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**Assistance to countries in the Caucasus, Central Asia
and Eastern and South-Eastern Europe – Progress report
on assistance activities carried out in 2019–2020**

Progress report on the implementation of assistance activities in 2019–2020

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents Assistance Programme, established at the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2004 (ECE/CP.TEIA/12, para. 39) and rebranded as the Assistance and Cooperation Programme at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in 2018, as per the Long-term strategy for the Convention until 2030 (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1, para. 25), seeks to enhance the efforts of countries with economies in transition in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region to raise their levels of industrial safety, through implementation of the Convention. The present document presents the assistance activities carried out in the period 2019–2020 and their main outcomes.



Introduction

1. At its third meeting (Budapest, 27–30 October 2004), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) adopted an Assistance Programme in order to enhance the efforts of the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia to implement the Convention (ECE/CP.TEIA/12, para. 39). At its tenth meeting (Geneva, 4–6 December 2018), the Conference of the Parties adopted the Long-term strategy for the Convention until 2030, which revised and rebranded the Assistance Programme as the Assistance and Cooperation Programme: “to ensure that it remains an effective instrument for delivering assistance and building capacity at all levels... through which beneficiary countries will increasingly cooperate and support each other and take full ownership of activities” (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1, para. 25). The Programme helps countries with economies in transition to address obstacles to accession or implementation, such as unstable institutional frameworks, limited administrative and expert capacities and scarce financial resources, which are often exacerbated by difficult overall political and economic situations. Thanks to the support received, countries are better equipped to cope with industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response.

2. The present document examines the main outcomes of the activities carried out under the Convention’s Assistance and Cooperation Programme during the biennium 2019–2020. Chapter I sets out the key outcomes and achievements of the activities; chapter II provides an overview of the evaluation of effectiveness of the activities; chapter III presents the main outcomes of implementation of the Strategic Approach during the biennium; and chapter IV describes the key outcomes and achievements of other assistance activities. The annex to the present document contains a list of activities carried out under the Programme during the biennium.

I. Key outcomes and achievements of the activities carried out under the Assistance and Cooperation Programme during the biennium 2019–2020

A. Project on strengthening industrial safety in Central Asia through the implementation of and accession to the Convention: finalization of the Implementation Guide on the Convention for Central Asia and external evaluation of the Project

3. The Project on strengthening industrial safety in Central Asia through the implementation of and accession to the Convention was implemented in the period March 2016–March 2019 with financial support from the Russian Federation, which, together with Belarus, also provided in-kind contributions in the form of international experts who advised and guided national experts in the beneficiary countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The Project was formally launched at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Ljubljana, 28–30 November 2016) (ECE/CP.TEIA/32, para. 64)). During the biennium 2017–2018, the Project entered its key implementation phase, with activities in all five beneficiary countries and a subregional workshop (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 25 and 26 September 2018). During the current biennium (2019–2020), the Project was completed with the finalization of the *Implementation Guide for Central Asia on the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents*¹ (Implementation Guide) and the external evaluation of the Project.

4. The Implementation Guide was elaborated by the Project’s international experts from Belarus and the Russian Federation, including with support from the secretariat and peer review by the Working Group on Implementation (members from Belarus and the Russian Federation), and from beneficiary countries. It was prepared in Russian and translated into

¹ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.II.E.1.

English and French by means of the ECE Regular Budget. The Guide is available in all three languages on the Convention's website. It was printed thanks to the ECE Regular Budget in December 2019 (in Russian and English). Printing of the French-language version is envisaged before the end of 2020.

5. The Guide offers a practical explanation of what compliance with the Convention means. Although primarily based on the Central Asian countries' needs and challenges, it can also be useful for other countries with economies in transition and beyond wishing to increase their level of implementation of the Convention.

6. In 2018–2019, the Project underwent an independent evaluation (covering the Project's full duration in 2016–2019). In accordance with this external evaluation:

1. The Project made a significant contribution to increased understanding of key requirements of the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention in Central Asia.

...

3. Project activities enhanced capacities for assessment of industrial safety and development of national action plans for the implementation of and accession to the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention in all five countries of the Central Asia subregion.²

Please refer to chapter II below for more information on the evaluation of the Project's effectiveness.

7. Summarizing the achievements of the Project, the below expected accomplishments were achieved in all five beneficiary countries:

(a) Completion of self-assessments of levels of industrial safety (with the identification of existing challenges and shortcomings);

(b) Development of national action plans (which list concrete measures needed to solve existing difficulties and identify responsible parties and provisional timelines);

(c) Initiation of inter-institutional coordination among various competent authorities through the conduct of the National Expert Group Meeting;

(d) Enhancement of transboundary cooperation, notably through the participation of all Central Asian countries in the final subregional workshop of the Project, including conducting initial consultations among countries;

(e) Preparation and publication of the Implementation Guide.

8. Moreover, the timely and efficient implementation of the Project allowed for the following additional achievements:

(a) Identification of competent authorities responsible for the Convention's implementation in each of the five countries and Convention focal points;

(b) Addition of four out of the five countries as users of the Industrial Accidents Notification system, allowing the countries to promptly inform each other and request assistance in case of an industrial accident.

9. Through the Project activities, the beneficiary countries expressed their needs for further support in the field of industrial safety, particularly the need for enhanced inter-institutional cooperation and coordinated policymaking in the area of industrial safety and technological disaster risk reduction. The Industrial Accidents Convention's workplan for 2019–2020 thus includes the establishment of National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Central Asia. National Policy Dialogues are coordinated consultations on industrial safety, accident prevention, disaster risk reduction and emergency response among relevant institutions, with the purpose of defining national priority needs, policy development and leading to coherent policymaking. In April 2020, the Russian Federation confirmed its support for a new follow-up project to launch National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety

² See:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/OPEN_UNECE/03_Evaluation_and_Audit/Evaluation_Report_s-with_SPs/01-Environment/Final_Evaluation_Report_with_Annexes.pdf.

in Central Asia, envisaged as of the second half of 2020. The new project will build on the successes, needs and challenges identified through the implementation of the 2016–2019 Project on strengthening implementation of and accession to the Convention in Central Asia. See paragraphs 23 to 29 below for more information on the Project on National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Central Asia (Phase I: Launch).

10. The results of the Project were presented by the Convention's secretariat at the twenty-seventh meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States Interstate Council on Industrial Safety (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, 12 and 13 September 2019). The outcome document of the meeting took note of the Project's finalization and outcomes and considered it expedient to continue cooperation with the secretariat of the Convention in the framework of a new technical assistance project aimed at improving the level of industrial safety and strengthening transboundary cooperation through National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Central Asia.

B. Subregional workshops on land-use planning and industrial safety: for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and for South-Eastern Europe

11. Two subregional workshops on land-use planning and industrial safety were scheduled to be held in the current biennium: one for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, which took place from 22 to 24 May 2019 in Chisinau, and another for South-Eastern Europe, which was scheduled to take place from 18 to 20 March 2020 in Belgrade but which had to be postponed to 21 to 23 October 2020 in view of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and eventually rescheduled to 27 to 29 October 2021.

1. Subregional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

12. The Subregional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Chisinau, 22–24 May 2019) brought together 37 experts in land-use planning, industrial safety and environmental assessment from the beneficiary countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and 7 international experts from Belgium (Flanders), France, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Norway and Serbia. Participants comprised representatives of national and regional authorities, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia. The meeting was organized and serviced by the ECE secretariats to the Industrial Accidents Convention and the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova, with contributions by the Government of Flanders (Belgium). The workshop was organized thanks to financing provided by the Ministry of the Ecological and Inclusive Transition of France and co-financing from the ECE Regular Budget Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation.

13. At the workshop, the beneficiary countries recognized that they faced challenges regarding integrating land-use planning and industrial safety procedures and sustaining coordination and cooperation between the relevant authorities in relation to decision-making on land-use planning and the siting of hazardous industrial activities. To address those challenges, participants concluded that inter-institutional coordination should be strengthened.³

14. The workshop participants agreed that cooperation needed to be transformed into a steady and sustainable process, which could be achieved through National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety under the auspices of ECE.

15. The workshop allowed participants to identify the need to progress with the implementation of article 7 of, and related annexes V and VI to, the Industrial Accidents Convention on siting and land-use planning.

³ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.II.E.6.

16. The need to strengthen transboundary cooperation, through the implementation of article 7 of the Convention and the notification of existing and proposed hazardous activities to neighbouring or riparian Parties under article 4 of the Convention, was acknowledged by the workshop participants. To that effect, they agreed to proceed with the notification of existing and planned hazardous industrial activities, making use of the Template for the notification of hazardous activities in accordance with article 4 of and annex III to the ECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1), which the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties recommended for use by Parties and other countries when notifying potentially affected Parties of hazardous activities (ECE/CP.TEIA/38, para. 65). Following the workshop, at least one country (Republic of Moldova) informed the secretariat of its use of the template to notify its neighbouring countries of the existing hazardous activity.

17. It was agreed at the workshop that coherent policymaking in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus could be strengthened through:

- (a) The facilitation of information exchange and the sharing of good practices between experts, within and across borders;
- (b) Capacity development and the provision of policy advice at the national level;
- (c) Support to the implementation of regional projects fostering transboundary cooperation in the field of land-use planning and industrial safety.

18. Finally, the representative of Kyrgyzstan expressed the need for a subregional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for countries of Central Asia and offered to host such an activity, envisaged to be held in the next biennium (2021–2022). The representative of Serbia confirmed the Serbian Ministry of Environmental Protection's willingness to host a subregional workshop for countries of South-Eastern Europe in Belgrade in spring 2020.

2. Subregional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for South-Eastern Europe

19. The Subregional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for South-Eastern Europe was scheduled to take place from 18 to 20 March 2020 in Belgrade. Preparatory work was done by the Industrial Accidents Convention and the ECE Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management in cooperation with the Serbian Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Government of Flanders (Belgium). However, the event had to be postponed at short notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic, first of all to 21–23 October 2020, and subsequently to the following year (provisional dates: 27–29 October 2021). All five beneficiary countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) had nominated participants representing both the industrial safety and land-use planning authorities. The Subregional workshop for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus has similar main objectives as the one for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

20. In view of the postponement of the Subregional workshop for South-Eastern Europe to the next biennium, the secretariat has initiated and agreed with the Chair, the donor country and the host country the organization of an online teaser event (via Webex, 21 October 2020) for the five beneficiary countries. The event will serve as a preparatory session to, but not replace, the subregional workshop. It is planned as an interactive event aimed at supporting the efforts of the countries of South-Eastern Europe in coordinating their land-use planning and industrial safety procedures, including in a transboundary context, and inspiring them with examples from other countries.

C. Technical mission to support the accession of Ukraine to the Industrial Accidents Convention

21. A technical mission to support the accession of Ukraine to the Industrial Accidents Convention, co-organized by the ECE Industrial Accidents Convention and the State Emergency Service of Ukraine, was originally scheduled to take place from 19 to 21 May

2020. The mission had to be postponed, initially to 6–8 October 2020 and eventually to the following biennium (exact dates to be confirmed according to the evolving situation in view of the pandemic). The mission will allow for the exchange of experiences between international and national experts and will provide a forum for Ukraine to share its views regarding its accession to the Convention.

D. Launch of the National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Serbia

22. In view of a need expressed by Serbia and its progress in implementing the Convention and thanks to funding provided by France, it has become possible to launch National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Serbia in 2020. Following an exchange of letters and bilateral meetings at the high level between the ECE secretariat and the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia, it has been determined that the launch of National Policy Dialogues will become possible upon completion of certain preparatory steps. As Serbia has been making respective progress, the launch of the National Policy Dialogues was planned to take place back-to-back with the Subregional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for South-Eastern Europe. Notably, progress has been made, with support by the secretariat, in the elaboration of the terms of reference of the National Policy Dialogue Steering Committee. The launch meeting was initially envisaged for 20 October 2020 (back-to-back with the above-mentioned subregional workshop); it had to be moved to the following biennium in view of the pandemic. It is planned that the National Policy Dialogues launch will take place in 2021.

E. Project on National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Central Asia (Phase I: Launch)

23. The Project on National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Central Asia (Phase I: Launch) was designed based on the needs voiced by the beneficiary countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) in the course of the implementation of the 2016–2019 Project on strengthening industrial safety in Central Asia through the implementation of and accession to the Convention. Such needs encompassed:

- (a) Continuing the process initiated through the conduct of one National Expert Group Meeting, and its further strengthening and transformation into a steady and sustainable process of inter-institutional cooperation/governance and coherent policymaking;
- (b) Involving high-level decision-makers with a view to ensuring the placing of the issue of industrial safety higher up the political agenda;
- (c) Drafting and/or aligning by-laws with the laws on industrial safety currently in force and (further) aligning national legislation with the requirements of the Industrial Accidents Convention;
- (d) Further supporting the identification of hazardous activities and their subsequent notification to potentially affected countries;
- (e) Enhancing further exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices in the area of industrial accidents prevention, preparedness and response, in particular through conducting subregional meetings and facilitating transboundary cooperation in Central Asia.

24. The objective of the Project is to strengthen industrial safety in Central Asia through the creation of sustainable and clear coordination mechanisms through National Policy Dialogues between: State authorities responsible for, among other things, industrial safety, environmental and internal affairs and emergency situations, local authorities, industries and other stakeholders. The Russian Federation has confirmed its willingness to provide funding for the Project, which will be implemented from mid-2020 until end 2021. “Phase II: Implementation” of the Project is envisaged as of 2022, subject to availability of funding.

25. In view of the above, keeping in mind the developing situation related to the pandemic, implementation of the Project started in August 2020 with detailed project planning, including the organization and preparation of project activities in consultation with

all five beneficiary countries. The official launch of the Project is scheduled to take place at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

26. The Project's expected accomplishments include:

(a) Improved understanding on the part of the Central Asian countries of the importance and benefits of National Policy Dialogues;

(b) Enhanced capacities for the alignment of national legislation with the Industrial Accidents Convention, national legal requirements and other related policy areas (including disaster risk reduction).

27. Subject to availability of funding, the subsequent phase of the Project implementation (as of 2022) will include the:

(a) Conduct of National Policy Dialogues;

(b) Review and update of the self-assessments and national action plans;

(c) Provision of advisory services for the identification and notifications of hazardous activities to all five beneficiary countries;

(d) Conduct of the Subregional forum for countries of Central Asia allowing for transboundary consultations and exchange of information, including notifications.

28. The Conference of the Parties will be invited to take note of activities under the Assistance and Cooperation Programme carried out during the biennium 2019–2020.

F. Pilot project to strengthen the safety of mining operations, in particular tailings management facilities, in Kazakhstan and beyond in Central Asia, and Project to strengthen the safety of mining operations, in particular tailings management facilities, in Tajikistan and Central Asia

29. The Pilot project to strengthen the safety of mining operations, in particular tailings management facilities, in Kazakhstan and beyond in Central Asia, implemented in the period December 2017–December 2019, was successfully finalized during the biennium 2019–2020. The implementation of a similar Project in Tajikistan started in December 2018 and is ongoing. Both projects, implemented with funding from the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, aim to strengthen the safety of tailings management facilities in the respective beneficiary countries.

30. The main beneficiaries of the above-mentioned projects are Kazakhstan and Tajikistan respectively, notably their competent authorities and operators. The Ministry of Investment and Development of Kazakhstan and its Committee for Industrial Development and Industrial Safety, as well as the Service of the State Supervision over the Safe Conduct of Work in Industry and Mining Supervision under the Government of Tajikistan, have taken the lead in each project respectively, with close cooperation in terms of their conduct being established with other relevant authorities, for example, at the local level, and with industry representatives. The other Central Asian countries, notably Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have also benefited, and continue to benefit, from the projects by participating in specific activities.

31. Several key activities were implemented under the above-mentioned projects in the biennium 2019–2020, as further described below. While the work in Tajikistan is ongoing, the project in Kazakhstan helped the country and other Central Asian countries to improve their safe management of mine tailings. Notably, its implementation achieved the following results in Kazakhstan:

(a) Establishment of a national inventory with 121 tailings management facilities, ranked by their hazard degree;

(b) Identification of tailings management facilities that could cause accidental water pollution and at which an accident may have transboundary effects;

(c) Development of a hazard map showing the above-mentioned tailings management facilities;

(d) Establishment of an inter-institutional working group on tailings safety and water management;

(e) Improved cooperation among competent authorities at the national and regional levels and between competent authorities and operators of mine tailings facilities;

(f) Enhanced implementation of the Industrial Accidents Convention, its *Safety guidelines and good practices for tailings management facilities*⁴ (Safety guidelines) and the related checklist methodology⁵, including of the environmental performance reviews recommendations.

32. The results achieved in Kazakhstan also inspired other Central Asian countries, which expressed at the project's subregional workshop (see below) their commitment to applying the ECE Safety guidelines and the related checklist methodology in their countries. The positive effects of the project also extended to the area of improving inter-institutional cooperation, resulting in the commitment of Tajikistan, expressed at the subregional workshop, to also establish an inter-institutional working group on tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution.

1. Introduction workshop and on-site training session (Kokshetau, Kazakhstan, 11–13 June 2019)

33. This event consisted of two parts, including an introduction workshop and an on-site training session, which were attended by representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and ECE, as well as by international experts from Ukraine. The introduction workshop officially launched the Project on strengthening the safety of mining operations, in particular tailings management facilities, in Tajikistan and initiated the work on the preparation of a draft inventory and map of tailings in Tajikistan. The on-site training session at a tailings facility in Kazakhstan provided a valuable opportunity to the Kazakh and Tajik participants to familiarize themselves with, and apply in practice, relevant ECE tools and instruments, such as the Safety guidelines and the tailings management facility checklist methodology. The event successfully enhanced the capacity of participants to improve the safe management of, and reduce water-related risks from, tailings. The event also served as a forum for discussion for national authorities to improve their institutional coordination on tailings management facility safety — among themselves, with operators and across borders. The participation of Kazakh experts was co-financed by OSCE.

2. Subregional workshop under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe projects on improving mining/tailings safety in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and beyond in Central Asia (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 20 and 21 November 2019)

34. The main objective of the Subregional workshop was to strengthen mine tailings safety in Central Asia, notably by presenting the final results of the project in Kazakhstan and sharing the interim project results in Tajikistan with other Central Asian countries. The workshop was attended by representatives of competent authorities from all five Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as by representatives of international and regional organizations, including OSCE, OECD, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Water Assessment Centre and the Regional Environment Centre for Central Asia, as well as international experts from Czechia, the European Union, the Russian Federation and Switzerland. Representatives of operators of tailings management facilities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan also participated in the workshop.

⁴ United Nations publication, ECE/CP.TEIA/26.

⁵ Available at: <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45348>.

35. The workshop successfully facilitated the exchange of information, lessons learned and experiences among competent authorities and operators in the region, enhancing their capacity to improve their management of tailings and to prevent related accidental water pollution. All Central Asian authorities and operators shared their experiences in managing tailings and approaches on how to scale up joint efforts to improve mine tailings safety in view of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Among others, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan committed to applying the Safety guidelines and the related checklist methodology in their countries; and Tajikistan expressed its commitment to follow the example of Kazakhstan by also establishing an inter-institutional working group on tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution. The key conclusions, presentations and evaluations of the subregional workshop can be viewed on the Convention's website under the tab "Meetings and Events"⁶ by choosing the appropriate meeting.

3. Consultation for Central Asia on a draft global tailings standard (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 18 and 19 November 2019)

36. The Subregional workshop was preceded by a consultation for Central Asia on a draft tailings standard (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 18 and 19 November 2019), co-hosted by the Convention secretariat together with the Global Tailings Review. The Global Tailings Review — a joint initiative of the International Council on Mining and Metals, UNEP and the Principles for Responsible Investment — developed a draft global tailings standard aimed at preventing tailings failures through a step change in the safety and security of tailings facilities.⁷ The objective of the consultation was to collect feedback from the public and competent authorities in Central Asia on the draft global tailings standard.

37. Based on a suggestion from UNEP, the Convention secretariat joined forces with the Global Tailings Review to conduct a consultation for Central Asia. The cooperation was beneficial to both partners. Thanks to the ECE secretariat's network of contacts, made up of competent authorities and experts, the Global Tailings Review was able to involve, and collect feedback on the draft standard from, regulators of all five Central Asian countries and from international experts, including the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents. At the same time, ECE benefited from the partnership through the involvement of industry representatives from Central Asia and beyond in the above-mentioned subregional workshop on mine tailings safety.

4. On-site training course and a back-to-back meeting in Tajikistan (postponed from 29 September–2 October 2020 to spring/summer 2021)

38. A three-day on-site training course in Zarafshan, Tajikistan, is planned, along with a one-day, back-to-back meeting with national competent authorities in Dushanbe. The aim of the on-site training course will be to develop specific short-, medium- and long-term measures to address safety deficiencies in the tailings management facilities in the country. It will be attended by representatives of national authorities and operators in Tajikistan, as well as representatives of competent authorities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and international experts. The on-site training course at a tailings facility will familiarize the Tajik and other Central Asian participants with the practical application of ECE tools and instruments, such as the Safety guidelines and the tailings management facilities checklist methodology. It is expected that the event will enhance the capacity of participants to manage tailings risks and reduce related water pollution. The meeting with national competent authorities aims to discuss how to improve their institutional coordination on tailings management facility safety. The event, initially scheduled for 29 September to 2 October 2020, had to be postponed due to the pandemic. It is currently tentatively planned for spring/summer 2021.

⁶ <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/industrial-accidents/meetings-and-events.html#/>.

⁷ Further information about the initiative, including the standard, once published, is available at <https://globaltailingsreview.org/>.

G. Project on supporting countries of Central Asia in strengthening the safety of mine tailings

39. The two-year project is being implemented during the period 2020–2021 with funding from the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment. It is aimed at providing support to Central Asian countries in strengthening the safe management of mine tailings and their transboundary cooperation with neighbouring countries. Notably, the Project assists the competent authorities of the beneficiary countries in improving inter-institutional coordination on managing tailings facilities and in applying ECE tools to strengthen mine tailings safety, such as the Safety guidelines and a related checklist methodology. The main beneficiaries of the Project are the competent authorities and operators of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which lead the Project's implementation in close cooperation and interaction with the secretariat. The other Central Asian countries, notably Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, will also benefit from the Project through their involvement in subregional activities.

40. Key project activities include the following:

- (a) Two national meetings in Kazakhstan aimed at the establishment and operation of an inter-institutional working group on mine tailings safety and prevention of accidental water pollution;
- (b) Two national meetings in Tajikistan aimed at the establishment and operation of an inter-institutional working group on mine tailings safety and prevention of accidental water pollution;
- (c) A subregional workshop for the countries of Central Asia and beyond;
- (d) Preparation of a hazard rating list and map of tailings in Uzbekistan;
- (e) Activities to share experience and knowledge with countries beyond the subregion, for example, with Mongolia and other concerned countries;
- (f) Continued engagement and strengthened partnerships with other international organizations, such as UNDP, UNEP and OECD.

41. The Project builds on existing experience in the area of mine tailings safety, notably the projects in Kazakhstan (2017–2019), Tajikistan (since 2018) and beyond in Central Asia. It will be implemented in close cooperation with the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, building on its experience in the establishment of National Policy Dialogues on integrated water resource management and water supply and sanitation in Central Asia and seeking synergies between the two processes, where feasible. Due to the pandemic, some meetings envisaged for 2020 had to be postponed and will likely take place as of 2021.

H. Contributions to consultations on mineral resource governance and sustainable infrastructure

42. In preparation for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (Nairobi, 22–26 February 2021), UNEP organized two subregional consultations for Western and South-Eastern Europe as well as Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia on the implementation of United Nations Environment Assembly resolution A-4 resolution on mineral resource governance (UNEP/EA.4/Res. 19), which were supported by ECE (online, 25 and 27 August 2020).⁸ The focal points under the Industrial Accidents Convention were invited in advance to participate in the consultations and/or provide comments in writing. The Convention's secretariat contributed to the discussion paper and delivered a

⁸ Further information available at <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=55135> and <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=55137>.

presentation at both meetings, highlighting challenges of ECE countries, available good practices and proposals for future action.

43. Equally in preparation for the above-mentioned fifth session, UNEP organized a series of consultative meetings on the implementation of actions proposed in United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/5 on sustainable infrastructure (UNEP/EA.4/Res.5). ECE co-hosted the meetings that covered the Europe region, including countries in Western and South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, which took place online on 3 and 4 September 2020.⁹ The secretariat to the Convention submitted written comments on a draft Good Practice Guidance Framework and contributed to a presentation on the role of multilateral environmental agreements and other policy instruments in implementing integrated approaches for sustainable infrastructure, focusing on the role of infrastructure in preventing, preparing for and responding to industrial accidents. The meetings further sought input from countries and their experience with effectively using environmental agreements for sustainable infrastructure development. The secretariat to the Convention submitted a written statement to this end, highlighting among other things the importance of technological risk management in achieving sustainable infrastructure, as well as particular challenges addressed by the Convention in terms of technical and institutional capacities, inter-institutional cooperation and the importance of land-use planning in this regard.

II. Evaluations of the effectiveness of activities carried out under the Assistance and Cooperation Programme

A. External evaluation of the Project on strengthening industrial safety in Central Asia through the implementation of and accession to the Convention implemented in 2016–2019

44. In line with the ECE Evaluation Policy, all extrabudgetary projects with an overall budget at or above \$250,000 are subject to an independent external evaluation. Therefore, the Convention's secretariat engaged an independent evaluator who conducted an external evaluation of the Project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact. The evaluation process included the application of both quantitative and qualitative methods and a variety of evaluation tools, including desk review, analysis of pertinent documents, collection of survey information, interviews and focus group sessions. The evaluator attended the Project's subregional workshop (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 25 and 26 September 2018) and interviewed the Project's beneficiaries, national and international experts, Bureau and Working Group on Implementation members and the Convention's secretariat.

45. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the Project achieved its intended objective: strengthening the implementation of and accession to the Industrial Accidents Convention in all five beneficiary countries of the Central Asia subregion (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The evaluation considered the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Project at the subregional level and in the beneficiary countries. The evaluation also assessed the relevance and effectiveness of outputs, as well as operational efficiency and impact. The scope of evaluation also covered gender aspects in terms of women's involvement in all critical meetings and the development of main outputs.

46. The evaluation exercise resulted in the below key findings:

(a) Project results were highly and, in a few cases, partially consistent with the subregional and national priorities and the needs of target groups in Central Asia. There was a high degree of congruence between the perception of what was needed by Project planners and the perception of what was needed by Project beneficiaries in the recipient subregion and its countries;

⁹ Further information available at <https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=55065>.

(b) Project activities contributed significantly and, in a few cases, partially, to the expected results, the main objective of the Project and the overall objective of the Industrial Accidents Convention. Project activities were fully implemented;

(c) Human and financial resources allocated to the Project were used efficiently and wisely to achieve the expected results. Planned activities were, with a very few exceptions, implemented according to the original schedule;

(d) The Project contributed greatly to enhancing capacities for assessment of industrial safety and the development of national action plans for the implementation of the Strategic Approach under the Convention's Assistance and Cooperation Programme;

(e) While consideration of gender equality and the empowerment of women is not explicitly addressed in the text of the Industrial Accidents Convention, the Project paid attention to this subject through women's participation in national meetings, the subregional workshop and their significant involvement in the development of the Project's main outputs (implementation guide, national action plans and self-assessments).¹⁰

47. Among the key conclusions of the independent evaluation are the following:

(a) The Project made a significant contribution to increasing understanding of key requirements of the Industrial Accidents Convention in Central Asia;

(b) Consideration of gender equality and the empowerment of women was reflected in active participation of women in the national seminars and subregional workshop, as well as in their significant involvement in the development of the national self-assessments, action plans and implementation guide;

(c) Project activities considerably enhanced capacities for assessment of industrial safety and development of national action plans for the implementation of and accession to the Industrial Accidents Convention in all five countries of the Central Asia subregion.¹¹

48. The independent evaluation provided the below key recommendations:

(a) ECE needs to provide long-term support to the Central Asian countries in addressing the challenges linked to the implementation of and accession to the Convention;

(b) The Convention's secretariat needs to continue to communicate with the national authorities responsible for industrial safety and transboundary cooperation and involve all industrial safety actors in the design and implementation of future and similar projects;

(c) ECE needs to promote the fact that effective industrial accidents hazard and risk management is linked to development planning;

(d) The Convention's secretariat should maintain a continued dialogue with the subregional Centre for Emergency Situation and Disaster Risk Reduction, the Commonwealth of Independent States Inter-State Council on Industrial Safety and other relevant regional and subregional partners;

(e) For future similar projects, ECE should encourage and promote the development and/or improvement of existing industrial safety governance arrangements with a view to facilitating implementation of and accession to the Convention;

(f) The establishment and continuous holding of National and Subregional Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety could be an effective way to provide support to beneficiary countries.¹²

49. The full results of the evaluation, management response and progress report thereon are available on Open ECE.¹³ These results were taken into account in the design of the follow-up Project on National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Central Asia (see

¹⁰ See pp. 3 and 4 of the Evaluation Report, available <http://www.unece.org/info/open-unece/evaluation/evaluation-reports.html>.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 4.

¹² Ibid., pp. 4 and 5.

¹³ <http://www.unece.org/info/open-unece/open-unece.html>.

paras. 23–29 above) and will be taken into account at all stages of the Project’s implementation.

B. Continuous evaluation of assistance activities

50. When implementing assistance activities, the Convention’s secretariat, as per its usual practice, develops evaluation questionnaires that are distributed to participants at the end of the activity. As a general rule, these questionnaires aim to evaluate participants’ perceptions of the following: organization of and practical arrangements for the activity; overall satisfaction with the activity; and the extent to which the activity’s goals were achieved. The answers provided are then analysed by the secretariat, and the analysis is provided in the form of evaluation summaries with satisfaction rates based on answers to questions under the above-mentioned categories, with the overall rating of the workshop. Participants’ comments and suggestions are also summarized and provided in the summary report. Results of the evaluation of various assistance activities can be found on the Convention’s website under the tab “Meetings and Events”¹⁴ by clicking on the respective assistance activity. These results are taken into account in the design and implementation of the subsequent activities, aiming to continuously provide the highest quality of organization and substantial content to the participants.

51. The Conference of the Parties will be invited to take note of the independent external evaluation of the Project, and the ongoing evaluation of assistance activities, in view of the three-step approach decided by the Conference of the Parties in 2016.¹⁵

III. Implementation of the Strategic Approach in 2019–2020

52. The Strategic Approach is a tool that provides a robust basis for the comprehensive, carefully planned and coordinated implementation of the Convention. It requires countries to analyse, monitor and evaluate the level of implementation in each priority working area¹⁶ and to identify shortcomings and challenges regarding implementation of the Convention. In accordance with the Strategic Approach, beneficiary countries of the Assistance and Cooperation Programme submit self-assessments and national action plans. In accordance with its terms of reference (ECE/CP.TEIA/32/Add.1), the Working Group on Implementation monitors the Programme, including the application of the Strategic Approach, and reviews national self-assessments and action plans.

53. In the current biennium, at the time of writing of the present report, three countries have submitted their updated self-assessments: Ukraine (on 28 February 2020), Azerbaijan (on 14 May 2020) and Montenegro (on 6 July 2020). The self-assessment submitted by Ukraine in view of the planned assistance activity in 2020 has been reviewed by the Working Group on Implementation and is currently undergoing revision by the relevant authorities of Ukraine in view of the comments received. The document is expected to be finalized

¹⁴ <http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/industrial-accidents/meetings-and-events.html#/>.

¹⁵ At its ninth meeting (Ljubljana, 28–30 November 2016), the Conference of the Parties suggested revisiting the subject of effectiveness of the Assistance Programme at the eleventh meeting, following the implementation of the then-adopted three-step approach (ECE/CP.TEIA/32, para. 63 (c)). Step 1, involving the pursuit of a more rigorous approach to monitoring the Assistance Programme, has been pursued since the adoption of the amended Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Implementation (ECE/CP.TEIA/32/Add.1) in 2016. Step 2, namely the request for high-level feedback from beneficiary countries on behalf of the Bureau, in cooperation with the Working Group on Implementation, was implemented in 2017–2018. The Conference of the Parties was presented with the results of this feedback by the Working Group on Implementation at its tenth meeting (ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/11, annex II). At that meeting, the Conference also decided on the Programme’s further development, rebranding it as the “Assistance and Cooperation Programme,” by adopting the Long-term strategy for the Convention until 2030 (ECE/CP.TEIA/38/Add.1).

¹⁶ Six priority working areas are: (a) Identification of hazardous activities; (b) Notification of hazardous activities; (c) Prevention; (d) Preparedness; (e) Response and mutual assistance; and (f) Information to the public and public participation.

following the implementation of the technical mission to support the accession of Ukraine (Kyiv, 6–8 October 2020), which will also allow for elaboration of the national action plan. The self-assessments submitted by Azerbaijan and Montenegro are currently undergoing review by the Working Group. Possibilities of organizing assistance activities in these countries in the next biennium are being explored in close cooperation with the relevant competent authorities.

54. All Assistance and Cooperation Programme beneficiary countries are encouraged to submit their updated self-assessments and national action plans to enable effective monitoring of the progress achieved and delivery of targeted needs-driven assistance activities.

IV. Key results and achievements of other assistance activities

A. Project on capacity development to improve safety conditions of tailings management facilities in the Danube River Basin (2019–2020)

55. The Project was implemented under the Convention's workplan with funding from the German Environment Agency, under its Advisory Assistance Programme, and was coordinated by an International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River.

56. The Project is aimed at increasing the safety of industrial retention basins of the Danube and Sava Rivers, narrowing knowledge gaps and raising awareness related to tailings management facilities and their hazards in the Danube River basin. Facility operators, authority inspectors, environmental experts, environmental/water authorities, agencies and universities of Czechia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine benefited from the project's implementation.

57. Each country concerned surveyed the risk potential of the local tailings management facilities. The partners also provided recommendations for developing and implementing further national/subregional training programmes.

58. The Project activities included a regional demonstration training event in Romania (Baia Mare, Romania, 1–3 October 2019) for tailings management facility operators and authority inspectors of the north-eastern Danube River basin countries, aimed at strengthening the technical and management capacity at the facilities concerned and responsible authorities. In the long run, as envisaged, the Project transmitted and preserved knowledge on tailings management facility safety in the Danube River basin in a sustainable way through the training of national trainees who passed on the knowledge acquired to additional operators and inspectors working on the tailings management facility issue in their respective countries. This approach ensured that a common set of minimum standards and safety requirements were respected in the Danube River basin.

59. In course of the Project, the tailings management facility methodology invented in previous projects was completely overhauled. Notably, the tailings management facility checklist methodology was updated and improved by taking advice from national and international experts into account. Furthermore, the Tailing Hazard Index was updated by taking historical tailings management facility failures into consideration. Based on those results, the Tailing Hazard Index was further developed into a Tailings Risk Index, which considers affected population and environmental aspects through potential tailings management facility failures. These achievements might have an impact on land-use planning and subsequently advance protection of human health and environment from tailings management facility accidents.

60. In addition, a mapping of the tailings management facilities inventories within the whole Danube River catchment was performed based on the new Tailing Hazard Index and Tailings Risk Index, allowing the respective countries to target their personnel and financial capacities to improve the safety levels of the most dangerous tailings management facilities.

B. Project on Improving the Safety of Tailings Management Facilities in the Caucasian Region/Assistance in safety improvement of tailings management facilities in Armenia and Georgia project (November 2017–November 2019)

61. The Project was implemented under the Convention's workplan and was conducted by the German Environment Agency with the engagement of the Ministries of Emergency Situations and of Nature Protection of Armenia and the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources Protection and of Internal Affairs — Emergency Management Agency of Georgia, mining enterprises and local communities in Armenia and Georgia, and other countries of the ECE region.

62. The project aimed at: improving and strengthening the capacities of competent agencies and industrial enterprises in Armenia and Georgia; improving the management of disasters caused by industrial accidents, including those with transboundary effects; and increasing the level of preparedness of industrial enterprises using industrial storage basins (tailings) as target facilities.

63. The long-term goals of the project were to anchor the tailings management facility checklist methodology developed within the previous Advisory Assistance Programme project in Ukraine and to provide for its adaptation and further sustainable use in the other countries of the ECE region.

64. The project completed the five following tasks:

(a) The analysis of the legislative and administrative situations in Armenia and Georgia;

(b) Training of mining sector specialists/responsible bodies in Armenia and Georgia by international experts;

(c) The transfer of knowledge acquired by trained Georgian and Armenian trainers to the representatives of competent authorities responsible for the local control of tailings management facilities;

(d) Determination of possible transboundary effects of tailings management facility-caused emergencies on the Kura alert and alarm system — developed within the project implemented in the South Caucasus in 2003–2006, using the Khrami-Debed River basin (with the focus on enhancing disaster resilience and emergency preparedness at tailings management facilities along the Debed River);

(e) Revision of the tailings management facility methodology, notably in improving part C of the tailings management facility checklist methodology for closed and abandoned tailings management facilities.

65. In cooperation with the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents and tailings management facility/mining experts from Central Asia, Russia and European Union countries, the course and structure of the training events were further developed to optimize similar training events in other countries of the ECE region.

C. Project on the Safety of Tailings Management Facilities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

66. The Project is part of the Convention's workplan for the reported biennium 2019–2020; however, due to the pandemic, the Project start has been delayed.

67. For 2020, a feasibility study has been set up to analyse the most useful approach to improving tailings management facility safety specifically in Kyrgyzstan. The objective will be to discuss with the competent Kyrgyz authorities the most useful way to complete the originally envisaged tailings management facility training activities.

68. The project will be supervised and funded by the German Environment Agency, with the support of the Government of Kyrgyzstan and the regional authorities of Kazakhstan.

Annex

Activities carried out under the Assistance and Cooperation Programme during the biennium 2019–2020

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Beneficiary countries</i>	<i>Location and date:</i>
Finalization and publishing of Implementation Guide on the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents for Central Asia in English, French and Russian	Central Asia specifically, benefiting all Assistance and Cooperation Programme beneficiary countries and beyond	Available at publications page of Convention web page: www.unece.org/index.php?id=52980 (published in December 2019)
Preparation of video on land-use planning in Russian	Assistance and Cooperation Programme beneficiary countries, notably of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia	Available at video site of Convention web page at www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/industrial-accidents/videos.html ; or direct link: https://vimeo.com/337694510 (launched in May 2019)
Subregional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Rep. of Moldova and Ukraine	Chisinau, 22–24 May 2019
Introduction workshop and on-site training session under the ECE projects on improving mining/tailings safety in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and beyond in Central Asia	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan	Kokshetau, Kazakhstan, 11–13 June 2019
Participation in, awareness-raising and experience-sharing at the Regional Forum – Meeting of the Heads of Emergency Services of Central Asia	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	Bishkek, 11 and 12 July 2019
Participation in, awareness-raising and experience-sharing at the twenty-seventh meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States Interstate Council on Industrial Safety	Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as Russian Federation (Chair of the Council in 2019–2020)	Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, 12 and 13 September 2019

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Beneficiary countries</i>	<i>Location and date:</i>
Subregional workshop on improving mine tailings safety in Central Asia)	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	Almaty, Kazakhstan, 20 and 21 November 2019
Consultation for Central Asia on a draft global tailings standard, co-convened with the Global Tailings Review	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	Almaty, Kazakhstan, 18 and 19 November 2019
Participation in, awareness-raising and experience-sharing at the twenty-eighth meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States Interstate Council on Industrial Safety	Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as Russian Federation (Chair of the Council in 2019-2020)	Minsk (online), 16 September 2020
Preparation of a technical mission to support accession of Ukraine	Ukraine	Postponed to 2021
Preparation of the Terms of Reference of the NPD Steering Group and launch of the NPD for Industrial Safety in Serbia	Serbia	Preparation of the Terms of Reference in 2020 Launch of NPD - postponed to 2021
Preparations for the Subregional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for South-Eastern Europe	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia	Postponed to 2021
Online teaser event: Sub-regional workshop on land-use planning and industrial safety for South-Eastern Europe	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia	Online, via Webex, 21 October 2020
Initiation of the Project on National Policy Dialogues for Industrial Safety in Central Asia (Phase I: Launch)	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	Project launch envisaged at COP-11
Preparation of Terms of Reference for the inter-institutional working group on tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution in Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan	Postponed to end 2020/2021

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Beneficiary countries</i>	<i>Location and date:</i>
(ongoing), consultations with various government authorities		
Preparations of the Terms of Reference for the inter-institutional working group on tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution in Tajikistan (ongoing), consultations with various government authorities	Tajikistan	Postponed to end 2020/2021
Contribution to subregional and regional consultations on mineral resource governance and sustainable infrastructure organized by UNEP	All countries of the ECE region	Subregional consultations on mineral resource governance (online, 25 and 27 August 2020) Subregional consultations on sustainable infrastructure (online, 3 and 4 September 2020)

Abbreviations: COP-11, Eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.