

UNECE

Cross-border concerns, shared strategies

Why transboundary cooperation matters in preventing industrial accidents



UNITED NATIONS

CROSS-BORDER CONCERNS, SHARED STRATEGIES

**Why transboundary cooperation matters
in preventing industrial accidents**



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Foreword

Over the past few decades, numerous major industrial accidents have reminded us that industrial sites containing hazardous substances remain a serious threat to our societies. While Governments and industry have been trying to make operations safer, the devastation caused by past accidents has demonstrated that their effects can be far reaching and cross borders. The severity of the consequences of industrial accidents for human health, the environment and property, has been seen time and time again, including as a result of the 1986 Sandoz agrochemical plant accident near Basel in Switzerland and the 2016 mining waste spill in Ridder, Kazakhstan. The 1992 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) addresses these risks, and provides a framework for countries to strengthen their prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents at the national level and across borders.

The tools developed and the activities undertaken in the framework of the Industrial Accidents Convention can also help countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, by reducing the number of accidents involving hazardous chemicals at industrial facilities and their associated impacts on human health and the environment. In addition, the work carried out under the Convention supports countries in strengthening governance and management of disaster risk, preparedness and resilience, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

Prevention of industrial accidents requires coordinated and sustained efforts by both national authorities and industry, including investment in safety management, awareness-raising campaigns and the meaningful engagement of the public. Sharing experiences and good practices among countries is also crucial to address and mitigate the potential transboundary effects of industrial accidents. Parties to the Convention stand ready to share and build upon their experience in this area.

I encourage countries from the UNECE region and beyond to implement the Industrial Accident Convention's provisions and make use of its tools to reduce the risks posed by hazardous industrial facilities. Some of these facilities are "ticking time bombs" and, if countries do not act to increase safety and reduce risks, the question is not whether accidents will happen, but when. Such accidents are not inevitable. Let us continue working across borders to improve the safety of industrial facilities holding hazardous substances, for the benefit of our communities, industry and the environment.



Christian Friis Bach

Executive Secretary

*United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe*



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Background — the threat of industrial accidents

In recent years, the UNECE region has experienced devastating industrial accidents, such as the 2005 fire at the Buncefield oil storage in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the 2010 aluminium sludge spill in Kolontar, Hungary, the 2012 chemical leakage at the Talvivaara mine in Finland and the 2016 waste spill in Ridder, Kazakhstan. Many other industrial accidents occur every year, but do not capture international headlines.



(Buncefield, United Kingdom, 2005)

Each year many countries outside the UNECE region also experience the consequences of industrial accidents. In 2015, the massive explosions at a chemical warehouse in Tianjin, China, reportedly killed 139, injured over 700 and displaced 6,000 people. The same year, a tailings dam failure in Bento Rodrigues, Brazil, accidentally released approximately 50 million tons of toxic iron ore waste into the Doce River, damaging the environment and the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. These are just two tragic reminders of the constant need to reinforce safety measures at industrial sites containing hazardous substances.¹ As long as industrial accidents remain a significant risk to people and the environment,

¹ Hazardous substances, for the purposes of the Convention, include flammable, toxic, oxidizing and explosive substances, as well as substances dangerous for the environment because of their toxicity to aquatic organisms. See the Convention's annex I for details.

efforts need to continue, at the international, national and local levels, to prevent, prepare for and respond to major accidents.

Box 1. Did you know that ... ?

In the United Kingdom, the average economic costs of a major industrial accident, excluding environmental costs, have been estimated at:

- Injuries and fatalities: £95,000,000
- Building damage: £3,300,000
- Business disruption: £4,500,000
- Evacuation of people: £120,000
- Emergency services: £2,100,000

Average total costs per major accident by type of event:

- Toxic: £153 million
- Fireball: £105 million
- Overpressure: £430 million

Source: Health and Safety Executive and Cardiff Business School, United Kingdom

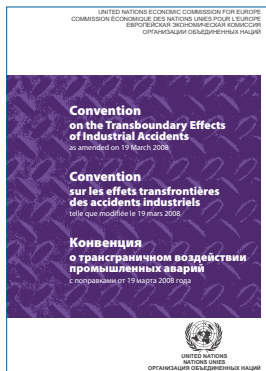
This brochure aims to strengthen the understanding of the benefits of the Industrial Accidents Convention. It also explains how the Convention can assist countries in achieving certain Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (Sendai Framework).

"The threat of industrial accidents exists everywhere, including in countries and sectors with stringent safety standards. The consequences of such accidents can be severe and are often deadly. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's Industrial Accidents Convention actively supports countries in preventing such accidents, and in mitigating their effects if they occur. It focuses particularly on cross-border cooperation between countries in this regard. ... The Convention has been successful, but more needs to be done."



**Ban Ki-moon, United Nations
Secretary-General, 3 December 2014**

About the Industrial Accidents Convention



The UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents is designed to protect people and the environment against the devastating effects of industrial accidents by preventing accidents from occurring, reducing the frequency and severity of their occurrence and mitigating their effects. The Convention also applies to industrial accidents triggered by natural disasters, such as floods, landslides or earthquakes. The Industrial Accidents Convention entered into force in 2000 and presently has 41 Parties.²

Effective transboundary cooperation at the international level and between neighbouring States is of the utmost importance. The Convention focuses in particular on effective cooperation before, during and after an accident, and encourages Parties to help each other, cooperate on research and development and share information and technology.

The Convention is based on the idea that the first line of defence against industrial accidents is to prevent them from occurring at all.

The first step to be taken by countries under the Convention is to identify all hazardous activities taking place within their borders that could have a transboundary effect if an accident were to occur. Following this, the Convention outlines preventive measures that need to be carried out by competent authorities and operators, or through joint efforts. For example, operators should put in place the necessary safety measures and competent authorities should conduct inspections and check safety documentation to ensure that operators comply with the relevant legal requirements.

² Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Convention basics



The Convention requires the sharing of information about hazardous activities between neighbouring countries, as appropriate, and among operators, the public and emergency response teams. In the event of an accident with transboundary effects, Parties to the Convention are well prepared to promptly implement response measures. A coordinated effort by Parties represents the best method to reduce any negative effects and their associated costs.

The Convention also highlights the importance of land-use planning, the siting of hazardous activities and the integration of the safety aspects of hazardous facilities into policies, plans, programmes and projects.

Many Parties apply the provisions of the Convention not only to hazardous facilities with potential transboundary effects, but to all such installations across their territory, improving industrial safety at the national level even further.

The benefits of membership

The UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention provides an effective mechanism to support countries in achieving sustainable economic growth by protecting their industries, populations and the environment from industrial accidents occurring within and across borders. Originally a UNECE regional treaty, the Convention is expected in the future to be open to all United Nations Members States.

The history of cross-border accidents highlights the need for special attention to transboundary cooperation across the UNECE region and beyond. To effectively prevent and respond to transboundary accidents, the Convention promotes collaborative efforts between Parties and experts in this field. The Convention complements the European Union Seveso III Directive,³ which addresses industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response within the European Union.

For countries to ensure that their economies, communities and the environment thrive in the future they need stable legal frameworks and mechanisms to control the risks and impacts associated with industrial accidents, including those occurring beyond their borders.

The key benefits, at the national and international levels, of countries joining the Convention are:

1. Avoiding and minimizing the costs of industrial accidents
2. Enhancing capacity to address transboundary water pollution
3. Strengthening regional cooperation and information sharing
4. Improving transboundary preparedness and emergency response
5. Building support from the community of Parties
6. Receiving capacity development and training
7. Joining a platform for the exchange of experience, good practices, technology and information
8. Influencing the development of international treaty law and policy
9. Contributing to peace and security and implementing global commitments.



³ Directive 2012/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directive 96/82/EC.

Avoiding and minimizing the costs of industrial accidents

The risks associated with industrial accidents (as well as natural disasters that trigger industrial accidents) pose significant threats to our economies, lives and infrastructure. The economic damage from an accident can encompass fatalities, injuries, evacuation, mobilization of emergency services, damage to buildings, business disruption and the costs of reconstruction, recovery and ecosystem restoration. Such costs significantly outweigh the economic costs that countries dedicate to implementing the Convention.

Enhancing capacity to address transboundary water pollution



The effects of the vast majority of transboundary accidents are transmitted across borders through water bodies. Therefore, international cooperation under the Convention on water resources, flooding and other hydrological matters around hazardous activities is paramount. The severe transboundary effects that the release of hazardous substances into water sources has on countries downstream was evident during the 1986 accident at the Sandoz agrochemical plant in Schweizerhalle, Switzerland, and the tailings dam accident in Baia Mare, Romania, in 2000. To avoid such events, the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention supports countries in preventing accidental water pollution through the work of the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents,

established jointly with the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

Strengthening regional cooperation and information sharing

Regional cooperation helps to raise awareness of the importance of industrial safety among Governments, operators and the public. The Convention actively promotes such cooperation, mainly through bilateral agreements and organizing joint exercises. It also establishes important information-sharing procedures for Parties to follow. Article 4 of the Convention clarifies each Party's responsibilities to identify hazardous activities within its jurisdiction and notify potentially affected Parties.

The Convention therefore contributes to cross-border cooperation and better environmental governance by increasing coordination among the relevant authorities, operators and the public. This decreases the risk of harm to a country's population, land or property from threats located outside its territory and beyond its jurisdiction or control.

Improving transboundary preparedness and emergency response

A prompt response to an industrial accident is crucial to reduce its impacts, both within and across borders. Many Parties to the Convention have joint preparedness and emergency response measures in place, which they can swiftly implement in the event of an accident with cross-border effects.

According to the Convention, hazardous facilities must have on-site and off-site contingency plans and, where several Parties might be affected by a hazardous operation, they are expected to work together to develop or make their plans compatible.

Article 10 of the Convention relates to the UNECE Industrial Accident Notification System, which Parties can use to notify potentially affected Parties, as required, in the event or imminent threat of an industrial accident with potential transboundary effects. The designated points of contact use this web-based system to notify other Parties, to transmit all necessary information, and to request assistance. The concerned Parties are responsible for activating their contingency plans as soon as possible.



Building support from the community of Parties

Communal support is at the heart of the Industrial Accidents Convention. The Convention itself serves as a collective forum, which promotes solidarity between countries in addressing joint problems and issues. Through the platform provided by the Convention, including the biennial meetings of the Conference of the Parties, a Party can bring its needs and expectations to the attention of all other Parties or voice its concerns. And the Convention's Working Group on Implementation is prepared to help countries in implementing the Convention.

Receiving capacity development and training

Countries that are Parties to the Convention or wish to join can benefit from needs-driven assistance for:

- Capacity-development activities regarding implementation of the Convention
 - Joint emergency response exercises and other practical training
-

- Applying UNECE safety guidelines, good practices, checklists and other guidance.

Capacity-development activities

Countries that are Parties to the Convention or wish to join can benefit from various capacity-development activities under the Convention such as seminars, workshops, projects, training sessions, advisory services and consultations. For example, training sessions develop the capacities of national experts in investigating and evaluating industrial facilities.

“Capacity-building activities under the Convention have provided the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with excellent opportunities to set up a comprehensive system for industrial accidents management completely in line with international, European Union and national directions and to share information and experiences with other Parties to the Industrial Accidents Convention.”

**Emilija Kupeva, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
National coordinator for the on-site inspection project (2010–2013)**

To enhance the capacities of countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in implementing the Convention, an Assistance Programme was adopted in 2004. Targeted capacity-development activities are carried out to support these countries in:

- Improving their governance, institutional structures and coordination mechanisms
- Developing legislation for industrial accidents prevention, preparedness and response
- Preparing and implementing practical tools for authorities and operators.



Between 2005 and 2015, over 50 activities were implemented within the Convention's Assistance Programme; other activities were also carried out to support countries.⁴ In addition, long-term projects were implemented under the Assistance Programme, such as the:

⁴ A complete list of all assistance activities can be found at: www.unece.org/env/teia under the rubric "Meetings and Events".

- Danube River project between Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia (2009)
- On-site inspection project involving Croatia, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2010–2013)
- Danube Delta project on improving hazard and crisis management between the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine (2011–2015) (see box 2).

“The Moldovan people have the right to live and work in a safe environment. A high level of industrial safety is an important condition for that. For the Republic of Moldova, the UNECE Assistance Programme has proven to be an important driving force and a very effective mechanism for a sustainable implementation of the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention.”

Svetlana Stirbu, Republic of Moldova
National coordinator for the Danube Delta project (2011–2015)

“Participation in the training session on ‘The evaluation of safety reports’ was of great benefit for Serbia. It made it possible to build up the knowledge of authorities in evaluating safety reports in order to enhance implementation of the Convention and relevant European Union legislation, to strengthen a culture of safety and to improve quality and completeness of safety reports.”

Suzana Milutinovic, Serbia
National coordinator for the on-site inspection project (2010–2013)

Joint emergency response exercises and practical training

Parties to the Convention benefit from the available experience under the Convention through joint emergency response exercises and training sessions on different topics. These include desktop and field exercises, simulating emergency situations, and training sessions on integrated approaches to major hazard prevention.

Within the Danube Delta project (2011–2015), the first-ever trilateral field exercise between the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine was organized in 2015 (see box 3). The exercise helped test a draft joint contingency plan between the three countries.

Box 2. The Danube Delta project (2011–2015)

After more than 2,000 kilometres, the Danube River flows into the Black Sea where it forms one of the largest and best-preserved river deltas in Europe, shared by the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine. The Danube Delta is famous for its unique ecosystems that host over 5,000 animal and plant species. Since 1991 the core of the Delta has been designated as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Natural Heritage Site.

The outstanding environmental value and sensitivity of the region require particular efforts to protect them. This is especially important in view of several oil terminals located upstream of or within the Delta, which cause an increased hazard potential for the Delta's ecosystems. Because an industrial accident at an oil terminal could result in catastrophic pollution of the Delta, riparian countries need to work closely together to be able to respond effectively in the event of accident.

The Danube Delta project, implemented under the auspices of the Convention, helped to improve joint hazard and crisis management in the Delta. Activities under the project were carried out thanks to financial support by Finland, Germany and the Netherlands and the active engagement of the three riparian countries.



Box 3. Joint exercise of transboundary cooperation in the event of an oil spill on the Danube River

For the first time, on 24 March 2015, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine tested how the three countries would cooperate to respond to an industrial accident with possible transboundary consequences, such as an oil spill that might reach the Danube Delta. The test was conducted within the Civil Protection Emergency Situation Service of the Republic of Moldova by simulating an accident and discussing in a structured way possible emergency response, transboundary cooperation and mutual assistance activities (table-top exercise). The test was part of the Danube Delta project (see box 2).

The results of the test and its evaluation revealed areas for improvement in the trilateral cooperation between the countries. The results will be useful for the further development of a trilateral agreement on hazard and crisis management and a joint contingency plan for the Danube Delta. Although the three countries have bilateral agreements in place to cooperate in case of an emergency, there is currently no trilateral agreement allowing for their joint response. A joint contingency plan could fill that gap, and would be an important new tool to improve the protection of the natural heritage, water quality and the unique environment in the Danube Delta.



Applying guidelines and other instruments

A number of guidance materials and other instruments for use by countries, competent authorities, operators and others, have been developed under the Convention.⁵



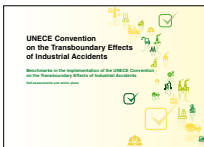
Safety guidelines and Good Practices for: Tailings Management Facilities; Pipelines; and Oil Terminals



Checklists for: Contingency Planning for Accidents Affecting Transboundary Waters; Preparation and Inspection of a Safety Report; and Tailings Management Facilities



Introduction to Industrial Accidents (online training course)



Benchmarks for the implementation of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

Joining a platform for the exchange of experiences, good practices, technology and information

Managing accident hazards requires specific expertise that is not always available within governmental bodies or authorities. The Convention helps by providing an intergovernmental platform for sharing experiences and good practices within and between countries.

⁵ For more information, see: www.unece.org/env/teia under the rubric "Publications" or "Guidelines".

All Parties actively participate in the sharing of knowledge and experience and learn from each other. The programme of work under the Convention is demand-driven and therefore able to respond to the differing and evolving needs of the Parties.

Articles 14 and 16 of the Convention encourage cooperation in research and development and the exchange of technology related to the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents.

Influencing the development of international treaty law and policy

The Convention has actively contributed to the development of international policy and legislation in the field of industrial safety. The Convention's Working Group on Development reviews developments in relevant legal instruments in other international forums to ensure that the Convention is up to date. For example, it recently reviewed the Convention's annex I to bring it into line with the United Nations Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (see box 4) and to maintain consistency with the corresponding European Union legislation (Seveso III Directive).

Box 4. United Nations Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS)

GHS classifies chemicals by types of hazard and proposes harmonized hazard communication elements, including labels and safety data sheets. It aims to ensure that information on physical hazards and toxicity from chemicals are available in order to enhance the protection of human health and the environment during the handling, transport and use of these chemicals.



Contributing to peace and security and implementing global commitments

Major accidents with transboundary effects can trigger substantial tension between countries. Participation in and cooperation through the intergovernmental platform of the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention

fosters mutual understanding and can improve relations between neighbouring States, thereby contributing to international peace and security.

Furthermore, the work under the Convention contributes to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see below).

The partners to the Convention

The secretariat to the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention works in partnership with many different organizations to achieve the objectives of the Convention (see box 5).

Box 5. Partners to the Convention

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in particular the Sustainable Consumption and Production Branch and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management policy framework
- Joint UNEP/Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Environment Unit
- Other United Nations regional commissions
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
- International Labour Organization, including its 1993 Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention
- Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
- World Health Organization, including its work on environmental health in emergencies or technological incidents
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
- Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals
- European Commission, in particular its work on Major Accident Hazards (Seveso III Directive) and Preparedness and Response (Civil Protection Mechanism), and its Joint Research Centre, including the Major Accident Hazards Bureau
- Commonwealth of Independent States Interstate Council on Industrial Safety
- European Chemical Industry Council and its Energy, HSE (Health, Safety and Environment) and Logistics Programme
- European Process Safety Centre
- European Environmental Bureau
- Regional Environmental Centres.

The Convention, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction



Sustainable Development Goals

The UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention can help countries in their attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by United Nations Member States in 2015. This new Agenda includes a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all – the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs.

Over the next 15 years countries will mobilize to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change. The SDGs recognize that ending poverty must go hand in hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

The main links between the Convention and the SDGs are:



Avoiding deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals by reducing the risk of technological disasters releasing chemical substances.



Preventing accidental water pollution from industrial accidents.



Promoting safe management of industrial installations to make them sustainable.



Encouraging integrated policies to achieve resilience to disasters, in line with the Sendai Framework.



Providing a framework to prevent accidental release of chemicals, thus contributing to their environmentally sound management.



Strengthening resilience to climate-related hazards and natural disasters by promoting adequate siting, land-use policies and emergency plans.

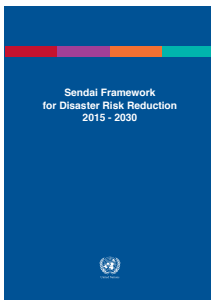


Ensuring participatory decision-making by involving the public in discussions related to the prevention of, preparedness for and response to industrial accidents.

Implementing the Convention is therefore effective in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030

The Convention helps its Parties to achieve the priorities for action set out in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.



The Sendai Framework is a 15-year, voluntary, non-binding agreement that recognizes the State's primary role in reducing disaster risk, and that the responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders, including local government and the private sector. It aims for the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.

Countries should consider the implementation of the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention as an effective way to address the four priorities for action under the Sendai Framework.

Priority 1 – Understanding disaster risk

Understanding disaster risk is paramount before any action can be taken. The Sendai Framework encourages countries to identify potentially hazardous activities to be able to target preventive measures, preparedness and response. The provisions of the Industrial Accidents Convention help to identify critical technological hazards. This information can be reused for understanding and governing disaster risk.

Priority 2 – Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

Providing a governance mechanism for regional cooperation to address transboundary disaster risk reduction is crucial in identifying and addressing risk sources within and across borders. The Convention provides the procedures for countries to cooperate and effectively manage these issues.

Priority 3 – Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

The Convention promotes investment in preventive measures, at the national and international levels, which cost less than remedying the consequences of disasters. A primary objective of the Convention is encouraging Parties to be proactive in implementing measures to mitigate risks (in collaboration with neighbouring countries) and providing the procedures to do so.

Priority 4 – Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

The Convention not only addresses accident risk sources, but also the mitigation of their effects. Ensuring preparation, review and periodical update of disaster preparedness and contingency policies, plans and programmes as a joint effort between countries is a key feature of the Convention.

Looking forward – Our vision

The UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention will continue to support countries in their efforts to make industrial accidents rarer and their consequences less severe. To this end, it provides rule-based solutions for strengthening cooperation and a platform for exchanging experiences and fostering progress.



Our vision going forward is centred on:

- Deepening cooperation between countries through more effective agreements, contingency plans, capacity development, training and practical exercises
 - Conducting further research into good practice and encouraging higher safety standards and measures
 - Ensuring transparency and accountability in the operation of hazardous activities, through awareness-raising and free-flowing information
 - Further supporting countries in transposing the Convention's provisions into national legislation and integrating them in industrial operations through targeted training, capacity development and knowledge sharing
-

- Continuing support for countries that face challenges in joining the Convention
- Helping Parties to implement the provisions of the Convention in order to contribute to meeting the SDGs and the priorities of the Sendai Framework
- Establishing strategic partnerships in support of all of the objectives stated above.

Deepening cooperation — through countries joining or strengthening their support for the Convention — is the fundamental focus of the Convention. It is the most effective approach for preventing, preparing for and responding to industrial accidents and their costly cross-border effects.

Cross-border concerns, shared strategies Why transboundary cooperation matters in preventing industrial accidents

The Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents was adopted 25 years ago, in 1992, to protect people and the environment against industrial accidents that can have transboundary effects. It aims to prevent accidents from occurring, or to reduce their frequency and severity and to mitigate their effects if they do occur.

The Convention promotes active international cooperation among countries before, during and after an industrial accident. The Convention also encourages its Parties to help each other in the event of an accident, to cooperate on research and development and to share information and technology.

The Convention's greatest achievements have been to increase awareness of industrial safety across the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and to foster a growing sense of solidarity, especially between upstream and downstream countries.

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