 2024) onwards, in close cooperation with the secretariat.

10. The Bureau mandated<sup>11</sup> the small group to: assess whether the Long-term Strategy was fully fit-for-purpose given the emerging trends; develop a more detailed note outlining areas warranting further work and possible institutional adjustments in the Convention's subsidiary structure to meet the demands of ISET; initiate a consultation process through a survey to understand member States' needs and expectations; and organize a seminar on that topic at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

11. The small group on ISET held two meetings. At its first meeting (online, 11 December 2023),<sup>12</sup> the Group reviewed the background note prepared by the secretariat on trends and challenges of ISET, prepared a questionnaire on hazards and risks related to ammonia, carbon dioxide, hydrogen, critical minerals and beyond, and requested the secretariat to finalize and circulate it. Additionally, the Group requested the secretariat to develop a paper with options for institutional adjustments regarding the new workstream.

12. At its second meeting (online, 16 April 2024),<sup>13</sup> the Group welcomed the survey results, noting a need for further work on ISET at the national and international levels to address gaps and strengthen safety. The Group also made suggestions for organizing the above-mentioned seminar, agreeing that it should focus on risks associated with hazardous substances and technologies affiliated with the energy transition. Furthermore, the Group deliberated options for potential institutional adjustments for the future of the workstream under the Convention.

13. Based on the small group's recommendations, the Bureau considered that the draft decision on work on ISET (ECE.CP.TEIA/2024/3) should contain two options regarding institutional arrangements for the workstream: (a) establish an open-ended Working Group, which would lend greater legitimacy to its work by engaging all Parties and interested member States; or (b) continue with an expanded small group – a more pragmatic solution that would operate within a limited setting and require less resources. **The Bureau encourages Parties to consider their needs with regards to the industrial safety of the energy transition and to actively participate in this new workstream under the**

<sup>10</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/44, para. 104.

<sup>11</sup> List of decisions (CP.TEIA/2023/B.4/Decisions Report), decision 36.

<sup>12</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/386743>.

<sup>13</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/391908>.

**Convention. It calls on Parties to take the lead on this workstream and to seek additional resources to support it, noting the growing importance of this topic.**

## **B. Mine tailings safety**

### **1. Update of the Guidelines to facilitate the identification of hazardous activities for the purposes of the Convention**

14. At its twelfth meeting, the Conference of the Parties tasked the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (Joint Expert Group), in cooperation with the Working Group on Implementation and the Bureau, with assessing whether the Guidelines to facilitate the identification of hazardous activities for the purposes of the Convention (ECE/CP.TEIA/2, annex IV, decision 2000/3, appendix) as amended in 2004 (ECE/CP.TEIA/12, annex II, decision 2004/2) and 2018 (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1, decision 2018/1), needed revision and updates, focusing on determining the need to cover more comprehensively hazards and risks arising from tailings management facilities (TMFs). The findings were to be presented in the form of an official document for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference.<sup>14</sup> To pursue that task, the Bureau re-established its small group on mine tailings safety in an expanded form to include members of the Bureau (Mr. Merkofer (Switzerland, lead) and Mr. Struckl (Austria)), the Working Group on Implementation (Ms. Sanja Stamenkovic (Serbia)) and the Joint Expert Group (Mr. Bojan Srdic (Serbia), Mr. Pavel Danihelka (Czechia) and Mr. Gerd Winkelmann-Oei (Germany)).

15. The small group held three meetings. At its first meeting (online, 30 May 2023),<sup>15</sup> it discussed TMF hazards and risks, agreed on options for the Convention and/or its guidelines to cover more comprehensively such hazards and risks and shared key elements for the official document for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. At its second meeting (online, 14 September 2023),<sup>16</sup> the small group reviewed the proposed options and recommended that the Bureau draft a decision with a recommendation for the Conference. At its third meeting (online, 7 May 2024),<sup>17</sup> the small group finalized the official document (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/10) and revised the draft decision (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/11). The small group shared its deliberations, recommendations and the related draft documents at the Bureau's fifty-third and fifty-fourth meetings, for the Bureau's review and advice.

16. The small group concluded that TMFs had diverse risk profiles and the toxicity, acidity, alkalinity and physical scale of tailings needed to be taken into account to ensure appropriate industrial safety measures. These aspects could have a significant impact on people and the environment in case of accidents at TMFs. The small group also concluded that testing tailings mixtures against annex I to the Convention presented challenges for Parties and therefore precluded them from fully understanding hazards and risks of TMFs and classifying them as "hazardous activities" under the Convention. To address those issues, **the Bureau recommended updating the Guidelines with a technical methodology for testing and classifying tailings mixtures against annex I. Additionally, it suggested, on the basis of the precautionary principle, incorporating aspects such as alkalinity, acidity and capacities of tailings mixtures.** Following the small group's recommendations, **the Bureau, at its fifty-fourth meeting,<sup>18</sup> decided to present to the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting a draft decision (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/11) that outlines the path for implementing these two recommendations in the biennium 2025–2026 and recommends the preparation of a draft decision for the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties on:**

- (a) **Adopting the updated Guidelines;**
- (b) **Clarifying how the Convention applies to TMFs;**

<sup>14</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/44, para. 31.

<sup>15</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/377906>.

<sup>16</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/382906>.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/390753>.

<sup>18</sup> CEP.TEIA/2024/B.1/Decisions Report, decision 41.

**(c) Consolidating key guidelines, tools and knowledge products available to support countries in enhancing mine tailings safety.**

17. The draft decision is accompanied by a note on the assessment of the Guidelines to facilitate the identification of hazardous activities for the purposes of the Convention, in view of tailings management facilities (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/10), which provides further background information. The Bureau reviewed both documents at its fifty-fourth meeting and agreed to submit them to the Conference of the Parties for consideration at its thirteenth meeting.<sup>19</sup> **It urges Parties to actively participate in the updating of the Guidelines, particularly in developing the technical methodology, and preparing the accompanying decision.**

**2. Cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and other partner organizations on mine tailings safety**

18. The Bureau recognized the successful past cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Convention secretariat during the regional consultation for Central Asia on a draft mine tailings standard (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 18–19 November 2019). In the light of this past cooperation, as well as of decision 2020/1 on strengthening mine tailings safety in the ECE region and beyond (ECE/CP.TEIA/42/Add.1) and the Road map for action to strengthen mine tailings safety within and beyond the ECE region (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/7), it encouraged the Convention secretariat to maintain close cooperation with UNEP over the biennium 2023–2024, particularly by participating in all five regional consultations and the global consultation under United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP resolution 5/12 on the environmental aspects of minerals and metals management (UNEP/EA.5/Res.12), given the relevance of the Convention and ECE guidelines, tools and projects developed under the Convention on mine tailings safety for all States Members of the United Nations. It also mobilized Parties to the Convention to actively engage in the intergovernmental process under resolution 5/12 and in related deliberations at the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (Nairobi, 26 February–1 March 2024).

19. Against this background, the secretariat actively contributed to, and encouraged Convention focal points to participate in the following UNEP events:

(a) UNEP briefings on: the implementation of United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP resolution 5/12 on environmental aspects of minerals and metals management (Geneva (hybrid), 28 February 2023);<sup>20</sup> and the Global Intergovernmental Meeting on Minerals and Metals (Geneva, 23 August 2023);<sup>21</sup>

(b) Regional intergovernmental consultations (March–July 2023) and the Global Intergovernmental Meeting on Minerals and Metals (Geneva, 7–8 September 2023);

(c) The sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP.<sup>22</sup>

20. The Bureau appreciated the secretariat’s engagement and the important role of the Parties, in particular, Bureau members and the small group on mine tailings, in fostering this cooperation and for the overwhelming support in the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP resolution 5/12 consultations and the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP process, which translated into positive references to the work of the Convention. The references to the Convention in the Co-Chairs’ Summary Report<sup>23</sup> of the Global Intergovernmental Meeting (Geneva, 7–8 September 2023), and the UNEP report “Knowledge Gaps in Relation to the Environmental Aspects of Tailings

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., decision 41.

<sup>20</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/376296>.

<sup>21</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/381965>.

<sup>22</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/387798>.

<sup>23</sup> UNEP, Environmental Aspects of Minerals and Metals Management: Implementing UNEA Resolution 5/12 – Co-Chairs’ Summary Report of the Global Intergovernmental Meeting, 7–8 September 2023 (n.p., 2023), pp. 5, 11 and 13.

Management”,<sup>24</sup> prepared for the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, are a testimony of the Convention’s important work on mine tailings.

21. Further to the cooperation with UNEP, the secretariat cooperated in the organization of, or attended, several seminars and workshops held by partner organizations focused on mine tailings safety:

(a) International Commission on Large Dams Short Course 4 (ninety-first Annual Meeting) (Gothenburg, Sweden, 14 June 2023);<sup>25</sup>

(b) World Resources Forum (Geneva (hybrid), 4–6 September 2023);

(c) Conference on “Global nature-based solutions to mine tailing wastewater: From research to practice”, organized by the Sustainable Kazakhstan Research Institute at Narxoz University (Almaty, Kazakhstan (hybrid), 2 November 2023);<sup>26</sup>

(d) Final knowledge exchange workshop of the regional project on “Stakeholder engagement in remediation of uranium legacy sites in Central Asia. Phase 2” (Tashkent (hybrid), 24 November 2023);<sup>27</sup>

(e) Sixth meeting of the Uzbek-Kazakh joint working group on environmental protection and water quality in the Syr Darya River basin (Astana (hybrid), 14 December 2023).<sup>28</sup>

22. Throughout the biennium, the secretariat also contributed to the coordination meeting of the Working Group on Transforming the Extractive Industries for Sustainable Development,<sup>29</sup> which is coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme, UNEP and the regional commissions (for ECE, led by the Sustainable Energy Division). The Working Group is tasked with: coordinating extractives-related work across the United Nations system and beyond; serving as an information and knowledge hub to scale up good practices; and providing policy advice and technical assistance.

**23. The Bureau encourages the secretariat to continue its active cooperation with UNEP and other United Nations and international partner organizations in relation to mine tailings safety and mineral resource governance. It also encourages Parties and other member States to make reference to the Convention’s work on mine tailings safety in the respective meetings and processes.**<sup>30</sup>

### 3. Reporting through national implementation reports

24. At the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Parties agreed to regularly report on progress with the Road map for action to strengthen mine tailings safety.<sup>31</sup> In the tenth reporting period, Parties and reporting countries were, for the first time, asked to specify the number of hazardous activities at TMFs. The low number reported appears inconsistent with the more than 1,000 TMFs identified in the ECE region through various projects under the Convention, suggesting that at least 25 per cent may have transboundary effects. This discrepancy and lack of information on TMFs indicates potential challenges in identifying TMFs as hazardous activities under the Convention.

**25. The Bureau encourages Parties to identify TMFs, using, where appropriate, the TMF methodology, and to seek support from the Working Group on Implementation and the secretariat as needed. It encourages Parties to include TMFs in their national**

<sup>24</sup> Available at [www.greenpolicyplatform.org/sites/default/files/downloads/tools/Final Knowledge Gaps Report Environmental Aspects of Tailings Management %28January 2024%29\\_1.pdf](http://www.greenpolicyplatform.org/sites/default/files/downloads/tools/Final%20Knowledge%20Gaps%20Report%20Environmental%20Aspects%20of%20Tailings%20Management%20January%202024%29_1.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/379771>.

<sup>26</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/385070>.

<sup>27</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/385650>.

<sup>28</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/386729>.

<sup>29</sup> For more information on the Working Group, see <https://unece.org/unece-and-sdgs/working-group-transforming-extractive-industries-sustainable-development>.

<sup>30</sup> More information on activities related to ECE tools and work is available in the Online Toolkit and Training for Strengthening Mine Tailings Safety, available at [https://unece.org/environment-policy/industrial-accidents/online-toolkit-and-training-strengthening-mine-tailings#accordion\\_1](https://unece.org/environment-policy/industrial-accidents/online-toolkit-and-training-strengthening-mine-tailings#accordion_1).

<sup>31</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/44, para. 48 (f)–(g).

implementation reports for the next reporting round, or, in the case of late submissions, in the current round.

### C. Preventing accidental water pollution

26. At its fifty-first meeting (Geneva (online), 14 February 2023), the Bureau re-elected Mr. Srdic (Serbia) as Co-Chair from the Industrial Accidents Convention of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents in line with the Joint Expert Group strategy. Mr. Peter Kovacs (Hungary) remained the Co-Chair from the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). The Joint Expert Group held its first meeting on 2 June 2023 (Geneva, online),<sup>32</sup> at which it discussed the organization of an international workshop on prevention of accidental water pollution and early warning systems scheduled for 2024. At the second meeting (Bratislava (hybrid), 24 April 2024),<sup>33</sup> the Group reviewed the lessons learned from the international workshop on increasing capacities to prevent, prepare for and respond to accidental water pollution from tailings facilities (Bratislava, 23–24 April 2024)<sup>34</sup> and discussed activities for the 2025–2026 workplan.

27. The international workshop was a global event that supported the implementation of both the Industrial Accidents Convention and the Water Convention and aligned well with the Industrial Accidents Convention’s Long-term strategy. Over 150 representatives of more than 40 countries of Europe, Africa and Central Asia attended. The workshop covered regulatory frameworks for tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution, the role of transboundary basin organizations, the life cycle and monitoring of TMFs, including early warning systems; and discussed the financing of TMFs. It concluded with an on-site visit to a tailings facility in Žiar nad Hronom, Slovakia.

28. The Bureau appreciates the success of the workshop and thanks Slovakia and a local water management company for hosting that event, Germany for its continued financing of the Joint Expert Group’s activities and the Water Convention for its cooperation.

29. The Bureau supports the Joint Expert Group’s conclusions, noting gaps in TMF identification and external emergency plans for TMFs (both under the Convention and European Union Directives) and the need to share best practices on managing abandoned and remediated TMFs and those located in river basins to prevent accidental water pollution. **The Bureau encourages countries to use the TMF-related guidance materials and tools available under the Convention.**<sup>35</sup>

### D. Risk assessment

30. Following the development of a two-part report (ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/8 and ECE/CP.TEIA/2022/9) on risk assessment methodologies by the small group on risk assessment comprised of representatives of Austria, Belarus, Latvia, Serbia, Slovenia and Switzerland during the 2021–2022 biennium, the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth meeting requested the secretariat to finalize and publish the reports as a single publication in English, French and Russian.<sup>36</sup> The secretariat, together with Switzerland as Chair of the small group, presented the English version of the publication entitled *Risk Assessment for Industrial Accident Prevention: An Overview of Risk Assessment Methods, Selected Case Studies and Available Software* (ECE/CP.TEIA/45) to the Bureau at its fifty-fourth meeting.

31. The Bureau welcomed the publication and its translations, requesting its official launch at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It encouraged the publication’s promotion to focal points, partners and stakeholders. **The Bureau invites**

<sup>32</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/377430>.

<sup>33</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/390062>.

<sup>34</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/381922>.

<sup>35</sup> See <https://unece.org/environment-policy/industrial-accidents/online-toolkit-and-training-strengthening-mine-tailings>.

<sup>36</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/44, para. 53.

member States to refer to the examples of risk assessment methods and available software tools included in the publication to strengthen their understanding and application of these methods. This includes using the results of risk assessments in the consultations linked to the notification of hazardous activities. The Bureau expresses its gratitude to Switzerland for its leadership and financial support for the risk assessment work, to the members of the small group and the secretariat for their work, as well as to the Parties that submitted relevant case studies.

32. The Bureau acknowledges that many workstreams under the Convention, such as ISET, Natech risk management, safe and secure management of hazardous substances, land-use planning and siting, are interconnected with risk assessment. It emphasizes that these interlinkages should be encompassed in future activities under the Convention.

## E. Natech

33. The Bureau expressed satisfaction with the secretariat's cooperation with OECD and JRC over the biennium to develop the *Joint OECE/UNECE/European Commission JRC Guidance on Managing Risks from Natural Hazards to Hazardous Installations (Natech): A Guide for Senior Leaders in Industry and Public Authorities*, including its self-assessment checklists. The Bureau reviewed and provided inputs to earlier drafts of the Joint Guidance. **It recommends that Parties and member States apply the Joint Guidance recommendations to address Natech risks, particularly given their increase in the context of climate change, and its promotion within relevant networks.** Additionally, it decided to launch the Joint Guidance at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties through a joint OECD/ECE/JRC presentation.

34. Through decision 2022/1 (ECE/CP.TEIA/44/Add.1) of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Parties requested the Bureau, in cooperation with the Working Group on Implementation and the Joint Expert Group, to prepare a road map for more effective Natech risk management.<sup>37</sup> However, the Bureau, recognizing the lack of financing for this activity during the biennium, decided to organize a panel at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to discuss key questions pertaining to Natech risk management, including specific natural hazards, and the envisaged development of the road map during the upcoming biennium, contingent upon availability of resources. **The Bureau encourages Parties to consider leading and actively engaging in the work to develop a road map on Natech risk management.**

## F. Strengthening the safe and secure management of hazardous substances to prevent and mitigate industrial accidents

35. The Bureau expressed its gratitude to the European Commission for supporting the new ECE project "Strengthening the safe and secure management of hazardous substances to prevent and mitigate industrial accidents" funded under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe for three years as of July 2024. The project aims to: enhance knowledge of international instruments, standards and mechanisms that support countries in addressing risks; strengthen environmental policy and governance; and increase knowledge of authorities, operators and the public on ways to enhance preparedness for and response to industrial accidents.

36. The Bureau discussed planned activities under the project that will build on the United Nations/OECD Seminar in follow-up to the 2020 Beirut port explosion (Geneva (online), 14 December 2021).<sup>38</sup> Such activities include developing a report, an information repository and a video on instruments, standards and mechanisms related to sound chemicals management in the context of industrial safety. The Bureau welcomes the organization of a global seminar on this topic during the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2026. In

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<sup>37</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/44/Add.1, decision 2022/1, para. 15.

<sup>38</sup> See <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/unoecd-seminar-follow-2020-beirut-port-explosion-lessons-learned>.



addition, the Bureau appreciates the organization of another global seminar on early warning and industrial accident notification systems, environmental liability and pollution remediation in 2025, which will be a means to continue work on preventing accidental water pollution under the auspices of the Joint Expert Group.

37. The Bureau appreciates the global scope of this project and the continuation of strategic partnerships in implementing certain activities, including with other ECE instruments (Sustainable Transport Division, Water Convention, Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention)), and with the European Union, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), OECD, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), UNEP/United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Joint Environment Unit (JEU), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). **The Bureau recommends that Parties and other member States actively participate in the forthcoming activities and utilize the information and knowledge generated, both within and beyond the ECE region, to enhance the prevention and mitigation of chemical accidents.**

## G. Industrial Accidents Notification system

38. The Bureau recalled the need to upgrade the Industrial Accidents Notification (IAN) system to fit modern needs and comply with United Nations cybersecurity guidelines, as concluded in prior connectivity tests and meetings of the Conference of the Parties and the Bureau. At its fifty-third and fifty-fourth meetings, the Bureau reviewed the upgrade options prepared by the secretariat, along with quotes obtained from service providers, and welcomed the progress made in preparing for the upgrade.

39. The Bureau expressed appreciation to the European Commission and Switzerland for providing resources for the upgrade and maintenance of the IAN system, and the necessary training of points of contact. **The Bureau recalls that additional contributions are necessary to fully upgrade and maintain the IAN system. Therefore, the Bureau encourages responsible authorities, including those acting as points of contact, to support the upgrade and subsequent maintenance of the IAN system.**

40. Due to the insufficient financial resources available this biennium, the Bureau decided to organize a connectivity test and the ninth online consultation of the points of contact in the following 2025–2026 biennium, when the System’s upgrade is envisaged. **The Bureau encourages Parties and non-Parties to participate in future online consultations and independently test the IAN system, for example, by sending notifications in the exercise mode.**

## H. Assistance and Cooperation Programme

41. The year 2024 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Assistance and Cooperation Programme, established in 2004 as the “Assistance Programme”,<sup>39</sup> and rebranded in 2018 according to the Long-term strategy.<sup>40</sup> The Programme has played a crucial role in supporting countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in overcoming implementation issues and progressing towards accession. At this 20-year milestone, the Bureau expresses its appreciation to the beneficiary countries<sup>41</sup> for their engagement in assistance activities and the progress made in the Convention’s implementation in all subregions. At the same time, it recognizes the continuing commitment of donor countries to support these efforts and expresses its gratitude to all those Parties that provided related support. The Bureau notes with satisfaction that the Programme activities this biennium have significantly advanced the implementation of the Long-term strategy.

<sup>39</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/12, para. 39.

<sup>40</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1, para. 25.

<sup>41</sup> List of beneficiary countries available at <https://unece.org/introduction-18>.

## 1. South-Eastern Europe

42. Notably, the Bureau welcomes the finalization of the National Programme for Industrial Safety of Serbia, initiated last biennium and actively pursued thereafter. It commends Serbia for successfully organizing the second meeting of the Steering Committee for the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) for Industrial Safety (Belgrade, 4 April 2023) and consultations with industry and local government. It particularly welcomes the Stakeholder Consultation in the framework of the NPD (Belgrade, 20 September 2023),<sup>42</sup> organized with the support of the secretariat and the OECD Programme on Chemical Accidents, which advanced the finalization of the National Programme. Serbia is the first country in the pan-European region to implement an NPD for Industrial Safety, as called for by the Long-term strategy, which marks a significant milestone.<sup>43</sup>

43. The Bureau appreciates the financial support of France to the NPD of Serbia and thanks OECD for co-organizing the Stakeholder Consultation. It acknowledges the strong commitment demonstrated by the Serbian authorities, and the secretariat's support, recognizing that the lessons learned in Serbia will guide similar NPDs elsewhere.

## 2. Central Asia

44. The Bureau welcomes the continued functioning of the Inter-Institutional Working Groups (IIWGs) on tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution by Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, supported by projects under the Assistance and Cooperation Programme. The second and third IIWG meetings in Tajikistan (Dushanbe (hybrid), 4 April 2023<sup>44</sup> and 15 May 2024,<sup>45</sup> respectively) advanced progress towards implementation of and accession to the Convention. Notably, these efforts resulted in a proposal for the Government of Tajikistan to consider accession to the Convention. The second and third IIWG meetings in Kazakhstan (Astana (hybrid), 15 March 2023<sup>46</sup> and 28 August 2024, respectively) highlighted the need for more TMF exercises and further study of the impacts of climate change on TMFs. The Bureau is pleased with the progress, continuity and ownership of the work of IIWGs in both countries. It also welcomes the establishment of a similar working group in Uzbekistan in July 2024, as part of the project on "Strengthening action in Uzbekistan on water and sanitation and protection of water resources from accidental pollution in the face of climate change" (see para. 46).

45. Moreover, the Bureau appreciates the completion of two assistance projects benefiting Central Asian countries. First, the project "Addressing technological/industrial accident risks in national strategies and DRR plans of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan" (August 2022–January 2023)<sup>47</sup> raised awareness and strengthened knowledge of national authorities on technological disaster and industrial accident risks. Second, the "Study on pollution sources and identification of accident risks in the Syr Darya basin" (July 2021–February 2023),<sup>48</sup> involving Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, improved understanding of the hazards and risks posed by hazardous facilities in the Syr Darya River basin, including disaster risks, vulnerabilities and exposure, and ways to mitigate these, both at the technical and political levels.

<sup>42</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/381381>.

<sup>43</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/5, para. 25.

<sup>44</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Industrial-Accidents/events/376295>.

<sup>45</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Industrial-Accidents/events/390754>.

<sup>46</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/Environmental-Policy/Industrial-Accidents/events/376267>.

<sup>47</sup> The Project was implemented by ECE under the auspices of the Convention, following a related agreement with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) as a component of the UNDRR Central Asia Initiative "Strengthening disaster resilience and accelerating implementation of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia", with European Union financing.

<sup>48</sup> The project was implemented by ECE, led by the Water Convention, with significant contributions from the Industrial Accidents Convention and support from the International Water Assessment Centre. It was funded by the European Union and implemented within the framework of the European Union Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia.

46. Furthermore, the Bureau appreciates the initiation of a new project on “Strengthening action in Uzbekistan on water and sanitation and protection of water resources from accidental pollution in the face of climate change,” and thanks the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) for its support. Implemented by the ECE Industrial Accidents Convention in close cooperation with the joint ECE-WHO Protocol on Water and Health to the Water Convention, the project aims to improve the governance and capacity of Uzbekistan in the areas of water and sanitation, the prevention of accidental water pollution and resilience to climate change, including through transboundary cooperation and regional exchange. This project enables the transfer of lessons learned in establishing national governance mechanisms in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to Uzbekistan and the advancement of subregional cooperation among Syr Darya River basin riparians, based on the results and recommendations of the above-mentioned study on pollution.

### 3. Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

47. The Bureau welcomes the technical mission to Georgia (Tbilisi, 7–9 November 2023)<sup>49</sup> to support its accession to the Convention, organized by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture in cooperation with the secretariat following a request by Georgia at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.<sup>50</sup> The Convention’s Chair of the Bureau (Norway), Chair of the Working Group on Implementation (Sweden) and Co-Chair of the Joint Expert Group (Serbia), along with a Bureau member (European Union) and Working Group members (Estonia and Switzerland, respectively) actively contributed by sharing their expertise on the Convention’s implementation. The Bureau appreciates the determination expressed by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture to lead accession efforts, with the support of an inter-agency group of relevant authorities, aiming to submit a proposal for accession to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

48. Following the accession of Ukraine to the Convention on 4 October 2022, the Bureau acknowledges the support provided to enhance Ukrainian industrial safety by strengthening the Convention’s implementation and expresses gratitude to the European Investment Bank for its related in-kind support. The Bureau appreciates the progress of Ukraine, notably in preparing a “Report on analysis of the Ukrainian industrial safety legislation and its alignment with main requirements of the ECE Industrial Accidents Convention” and the relevant recommendations along with a “Road map to full implementation of the ECE Convention”. It welcomes the close cooperation with the competent Ukrainian authorities in the development of these documents.

49. The Bureau acknowledges that the assistance activities implemented during this biennium fostered significant progress in the beneficiary countries. As the new biennium begins, significant project support from Switzerland and support from the United Nations Development Account will enable the maintenance in particular of the Convention’s presence in Central Asia. The Bureau recognizes the need for further financing to maintain and advance the progress achieved and to more significantly support countries of other ECE subregions. In this context, **the Bureau urges Parties to provide financing to support activities that strengthen the Convention’s implementation by the Programme’s beneficiary countries.**

## I. Linkages with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sendai Framework and policy/governance integration

### 1. Midterm review of implementation of the Sendai Framework

50. The Bureau notes with satisfaction the conclusion of the Sendai Framework’s midterm review in 2023 and appreciates the contributions made by ECE, including the Convention’s

<sup>49</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/385940>.

<sup>50</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/44, para. 40 (g).

secretariat, as well as Parties, to the *Report of the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*.<sup>51</sup>

51. The Political declaration of the high-level meeting on the midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (A/77/L.70) includes priorities for the follow-up to the Sendai Framework that align with the Convention’s Long-term strategy. **The Bureau encourages Parties to reaffirm their commitment to the implementation of the Sendai Framework and to promote the Convention as an instrument for managing technological disaster risks, along with its policy tools and guidance globally.**

52. Following the Convention’s active contribution to the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction Road Map 2021–2030: For a disaster-resilient European and Central Asian region by 2030<sup>52</sup> in the previous biennium, the Bureau welcomes the continued close partnership with the European Forum, including through the secretariat’s contribution to the action-oriented dialogue co-organized by UNDRR with the Government of Finland (Helsinki, 14–15 December 2023).<sup>53</sup>

## 2. Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction

53. The Bureau welcomes the secretariat’s close cooperation with UNDRR and its contribution to the *Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2023 for Europe and Central Asia*,<sup>54</sup> through the coordination and preparation, jointly with JRC, of challenge 4: Managing technological risks. The Report emphasizes the need for understanding and strengthening of risk governance, investing in resilience and enhancing preparedness, and includes good practices and lessons learned. It refers to the Convention and other instruments relevant for technological risk management. The Convention’s contribution to the Report was possible thanks to the support of EIB, which provided a consultant who coordinated the drafting of the related chapter. The Bureau values the Report’s focus on key risks and challenges, such as climate change and its substantial impact on Natech events. It underscores the importance of industrial accident risk reduction in the changing contemporary demographic, economic, energy, climate and environmental landscape.

## J. Communication, outreach and engagement

54. The Bureau is pleased with the communication, outreach and engagement efforts in the current biennium, in particular the strategic partnerships with OECD, EIB, the European Union Seveso Expert Group, UNDRR and UNEP. It notes with satisfaction the secretariat’s active involvement in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Chemical and Industrial Accidents – which held its ninth meeting organized by UNDRR (Geneva (hybrid), 10 February 2023),<sup>55</sup> the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP resolution 5/12 process and the ensuing sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (Nairobi, 26 February–1 March 2024), and the annual meetings of the European Union Seveso Expert Group, the OECD Working Party on Chemical Accidents (Paris, 24–26 October 2023),<sup>56</sup> and the Regional Forum – Meeting of the Heads of Emergency Authorities of Central Asian Countries (Almaty, Kazakhstan (hybrid), 9–10 November 2023).<sup>57</sup>

55. Additionally, the secretariat participated in a meeting on Seveso Implementation in Ukraine and related policy issues (Ispra, Italy, 19–20 September 2023)<sup>58</sup> and the ILO Twenty-

<sup>51</sup> Geneva, UNDRR, 2023.

<sup>52</sup> See [www.preventionweb.net/media/75958/download?startDownload=20240901](http://www.preventionweb.net/media/75958/download?startDownload=20240901).

<sup>53</sup> See [unece.org/info/events/event/386738](https://unece.org/info/events/event/386738).

<sup>54</sup> Geneva, UNDRR, 2023.

<sup>55</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/388610>.

<sup>56</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/382907>.

<sup>57</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/384994>.

<sup>58</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/383868>.

third World Congress on Safety and Health at Work (Sydney, Australia, 27–30 November 2023).<sup>59</sup>

56. The secretariat also participated in and supported – thanks to financing provided by France – the participation of countries with economies in transition in the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law Seminar on Lessons Learned from Industrial Accidents (Marseille, France, 23–24 May 2023).<sup>60</sup>

57. **The Bureau welcomes the increased visibility of the Convention’s work through the secretariat’s participation in partner events and numerous press releases.**

58. **The Bureau encourages the focal points and other representatives of the Parties to promote and use the available guidelines, good practices and tools available under the Convention. Focal points may wish to promote the publications of this biennium on risk assessment, Natech and the *Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2023 for Europe and Central Asia*. Furthermore, they are encouraged to further distribute the press releases and news periodically shared by the secretariat.**

## II. Financing and workplan implementation

59. The Convention’s financial situation is of major concern to the Bureau, which regularly reviews it on the basis of information provided by the secretariat.

60. The Bureau wishes to thank the Parties for their financial contributions in this biennium, in particular those Parties that provided predictable contributions, in line with their pledges made at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Bulgaria, Czechia, European Union, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Serbia, Switzerland).<sup>61</sup> Such pledges are essential for providing a minimum level of funding for the biennium – although they do not provide for the resources necessary for the continued engagement of the secretariat team needed for servicing intergovernmental bodies and implementing other workplan activities, for which additional extrabudgetary funding is required.

61. The Bureau extends its particular gratitude to France for its additional financial support to and co-hosting of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It also wishes to express its gratitude to Switzerland and the European Commission for their additional significant project-related contributions, confirmed and provided during this workplan period, which enable the continuation of important workstreams under the Convention. Furthermore, the Bureau wishes to thank the Parties that pledged and provided additional contributions during the biennium (Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Lithuania, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Slovenia, Slovakia).

62. Despite these financial contributions, the total funding for the 2023–2024 biennium was only approximately half of what was needed to implement all activities according to the Convention’s workplan. Consequently, several planned activities could not be carried out, as reviewed and approved by the Bureau:<sup>62</sup>

- (a) Dedicated working visits, outreach and high-level missions apart from engagement in partners’ meetings;
- (b) Only one of two envisaged inter-agency coordination meetings was held;
- (c) A road map on effective Natech risk management could not be developed;
- (d) Under the work area “Risk management in relation to the storage, handling and transport of hazardous substances, such as ammonium nitrate, and related accident prevention, preparedness and response”, work on the web page/information repository on

<sup>59</sup> See <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/events/23rd-world-congress-safety-and-health-work>.

<sup>60</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/378700>.

<sup>61</sup> ECE/CP.TEIA/44, paras. 85 and 87.

<sup>62</sup> CEP.TEIA/2024/B.1/Decisions Report, decision 7.

storage, management and handling of hazardous substances could only be initiated in 2024 and will be complemented in 2025;

(e) A separate seminar to build capacity for Ukraine could not be organized;

(f) The connectivity test and online consultation of points of contact will only be organized in the next biennium, when the upgrade of the IAN system is envisaged.

63. Under the Assistance and Cooperation Programme, the following planned activities could not be implemented:

(a) Implementation of the Strategic Approach: Only one technical mission to Georgia was carried out, the follow-up to which is envisaged for 2025–2026, once funding for the development of a road map for accession is secured; other national and subregional expert and high-level meetings or study visits to foster implementation of the Strategic Approach could not be implemented, despite related requests by countries, including Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia;

(b) A brochure on the Assistance and Cooperation Programme was not developed;

(c) No progress was made regarding integration of the Convention's self-assessment indicators into the Industrial Safety Measurement Index (JRC leading this activity);

(d) Project funding was not awarded for the following projects, which could thus not be implemented:

(i) Improving understanding and governance of technological risks in South-Eastern Europe;

(ii) Developing joint measures to prevent and respond to pollution in the Syr Darya River basin — Phase II of the project which enabled the conduct of the study on the Syr Darya River basin (Phase I) — ;

(iii) Integration of technological disaster risk management into national DRR strategies through the development of a respective guide.

64. As to the envisaged project “Supporting Central Asian countries’ efforts to strengthen policies and governance for the safety of TMFs”, no separate project funding was awarded. No activities were implemented in Kyrgyzstan. Thanks to Assistance and Cooperation Programme funding and OSCE co-financing, the secretariat could continue to support the organization of IIWGs in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, with leadership being provided by the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) regarding the third IIWG meeting in Kazakhstan.<sup>63</sup>

65. Given the absence of dedicated project financing, it was also not possible to implement the projects mentioned in table 3 of the workplan, including:

(a) Strengthening industrial safety, disaster risk governance and management in Ukraine to support implementation of the Industrial Accidents Convention;

(b) The Danube Delta-II Project;

(c) Supporting countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in their efforts to prevent and mitigate accidental water pollution from industrial hazardous activities.

66. Overall, while pleased with the award of additional financial and more significant Project contributions, which strengthen the Convention's funding base and are essential for the continuity of the work, the Bureau remains concerned about the overall limited funding and notes that only about half of the Parties provided financial support to the implementation of the workplan 2023–2024. In this regard, the Bureau reminds Parties that they bear the primary responsibility to contribute to the financing of the Convention's workplan, which

<sup>63</sup> With funding provided by Parties to the Assistance and Cooperation Programme, the secretariat has to date organized two meetings of IIWG in Tajikistan and one in Kazakhstan in 2024. The establishment of the IIWG and one meeting in Uzbekistan are envisaged for 2024 under a separate SDC-funded project.

they adopt, in accordance with the sustainable financial mechanism (ECE/CP.TEIA/24, annex I).

67. In the 2023–2024 biennium, the Bureau’s small group on financing convened twice at the time of writing of the present report. The first meeting (Geneva (online), 11 September 2023)<sup>64</sup> discussed issues related to the trust fund situation, such as the decrease in financial contributions, the mismatch between available funding and the workplan activities, funding opportunities for the current biennium and beyond, and establishing a minimum threshold for contributions. At its second meeting (Geneva (online), 20 December 2023),<sup>65</sup> the small group continued those discussions, and suggested holding a round table at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Bureau, at its fifty-fourth meeting, welcomed the contributions made by the small group. It emphasized the need for additional funding to sustain and advance the Convention’s activities under current and future workplans in line with strategic priorities. To address this matter, the Bureau agreed to organize a round table on financing at the forthcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties to engage all Parties in discussions on securing necessary financial support. In this regard, **the Bureau wishes to invite all Parties to participate in the round table on financing and report on their engagement in the Convention and their efforts to implement the sustainable financial mechanism.**

68. In reviewing the implementation of the sustainable financial mechanism and decision 2018/2 on fostering its implementation (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1), the Bureau acknowledged some progress but recognized that significant challenges remain in achieving a system of long-term, sustainable and predictable financing. Noting that, in the biennium 2023–2024, only half of the Parties have contributed financially, the Bureau reminds the Parties of their financial responsibilities towards the workplan. **The Bureau thus urges Parties that have not yet made financial contributions to do so as of the 2025–2026 biennium. It welcomes contributions made thus far and encourages Parties to maintain, or, where feasible, increase their levels of contributions in the upcoming biennium, considering economic scale.**

### III. Organization of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties

69. The Bureau welcomes the co-organization by France of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and recognizes that its additional support has been instrumental in supporting the secretariat’s preparatory work leading up to the meeting. It also wishes to thank Germany and Norway for their additional financial contributions to support the participation of countries with economies in transition in the upcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

70. The Bureau is satisfied with the approach to the meeting’s organization, considering that the regular budget liquidity crisis has had an impact on the possibility of organizing a hybrid meeting, which was possible – thanks to the financial support from Parties – for the last two meetings of the Conference of the Parties. At the same time, it welcomes the fact that the thirteenth meeting’s opening and the Seminar on the global energy transition can be followed live, and remain accessible after the meeting via UN Web TV.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the entire meeting can be followed in audio format via Listen.Live.<sup>67</sup> The Bureau also thanks the secretariat for preparing a promotional flyer for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which it invites member States and partners to further promote.

71. The Bureau welcomed and approved the secretariat’s proposals for the agenda of the thirteenth meeting, welcoming in particular the engagement by countries in four strategic

<sup>64</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/382563>.

<sup>65</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/386825>.

<sup>66</sup> See <http://webtv.un.org/en>.

<sup>67</sup> Available at <https://listen-live.unog.ch/en/index.html>.

round table discussions. **The Bureau encourages Parties and other member States to actively engage in the four round table discussions on the following topics:**

- (a) **Parties' strategic dialogue on enhancing commitments and future-proofing the Convention;**
- (b) **Disaster risk reduction, natural hazard triggered technological disaster risk management and climate change;**
- (c) **Twentieth anniversary of the Assistance and Cooperation Programme: achievements, challenges and the way ahead;**
- (d) **Mine tailings safety.**

72. On the first day of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, a "Seminar on the global energy transition: Strengthening industrial safety to address emerging risks" will be held. The Bureau thanks the secretariat and the small group on ISET for their preparatory work on the seminar. The main objective of the seminar is to enhance Governments' understanding of the industrial and environmental risks linked to decarbonization and the energy transition. The seminar will provide a comprehensive overview of the topic. It aims to further define the Convention's role in supporting countries as they progress in this area and to set the agenda for international cooperation and the development of policy guidelines. Participants will be invited to take note of the seminar's conclusions. Following the seminar, the Parties will be invited to determine the future direction and organization of the Convention's work with regard to industrial safety of the energy transition. In this regard, **the Bureau invites Parties to actively consider the draft decision on the work on the industrial safety of the energy transition (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/3) and their possible engagement with expertise and financing.**

73. The thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties marks the twentieth anniversary of the Assistance and Cooperation Programme. In recognition of this milestone, the Bureau decided to organize a dedicated round table discussion (see para. 71 (c)). To support countries in preparing for the discussion, the Chairs of the Bureau and of the Working Group on Implementation prepared, in close cooperation with the secretariat, an official background document reflecting on the impact of the 20 years of the Programme, and its future evolution (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/7). **The Bureau encourages beneficiary and donor countries to participate actively in a panel discussion scheduled during the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which will highlight the results and impact of the Programme's activities, and to share their views on ways forward for continued effective assistance.**

74. At the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Working Group on Implementation will present its report and recommendations based on their review of the tenth reporting round of the Convention (2019–2022). **The Bureau wishes to thank the Working Group for its efforts in this biennium and reiterates the Working Group's recognition of those Parties that submitted their national reports on time, calling on those who have not yet submitted their report to do so without further delay.**

75. The Bureau acknowledges the potential of satellite imaging and Earth observation technologies regarding mine tailings safety and the Convention's work. In particular, it recognizes the possibility to use technologies such as Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar as a tool for early warning or failure prediction. The Bureau therefore welcomes the organization of a special session on "Innovations and industrial safety: Satellite monitoring technologies, including Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar, for tailings safety" to be held at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. At its fifty-fourth meeting, the Bureau approved the draft concept note and programme (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/INF.5) of this special session. **The Bureau encourages countries and partner organizations to participate in the seminar, aiming to encourage the use of existing technologies and the development of new ones to enhance prevention, preparedness and response efforts under the Convention.**

76. Another highlight of the thirteenth meeting will be the presentation of three publications that have been finalized this biennium:



(a) *Risk Assessment for Industrial Accident Prevention: An Overview of Risk Assessment Methods, Selected Case Studies and Available Software (ECE/CP.TEIA/45)*;

(b) *Joint OECD/UNECE/JRC Guidance on Managing Risks from Natural Hazards to Hazardous Installations (Natech): A Guide for Senior Leaders in Industry and Public Authorities*;

(c) *Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2023 for Europe and Central Asia*.

**77. The Bureau encourages countries to actively promote the above-mentioned publications and make use of the knowledge contained therein.**

78. A new Bureau will be elected at the meeting. To ensure a balanced representation across geographic subregions, **the Bureau encourages Parties to submit their candidatures for Bureau membership for the next biennium by the deadline of 2 October 2024 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). It also encourages Parties to submit their nominations for the Working Group on Implementation by the same deadline, considering the Working Group's terms of reference (ECE/CP.TEIA/32/Add.1), given that a new Working Group will be elected for a four-year term.**

## IV. Conclusions and observations

79. The Bureau is pleased with the further expansion of the work during this biennium, in line with the Long-term strategy, notably its role as a flexible and modern instrument capable of addressing new and emerging risks and developments. The Convention's work has been flourishing; it significantly supported progress by Parties to further its implementation, and, in the case of non-Parties, advance towards accession. This biennium also saw remarkable progress in the global recognition of the benefits of the Convention's approaches as a unique legal instrument fostering national governance and transboundary cooperation, along with its policy tools and guidance. This major advancement is very timely, given that the midpoint of the implementation of the Long-term strategy has been reached since its adoption in 2018, and it provides confidence in further moving towards the full implementation of the Convention's vision until 2030. The work envisaged for the coming biennium 2025–2026, in line with the draft workplan (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/8), provides a solid basis for progress in this direction.

80. Key enabling drivers for the substantial progress achieved in this biennium were the following.

### A. Parties' efforts to use the Convention as a modern and flexible instrument to support achieving their international commitments and address emerging needs

81. Building on the outcomes of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Bureau analysed, with the secretariat's support, emerging risks and trends in the ECE region and beyond, their impacts and considered how the Convention can best support member States in addressing these. A survey on ISET demonstrated Parties' interest in this work, resulting in the organization of a related seminar at the upcoming meeting of the Conference, and the preparation of draft decisions on the related future work under the Convention (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/3).

**82. The Bureau underlines the importance of establishing a workstream on ISET from the biennium 2025–2026 onwards (see ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/8, workstream 7), bearing in mind the importance of the energy transition for the success of the decarbonization agenda, and the regulatory gaps when it comes to ensuring safety, as demonstrated by the survey. It encourages Parties to actively engage in this work, which has significant potential to address key areas of interest to Parties and member States, to engage with**

**other communities and authorities, including those in charge of the energy transition, sound chemicals management and critical minerals, and to ensure that the Convention is used to its full potential to support Governments in ensuring industrial safety, protecting people and the environment and reducing risks of technological disasters throughout the energy transition.**

## **1. Promotion of the Convention’s approaches, policy tools and guidance at the global level**

83. ECE policy tools, guidance and work on strengthening mine tailings safety received widespread international recognition during the sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP and its preceding intergovernmental process, notably the regional and global consultations in 2023, and during the International workshop on increasing capacities to prevent, prepare for and respond to accidental water pollution from tailing facilities (Bratislava, 23 April 2024) organized under the auspices of the Joint Expert Group. At that meeting, Parties to the Water Convention and the Industrial Accidents Convention stressed the need for further support by ECE in the areas of preventing accidental water pollution and mine tailings safety.

84. These workstreams, which were initially limited to holding expert level meetings, producing technical guidance and providing technical assistance to beneficiary countries, have expanded considerably and gained global recognition over the years. During this biennium, within the context of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, the Convention was considered an important instrument for addressing tailings management safety and the potential of applying globally the ECE Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for TMFs was recognized.<sup>68</sup>

85. The biennium also saw the continuation of work with global reach initiated with the United Nations/OECD Seminar in follow-up to the Beirut port explosion (Geneva (online), 14 December 2021), in close cooperation with multiple partner organizations. Leading into the next biennium, new tools and knowledge products will be developed<sup>69</sup> in cooperation with partner organizations, underpinning workstream 4 on “Understanding and managing technological disaster risks, including in the face of climate change and natural disasters.” Continued work in this area will benefit from the dissemination of knowledge and good practices contained in the publications issued in this biennium, notably on risk assessment, Natech risk management and disaster risk reduction in Europe and Central Asia (see para. 76).

**86. The Bureau encourages Parties and other member States to actively promote the Convention’s approaches, knowledge products, policy tools and guidance not only within their own countries, reaching out to other national authorities, operators and stakeholders, but also across and beyond the region, at the global level.**

## **2. Intergovernmental support and assistance to support current and future Parties in the Convention’s implementation**

87. The Assistance and Cooperation Programme has been a successful mechanism for supporting Parties and non-Parties in advancing implementation. Following the Programme’s rebranding in 2018, the assistance activities have focused in recent years on fostering

<sup>68</sup> See [www.greenpolicyplatform.org/sites/default/files/downloads/tools/Report-UNEA%20512%20Global%20Intergovernmental%20Meeting-V2.pdf](http://www.greenpolicyplatform.org/sites/default/files/downloads/tools/Report-UNEA%20512%20Global%20Intergovernmental%20Meeting-V2.pdf); [www.greenpolicyplatform.org/sites/default/files/downloads/tools/Final%20Knowledge%20Gaps%20Report\\_Environmental%20Aspects%20of%20Tailings%20Management%20%28January%202024%29\\_1.pdf](http://www.greenpolicyplatform.org/sites/default/files/downloads/tools/Final%20Knowledge%20Gaps%20Report_Environmental%20Aspects%20of%20Tailings%20Management%20%28January%202024%29_1.pdf); and ECE/CP.TEIA/44, para. 31.

<sup>69</sup> This includes an information repository of international instruments under ECE and by partner organizations, including OECD and ILO, and a video (deliverable 4.1.1) and a global seminar in the framework of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (deliverable 4.1.2) under activity 4.1 “Strengthening the safe and secure management of hazardous substances to prevent and mitigate industrial accidents worldwide”.

sustainable national governance mechanisms that facilitate interinstitutional, cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder cooperation.

88. In this biennium, the secretariat successfully supported Kazakhstan, Serbia, and Tajikistan in establishing and managing such mechanisms, with further interest expressed by other countries for similar support. **The Bureau welcomes the establishment by and ownership of Serbia of the NPD process, which it hopes can in future be replicated elsewhere in the region, with the Programme's support, backed by initial donor funding. It also appreciates the increasing ownership taken by Kazakhstan and Tajikistan of their IIWGs as important mechanisms to manage tailings risks.**

89. In Central Asia, the related engagement enables supporting countries in progressing towards accession. Following a technical mission in 2023, Georgia envisages also embarking on the next steps towards joining the Convention. **The Bureau calls upon Georgia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to continue advancing on their paths towards accession and encourages other non-Parties in the ECE region to follow their lead.**

90. Moreover, the Bureau notes with satisfaction the Convention's expanding role in fostering subregional cooperation and exchange between countries going beyond merely exchanging technical information. The Subregional workshop on tailings safety (Dushanbe (hybrid), 25–26 May 2023)<sup>70</sup> was one example in this regard: it strengthened transboundary cooperation between Central Asian countries, which exchanged best international practices among themselves, involving authorities, operators, academia and NGOs, as such enhancing their cooperation on preventing, and if necessary, responding to TMF accidents.

91. **Overall, the Bureau commends the Assistance and Cooperation Programme beneficiaries and donors for their active engagement and contributions to Programme activities over the last 20 years, congratulating all Parties and committed countries on the progress made.** Reaching beyond Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, the Programme's outputs, such as information repositories, safety guidance, publications, videos and training toolkits, have benefited all countries in the ECE region and beyond.

92. The Working Group on Implementation has been instrumental in monitoring the Strategic Approach under the Assistance and Cooperation Programme, reviewing national implementation and supporting countries in overcoming implementation gaps, among other things. In this biennium, the Working Group further strengthened its engagement with beneficiary countries to advance in their application of the treaty. At the same time, it prepared recommendations for all Parties and committed countries to improve the Convention's implementation following its review of the national reports from the tenth reporting round (2019–2022).

93. Moreover, owing to additional financial contributions from the Netherlands, guided by the Working Group, the secretariat was able to initiate work on preparing a framework and initiating drafting of different chapters of a Guide of Good Practices, implementing a recommendation from the Seminar on good practices and lessons learned in implementing the ECE Industrial Accidents Convention (Geneva (hybrid), 3–4 February 2022) and the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

94. The Bureau recognizes and appreciates the Working Group's review of the reports from the tenth reporting round and its preparation of the tenth report on the Convention's implementation (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/5) and the draft decision on strengthening the Convention's implementation (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/6). It also greatly welcomes the initiation of the work **to prepare a Guide on Good Practices**, expresses its gratitude to the Netherlands and invites other Parties to consider leading and supporting this activity. **The Bureau encourages Parties to reach out to the Working Group when they require support with the Convention' implementation, make use of the good implementation practices and learn from one another's experiences.**

<sup>70</sup> See <https://unece.org/info/events/event/377827>.

### 3. Partnerships to advance policy and technical work in key work areas, including climate change adaptation

95. Partnerships have been a cornerstone of success in this biennium for advancing technical and policy work, thereby increasing the Convention's impact. Collaborations with UNDRR and OECD have led to important outputs, including the Regional Assessment Report and the Joint OECD/UNECE Guidance on Natech risk management. Partnership with the German Agency for International Cooperation multiplied authorities' and operators' engagement in the above-mentioned Subregional workshop on strengthening tailings safety in Central Asia.

96. Looking ahead, new partnerships with Value.Space,<sup>71</sup> SDC and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific have created new avenues for cooperation, particularly in risk profiling and climate change adaptation for mine tailings facilities (ECE/CP.TEIA/2024/8, see workstreams 5 and 6). Such partnerships will further strengthen implementation of the Long-term strategy and Road map for action on mine tailings safety. They have the potential to further expand application of ECE policy tools and guidance, thereby enhancing the Convention's impact within and beyond the region.

97. **The Bureau** notes with satisfaction the Convention's ongoing collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders and welcomes both existing and new strategic partnerships. It wishes to thank partner organizations for their valuable contributions to the Convention's past and future work, and to **encourage Parties and other member States to foster such partnerships, under the auspices of the Convention's and partner organization's intergovernmental and expert frameworks.**

98. The Bureau considers that the Convention is fit-for-purpose as it moves into the new biennium, and the second phase of implementing the Long-term strategy. The above-mentioned enabling drivers have supported the tremendous progress achieved over the past six years; they have influenced one another and created positive spill-over effects. The Bureau recognizes that this progress, which culminated in this biennium, was possible thanks to the active engagement of Parties, other member States and the secretariat, which the Bureau greatly welcomes. **It expresses its deep appreciation for the invaluable support and contributions provided by Parties, member States and partner organizations, which continue to be instrumental in advancing the work under the Convention.**

99. The new biennium will build on the achievements attained, building on and reinforcing the key enabling drivers for progress. It will provide opportunities for strengthened engagement of Parties and member States within and from beyond the ECE region, and continued broad engagement with partners and other stakeholders. Among its highlights will be two global seminars on: early warning and industrial accident notification systems, environmental liability and pollution remediation (2025); and safe and secure management of hazardous substances in industrial installations and accident prevention and mitigation in the framework of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (2026). Work on the industrial safety of the energy transition will continue more actively, in line with the decisions to be taken by the Parties. Assistance and Cooperation Programme activities will continue to foster progress in implementation and towards accession, with a special focus on mine tailings safety in Central Asia.

100. **The Bureau wishes to encourage Parties and member States to continue and renew their engagement with the Convention in the new biennium, in both existing and new workstreams. It calls on Parties to consider leading and financially backing the 2025–2026 workplan, to be adopted by them at the forthcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties.** Only with Parties' and member States' full engagement and support can the Convention attain its overall vision until 2030 to significantly increase industrial safety and reduce the risk of technological disasters by ensuring its full implementation, as a legal instrument for risk reduction under the Sendai Framework.

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<sup>71</sup> Mention of any firm, product, service or licensed process does not imply endorsement or criticism by the United Nations.