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**EU4Environment**  
Green Economy in Eastern Partner Countries

**Public Hearing on the Pilot Strategic Environmental Assessment for  
the draft Master Plan of the city of Ganja**

**28 September 2023, Ganja city, Azerbaijan**

**Event Report**

Action implemented by:



## Background

Within the framework of the European Union-funded EU4Environment programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has been assisting the Eastern Partnership countries, including Azerbaijan, in comprehensive capacity-building and institutional building on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and in finalizing legal reforms in this area since 2019.

The public hearing event was organized by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan (MENR) and UNECE with the involvement of the State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture (SCUPA) and Ganja City Executive Power to facilitate public participation in relation to the draft SEA Report and the draft master plan it is associated with. Its organization was consistent with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on “Public Participation”.

The “European Union for Environment” (EU4Environment – Green Economy) Action helps the Eastern Partnership countries preserve their natural capital and increase people's environmental well-being, by supporting environment-related action, demonstrating and unlocking opportunities for greener growth, and setting mechanisms to better manage environmental risks and impacts.

It is funded by the European Union and implemented by five Partner organisations - OECD, UNECE, UNEP, UNIDO, and the World Bank – over 2019-2024 period, with a budget of EUR 20 million.

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For more information, please visit our website: [www.eu4environment.org](http://www.eu4environment.org).

## Event objectives

- To enable the public concerned/local stakeholders to learn more of and comment on the draft Master Plan of the city of Ganja and the associated preliminary draft SEA Report.
- To present and discuss the preliminary draft of the SEA Report and its key findings;
- To inform the public concerned/local stakeholders about the means of providing their comments.

## Approach and methodology

A selection of pertinent stakeholders from various sectors across Ganja city was undertaken to conduct a Public Hearing on the Pilot Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the draft Master Plan. Invited participants represented diverse backgrounds, encompassing NGOs, state entities, representatives of municipalities, academia and SEA practitioners/experts. This careful selection aimed to promote substantive engagement during the event, promoting a comprehensive representation of perspectives and expertise. The event served as a platform for local stakeholders to gain comprehensive insights into the draft Master Plan and the associated draft SEA Report. It facilitated meaningful discussions, allowing for an exchange of ideas, addressing queries from the public concerned/local stakeholders, and soliciting recommendations from the participants.

The public hearing event allowed online participation via Zoom; however, the vast majority of participants chose to attend in person. Simultaneous interpretation in English and Azerbaijani was provided throughout.

The design of the public hearing agenda included the following key components in line with the event's above outlined objectives:

- Presentation of the draft Master Plan of the city of Ganja
- Presentation of findings of the draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Report
- Discussions regarding the participants' questions, comments, and recommendations on the draft Master Plan and the associated preliminary draft SEA Report

A significant portion of the allocated time was dedicated to an interactive discussion of the ongoing SEA of the Master plan of the city of Ganja. The participants were encouraged to bring forth their perspectives on the environmental and social issues and challenges related to Ganja's urban planning.

### **Summary of the Event outcomes**

The Event was conducted on 28 September, 2023, at Leon Hotel, Ganja, with participation of the representatives of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and participants from various stakeholder institutions as well as the representatives of UNECE, an international SEA and EIA expert to UNECE, and national experts to UNECE. Over 40 participants from state bodies (relevant departments of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture, Ganja City Authority, municipalities), private sector, academia and civil society organizations of the Ganja city and Ganja-Gazakh Economic Region took an active part in the discussions (see the list of participants attached).

The consultants to UNECE actively engaged with the participants through targeted discussions on the draft Master Plan of the city of Ganja and the associated draft SEA Report.

The following key topics were addressed and discussed:

The event was opened by Ms. Aysel Rzayeva, the Head of Subdivision of International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Espoo Convention national focal point. She highlighted the primary objective of the event, underscoring the critical importance of conducting a public hearing for the draft Master Plan of Ganja city and its associated draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report. Emphasizing that insights, suggestions, and comments gathered during the event would play a pivotal role in the subsequent refinement and ultimate finalization of the SEA Report, she further stressed that these valuable contributions would actively inform the formulation of recommendations crucial to finalizing the Master Plan for the city of Ganja.

In his brief statement delivered via Zoom, Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE, joined in welcoming the participants of the public hearing and outlined the activities undertaken by UNECE under the European Union funded EU4Environment programme for the pilot Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) project. He underscored the significance of the public hearing event in completing both the city's master plan and the SEA report, emphasizing the key role of community and stakeholders engagement at this crucial stage of the pilot project.

Ms. Shahnaz Badalova, Deputy Head of Urban Planning and Land Development Division, SCUPA, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the draft Master Plan of the city of Ganja. Her insightful overview focused on the key elements of the plan, addressing critical aspects such as urban development, infrastructure, and environmental considerations.

The opening session was followed by interactive discussions with the participants addressing a multitude of questions and comments. During the discussions, the participants actively deliberated on various challenges facing Ganja city. A prominent concern raised focused on a perceived inadequate state of the city's transport infrastructure and roads, leading to limited accessibility in certain residential areas. Moreover, there was a distinct emphasis on the necessity for heightened supervision of construction and demolition projects, with a strong focus on ensuring that all initiatives align with the cultural and historical values of the city. A number of the participants advocated for the strategic relocation of universities and branches of state institutions from Baku to Ganja, viewing this as a pivotal step in advancing the city's development. In addition, some views were expressed regarding the need for strengthening efforts to promote tourism development with a view to contributing to a sustainable economy and social infrastructure within the city.

During a subsequent session, the outcomes of the draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report were presented. Mr. Michal Musil, the International Expert to UNECE, delivered comprehensive insights into SEA and the intricacies of the SEA report preparation process. Following this, Mr. Amin Mammadov, the SEA Expert and Team Leader, presented the draft SEA report, offering detailed information on its various components. Following this presentation, discussions ensued on both the draft SEA report and the environmental challenges faced by Ganja city. Some participants underscored the imperative to establish a wastewater treatment plant within the city, emphasizing the role of proper sewage management to prevent discharge into surrounding areas. Additionally, concerns regarding solid waste management were deliberated upon. While acknowledging the significance of expanding the city's green spaces, a number of the participants pointed out that some areas were currently neglected or planted with water-intensive plants. Given the city's water scarcity, there was a consensus on the necessity of selecting drought-resistant plants suitable for the region. Furthermore, several participants raised issues related to developing solutions for water shortages and implementing rainwater management strategies for irrigation purposes.

### **Conclusions**

The event facilitated an in-depth understanding for its participants regarding the draft Master Plan of Ganja city and the associated preliminary draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report. The participants received information on both the master plan and the SEA report with notable enthusiasm, as evidenced by their active engagement through questions and recommendations. Beyond their inquiries, the participants took the opportunity to report issues concerning the city's infrastructure and environmental concerns.

The significance of the valuable information and recommendations provided by participants was underscored, emphasizing their crucial role in the finalization of both the SEA report and the master plan for the city.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Event was jointly prepared by the UNECE secretariat to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of

Azerbaijan, and supported by the Ganja City Executive Authority, and the State Committee on Architecture and Urban Planning (SCUPA).

The Event was kindly facilitated by Ms. Aysel Rzayeva of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Espoo Convention national focal point



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Appendix I:

**Public Hearing on the Pilot Strategic Environmental Assessment for the draft Master Plan of  
the city of Ganja**

**28 September 2023,  
09.30-13.00 (Baku time)**

**AGENDA**

<b>Time (Baku)</b>	<b>Item</b>
<b>09:00 – 09:30</b>	Registration and welcome coffee
<b>09:30 – 09:45</b>	<b>Opening and welcome remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ms. Aysel Rzayeva, Head of subdivision, International Cooperation Division, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan (MENR), National Focal Point to the Espoo Convention</li><li>• Ms. Shahnaz Badalova, Head of subdivision, State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture of Azerbaijan (SCUPA)</li><li>• Mr. Leonid Kalashnyk, EU4Environment Project Manager at UNECE</li></ul>
<b>09:45 – 10:05</b>	<b>Presentation of the draft Master Plan of Ganja</b> Ms. Shahnaz Badalova, SCUPA
<b>10:05-10:45</b>	<b>Q&amp;A on the draft Master Plan</b> Ms. Shahnaz Badalova, SCUPA
<b>10:45-11:00</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>11:00-11:30</b>	<b>Presentation of findings of the draft SEA Report</b> By Mr. Michal Musil, International SEA Expert to UNECE, and Mr. Amin Mammadov, SEA Expert, Team Leader
<b>11:30-12:50</b>	<b>Discussion on the findings</b> Moderated by Ms. Aysel Rzayeva, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources
<b>12.50-13.00</b>	<b>Closing remarks</b> Ms. Aysel Rzayeva, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources

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**Appendix II:**

**Public Hearing on the Pilot Strategic Environmental Assessment for  
the draft Master Plan of the city of Ganja**

**List of Participants**

**28 September 2023,  
09.30-13.00 (Baku time)**

**Ganja city, Azerbaijan**

Action implemented by:



### LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

**Total participants: 41**  
**Female participants: 20**  
**Male participants: 21**

#	Title and full name	Job title and institution	Contact information
1.	<b>Ms. Aysel Rzayeva</b>	<p>Head of subdivision, International Cooperation Division</p> <p>National focal point to UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention)</p> <p>Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan (MENR)</p>	<p>Address: Kazim Kazimzadeh st. 100A, Baku, Azerbaijan</p> <p>E-mail: <a href="mailto:aysel.rzayeva@eco.gov.az">aysel.rzayeva@eco.gov.az</a></p> <p>Mobile: +994556001538</p>
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