

Summary and conclusions of the Technical meeting to prepare for the on-site training in Tajikistan and to enhance capacity for governance and policy-making on tailings safety in Central Asia – Online, 23 April 2021 –

1. Background and objectives

The [technical meeting](#) to prepare for the on-site training in Tajikistan and to enhance capacity for governance and policy-making on tailings safety in Central Asia was organized as part of the UNECE projects on strengthening the safety of mining operations, in particular tailings management facilities (TMFs) in [Tajikistan](#) (since December 2018) and [Central Asia](#) (since December 2019). The projects are implemented under the workplan of the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention), with the financial support of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment. Project oversight and management is ensured by UNECE.

The technical meeting is part of a series of three events which have been re-designed, in cooperation with Tajikistan, to allow for the implementation of the on-site training (originally scheduled to take place as a face-to-face meeting on 29 September–1 October 2020 in Penjikent, Tajikistan) despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The [technical meeting](#) (online, 23 April 2021, with participants from all Central Asian countries) was followed by a [national on-site training at the Zarafshan site in Penjikent, Tajikistan](#) (online and face-to-face, 2-4 June 2021, for Tajik participants only) and [an online evaluation workshop for all Central Asian countries](#) (online, 3 June 2021).

The objectives of the technical meeting were the following:

- Support Central Asian countries in strengthening tailings safety through the implementation of the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes
- Enhance capacity for governance and policy-making on tailings safety in Central Asia using UNECE's instruments and tools
- Prepare the Tajik participants for the on-site training, notably for applying the UNECE Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for Tailings Management Facilities (TMFs) and a related TMF methodology
- Support Central Asian countries in their implementation of related recommendations arising from the UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs), incl. through the preparation of action plans
- Support Central Asian countries in using the Industrial Accidents Convention's Strategic Approach, incl. by assisting them in updating of their national self-assessments and action plans
- Review the progress made in the implementation of the UNECE project on supporting countries of Central Asia in strengthening the safety of mine tailings, notably the establishment of Inter-Institutional Working Groups on Tailings Safety and the Prevention of Accidental Water Pollution in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan
- Identify next steps for the implementation of the UNECE project on supporting countries of Central Asia in strengthening the safety of mine tailings



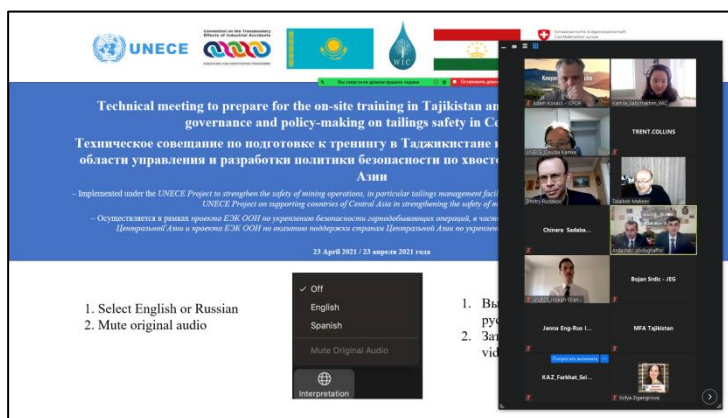
2. Attendees

The technical meeting brought together representatives of state authorities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as representatives of international and regional organizations, such as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) and international experts. Representatives of operators of TMFs in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan also participated.

The meeting was organized and serviced by the UNECE secretariat, in cooperation with the Water Initiatives Centre for the logistical arrangements. Its organization was made possible thanks to financial support from the Swiss Federation Office for the Environment as well as co-financing from the United Nations regular budget.

3. Programme

The technical meeting was held online and divided into 3 sessions. It began with an overview of: the meeting objectives; the activities of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents; and the application of the UNECE Safety guidelines and good practices for TMFs as well as the German Environment Agency and International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River's (ICPDR's) TMF methodology in the Danube River Basin. The second session



focused on the conduct and preparatory activities for the on-site training in Zarafshan, Tajikistan. It also provided Tajik participants with an overview of the past experience in Kazakhstan in conducting a similar on-site training. The third session was dedicated to enhancing capacity for governance and policy-making on tailings safety in Central Asia using UNECE's instruments and tools. To this end, experts from Kazakhstan and Tajikistan gave an overview of the progress made in establishing the Interinstitutional Working Group on Tailings Safety and the Prevention of Accidental Water Pollution within their countries. UNECE also gave recommendations to the countries on integrating tailings and natural hazards triggering technological disasters (Natech) risks into their governance structures and national policies. The key conclusions from the technical meeting are presented below.

4. Key conclusions of the technical meeting

SESSION 1 – Opening and setting the scene

The opening session of the technical meeting was chaired by Mr. Ardasher Mirzozoda, Deputy Chairman of State Supervision of Safe Work in Industry and Mining Supervision Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan.

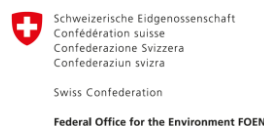
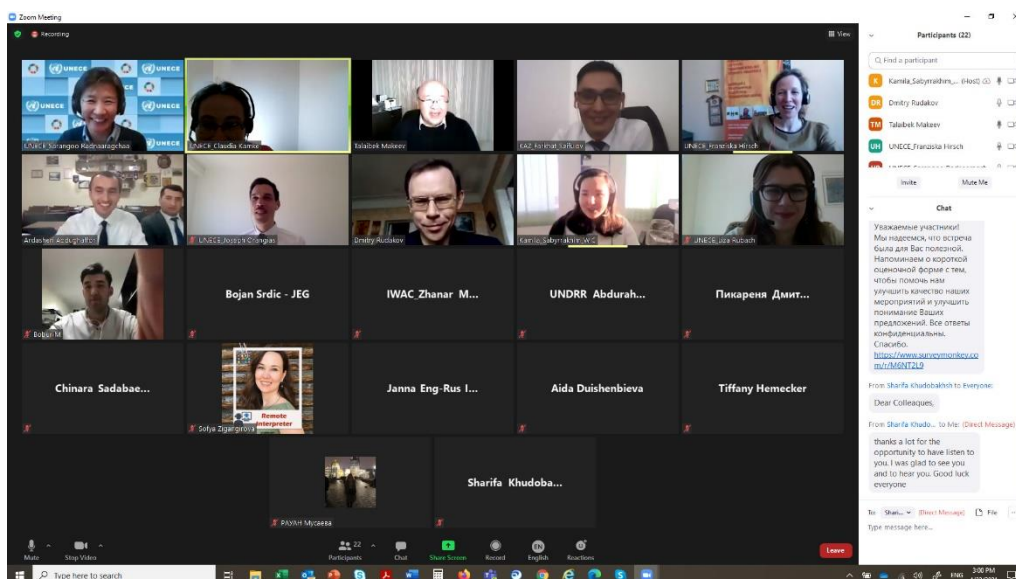
The session was initiated with welcoming statements from speakers from Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, as well as representatives of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment and the UNECE secretariat. The co-Chair from Serbia of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents presented information on the history and key activities of the group. The UNECE secretariat also presented information on: the Industrial Accidents Convention; conclusions and lessons learned from the application of the TMF methodology in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, namely that tailings safety needs close transboundary cooperation, national regulations and policies need updating, countries should apply the UNECE Safety Guidelines and TMF methodology and the need to improve interinstitutional cooperation; and decision 2020/1 on strengthening mine tailings safety ([ENG](#), [RUS](#)).

The UNECE secretariat presented an animated [video on TMF safety](#) and the [Online Toolkit and Training for Strengthening Mine Tailings Safety](#). An ICPDR technical expert then shared information on the application of the UNECE Safety Guidelines and TMF methodology, incl. with examples of applying the TMF methodology's Tailings Hazard Index and recent Tailings Risk Index at the Danube River Basin.

Participants acknowledged the relevance of the technical meeting topic and its mode of conduct in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants recognized tailings safety and Natech risk management as matters of regional concern, incl. with respect to national safety and security.

SESSION 2 – Preparation for the on-site training in Zarafshan, Tajikistan

The second session was moderated by Mr. Farkhat Seifulov, Head of the Department for State Supervision of Nuclear Facilities of the Industrial Safety Committee, Ministry for Emergency Situations of Kazakhstan.



It was dedicated to the preparation for the on-site training at the Zarafshan site in Penjikent, Tajikistan. As such, Kazakhstan and the UNECE secretariat presented an overview of a similar on-site training that took place in Kazakhstan in 2019; however, they recognized the adjustments that would be required for the Tajikistan event due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the on-site training had now been transformed into a preparatory technical meeting for all Central Asian countries (online, 23 April 2021), a national on-site training at Zarafshan in Penjikent, Tajikistan (face-to-face, 2-4 June 2021) and an online evaluation workshop for all Central Asian countries (3 June 2021).

The UNECE secretariat introduced participants to the UNECE Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for TMFs and the TMF methodology's checklist for the on-site training, including the evaluation of the results and measure catalogue. This included technical information on, among other components, the assessment method of TMFs and classification of their safety levels. Thereafter, the TMF operator gave a brief overview of the history and key activities of the Zarafshan facility. He emphasized the importance of visual inspections of TMFs and key signs to look for (e.g. excessive waterlogging, water coming through pores, erosion, etc.).

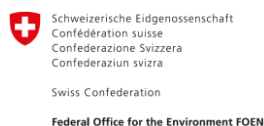
The final presentation of the second session provided information on the conduct of the upcoming on-site training in Tajikistan. In particular, the Tajik focal point of the Convention and international consultants presented practical information and next steps in advance of the evaluation workshop.

SESSION 3 – Enhancing capacity for governance and policy-making on tailings safety in Central Asia using UNECE's instruments and tools

The third and final session was moderated by Ms. Sarangoo Radnaaragchaa, Regional Advisor for the Environment, UNECE. During the session, UNECE and UNDRR made statements on strengthening governance and policy-making for mine tailings safety and disaster risk reduction. The Secretary to the Industrial Accidents Convention recalled the vision of the Convention's long-term strategy until 2030, particularly to 'Significantly increase industrial safety and reduce the risk of technological disasters by ensuring its full implementation, its wide recognition as a legal instrument for risk reduction under the Sendai Framework and its contribution to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals'. She also highlighted synergies between the Convention and Sendai Framework priorities for action as means to strengthen disaster risk governance.

The UNECE secretariat then introduced its work to assist Central Asian countries in strengthening their implementation of the Convention, including on tailings safety and Natech risk reduction. A UNECE consultant explained how the countries' Environmental Performance Review (EPR) recommendations could be implemented to that effect, and that he would be developing EPR Action Plans with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the coming weeks. He also presented the Convention's Strategic Approach, namely its six priority working areas and three-step cyclical approach to those working areas with the (1) self-assessment, (2) action plan and (3) assessment and results. He proposed to assist the countries in integrating tailings safety and Natech risk reduction into their self-assessments and action plans under the Convention.

Representatives from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan made statements to welcome UNECE's assistance in developing an EPR Action Plan and updating their Self-Assessment and Action Plan under the Convention. They expressed the importance of using these tools to enhance their implementation of the Convention and to strengthen tailings safety. They agreed to work on these documents with UNECE before



the [evaluation workshop](#) for all Central Asian countries (online, 3 June 2021). In particular, the focal point from **Tajikistan** expressed the need to develop a domestic approach to managing TMFs and to strengthen capacity for accession to the Convention. The representative from **Uzbekistan** also acknowledged that tailings issues and tailings safety are of paramount importance to the region and expressed Uzbekistan's readiness for transboundary cooperation. He also highlighted the importance of implementing the EPR recommendations. UNECE recalled an official letter sent by **Kyrgyzstan** requesting this work and their earlier commitment expressed to the consultant.

The expert of the Water Initiatives Center then gave an overview on the establishment of the **Inter-institutional Working Groups (IIWG) on Tailings Safety and Prevention of Accidental Water Pollution in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan**, in which he outlined background information, benefits and terms of reference for the IIWG. The representative from Kazakhstan and focal point from Tajikistan each presented the recent progress made and next steps for the establishment of the IIWG. Kazakhstan informed participants that it had initiated internally a process to create an IIWG across two ministries (Ministry for Emergency Situations and Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources), involving also NGOs and researchers, and that the Ministry of Emergency Services had accepted the draft letter of reference. The Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan informed participants of serious threats to safety that TMFs pose in their country, especially those located in mountainous landscapes, and expressed the need for international support in managing these. The Focal Point from Tajikistan also explained that his country is actively involved in the process of establishing the IIWG and developing activities for the group. In particular, he stressed that the nomination process takes a lot of time as it requires inter-institutional cooperation which needs to follow certain procedures and remains a challenge. He also said UNECE's technical assistance in this regard can help improve this work.

5. Evaluation of the technical meeting and further information

More information on the technical meeting, including workshop **presentations** and an **evaluation summary**, are available on the Convention's [website](#). More information on the **UNECE projects**, including their activities and outputs, is available for Kazakhstan ([ENG](#), [RUS](#)), Tajikistan ([ENG](#), [RUS](#)) and Central Asian countries ([ENG](#), [RUS](#)).

