

Summary and conclusions of the

On-site training and evaluation workshop in Tajikistan on strengthening the safety and governance of mine tailings in Central Asia

– In-person and Online, 2-4 June 2021 –

1. Background, format and objectives

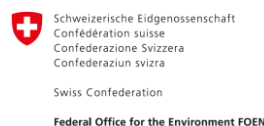
The [on-site training and evaluation workshop](#) on strengthening the safety and governance of mine tailings in Central Asia was organized as a hybrid event (online and in person) under the UNECE projects on strengthening the safety of mining operations, in particular tailings management facilities (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 on-site training and evaluation workshop were preceded by [a 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), also implemented under the above-mentioned projects.

The on-site training and evaluation workshop were held in the following format:

- 2 June – Travel of the Tajik participants to Penjikent, Tajikistan, and organization of an online briefing (in Russian only) by the trainers to prepare the Tajik participants for the on-site training
- 3 June – Conduct of the on-site training at the Zarafshan tailings facility in the morning (face-to-face, for Tajik participants only), followed by group work to discuss the training results (hybrid, for Tajik participants and trainers, in Russian only) and concluding with an evaluation workshop in the afternoon (online and in-person, for all Central Asian countries, with English-Russian interpretation)
- 4 June – Departure of the Tajik participants

The objectives of the on-site training and subsequent evaluation workshop were the following:

- Support the Tajik authorities and operators in applying the UNECE Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for Tailings Managements Facilities (TMFs) and a related TMF methodology
- Enhance the capacity of participants to reduce water-related risks from TMFs, notably by supporting them in applying the TMF checklist methodology during an on-site training
- Support Central Asian countries in the implementation of the recommendations arising from the UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs), incl. through discussions on their newly developed EPR Action Plans
- Strengthen 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



- Exchange information and discuss the next steps on the Central Asian countries' updated national Self-Assessments and Action Plans that they had recently prepared under the Industrial Accidents Convention's Strategic Approach
- Review the progress made in the establishment of Inter-Institutional Working Groups (IIWGs) on Tailings Safety and the Prevention of Accidental Water Pollution in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan
- Provide a forum for discussion for national authorities to improve their institutional coordination on TMF safety – among themselves, with operators and across borders

2. Attendees

The **on-site training** brought together representatives of several state authorities of Tajikistan, including from: the State Supervision of Safe Operation of Industry and Mining Supervision; the Radiation, Chemical and Biological Protection Division of the Civil Protection Department of the Committee for Emergency Situations and Civil Defense ; the Republican Chemical and Radiometric Laboratory of the Committee for Emergency Situations and Civil Defense; the Department of Foreign Economic Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Department of Mining Industry and New Technologies of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Environmental Protection sector of the city of Penjikent, Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan; and the Committee for Environmental Protection. It was led by Mr. Dmitry Rudakov, consultant to the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention, and Mr. Dmitry Pikarenia, an expert on tailings safety from Ukraine.

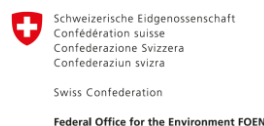
The **evaluation workshop** brought together representatives of state authorities of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as representatives of international and regional organizations, such as the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) and international experts. Representatives of operators of TMFs in Tajikistan also participated in the evaluation workshop, following the on-site training and discussions with UNECE consultants.

The **on-site training and evaluation workshop** were organized and serviced by the UNECE secretariat, in cooperation with the Water Initiatives Centre for the logistical arrangements. Their 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.

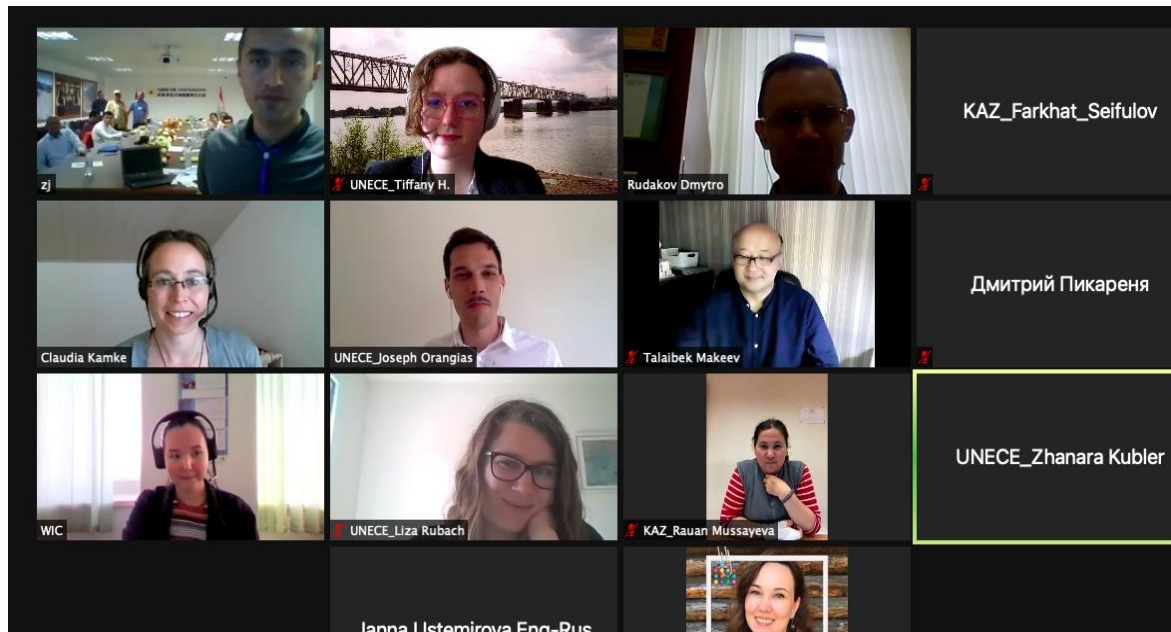
3. Programme

The event took place over three days, from 2-4 June 2021. On 2 June, the Tajik participants traveled from Dushanbe to Penjikent, where they followed an online briefing and had time to study materials for the on-site training. On 3 June, the Tajik participants undertook in the morning the in-person on-site training at the Zarafshan tailings facility, during which they applied a checklist methodology on strengthening mine tailings safety, developed by the German Federal Environment Agency¹ and based on the UNECE Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for Tailings Management Facilities. The participants from Tajikistan then discussed with the trainers the results of the application of the checklist and guidelines, before they presented them at the subregional online evaluation workshop in the afternoon. The evaluation workshop also discussed how to enhance the capacity for governance and policy-making on tailings safety in Central Asia, notably through recently developed action plans to support the implementation of the relevant

¹ Germany and ICPRD updated the checklist in 2020 – this last version was translated by UNECE into Russian in March 2021 and used for the on-site training.



recommendations from countries' Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs)² and through recently updated Self-Assessments and Action Plans under the Convention's Strategic Approach which integrated tailings and Natech risks. The key conclusions from the conduct of the on-site training and the evaluation workshop are presented below. On 4 June, the participants from Tajikistan travelled back to Dushanbe.



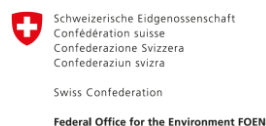
4. Key conclusions of the on-site training and evaluation workshop

SESSION 1 – Opening and setting the scene

The first session was moderated by Mr. Ardasher Mirzozoda, Deputy Chairman of State Supervision Service of Safe Work in Industry and Mining Supervision under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. It included welcoming statements from representatives of Tajikistan, the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment and UNECE, who recognized the importance of strengthening tailings safety within the Central Asia region in view of the projected increasing demands for mineral resources and increasing threats that climate change and natural disasters pose to triggering technological disasters (Natech) at tailings management facilities (TMFs). The speakers also recognized tailings safety and Natech risk management as a matter of regional concern, incl. with respect to national safety and security. To this end, they stressed the relevance of the evaluation workshop, its topic and mode of conduct in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UNECE secretariat provided an overview of its Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for TMFs and the German Environment Agency's and International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River's TMF methodology, which was created to support countries in their implementation of the UNECE Guidelines. The UNECE secretariat also presented information on the history of its past and ongoing projects and key activities on strengthening mine tailings safety

² For the development of the action plans, the EPR recommendations related to the implementation of the Convention were used for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (for the latter also a roadmap from 2021 was used as a basis).



in Central Asia. It also presented the envisaged next steps for the Central Asia project, incl. the conduct of first meetings of the IIWGs planned for the second half of the year, the finalization of the EPR Action Plans and Self-Assessments and Action Plans under the Convention after this meeting and the conduct of the subregional workshop in 2022. These activities will contribute to the implementation of the Conference of the Parties' decision 2020/1 on strengthening mine tailings safety in the UNECE region and beyond ([ENG](#), [RUS](#)).

SESSION 2 – Evaluation of the checklist application during the on-site training at Zarafshan in Penjikent, Tajikistan

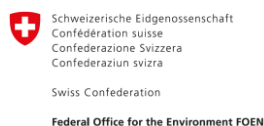
The second session was moderated by Mr. Dmitry Rudakov, Consultant to the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention. It was dedicated to the discussion of the results from the on-site training. The Tajik participants presented a common overview of their itinerary and pictures from the tailings site, as well as their findings from the checklist application. They also showcased a video they had recorded during the on-site training to support their presentation of the findings. The participants demonstrated that this on-site training – organized for the first time ever in a hybrid format – was successful, despite restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Q&A session followed the presentation from Tajikistan. The UNECE secretariat, the trainers and other meeting participants asked for more details about the conduct of the training, notably on the elements inspected, the data collected and justifications for the findings presented. The moderator, who was also one of the trainers, stressed that without a justification the checklist methodology foresees replying to the questions negatively, hence resulting in a negative safety ranking. Mr. Pikarenia, the other trainer, showed a Google Earth visual of the Zarafshan site and asked the Tajik participants to clarify some visual inspection elements at specific places on the tailings site which were visible from the image. The participants provided some clarification and agreed to prepare more comprehensive information following the meeting to justify their findings from the training. They also agreed to share this, together with an updated presentation, with the UNECE secretariat and trainers. The UNECE secretariat informed participants that, as done for the on-site training in Kokshetau, Kazakhstan in 2019, a report on the conduct of the on-site training, including the findings and measures to overcome observed safety deficiencies, will be prepared by Mr. Rudakov and shared with the Tajik representatives for review.

The moderator concluded the second session by thanking the Tajik participants for their cooperation and emphasizing the importance of the on-site training as an event for increasing safety. The moderator also underlined the success of the hybrid event, despite some technical connection difficulties and reiterated his regret of not being able to meet in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The UNECE secretariat congratulated Tajikistan for its innovative approach to ensure the implementation of the on-site training in a hybrid format despite the pandemic.

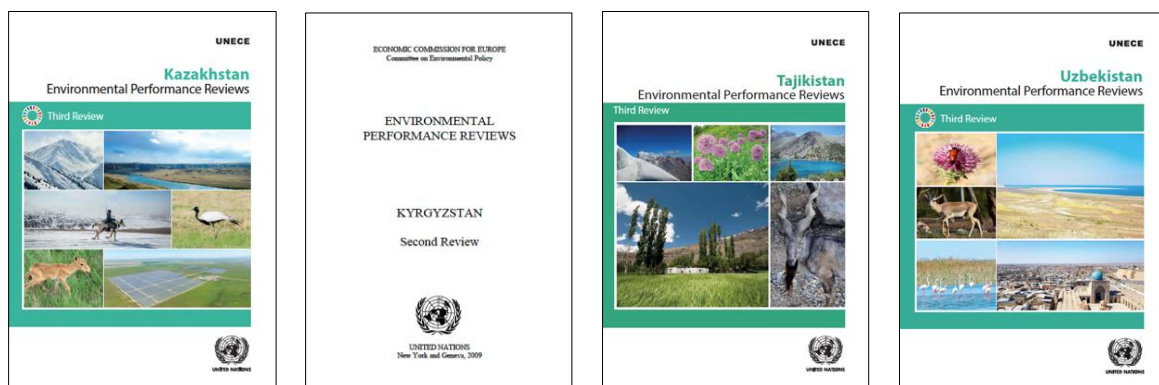
SESSION 3 – Enhancing capacity for governance and policy-making on tailings safety in Central Asia

The third and final session was moderated by Ms. Sarangoo Radnaaragchaa, Regional Advisor for the Environment, UNECE. It was dedicated to enhancing capacity for governance and policy-making on tailings safety. The UNECE secretariat presented the Action Plans it had prepared, in cooperation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, for the implementation of



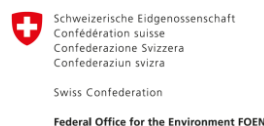
these countries' respective UNECE Environmental Performance Review (EPR) recommendations (and Uzbekistan's 2021 Roadmap) that pertain to the Convention and tailings. While the Action Plans differed according to each countries' legal and policy context, the UNECE consultant also outlined an emerging common approach to strengthen implementation of the Convention and tailings safety across the Central Asian countries. This common approach included five elements:

- (1) Identification of hazardous activities, incl. TMFs;
- (2) Coordination within and across countries;
- (3) Increasing awareness and strategies to address risks of Natech events, incl. with respect to the adverse impacts of climate change;
- (4) Ensuring active participation and readiness to use and test emergency notification systems, incl. the Convention's IAN System; and
- (5) Accession to or alignment with the Convention through updating laws and policies, ensuring governance adequately covers the Convention's measures and then proceeding through the respective national channels to accede to and/or implement the Convention.



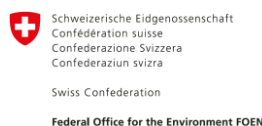
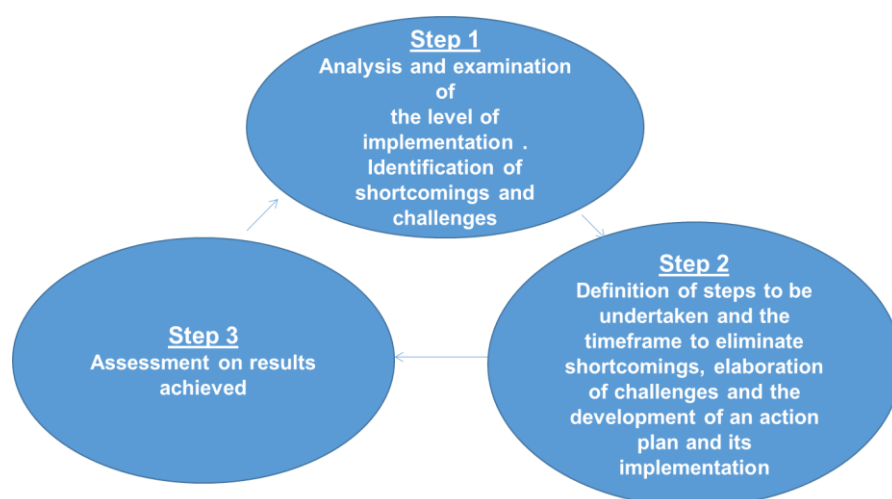
The next steps for countries are to finalize their EPR Action Plans, as well as their Self-Assessments and Actions Plans under the Convention, and to seek approval of these documents at the national level. Then, the three approved documents should be submitted to UNECE and the Convention's Working Group on Implementation. The countries should then actively implement their two Action Plans and prepare to report their progress at upcoming meetings, including a subregional workshop in 2022 and the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties at the end of 2022.

The three Central Asian countries present at the meeting – Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – made supportive statements following the presentation of their **EPR Action Plans** by the UNECE secretariat. In particular, the representative from **Kazakhstan** stated that the EPR recommendations contribute significantly to on-going activities in Kazakhstan aimed at the transition to a sustainable economy in order to tackle environmental, social and economic issues in the country. He mentioned that Kazakhstan had developed a new ecological code, which takes the EPR recommendations—including those on biodiversity, water resource management, chemical substances management as well as the polluter pays principle—into account, and that the country is undertaking further measures to improve its ecological efforts. Thus, joint work on these issues and concerted actions are of high importance. He also said that Kazakhstan stands ready to pursue the recommendations in its EPR Action Plan, stressing that particularly EPR Recommendation 11.3 on strengthening implementation of the Convention to enhance industrial safety is very relevant. The focal point from **Tajikistan** discussed the country's experience in organizing the on-site training. With regard to the national EPR Action Plan, he stated Tajikistan's interest to take part in and continue cooperation with UNECE on strengthening tailings safety and



governance in Tajikistan, expressing that he expects a good continuation of the collaboration in the future. The representative from **Uzbekistan** explained safety issues within the country, namely in relation to many uranium dumps across Central Asia which are in deteriorating states despite the restoration actions. These dumps contain highly dangerous waste and present high risks as many of them are: located in the vicinity of residential areas; susceptible to risks posed by natural disasters, given their proximity to earthquake lines and landslide areas; and near water streams, which could cause accidental water pollution. This presents a real danger of an environmental disaster as the toxic waste can pollute the rivers flowing along the Fergana valley and lower reaches of Syr Darya river, thus posing transboundary risks of accidental water pollution. Further to UNECE, Uzbekistan has been working with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to find effective solutions and has signed framework agreements with other Central Asian countries to address these issues. The Uzbek representative stated that Uzbekistan is working towards acceding to a number of environmental Conventions until 2030 as part of its national environmental strategy, in particular to the Industrial Accidents Convention. He also expressed appreciation to UNECE for their support with the EPR, including the Roadmap and Action Plan, which support these efforts. The moderator also thanked **Kyrgyzstan**, which was unable to attend the meeting, for their active participation in many UNECE environmental activities and recalled their official letter that expressed interest to work with UNECE on strengthening tailings safety and Natech risk reduction in Central Asia.

The member of the Convention’s Bureau from Serbia presented on the **Convention’s Strategic Approach**. She emphasized the cyclical nature of the Strategic Approach, namely (1) self-assessment of shortcomings and challenges, (2) taking actions to address them and (3) assessment of results achieved. This should be repeated as it is important to continuously analyze and monitor implementation. She encouraged participants to study the Strategic Approach’s indicators and criteria under the Convention’s six priority working areas. Furthermore, she presented first-hand experience of Serbia’s use of the Strategic Approach’s Self-Assessment and Action Plan to improve industrial safety and develop National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on Industrial Safety. She said the NPDs on Industrial Safety were developed on the bases of improving effectiveness and efficiency through inter-institutional cooperation, identifying and addressing gaps in legislation and cooperating with UNECE to develop a project concept, which could be funded and implemented under the Convention.



The representative from Kazakhstan and focal point from Tajikistan presented their integration of measures to improve tailings safety and reduce Natech risks into their **updated Self-Assessment and Action Plans**, as well as the progress made in establishing **Inter-institutional Working Groups on Tailings Safety and the Prevention of Accidental Water Pollution (IIWGs)** in their countries. In particular, the Kazakh representative stated that **Kazakhstan**, as a Party to the Convention, updated its Self-Assessment and Action Plan to include an analysis of its legislation and policy on industrial accident preparedness and response, including emergencies response and coordination and cooperation with other Central Asian countries. He stated the need for Kazakhstan to strengthen its work on implementing the Convention's provisions and expressed Kazakhstan's readiness to implement its updated Action Plan. The Tajik focal point discussed the updated Self-Assessment by **Tajikistan** and how to address legislation issues, following a recent legislation review. He outlined in his presentation the history of their governance structure and the relevant legislation (adopted in 2004 and updated four times in 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2020), which includes legal, social and economic aspects to prevent industrial accidents. Further to describing specific provisions therein, he mentioned several international agreements and regional councils and crisis centers Tajikistan is part of. The Tajik focal point also informed the group of the country's progress in establishing the IIWG, pointing out the importance and challenge in identifying members from and coordinating with different agencies to be involved in the IIWG. He stated that this process would be finalized in June and that he expects good progress in advancing the work, once the members have been nominated.

In addition, the representative from **Uzbekistan** reported on the progress made with the preparation of Uzbekistan's draft Self-Assessment and Action Plan, which the country was unable to submit in advance of the meeting. He mentioned that it takes much interinstitutional coordination, effort and time to provide information on the Self-Assessment and Action Plan to integrate Natech/TMFs and to complete the table under the UNECE Project, incl. coordination between three competent authorities, namely the Ministry for Emergency Situations, the State Committee on Industrial Safety and the State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection. However, work is underway to provide the information as soon as possible.

The moderator concluded the third session by thanking all participants of the on-site training and evaluation workshop. She recognized that the presentations demonstrated how the EPR recommendations and the Convention's Strategic Approach, including its Self-Assessment and Action Plan components, can effectively support capacity building for governance and policymaking that aims to strengthen mine tailings safety. She thanked the countries for their excellent work in assessing their laws, policies and safety measures, and in developing Action Plans to achieve further progress. The moderator also recalled the next steps agreed, notably countries' finalization and approval of their Self-Assessments and before-mentioned Action Plans. She also encouraged the countries to start implementing them subsequently and expressed that UNECE looks forward to hearing their implementation progress in meetings later this year and next year.

5. Evaluation of the technical meeting and further information

More information on the event, 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](#)).

