



Online seminar
1 December 2020
9.30-12.30 CET

Register here: [https://
indico.un.org/
event/35252/](https://indico.un.org/event/35252/)

Mine tailings safety in the UNECE region and beyond: Online seminar

The seminar aims to strengthen mine tailings safety and provide support to countries in the implementation of the [UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention](#). The main focus of the seminar will be on the UNECE region; interested representative of neighbouring and other countries are invited to attend. Supported languages are English and Russian.

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Draft agenda

- 9.00 – 9.30 **Participants connect to the online seminar platform in KUDO (details to be circulated)**
- 9.30 – 9.35 Opening and welcome by [Ms. Torill Tandberg](#), Chair of the Industrial Accidents Convention: *Objectives of the seminar and expected results.*

Part 1: exchange of experiences

- 9.35 – 9.55 **Session 1: Setting the scene in the area of mine tailing safety at the UNECE and at the global level**
Moderator: Torill Tandberg.
- Keynote address: [Mr. Antonio Pedro](#), Director of the UN Economic Commission for Africa's Sub-regional Office for Central Africa, expert member of the International Resource Panel (IRP): *Global trends in mineral demand, resource use, mine tailings safety and sustainable development – Outlook and impact for UNECE countries.*
 - [Ms. Martine Rohn-Brossard](#), Deputy Head of International Affairs Division, Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland: *Recent development on mineral resource governance at the global level: towards the 5th UN Environment Assembly.*
 - [UNECE secretariat](#): *Animated video on mine tailings safety.*
- 9.55 – 10.30 **Session 2: Experiences and lessons learned from the application of the safety guidelines and methodologies for improving tailings safety in UNECE countries**
Moderator: Torill Tandberg.
- [UNECE secretariat](#): *Experience with the UNECE Safety Guidelines, TMF methodology and transboundary cooperation in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and beyond in Central-Asia.*
 - [Mr. Gerhard Winkelmann-Oei](#), Chair of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents: *Preventing accidental pollution from mine tailings under the UNECE Industrial Accidents and Water Conventions – relevance for the UNECE region and beyond.*
 - [Mr. Adam Kovacs](#), International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR): *The application of the UNECE Safety Guidelines and a related TMF methodology in Romania and the Danube region: Assessing the hazard potential of TMFs.*
 - **Q&A** – through chat box and live.

Part 2: towards strengthened mine tailings safety, now and in the future

10.30 - 11.00

Session 3: Experiences, lessons learned and good practices on the safe management of mine tailings from countries beyond the UNECE region

Moderator: [Mr. Michael Struckl](#), vice-chair of the Industrial Accidents Convention.

- [Mr. Jan Kosmol](#), Federal Environment Agency, Germany: *Global trends and needs for mineral resources.*
- Representative from Brazil (tbc): *Lessons learned from the 2019 Brumadinho dam disaster and next steps towards the safe management of mine tailings facilities.*
- Representative from the Chinese Center of Environmental Emergency and Accident Investigation of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (tbc): *Lessons learned in monitoring TMFs.*

11.00 – 11.10

Break

11.10 – 11.45

Session 4: Trends and developments, stakeholder responses and proposed actions to improve mine tailings safety in the UNECE region and beyond

Moderator: Michael Struckl.

- [Ms. Diane Tang-Lee](#), Manager, International Council on Mining and Metals: *The Global Tailings Review, the Global Industry Standard for Tailings Management and follow up actions to support implementation.*
- [Mr. Guy Halpern](#), Policy Analyst, Green Growth and Global Relations Division, OECD): *Green growth and mine tailings: options for action.*
- [Mr. Pierre De Pasquale](#), Head of Stakeholder Engagement, Responsible Mining Foundation: *the RMI report 2020 – focus on the UNECE region.*
- **Q&A** through written statements in the chat based on the following questions:
 - Which experiences, lessons learned or good practices related to the safe management of mine tailings could you share, in view of the existing national challenges and international developments in the area of mineral resource governance?
 - What are, in light of current challenges and megatrends, the actions you are taking or planning to take to strengthen policy and governance to improve mine tailings management, and manage and reduce related disaster risks?

11.45 – 12.10

Session 5: Proposed actions to strengthen mine tailings safety in the UNECE region and beyond by the Industrial Accidents Convention

Moderator: Torill Tandberg.

- [UNECE secretariat](#): *Presentation of a draft decision on strengthening mine tailings safety in the UNECE region and beyond*
Discussion by the seminar participants on
 - proposed action by the Industrial Accidents Convention, and
 - further proposed actions to go above and beyond.

12.10 – 12.30

Seminar conclusions and closing

Past **accidents at tailings management facilities** within and beyond the ECE region – such as those in Brazil (2019, 2015), Kazakhstan (2016), Canada (2014), Finland (2012), Hungary (2010), Ukraine (2005) and Romania (2000) – have shown the **disastrous effects** that mine tailings accidents can have on humans and the environment, on both national and transboundary levels. Consequences of such accidents are getting more severe, even if they are entirely preventable.

The extraction of mineral resources is an important contributor to export earnings, employment and economic growth in many ECE countries, especially in Eastern and South Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Looking towards 2050, a global increase in the **demand for metals and minerals** is expected. This will likely increase the amount of hazardous waste stored in tailings facilities.

Environmental and technical hazards can be aggravated by changing weather patterns. **Extreme weather events** such as floods, storms and landslides are examples of natural hazards triggering technological risks (NATECH) that particularly affect mine tailings safety.

Countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia face particular challenges in view of the existence of **neglected TMFs**, in addition to which there are many other countries in the ECE region that have mine tailings facilities in place (e.g. Austria, Czechia, Finland, Serbia), making the subject of strengthening safety of mine tailings facilities of interest to all Parties of the Convention and the beneficiaries of its Assistance and Cooperation Programme.

At the same time, experiences around the globe could be useful for countries in the UNECE region. Lessons learned and upcoming practices to monitor risks related to mine tailings facilities can **help parties concerned adapt** to the scenarios of increased demand for resources in densely populated areas, addressing climate-related extreme weather events and environmental impact.

While mining activities are essential for socio-economic development, **industry and governments need to put safety first** to minimize disaster risk caused by hazardous activities. Continuing business as usual is not an option: Failing to prepare means preparing to fail.



Seminar objectives:

- Raise awareness among competent authorities and decision-makers of the urgency to strengthen national governance, policies and operational measures related to the safety of mine tailings facilities.
- Discuss the impact of international developments on the management of mine tailings, including:
 - The increase in demand for minerals and metals, related to energy, transport, investments and trade
 - Consequences of changes in climatic conditions
 - Considerations how to address related challenges
- Present the role the [UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention](#), other legal instruments and existing tools in increasing the safe management of mine tailings facilities and exemplify successful efforts by UNECE countries, and beyond.
- Strengthen awareness of the Convention's role and collect input for its future work on mine tailings and for the global debate on mineral resource governance and sustainable infrastructure, focusing on support for operational and implementation activities.
- Provide a forum to strengthen existing and build new partnerships, including with international organizations, industry representatives, experts, academia and NGOs, through the exchange of experiences and good practices in the area of mine tailings safety.
- Agree on action to take by the Parties to the Convention, beneficiaries of its [Assistance and Cooperation Programme](#), and other interested countries.