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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Major recent international meetings and events
Eight Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Helsinki Convention
on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (COP 8) (Geneva, 3-5
December 2014)
- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Presidency and the Commission on the above subject, which will be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Environment Council meeting on 17 December 2014.

**Eight Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the
Helsinki Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (COP 8)
(Geneva, 3-5 December 2014)**

- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -

1. INTRODUCTION

The 8th Conference of the Parties (COP 8) to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (TEIA) was held in Geneva (Switzerland) 3-5 December 2014.

The COP was attended by delegations from 37 out of 41 Parties and several observers. It was at start chaired by Mr Chris Dijkens (The Netherlands) and later by Ms Jasmina Karba (Slovenia) who was elected as new Chair.

The EU position was governed by two Council Decisions related to the amendment of Annex I ¹ and negotiations on potential future amendments ².

2. MAIN OUTCOMES

This section lists the most important outcomes of COP 8 which were all in line with EU positions.

2.1. Amendment of Annex I to TEIA

Parties unanimously agreed to amend Annex I to TEIA which specifies the hazard categories and chemicals affected by the Convention. The amendment aligns the Annex with developments on international level (mainly the development of the Globally Harmonised System on the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, aka "GHS") and on EU level (i.e. Directive 2012/18/EU, aka "Seveso III").

¹ Council Decision of 1 December 2014 on the position to be taken, on behalf of the European Union, at the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents with regard to the proposal for an amendment of Annex I to that Convention (*OJ L 349, 5.12.2014, p. 50-57*).

² Council Decision of 1 December 2014 authorising the opening of negotiations on an amendment of the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (*doc. 15615/14*).

The amendment aligns Annex I of the Convention to Annex I of the Seveso III Directive. Furthermore, as it has been adopted under a simplified procedure in the Convention not requiring ratification, no further action from the EU is required.

2.2. Potential future amendments

COP 8 discussed a report by the Working Group on Development of the Convention (WGD) on other potential amendments. The WGD concluded that out of the 12 items it was tasked to look at, four would merit an amendment, mainly involving adjustments and clarifications to align the Convention with developments under other Conventions.

Concerning the potential opening of the Convention to non-UNECE countries Parties expressed support in principle. No opposition was voiced but several parties expressed concerns about the budgetary implications. Parties agreed to continue discussing the item in the WGD.

The Parties asked the WGD to prepare a draft amendment text for consideration by COP 9 in 2016 sufficiently ahead of the COP and agreed that all proposed amendments shall be addressed in a single package.

Furthermore, COP 8 agreed that the other items from the list could be clarified by guidance or that no action was required. The Parties tasked the different bodies with the development of the relevant guidance documents.

2.3. Other issues

The Parties celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Assistance Programme by providing funding to improve the implementation of the Convention based on voluntary contributions by Parties.

The COP took several routine decisions, e.g. the strengthening of the implementation of the Convention including a number of good practices. Also, Parties agreed on the work plan for the next two years.

3. ELECTIONS

The COP elected a new Chair (Slovenia) as well as the officers and members of the Bureau and the Working Group on Implementation (WGI). The EU and its Member States are well represented in the Bureau (CZ, DE, EU, FI, NL, PL, SI) and WGI (CH, DE, HR, NL, SE, UK). A reasonable gender and regional balance was ensured.

4. NEXT STEPS

Over the next two years the Working Groups and the Bureau will meet several times. COP 9 is scheduled for end 2016.

5. BACKGROUND

The 1992 Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents entered into force in 2000 and aims at protecting people and the environment against adverse effects of major industrial accidents involving hazardous chemicals. The principle is to prevent accidents from occurring, or to reduce their frequency and severity and to mitigate their effects if required. The Convention also promotes active international cooperation between countries, before, during and after an industrial accident.

All EU Member States except for Ireland and Malta are Parties to the Convention. The European Union signed the Convention on 19 March 1992 and approved it on 24 April 1998.

In the EU the corresponding measures are included in Directive 96/82/EC (aka "Seveso II") which will be repealed by Directive 2012/18/EU (aka "Seveso III") on 1 June 2015 which is also the date by when this Directive needs to be transposed by EU Member States. The Directive is more stringent than the Convention.