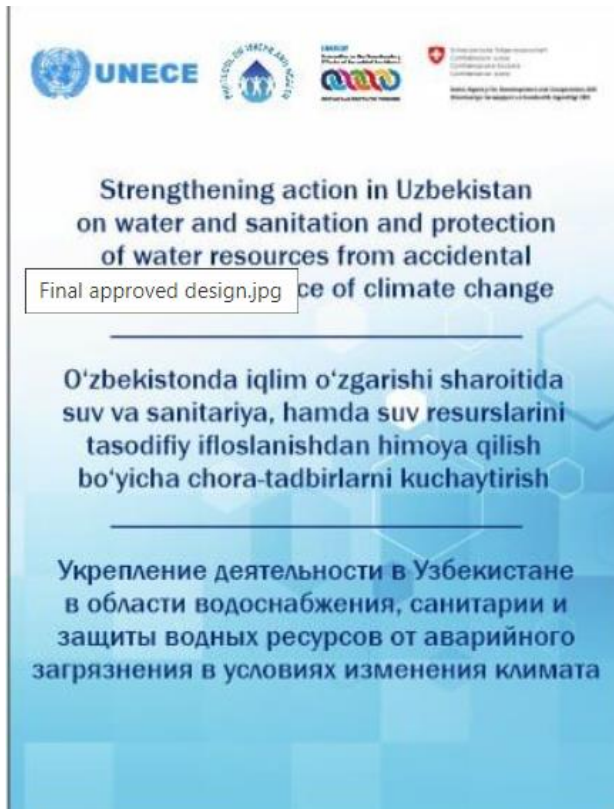

Summary and conclusions of the high-level project launch event and technical meetings – Tashkent and online, 14- 15 March 2024 –

1. Background



The event marked the official launch of [the Project on strengthening action in Uzbekistan on water and sanitation and protection of water resources from accidental pollution in the face of climate change \(2024-2026\)](#), implemented by UNECE and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project aims to improve governance and build capacity in Uzbekistan in the areas of water and sanitation, prevention of accidental water pollution, and resilience to climate change, including through transboundary cooperation and regional exchange.

The 1.5-day of events included a high-level launching event with a press conference and technical meetings on the implementation of the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health and the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents. The events were attended by both high-level representatives and experts from environment, water, health and industrial safety authorities of Uzbekistan, experts from other countries

(joining remotely), operators, NGOs, international organizations such as the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and representatives of national and international media.

2. Key conclusions of the high-level project launch event and technical meetings

HIGH-LEVEL PROJECT LAUNCH EVENT (14 March 2024, 9:30 – 13:00)

The objectives of the high-level launch event were the following:

- Raising awareness of the project, notably by introducing the project objectives, activities and expected results to the national authorities and the general public and to exchange views on activities as well as to endorse the workplan for 2024;
- Raise awareness of and strengthen commitment to the implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health and Industrial Accidents Convention at high and expert level and among relevant local actors and to build relevant partnerships. The event also celebrated the recent accession of Uzbekistan to the Protocol on Water and Health as its 29th Party;
- Enhance understanding of the needs of Uzbekistan in the area of water resources, WASH, industrial/tailings safety and prevention of accidental water pollution and ensure information exchange between different stakeholders.

The meeting was opened and chaired by Mr. Pulatov, the Director of Scientific Research Institute of Ecology and Environmental Protection at the Ministry of Ecology of Uzbekistan. The high-level opening remarks were delivered by Mr. Juraev, Director of Information-Analytical and Resource Center under the Ministry of Water Resources of Uzbekistan, who is also the officially nominated focal point for the project; Mr. Kurbanov, Deputy Head of the Sanitary and Epidemiological Welfare and Public Health Service, Mr. Akhmedov, Head of the Radiation Chemical and Medical and Biological Defence Department of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Uzbekistan; Ms. Boesch Deputy Head of Mission/Head of Cooperation, Embassy of Switzerland, representing SDC in Uzbekistan, Ms. Noshadi, UN RC a.i. in Uzbekistan and Mr. Mariyasin, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary (through a video message).

The high-level statements made by the Uzbek authorities highlighted the relevance of the issues of water, health and industrial safety within the current country's priorities. The government conveyed the need to follow an all-encompassing approach to issues related to water, environment and health, further work on subregional cooperation and cooperation with different national authorities. In this context, the role of the Industrial Accidents Convention and Protocol on Water and Health was highlighted. It was noted that the newly launched project will trigger joint and coordinated action by key ministries and authorities working on environment, water resource management, health and industrial safety.

At the same time, the meeting allowed to better understand the needs of Uzbekistan to further refine the project's activities and plan implementation actions. Among the challenges that Uzbekistan faces are increasing climate change impacts, access to and safety of water and sanitation services, quality of water resources, population growth, mining and urbanization, and others. In their presentation, Ms. Nikiforova and Kamke from UNECE explained how the project is planning to support addressing the above challenges and country priorities and needs and introduced main project activities and expected results. The meeting endorsed the proposed workplan and activities for 2024.

The high-level event also allowed for an open dialogue and trust-building among all participants (both coming from the government authorities, partner organizations and civil society). In addition, it facilitated information and knowledge sharing about the upcoming activities planned under the new project, incl. through press conference, and synergies with other projects and relevant activities. The press conference was a first step in communication and awareness raising campaign to the general public.

Following the high-level launch, separate technical meetings were organized in parallel by the Industrial Accidents Convention and the Protocol on Water and Health in the afternoon of 14 March 2024. In addition, a technical meeting on the revision of wastewater standards was held in Uzbekistan on 15 March 2024. The key findings from those meetings are presented below. All presentations, photos and the press release for the event are available on [the meeting website](#).

TECHNICAL WORKSHOP TO FACILITATE UZBEKISTAN'S ACCESSION TO AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNECE CONVENTION ON THE TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS (14 March 2024, 14:00 – 17:30)

The objectives of the technical workshop on the Industrial Accidents Convention were the following:

- Familiarize the Uzbek national authorities with the benefits of accession to the Convention and share practical experiences of other countries in implementing its provisions;
- Discuss the establishment and terms of reference of the Inter-Institutional Working Group on Tailings Safety and Prevention of Accidental Water Pollution (IIWG) in Uzbekistan;
- Agree on concrete steps to consider accession to the Industrial Accidents Convention and the IIWG establishment.

The meeting allowed Uzbekistan to better understand the provisions of the Convention and benefits of accession (secretariat presentation). It also allowed the country to review the experience of other

countries in acceding to the Convention (Mr. Morshch, Ministry of Emergency Situations of Ukraine), coordinating national action to implement the Convention's provisions (Mr. Srdić, Ministry of Environmental Protection of Serbia) and establishing IIWGs (Mr. Mirzozoda, Service of the State Supervision of Safe Work in Industry and Mining Supervision under the Government of Tajikistan). On that basis, Uzbek authorities discussed and agreed on possible next steps.

In particular, the representatives of the national authorities agreed to take further steps towards the IIWG establishment, notably:

- The national authorities - Ministry of Ecology, Ministry of Emergency Situations, Inspectorate for Supervision of Mining, Geological and Industrial Safety and Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan - supported the IIWG's establishment and agreed with the ToR and the proposed composition of the group;
- Under the leadership of the Ministry of Ecology, national authorities will consult internally how to best formally establish the IIWG in Uzbekistan and inform UNECE by 15 April 2024 about the outcome and possible dates for the first meeting of the group.

Additionally, concrete steps to facilitate Uzbekistan's accession to the Industrial Accidents Convention were agreed, notably to:

- Start organizing internal negotiations on accession to the Convention;
- Develop a roadmap for accession (actions necessary for accession to the Industrial Accidents Convention);
- Determine the responsible body that will coordinate or lead accession to the Convention.

The Ministry of Ecology expressed interest to lead both the establishment of the IIWG and Uzbekistan's efforts towards accession to the Industrial Accidents Convention. The Ministry agreed to coordinate internally on this and inform the secretariat about the responsible body and further steps towards accession and the IIWG establishment by 15 April 2024.

The technical workshop and above decisions taken allowed Uzbekistan to progress in the implementation of its 2019 concept on environmental protection until 2030, which foresees accession to the Industrial Accidents Convention.

TECHNICAL WORKSHOP ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE UNECE-WHO/EUROPE PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH AS A PARTY (14 March 2024, 14:00 – 17:30)

The objectives of the technical workshop on the Protocol were the following:

- Understand the key needs of Uzbekistan in the area of WASH and health;
- Provide detailed guidance to the Uzbek authorities on the process of target setting and reporting under the Protocol (main legal obligation and at the same time key part of the project activities under this component);
- Agree on the way forward and next steps in initiating the baseline analysis on water, sanitation, hygiene and health and subsequently setting of targets under the Protocol.

The meeting was opened by the Head of WHO Country Office in Uzbekistan, Ms. Khalakdina. It was attended by the national focal points for the Protocol and key experts from the Sanitary and Epidemiological Welfare and Public Health Service and the Ministry of Water as well as representatives of the Agency for Strategic Reforms under the Administration of the President, the Ministry of Construction, the Institute for Irrigation and other partners such as Caritas, GIZ, Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia (SIC ICWC) and WHO CO. Representatives of Belarus, Ms. Drazdova, and Hungary, Ms. Vargha, attended remotely and delivered presentations on their experiences with setting targets and implementing technical areas of work under the Protocol. Mr. Schmolli, co-Secretary of the Protocol at WHO/Europe, also attended

remotely and made a presentation on the Protocol obligations and benefits together with Ms. Nikiforova.

During the workshop the participants discussed the institutional arrangements needed to carry out the work at national level, namely whether to set up an official working group on water and health with the mandate to collect data from the relevant agencies but nominating specific experts or rather a steering committee to monitor the implementation of the project activities (Protocol component) and the Protocol in general. The decision was to establish a working group with experts officially nominated by their respective institutions.

The next steps in the project implementation were identified, namely initiation of baseline analysis by national consultants in order to inform future target setting under the Protocol (to be conducted in summer 2024) and subsequently initiating the process of target setting (to continue also in 2025).

FIRST TECHNICAL MEETING ON REVISION OF WASTEWATER STANDARDS IN UZBEKISTAN (UNDER THE PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH COMPONENT) (15 March, 14:00 – 18:00)

This meeting was held within the framework of the Water Sector Donors' Coordination in the Republic of Uzbekistan, and with the support of / within the framework of the project "[Strengthening Action in Uzbekistan on Water and Sanitation and Protection of Water Resources from Accidental Pollution in the face of Climate Change](#)", which is funded by SDC and implemented by the UNECE.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss existing standards for wastewater treatment in Uzbekistan and agree on the further development of regulation on this topic. Various aspects of the application of the current wastewater standard were presented by Mr. Shi-Syan from Centre for the State Environmental Expertise the Ministry of Environment, Ms Murashkina from Uzsvtaminot, and Ms. Le Guillou from French Development Agency. Mr. Jumagulov from LLP StroyDesignProekt shared experience of Kazakhstan in changing the wastewater standards which assisted in shaping the roadmap for the same task in Uzbekistan.

Conclusions and decisions of the meeting are as follows:

- The water quality indicators specified in SanPiN No. 0318-2015 should be distinguished from the requirements for wastewater at the point of discharge.
- To clarify the application of the current national legislation, the Center for State Environmental Expertise of the Republic of Uzbekistan has developed a draft instruction - it will be finalized soon and shared with the meeting participants for comment.
- For the same purpose, the possibility of mapping zones I and II categories specified in SanPiN No. 0318-2015 will be considered.
- To develop a national standard for wastewater treatment, considering the experience of Kazakhstan. When developing the standard, wastewater treatment for irrigation should be considered for inclusion.
- To revise the classification of the quality of natural water bodies, considering the experience of the neighboring countries.
- To consider the possibility of the pilot modelling of the Chirchik River, taking into account its water balance, quality of the waterbodies and quality of discharges.
- Work in this area will continue within the scope of the sectoral Working Group (within the framework of the SDC-funded project). UNECE will provide support to the Republic of Uzbekistan in revising the wastewater quality standard, as well as the classification of the quality of natural water bodies - within the framework of the SDC project / its part of the



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Protocol on Water and Health. International financial organizations expressed their readiness to support the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan in work in this area.

More information on the high-level launching event, press conference and technical meetings, including agenda, presentations and other information are available on the events' [website](#).