

Key recommendations for follow-up activities on mine tailings safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution in Central Asia

Subregional workshop

– 25-26 May 2023, Dushanbe, Tajikistan and online –

- Central Asian countries highlighted the importance of the ongoing work and projects by UNECE in the region and considered **the Industrial Accidents Convention to be an effective instrument** in the system of international cooperation to strengthen industrial safety. **It was recommended that all Central Asian countries accede to the Convention.**
- Participants stressed that **transboundary cooperation among Central Asian countries was critical** for the prevention of tailings accidents and related water pollution; and they highlighted the need to continue sharing good practices and knowledge in this area. **Both high-level and technical participants agreed that it is essential to develop a regional approach to further strengthen industrial safety and reduce the risks of all types of disasters in Central Asia.**
- Kazakhstan suggested establishing **a joint working group (at a technical level) on the monitoring and control of the transboundary tailings management facilities (TMFs) in Central Asia.** Tajikistan also suggested **setting up a coordination council (at the political level)** between Central Asian countries to explore the potential risks related to tailings management facilities and prevention of accidental water pollution.
- Central Asian representatives underlined the noticeable negative impacts of climate change, the exposure of their countries to extreme weather events and natural disasters, and the need to mitigate the Natech risks, while stressing the lack of knowledge available in this area to date. The International Water Assessment Center (IWAC) Deputy Director and Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (JEG) member proposed **launching a pilot project on assessing the impacts of climate change on tailings safety in Central Asia** to study the impacts and possible adaptation measures.
- As the countries of Central Asia are prone to natural disasters and extreme weather events, exacerbated by the impact of climate change, the Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction (CESDRR) Director, among others, highlighted the **need to establish a sustainable early warning and alert system at the national and regional levels**, e.g. to detect seismic movements, to help countries to prepare for hazardous climate-related events.
- Participants emphasized the results achieved under the [project on “Development of joint measures to prevent and respond to pollution of the Syr Darya River in emergency situations \(Phase I\).”](#) The Deputy Minister of Emergency Situations of Uzbekistan pointed out the need to develop joint contingency plans, notably in river basins, in Central Asia. A representative of Tajikistan from the Executive Committee of International Fund for Saving of Aral Sea (IFAS) highlighted **the necessity to implement the Phase II of the above-mentioned project, e.g. through the development of the joint contingency plan in the Syr Darya River Basin.** Representatives of Central Asian countries supported this idea, recommended the

implementation of Phase II above-mentioned project and highlighted the importance of the implementation of the recommendations, prepared under the Phase I of this project.

- Participants **stressed the vital role of the Inter-institutional Working Groups on Tailings Safety and Prevention of Accidental Water Pollution (IIWGs)** as multi-stakeholder platforms for the exchange and coordination on issues, lessons learned, and next steps related to the prevention of accidental pollution from tailings facilities. They also highlighted **the need to continue this work and recommended the establishment of such groups in other Central Asian countries.**
- The Group work featured at the workshop allowed for a transparent dialogue and exchange among different stakeholders, including national authorities, operators, NGOs and academia, on the most pressing challenges and needs related to tailings safety and preventing accidental water pollution in Central Asia. The needs highlighted by the groups comprised, among others, the following: **additional inspections/controls at the TMFs; staff capacity-building, notably training of national authorities' officials and TMFs' personnel, and legislation enhancement.**
- Participants also recommended **to organize an on-site training at a TMF** in Europe in order to improve the qualification and exchange experience and **hold trainings of competent authorities and operators at the local/regional levels**, including the creation of training courses with the support of UNECE.
- Participants agreed that **integrating a multi-hazards/multi-risk approach into legislation**, in national and transboundary settings, and **strong governance can be effective solutions to build disaster resilience and climate change adaptation.**