

Event Report

Towards modern environmental assessment in Uzbekistan¹

FINAL WORKSHOP



22 January 2019
Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Wyndham Hotel

¹ This project is funded by the German Federal Environment Ministry's Advisory Assistance Programme (AAP) for environmental protection in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and other countries neighboring the European Union. It is supervised by the German Environment Agency. The responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors.



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1. Background

Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is an essential tool for greening economies and attainment of sustainable development goals. Recognizing the potential of SEA for ensuring incorporation of the environmental considerations into planning and designing economic activities, Uzbekistan has been expressing an increased interest in assessing feasibility of application of SEA procedures in its country. Being a non-Party to the Espoo Convention and Protocol on SEA having no experience in practical application of SEA and EIA, it faces a number of challenges to on its way to modernize its environmental assessment system in line with the international standards. These challenges include absence of relevant legislative frameworks, lack of understanding or the roles and responsibilities of various authorities in the SEA and EIA process and limited awareness of SEA and its benefits among the environmental authorities. 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 modern SEA into its national legislation.

2. Workshop objectives

The aim of the workshop is to support development of modern SEA and EIA system in Uzbekistan, to raise awareness of the representatives of environmental and sectoral 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: Results of the reviews of the environmental assessment system in Uzbekistan via-a-vis the provisions of the Espoo Convention and SEA Protocol; information about EIA/SEA legislative reform in other countries under UNECE assistance; concept of the legislative reform of the environmental assessment system in Uzbekistan in the light of international standards; draft proposals for a new legal framework for EIA in Uzbekistan in the light of international standards; draft proposals for a new legal framework for SEA in Uzbekistan in the light of international standards; draft proposals for a new legal framework for public participation in Uzbekistan in the

light of international standards; complementary elements of legislative reform (role of ecological expertise, development of sub-laws etc). Each but last block included detailed presentations by Andriy Andrusevych, followed interactive discussion. The last block included a presentation by national legal expert Mr. Shamil Asyanov.

The discussion served multiple purposes, including better understanding by the participants of the issues, clarification of the reforms proposed and, where relevant, options to align national system to international standards. The workshop was held in English and Russian, with interpretation.

4. Summary of the Workshop

The workshop was opened by Vice Chair of the State Environmental Committee of Uzbekistan Mr. Uktam Utayev and Ms. Sarangoo Radnaaragchaa, the Regional Adviser on Environment, Environment Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Mr. Andriy Andrusevych, international expert, presented results of the reviews of the environmental assessment system in Uzbekistan via-a-vis the provisions of the Espoo Convention and SEA Protocol. He also presented information about EIA/SEA legislative reform in other countries under UNECE assistance and the way UNECE approaches such assistance projects.

Mr. Andriy Andrusevych, international expert, then presented the concept of the legislative reform of the environmental assessment system in Uzbekistan in the light of international standards, including Espoo Convention and the Protocol on SEA, which was developed by international experts in close cooperation with the State Environmental Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This was followed by a discussion among the participants.

Mr. Andriy Andrusevych, international expert, made detailed presentations about draft proposals for a new legal framework for EIA in Uzbekistan in the light of Espoo Convention and draft proposals for a new legal framework for SEA in Uzbekistan in the light of the Protocol on SEA. Separately, he presented draft proposals for a new legal framework for public participation in Uzbekistan in the light of international standards. These presentations generated vivid discussions about future SEA and EIA framework in Uzbekistan.

Mr. Shamil Asyanov, national expert, presented his views on complementary elements of legislative reform (role of ecological expertise, development of sub-laws etc). This part of the agenda was important to discuss options to preserve current pollution control (permitting) system in Uzbekistan. He also highlighted the need to align the reforms in this area with the other reforms currently taking place in Uzbekistan, in particular draft law On Public Control.

5. Workshop Conclusions

During the final discussions, the participants highlighted the need for further work in reforming the EIA/SEA framework in Uzbekistan, in particular:

1. with a view of promoting sustainable development and green economy and boosting investments;
2. to consider splitting the proposed reform into EIA and SEA, so as modern EIA framework can be introduced without delay;
3. to thank UNECE for its assistance in modernizing EIA/SEA system in Uzbekistan and willingness to continue further cooperation.