

Event Report *Towards a modern Strategic Environmental Assessment system in Uzbekistan¹*

KICK-OFF WORKSHOP



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Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Wyndham Hotel

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1. Background

Recognising the potential of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for greening economies and ensuring incorporation of the environmental considerations into planning and designing economic activities, in particular, in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, Uzbekistan have been expressing an increased interest in assessing feasibility of application of SEA in its country and raising awareness about its benefits among the environmental and sectoral authorities. In Uzbekistan, so far, the deficiencies of the current environmental assessment system with regard to application of strategic environmental impact assessment for plans and programmes have not been addressed. The Government of Uzbekistan requested to provide support to carry out legislative review and provide recommendations on how to amend the existing legislative system in order to introduce the strategic environmental assessment into its national legislation in accordance with UNECE Protocol on SEA. Kick-off workshop "Towards a modern Strategic Environmental Assessment system (SEA) in Uzbekistan" was held on 27 August 2018 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. It was organized by the UNECE in cooperation with the State Committee on Ecology and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan. The workshop gathered relevant governmental stakeholders at the decision-making level, national experts from the environmental and planning authorities as well as representatives of international organizations, business, public associations and academia.

2. Workshop objectives

The aim of the workshop is to support development of modern SEA system in Uzbekistan, to raise awareness of the representatives of environmental and planning authorities about the SEA benefits, to share the best practices of SEA application in the UNECE region and to facilitate a discussion on the way forward to development of modern SEA system in Uzbekistan.

3. Approach and methodology

The workshop included blocks regarding: concept of SEA, UNECE SEA Protocol and other international standards, role of SEA in development control and the role of authorities and other actors, strategic documents covered by SEA scheme, concept of scoping and SEA report, public participation, transboundary procedure under SEA Protocol, adoption of the strategic document and monitoring. Each block included detailed presentations by Mr. Jerzy Jendroska, followed by

presentation of the preliminary outcomes of the mapping study by Mr. Andriy Andrushevych and interactive discussion. The discussion served multiple purposes, including better understanding by the participants of the issue, clarification of the mapping conclusions and, where relevant, gaps and needs to align national system to international standards. The workshop was held in English and Russian, with interpretation.

4. Summary of the Workshop

Mr. Jerzy Jendroška, international key legal expert and Mr. Andriy Andrushevych, international legal consultant delivered a series of presentations on the Strategic Environmental Assessment System (SEA) and facilitated interactive discussions on the current situation in Uzbekistan. Mr. Jerzy Jendroška opened the first part of the workshop with a presentation introducing a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). He explained a concept and role of SEA under UNECE Protocol on SEA and other international standards. He made a comparison between SEA and OVOS/expertiza, stating a key issues and making references to current legal framework of Eastern European countries. During this part conceptual differences between SEA and OVOS/expertiza system were discussed with clear references to the mapping study conclusions based on brief introduction provided by Mr. Andriy Andrushevych. Then, Mr. Jerzy Jendroška explained a role of SEA in development control and the role of authorities and other actors in this process, sharing some practical examples from EU countries.

The next part of the event was focused on elements of the SEA scheme required to implement the Protocol on SEA and other international standards. Mr. Jerzy Jendroška discussed the field of application of SEA Protocol and strategic documents covered by SEA scheme. Then he explained a concept of screening and role of national authorities. He continued his presentation, explaining the scoping and the process of preparation of SEA Report according to standards of UNECE Protocol on SEA. Each presentation was followed by group discussion preceded by brief introduction of the mapping study by Mr. Andriy Andrushevych, i.e. bringing specific SEA element into the national context, in order to facilitate better understanding of the specific SEA element.

The final part of the workshop was dedicated to importance of public participation and consultations. Mr. Jerzy Jendroška described the public participation process in SEA procedure, highlighting a key elements and sharing best practices of EU countries. Following that, Mr. Jerzy Jendroška talked about transboundary procedure and role of national authorities under SEA Protocol. In conclusion, he explained the process of adoption of the strategic document and monitoring of effects of the implementation of the plans and programmes adopted.

As noted, each presentation was followed by opened interactive discussion, facilitated by Mr. Jerzy Jendroška, international key legal expert and Mr. Andriy Andrushevych, international legal consultant.

As a result, the discussions generated much interest and encouraged the exchange of views among the participants, including between governmental representatives, environmental and planning authorities.

During the discussions the participants were very active and a lot of information was gathered and discussed regarding the practical application of the OVOS/expertiza system to plans and programs in Uzbekistan. In particular, it became clear that every draft city plan is subject to environmental expertiza, while sectoral programs and plans are not subject to environmental expertiza. It became also apparent that practice in Uzbekistan for adoption of land use plans shows growing experience in ensuring public participation, but it remains occasional and not a routine practice.

5. Workshop conclusions

The workshop was carried out as it had been planned and, following the prepared agenda, it fulfilled its objectives. Thus, as a result of the workshop, the participants have:

- (a) increased awareness of environmental and planning authorities of Uzbekistan on benefits of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and its practical application;
- (b) learned about the experience of the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in reforming their national environmental assessment systems and the practical application of the SEA procedure in accordance with UNECE Protocol on SEA;
- (c) identified existing challenges related to the application of SEA in Uzbekistan and actions needed to address these challenges.
- (d) gained good understanding of the national SEA system as compared to the provisions of the Protocol on SEA and other international standards.