

**Summary and conclusions of the
Inception Workshop of the UNECE Pilot Project to strengthen the safety of mining
operations, in particular tailings management facilities (TMFs), in
Kazakhstan and beyond in Central Asia
– Astana, 7-8 November 2018 –**

1. Main objectives

- Establishing an inter-ministerial working group on water management and TMF safety to initiate the implementation of the project and to agree on national priorities
- Enhance the expert knowledge and administrative capacity of Kazakhstan to reduce water-related risks
- Provide a forum for discussion for the representatives of national authorities to improve institutional coordination regarding TMF safety and industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response
- Support Kazakh competent authorities in identifying and rating TMFs with regard to their hazard for human health and the environment, with a focus on facilities, which may cause transboundary pollution
- Strengthen knowledge about international Conventions and relevant guidance materials in the field of chemicals and waste management to improve the management of mining tailings
- Enhance water management and to reduce related risks to strengthening the implementation of the UNECE Industrial Accidents and Water Conventions
- Support Kazakhstan in the implementation of the recommendations arising from the UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs), namely that “a broad programme for the management of existing mining tailings, including hazardous and radioactive tailings, should be developed, financed and implemented”

2. Attendees

The inception workshop brought together representatives of state authorities of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as well as representatives of international organizations and NGOs, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC), Regional Environment Centre for Central Asia (CAREC), Public Fund Water Initiatives Center (WIC) and international experts from the Armenia, Czechia, Finland, Germany, Switzerland – notably also the Ambassador of Switzerland to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan – and Ukraine. Representatives of the UNECE governing bodies and operators of TMFs in Kazakhstan also participated. The meeting was organized and serviced by the UNECE secretariat.



3. Programme



The inception workshop was divided into 4 sessions. The workshop began with providing an overview of the work on tailings safety under the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, further to the application of international instruments and guidance materials. The second session focused on the management of tailings facilities and lessons learned from past tailings accidents in the UNECE region, including in a transboundary context. It also allowed countries to exchange their experiences and best practices through presentations by experts from Czechia, Finland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Romania. The third session

focused on the introduction and application of the TMF methodology. To this end, international experts presented in more detail the TMF methodology, i.e. the Tailings Hazard Index, the checklists and measure catalogue, and its application in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. In the fourth session, ways of improving inter-institutional collaboration were discussed and the participants agreed that an inter-institutional Working Group on Tailings Safety and Water Management be established in Kazakhstan. The seminar ended with the discussion on the preparations for the further project implementation, including the on-site training, with clear identification of responsibilities for identified tasks and timelines. The key conclusions from inception workshop are presented below.

4. Key conclusions of the inception workshop

- The Government of Kazakhstan, in view of the importance and existing needs in improving the safety of tailing facilities, stressed its commitment to the implementation of the UNECE pilot project on improving mining and tailings safety in Kazakhstan and beyond in Central Asia. The project was initiated following the conduct of the national self-assessment and drafting of the national action plan for the implementation of the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention.
- The Chair of the Water Convention noted the linkages of the Water Convention with the Industrial Accidents Convention through the UNECE Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (JEG). Kazakhstan, as Chair of the Water Convention, will pay increased attention to the activities of the JEG and, through its activities, to the interaction with the Industrial Accidents Convention.
- Kazakhstan expressed its gratitude to UNECE and the government of Switzerland for the support in financing and implementing the project. UNECE stressed the progress made to date in the project thanks to the Kazakh commitment.
- Switzerland welcomed and expressed support to Kazakhstan's efforts to enhance the safety of mining operations, in particular TMFs. It also welcomed and supported Kazakhstan's efforts to conduct the 3rd Environmental Performance Review in the light of the SDGs, green economy concept and the Belt and Road Initiative perspectives.
- Participants approved the objectives of the project, i.e. to strengthen the safety of tailing facilities, the capacity of the involved agencies and mechanisms of inter-institutional cooperation in Kazakhstan and with other Central Asian countries, to support competent authorities of Kazakhstan in the preparation of an inventory and the ranking of tailing facilities to safeguard human and the environment hazards, with a special focus on objects that can cause cross-border pollution. Participants also agreed with the project activities, the implementation plan and proposed timelines presented by UNECE.
- Participants recognized the importance of inter-institutional collaboration and agreed to establish an inter-institutional Working Group on Tailings Safety and Water Management in Kazakhstan. The Working Group should conduct its first meeting(s) back-to-back with the project activities and Kyrgyzstan expressed interest to participate in its work.

- Participants thanked the international and national experts from Kazakhstan for the interesting cases and lessons learned from past tailings accidents presented. They further acknowledged the severe consequences, including in a transboundary context, which TMF accidents may cause and concluded that safety and preventing accidents should be put first.
- Participants stressed the importance and need of continuing to share experiences and information with one another, notably at the subregional level among Central Asian countries.
- Participants welcomed the UNECE Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for TMFs and the TMF methodology and acknowledged them as good tools to support competent authorities and operators in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries in improving and managing tailings safety. Participants also agreed to use the TMF methodology at the upcoming onsite training and welcomed the intention of Kazakhstan to explore the introduction of the Methodology into its respective national regulations.
- Participants welcomed Kazakhstan's commitment to the project implementation, as demonstrated not least by the submission of the inventory with TMFs. Participants also agreed to map the TMFs in Kazakhstan, including those with possible transboundary effects, in a similar way as done in the projects in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. Kyrgyzstan expressed its intention to also submit TMF data for subsequent preparation of inventory and mapping.

5. Other key points made at the workshop

- Participants highlighted at several occasions during the workshop that the TMF methodology, notably its Tailings Hazard Index, is a good means to show where the highest needs for strengthening TMF safety in a (sub)region are. This can be of particular interest to donors when prioritizing funding for certain subregions or countries. Participants recognized the usefulness of applying the methodology to demonstrate commitment to improving tailings management and safety.
- Participants stressed the importance of the pilot project and expressed their gratitude to Switzerland and UNECE for allowing its implementation. Participants also expressed great appreciation to Germany for the development of the methodology, based on the UNECE Safety Guidelines and Good Practices for TMFs.
- Participants welcomed the elaboration of draft recommendations on improving regulations on tailings safety and management in post-soviet countries which are currently being developed in a project on tailings safety in Armenia and Ukraine. Participants recommended that these be shared with the participants of the inception workshop.

6. Key action items agreed at the project coordination meeting

(a) Inventory and Hazard Mapping

- By mid-December 2018, Kazakh project coordinator to provide additional data for the finalization of the inventory (e.g. information on the additional approx. 30 TMFs not yet included in the inventory; further information clarifying the toxicity of the hazardous materials; information on main pollutant; information on the location, preferably longitude and latitude, of the TMF).
- By mid-January 2019, finalization of the Kazakh inventory, and by end-January 2019, finalization of the hazard map for Kazakhstan, with the support of the Ukrainian experts.

(b) Onsite training

- Onsite training should take place in the second half of May or in June 2019; the exact date should be agreed as soon as possible, preferably in January 2019; Ust-Kamenogorsk was identified as a good region to conduct the training, allowing also for a TMF with possible transboundary effects.
- Checklist B2 should be completed before the site visit by the Kazakh participants, possibly during a preparatory visit of the TMF facility by the Kazakh competent authorities; checklist B1 can be used during the onsite training; before the training information about the TMF facility should be circulated to all participants.

(c) Inter-institutional working group on tailings safety and water management

- The Ministry of Investment and Development of Kazakhstan agreed with the planned establishment of the working group and expressed its full support, noting that the Ministry would prefer that the Ministry of Agriculture took the lead in this.
- Consultations will be conducted by the Ministry of Investment and Development with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Energy regarding the establishment of the working group. The outcome of the consultations will be communicated in January 2019.
- For cost efficiency reasons, it was proposed that the working group should meet back-to-back with envisaged project activities initially. It was stressed that the working group be sustainable and continue its work after the project finalization, as a platform to discuss also questions related to industrial safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution more broadly.

7. Evaluation of the inception workshop and further information

More information on the inception workshop and its **Evaluation Summary** are available on the Convention's [website](#). More information on the **Project** and its activities is available [here](#).