

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON THE TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

Internationally supported assistance programme for the EECCA and SEE countries to enhance their efforts in implementing the Convention

High-level commitment meeting
Geneva, 14-15 December 2005

DRAFT DECLARATION ¹

by the Heads of delegation of the EECCA and SEE countries ²

Introduction

1. We, Heads of delegation of (*names of EECCA and SEE countries*), together with Heads of delegation from (*number*) other UNECE member countries met in Geneva on 14-15 December 2005 at a high-level commitment meeting organized under the auspices of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.
2. We recognize the challenge presented by the Convention, whose main objective is to prevent industrial accidents, in particular, those with transboundary effects, and which also addresses preparedness for and response to such incidents.
3. We note that this instrument requires for its implementation the coordinated involvement of a number of competent authorities at the national level. Certain tasks also require vertical coordination between national authorities and those at the regional and local levels as well as industry and the public. Finally, implementing the Convention requires bilateral cross-border cooperation between neighbouring countries.
4. We welcome the many activities under the auspices of the Conference of the Parties which led to the preparation of the internationally supported assistance programme for the EECCA and SEE countries to enhance their efforts to implement the Convention, in particular the subregional workshop on the implementation of the Convention, held in Erevan on 13-15 March 2003.

¹ This draft declaration, prepared by the Chairperson of the Conference of the Parties, the Chairman of the Working Group on Implementation and the Convention's Secretary, was disseminated among countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia as well as other UNECE member countries for consultation. Their representatives are invited to comment and send their suggestions/proposals to the Convention's secretariat until 10 July 2005. A new draft, incorporating the comments received will be produced by the secretariat and made available to all UNECE member countries well before the joint meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties and the Working Group on Implementation scheduled to take place in Warsaw on 14 September 2005. This meeting is expected to reach agreement on the text of the final draft which will then be officially translated and submitted to the high-level commitment meeting for consideration and subsequent adoption by the Heads of delegation of the EECCA and SEE countries.

² EECCA – Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia; SEE – South-Eastern Europe.

5. We welcome decision 2004/1 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on strengthening the implementation of the Convention taken in Budapest on 27-30 October 2004, and in particular the adoption of the assistance programme.

6. We gratefully acknowledge the strong support expressed by many Parties for the assistance programme and the financial contributions made so far by the Czech Republic, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia and Switzerland thanks to which the programme was launched, thus facilitating the high-level commitment meeting.

Challenges

7. We recognize that most of our countries are faced with insufficient regulatory and institutional frameworks and limited human resource capacities due, inter alia, to the difficult overall political and economic situation.

8. We are aware that this has a negative influence on the industrial sector, where most installations need modernization, replacement of obsolete technologies and better maintenance. We agree that the level of risk at these installations is high and will grow with any increase in capacity. Any industrial accident would have impacts on both human health and the environment in our already highly vulnerable societies.

Our commitment

9. We note the important step in improving industrial safety already made by Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, Romania and the Russian Federation in becoming Parties to the Convention.

10. We fully accept that we, ourselves, have to address the challenges mentioned above and those of the assistance programme and make the necessary efforts to implement the Convention.

11. At the same time, we stress that our efforts need to be supported. To this end, we consider the assistance programme as an important tool to enhance our countries' efforts to fully apply the Convention in practice.

12. We reiterate the determination of the authorities of our countries to improve industrial safety by implementing appropriate safety measures at industrial facilities, in particular at hazardous installations. Therefore, our countries are also strongly committed to implementing the Convention's national tasks and to fulfilling its cross-border and multilateral duties.

13. We stress that most of our countries have already implemented a majority of the Convention's basic tasks clearly defined by the programme (first paragraphs of sections A to J in chapter IV). We shall ensure that the remaining tasks will be applied in practice without delay.

14. We will demonstrate the implementation of these tasks to the members of the fact-finding teams, set up in accordance with the third step of the action plan to implement the assistance programme.

15. We welcome the visits of the fact-finding teams in our countries in 2006 and will, in cooperation with the Convention's secretariat, organize their meetings with representatives of: (i) all competent authorities at national level; (ii) selected authorities at local level; and (iii) selected

hazardous installations. We will contribute to drawing up individual country reports and an overall report on the implementation of the preparatory stage of the assistance programme for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

Next steps

16. We will provide more insight to the fact-finding teams into the particular areas in which our countries need capacity-building activities and advisory services. We will also put forward proposals for transboundary pilot projects, including joint response exercises among neighbouring countries.

17. We will welcome the future assistance provided through the programme. We will thus actively participate in needs-driven assistance activities and receive advisory services in order to implement the more complex tasks under the Convention (second paragraphs of sections A to J in chapter IV).

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18. We understand that for those of our countries that have not yet become Parties to the Convention, the assistance received through the programme will oblige them to accede to it without further delay.

19. We call on the countries of Central and Western Europe and North America, the European Commission and financial institutions and programmes to support further the assistance programme financially and in kind to facilitate its full implementation.
