



**United Nations Economic
Commission for Europe**



Federal Ministry for the
Environment, Nature Conservation
and Nuclear Safety

UNECE CONVENTION ON THE TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

UNECE CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION AND USE OF THE TRANSBOUNDARY WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES

SEMINAR ON THE OCCASION OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SANDOZ ACCIDENT

8 and 9 November 2011

Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Robert-
Schuman-Platz 3, 53175 Bonn, Germany
starting at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, 8 November 2011

INFORMATION NOTICE

I. Background

An accident at Sandoz agrochemical storehouse in Schweizerhalle, Basel, Switzerland on 1 November 1986 caused one of the most severe man-made environmental disasters in the history of Europe. This accident resulted in tons of pollutants entering the Rhine with fire fighting water and significantly destroying its biological life.

Since the accident, the international community, especially in Europe, took many steps to improve the safety at industrial facilities and to protect international rivers and lakes. In particular, multilateral environmental agreements such as the UNECE Conventions on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents) and on the Protection and Use of the Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water) had been adopted. The International River Commissions gave more attention in their work to addressing possible accidents from hazardous activities, designing relevant preventive measures and improving rivers' contingency planning. Also policy development had been carried out at the level of the European Union.

The new international standards led to developments at the countries level. Improved national legislation obliged to better risk management at the side of the plants' operators and authorities. Best available techniques for plant safety had been introduced. Monitoring and alarm system for international rivers and incidents reporting system had been established.

The 25 anniversary of the Sandoz accident is a good opportunity to take stock of the work carried out in this period in the prevention of accidental water pollution and to look for remaining challenges. For this occasion a seminar under the auspices of Industrial Accidents

and Water Conventions was decided to be held. The German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety kindly offered to host the seminar.

This note provides information on the objectives, organization of work and logistics of the seminar.

II. Objectives and organization of work

The objectives for the seminar will be to reflect on the work carried out and progress achieved in the area of prevention of accidental water pollution in the UNECE region. It will also allow for examining existing deficits in prevention of water pollution by chemical substances, and for formulating the way forward to address the deficiencies.

The seminar should also reflect on the results to be presented by the Joint Expert Group with regard to checklist/methodology for harmonized contingency planning for accidents with potential impacts on transboundary watercourses.

The seminar will be organized on 8 and 9 November, under the leadership of the Government of Germany, with the support of the UNECE secretariat of the Industrial Accidents and Water Conventions.

The seminar is addressed to all those who are responsible for or involved in the process of developing and implementing policies in the area of prevention of accidental water pollution: first and foremost governmental representatives, but also local authorities and representatives of academia, research institutes, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

A provisional programme will be issued in July 2011.

III. Practical information

In the morning of 8 November, the registration desk will be open from 8 to 9 a.m.

The seminar will start at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, 8 November, and end at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, 9 November 2011. It will be held at the premises of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Robert-Schuman-Platz 3, 53175 Bonn, Germany. The working languages will be English and Russian.

The registration form and further information on the venue as well as on transport and accommodation in Bonn, will be made available on the following website in due course: <http://www.kas-bmu.de/unece>

Technical assistance will be provided by **GFI Umwelt, Bonn**.

Eligible participants from countries with economies in transition may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the seminar.

Requests for financial support should be submitted directly to GFI-Umwelt (Mr. Hans-Siegfried Goebel, Email: goebel@gfi-umwelt.de) as soon as possible, but not later than 31 August 2011.

No application will be accepted after this deadline.

Participants requiring entry visas and respective additional support should submit their registrations to GFI Umwelt as soon as possible. **They are requested to initiate visa procedures at least four weeks before the meeting. The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety will allocate an official invitation when needed.**

Focal points are requested to disseminate information on the seminar and to facilitate nomination of relevant experts from their respective countries.
