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More safety at industrial installations

German consultation aid services to avoid hazardous incidents

Today, 25 November 2008, marks the start of the Fifth Parties of the Conference to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Geneva. At the three-day event the 37 signatory states, which include Germany, will discuss the state of development in implementation of the Convention. The Convention governs international efforts to prevent transboundary industrial accidents and seeks to protect human beings and the environment against risks. One topic at the conference will be the work of an expert group headed by the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) to develop recommendations for the prevention of water pollution related to industrial accidents. The group seeks to prevent industrial accidents such as those which occurred in Baia Mare, Romania, in 2000, which led to widespread contamination of the Danube River catchment area. Support in this work comes from the results of projects funded by the German Federal Ministry for Environment to provide consultation aid services in environmental protection for central and eastern European states, the Caucasus and Central Asia. UBA acts as administrator, coordinator, and supervisory authority to these projects, which places Germany in the role of important player in efforts to improve environmental standards at industrial installations, particularly in the countries in the South Caucasus.

UBA is currently providing advisory services in Armenia. The goal of the project is to educate the public living in the vicinity of dangerous industrial installations. It serves not only to prevent industrial accidents but also to promote environmental education in the South Caucasus. Since September 2008 Armenia has made first efforts to transpose the Convention from national law to the local level. Industrial concerns and disaster relief agencies, together with the local population, will take part in drills based on simulated hazardous incidents and will test a hazard prevention plan.

In another advisory aid project UBA and responsible organs in Moldavia and Ukraine are promoting improved risk prevention in the catchment area of the Dniester River.

The project began in 2006 and will be concluded in January 2009 and will produce a concept for an international warning scheme along the Dniester. Since this plan can only work if gauging stations equipped with appropriate technology to detect industrial accidents are in

continuous operation, experts from Moldova and Ukraine will be trained in operation of gauging stations at the Hamburg Institute for Hygiene and Environment in January 2009.

More information on the consultancy aid projects is available at:

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/ius/stoerfallvorsorge-armenien.htm>,

<http://www.unece.org/env/teia/water/tailingdams/yerevan-document.htm> (English),

<http://www.dnestrschutz.com>.

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