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Sixth meeting

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

Prevention of accidental water pollution

Joint management of transboundary emergencies involving international waterways, German-Polish exercise

Report of the technical workshop

Introduction

1. The German-Polish field exercise on the Odra River, combined with a technical workshop on joint management of transboundary emergencies involving international waterways, were held, respectively, in Urad and Slubice, Poland, from 8 to 10 September 2009. They were organized in the framework of German-Polish cooperation resulting from the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive and the European Council Directive on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances (Seveso II directive). The workshop was also part of the workplan under the Industrial Accidents Convention (ECE/CP.TEIA/19, Annex I, 5.1.2).

2. The lead national authorities for the organization of both events were, for Poland, the Ministry of Environment, with its Chief Inspectorate for Environmental Protection, the Ministry of Interior and Administration and the State Fire Service; and, from Germany, the Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The national authorities were supported by local authorities from the Lubuski *Województwo* (district) in Poland and the Ministries for Internal Affairs and for Development of Rural Areas, Environment and Consumer Protection of the *Land* (state) of Brandenburg in Germany.

I. Objectives

3. The objectives of the workshop and the exercise were:

- (a) To discuss the experience and good practice in joint management of emergencies, especially in view of German-Polish cooperation;
- (b) To discuss the basis for effective emergencies management in a transboundary context; and
- (c) To consider possible future developments that could help strengthen the cooperation between United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) countries prior to, during and after crises on waterways resulting from industrial accidents.

II. Participation

4. The exercise and the workshop were attended by representatives of the following countries: Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine. Representatives of the joint United Nation Environmental Programme (UNEP) and United Nation Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Environment Unit and the Convention secretariat also participated in both events.

III. Joint notification exercise

5. The exercise was opened by Mr. Janusz Skulich, Chief Commandant of the Polish State Fire Service, and Mr. Andrzej Bycka from Slubice District. Following the opening addresses, Mr. Slawomir Klusek of the Polish State Fire Service in Gorzow Wielkopolski informed participants and observers about the exercise scenario and response action to be taken by the response forces participating to the exercise from Germany and Poland.
6. The exercise scenario sought to test emergency response reactions to the release of oil into the Odra River from an oil transporting vessel as a consequence of damage to the vessel.
7. The specific goals of the exercise were to assess:
- (a) The functioning of warning, alert and notification systems, both national and international;
 - (b) The effectiveness of the work of joint (German and Polish) staff for managing the emergency;
 - (c) The degree of preparedness of response equipment for oil spills (floating barriers, separators, skimmers, etc.) and its effective application by response personnel.
8. The exercise led to the following conclusions:
- (a) The alert and notification systems functioned well;
 - (b) The cooperation between German and Polish staff for managing the incident was satisfactory but could be further improved through additional tabletop and field exercises which would allow for a better understanding of the respective procedures used by each country;
 - (c) The equipment was adequate and the response personnel were well trained in using it;
 - (d) The equipment of both countries was compatible;
 - (e) The response forces were well supported by the personnel responsible for monitoring and water management.

9. Germany and Poland were aware that the positive outcome of the exercise had resulted from the cooperation established and enhanced over 15 years. Despite those achievements, however, both countries recognized the need to continue their joint work with a view to making further improvements, e.g., in the work of the joint staff for managing an emergency.

IV. Technical workshop on joint management of transboundary emergencies involving international waterways

10. The workshop heard opening addresses by Mr. Andrzej Jagusiewicz, Chief Inspector for Environmental Protection of Poland, Mr. Wolfgang Gierke of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and by a representative of the UNECE secretariat.

11. The workshop was divided into 7 sessions: *Session I*, on Polish-German cooperation on emergencies in border areas; *Session II* on identification of point and linear hazards in border areas; *Session III* on techniques and technology in mitigating effects of accidents polluting transboundary waters; *Session IV* on notification procedures in the event of an accident in border areas; *Session V* on linkages between elements of planning on mitigation and rescue and the EU Water Framework Directive; *Session VI* on experience from UNECE-wide activities on enhancing the joint management of emergency situations in border areas; and *Session VII*, wrap-up of the workshop. (The programme for the workshop is available on the Convention website at <http://www.unece.org/env/teia/cop.html>.)

Conclusions of the workshop

12. The workshop and its presentations led to a discussion on all the elements necessary for effective response to and mitigation of effects during an emergency situation in border areas, especially on international watercourses.

13. Participants agreed that, for an effective response, cooperation between neighbouring countries was essential. Such cooperation could only be successful if it was not limited to crisis management (preparedness and response) but also addressed risk management (prevention), as well as aftermath management where feedback was shared between the countries and their authorities dealing with the different risk management areas (cross-areas and cross-country cooperation, risk management-safety chain methodology).

14. Cooperation was not possible if countries had not established legislation providing the basis for risk, crisis and aftermath management. Additionally, it would be difficult without bilateral agreements that specified in more detail the responsibilities of the neighbouring countries and their authorities vis-à-vis each other. The legislation and the bilateral agreements had not only to be established, but also enforced.

15. Within risk management, it was important that neighbouring countries were able to properly identify sources of risk, maintain relevant databases and exchange information on risks. They should also cooperate with each other, especially through sharing of new practices and technology (e.g., methodologies for risk assessment, modelling, approaches to land-use planning, etc.) or implementing joint projects leading to improving safety standards and decreasing risks for emergency situations (e.g., projects related to critical infrastructure issues).

16. Within crisis management, neighbouring countries should harmonize off-site contingency planning. That harmonization should include, especially with regard to response planning along waterways, agreement on:

(a) Use or establishment of alert and warning notification systems (e.g., alert and warning systems for international rivers such as the Odra, Rhine, Danube, Elbe; the UNECE Industrial Accidents Notification System, etc.);

(b) Establishing sectors for response actions; and

(c) Procedures and schemes for providing each other with mutual assistance (border crossing for the response forces in the event of an emergency).

17. An important part of crisis management was also a continuous joint training of the response forces to verify if the agreed procedures and systems were well known to and easily applicable for their personnel.

18. Aftermath management also required relevant cooperation. Countries should first of all help each other, when needed, in identifying the causes, especially for major accidents. In the event of accidents in border areas they should evaluate the joint response and identify ineffective procedures. They should share with each other lessons learned from different incidents and accidents so that similar events could be prevented or a more effective response could be prepared.

19. The presentations delivered by German and Polish experts showed good cooperation between both countries at every stage of the safety chain's management areas. Both countries had established a solid basis for their cooperation through legislation and bilateral agreements to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergency situations including those in the border area and on international waterways. They had also established a good practice of continuous work through regular meetings of a joint working group to discuss issues of prevention, preparedness, response and lessons learned, as well as to organize joint training sessions and tabletop and field exercises. The activities of the joint working group had also been found to be invaluable in terms of building trust, without which effective cooperation could not be possible.

20. On the other hand, presentations delivered by representatives of Italy and Romania on the interim results of the Danube project,¹ or in particular by representatives from Ukraine and from the joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit, demonstrated that crisis management was not as effective everywhere as was the case for Germany and Poland. There were countries that, for many reasons — including lack of a solid foundation (legislation, agreements), lack of institutional capacities, lack of new technologies and know-how, or lack of training sessions and exercises — needed to take steps to improve their crisis management capacities following the existing examples of good practice.

21. Taking into account the conclusions drawn from the workshop's presentations, participants agreed that each country should establish an effective crisis management system, including for transboundary emergencies especially on waterways, through ensuring:

(a) A legal, institutional and policy basis, comprising:

(i) Legislation in place and in force;

(ii) Dedicated institutional structures;

(iii) Emergency plans;

(iv) An operational alert and warning, monitoring and/or notification system;

¹ Project for Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia on joint management of transboundary emergencies from spills of hazardous substances into the Danube River.

- (b) An educational/cooperation basis, comprising:
 - (i) Training sessions and exercises;
 - (ii) Education, exchange of technology and know-how;
 - (iii) Trust-building;
 - (iv) Awareness-building involving politicians, the public, etc.

22. Most of the Western and Central European countries, as shown by the German and Polish examples, had built up the solid basis needed for joint management of transboundary emergencies. They had also raised awareness and had developed good practices on the basis of cooperation. On the other hand, the countries with economies in transition had been facing challenges in implementing a solid basis for cooperation and either had little awareness or had not yet managed to develop any practices for the cooperation/capacities-improving basis.

23. Participants concluded that Western and Central European countries should continue to work on a cooperation basis so that they could maintain or further improve the high effectiveness of joint crisis management, as well as other areas of the safety chain. That was important work also in the context of maintaining the needed political support and recourses for ensuring safety.

24. The countries with economies in transition should work on both bases and, learning from good practices available, should aim at improving their crisis management skills, including for transboundary emergencies on waterways, where needed receiving advice and recommendations from the Western and Central European countries.

25. In view of the above, participants agreed that a sound methodology for building an effective crisis management system, focusing on transboundary emergencies involving waterways, would be extremely helpful. It was strongly recommended that such a methodology be elaborated. The methodology should describe particular elements, belonging under both bases and should be shared with countries with economies in transition in the UNECE region, as well as with other countries that sought to improve their crisis management systems.

26. The secretariat of the Convention was requested to explore the possibilities leading to the elaboration of a methodology for building an effective crisis management system, focusing on transboundary emergencies involving waterways.
