

**UNECE/OECD Seminar on effective management of technological risks of
accidents triggered by natural hazards
(29 November 2022)
Statement by Mr. Solomon Pavliashvili, Deputy Minister of Environmental
Protection and Agriculture of Georgia**

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,**

On behalf of the Government of Georgia, I would like to thank the UNECE and OECD for convening the seminar, focusing on "Effective management of technological risks of accidents triggered by natural hazards". I am delighted to be here with you today and wish to thank you for the kind invitation to address this distinguished audience.

As you are aware Climate change is getting more and more intense, breaking the usual rhythm of our daily lives. Natural disasters and diseases intensified by climate change pose serious problems for both the world population and the economy. Georgia, as one of the countries, which is very vulnerable to the impacts of Climate Change, works hard to reduce its negative consequences. By joining the Paris Agreement in 2017, Georgia expressed its readiness to contribute to the international commitment to gradually reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In Georgia, natural disasters are large-scale, their recurrence is frequent, and the risk of danger is high. Our country is one of the outstanding among the mountainous countries of the world due to the scale of negative consequences caused by these events. The existing characteristics pose a significant threat to the country's economic development and population. In case of development and implementation of appropriate measures to reduce the risks, damage caused by disasters and large-scale economic losses can be avoided or reduced.

I would like to share our case which took place on 27.09.2013 extreme hydro-meteorological event caused flooding of the Tskhenistskali River and the change of the riverbed, which in its turn caused damage to the former metallurgical plant's dam in Lentekhi and subsequent leakage of arsenic waste material stored in steel barrels on the site (Tsana 1). At the request of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany kindly dispatched the Analytical Task Force with sampling and analysis assistance, technical support, provision of recommendations for the Ministry under these critical circumstances. The Government of Georgia carried out emergency on-site works as well as implemented the preliminary recommendations in order to avoid additional risks in case of extreme weather events. Furthermore, bank fortification works have been planned alongside the mentioned river area. The works has been provided and the situation for the moment is stabilized and laboratory tests confirmed that concentration of harmful substances in both the river and reservoirs did not exceed the permissible limit. Nevertheless, the risk of pollution of the Tskhenistskali and Rioni rivers, which

are part of the Black Sea basin, as well as the drinking water supply, remains rather high. This case highlighted once again the dangerous ecological situation created in Ambrolauri and Lentekhi regions of Georgia and environment related security risks that may arise from this old soviet legacy.

Disaster Risk Redaction is one of the priority issues for our government and in the last 10 years it is highlight in the national strategies and action plans. With support of international donors, we are trying our best to find solutions and avoid risks created by natural disasters for industrial sites, population and social-economic development of the country.

I would like to underline last developments with UNDP and the Government of Georgia, with funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Swiss and Swedish governments are implementing a 7-year program dedicated to reducing the risk of climate-driven disasters in Georgia. The program works with 7 hazards: floods, landslides, avalanches, mudflow, windstorm, hailstorm, drought. With an overall budget of USD 74 million, the initiative aims to reduce the exposure of Georgia's communities, livelihoods, and infrastructure to climate-induced natural hazards through a well-functioning nationwide multi-hazard early warning system and risk-informed local action. All (up to 149 items) the hydrometeorological equipment was procured and delivered. Hydrometeorological observation stations have been installed in 15 locations in western Georgia; Risk assessment for 11 river basins is ongoing and in parallel Improvement and enhancement of forecasting are already started. For this purpose, a flood-forecasting platform was created and a high-performance computer (HCP) has been procured and installed. Georgia became a member of the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) and uses the intel from the organization effectively, as well as trains experts abroad at European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF HQ). National-level hazard maps were produced for 4 hazards: avalanche, drought, windstorm, and hailstorm. Flood hazard maps have been prepared for 5 river basins in Western Georgia. Landslide and mudflow hazard maps have been created for 3 river basins.

International and local capacity development trainings (technical knowledge and skills) are successfully implemented for the National Environmental Agency, Emergency Management Service, and Roads Department (under the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure).

Emergency management plans for 3 municipalities were elaborated: Telavi, Akhmeta, and Lagodekhi. Local municipalities are being trained in disaster risk management and reduction, as well as multi-hazard response. Awareness-raising activities for the Georgian population are ongoing (e.g., Green Scholarships, Green Camp, Community Forum, various trainings and information meetings). Flood-protective infrastructure is being constructed throughout Georgia.

With support of EU there is ongoing PPRD EAST 3rd phase of the regional project and the overall objective is to increase the resilience to natural and man-made disasters in the Eastern Partner Countries. The specific objectives are: to build sustainable capabilities of Partner Countries' respective civil protection institutions for disaster risk prevention, preparedness and response to natural and man-made disasters; Strengthen interlinkages between all relevant governmental actors and civil society stakeholders as well as the scientific community, promoting a national inclusive approach to prevention, preparedness and response to natural and man-made disasters; Enhance regional coordination, institutional and operational cooperation between the civil protection mechanism and the Eastern neighborhood countries and among Eastern neighborhood countries. The work provided under the project is beneficial for our country and it creates good cooperation with the states for sharing experiences in disaster risk management.

I would like to bring to your attention once again that notwithstanding existing relevant commitments and mandates, the opportunity remains to strengthen the mandate on disaster management. We can enhance our efforts and fully utilize the field missions and institutions that have success in facilitating regional forums and training.

As a concluding remark I would like to express the readiness of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia for further cooperation to ensure safe and healthy environment that eventually will contribute to the successful implementation of the local and regional priorities.

Thank you for your attention.