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Progress report on the Assistance Programme and other assistance activities carried out in 2017–2018

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents Assistance Programme, established at the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2004 (ECE/CP.TEIA/12, para. 39), seeks to enhance the efforts of countries with economies in transition in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region to raise their levels of industrial safety, through implementation of the Convention. This document presents the assistance activities carried out in 2017–2018 and their main outcomes.

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Introduction

1. At its third meeting (Budapest, 27–30 October 2004), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention) adopted an Assistance Programme in order to enhance the efforts of the East European, Caucasian and Central Asian and the South-East European countries to implement the Convention (ECE/CP.TEIA/12, para. 39). The Assistance Programme helps countries with economies in transition to address obstacles to accession or implementation, such as unstable institutional frameworks, limited administrative and expert capacities and scarce financial resources, which are often exacerbated by difficult overall political and economic situations. Thanks to the support received, countries are better able to cope with industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response.

2. The present document examines the main outcomes of the activities carried out under the Convention's Assistance Programme during the biennium 2017–2018. Chapter I sets out the key outcomes and achievements of the Programme; chapter II summarizes its history and reflects on the way forward; chapter III presents the main outcomes of implementation of the Strategic Approach during the biennium; and chapter IV describes the key outcomes and achievements of other assistance activities. The annex contains a list of activities carried out under the Programme during the biennium.

I. Key outcomes and achievements of the activities carried out under the Assistance Programme during the biennium 2017–2018

A. Subregional workshops on industrial accident prevention in South-Eastern Europe and in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe

3. Two subregional workshops were organized in 2017 with the aim of increasing administrative capacity with respect to the identification and notification of hazardous activities in South-Eastern Europe and in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in the area of identification and notification of hazardous activities, in line with Annex I of the Convention and the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). They also sought to increase the beneficiary countries' awareness of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (Sendai Framework) and to identify linkages and synergies with European Union legislation on chemicals management and industrial accident prevention where relevant (for countries that are joining the European Union and/or have signed association agreements). Both workshops were organized with funding from Norway under the project on Promotion of environmental protection and cooperation in the ECE region. Additional financial and in-kind contributions were provided as indicated below.

1. Subregional workshop for South-Eastern Europe on industrial accidents prevention: Identification and notification of hazardous activities and linkages with the relevant European Union legislation

4. The subregional workshop (Zagreb, 21–23 February 2017) was attended by 21 representatives of the national authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro

and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Four representatives of Kosovo¹ attended the workshop at the invitation of the European Union, through the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) instrument of the European Commission. Its organization was made possible by funding from Norway and a financial contribution from the European Union through TAIEX. In-kind contributions in the form of expertise were provided by the European Union, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Netherlands, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. Switzerland made a presentation via Skype.

5. As a result of the workshop, the subregion's capacity for the identification and notification of hazardous activities was increased and linkages between the Convention, the GHS, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework and synergies with the European Union legislation on chemicals management and industrial accident prevention were identified.

2. Subregional workshop for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus on industrial accidents prevention: Chemicals management, identification and notification of hazardous industrial activities

6. The subregional workshop (Minsk, 11–13 April 2017) was hosted by the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Belarus. Its organization was made possible by funding from Norway and a financial contribution from Germany. In-kind contributions in the form of expertise were provided by the European Union, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovenia. Switzerland made a presentation via Skype.

7. The workshop allowed 28 representatives of the relevant authorities of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine to familiarize themselves with the Convention and its revised Annex I and to learn procedures for the identification and notification of hazardous activities in accordance with the Convention and in light of the good practices of other countries. The participants practised applying Annex I through case studies and exchanged knowledge and experience. Linkages between the Convention, the GHS, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Sendai Framework were highlighted.

3. Overall outcomes of the two subregional workshops

8. The 2017 subregional workshops showed that countries need to improve coordination between competent authorities at the national level. In view of the lack of mechanisms for consultation with neighbouring countries in the subregion, it was suggested that an online platform for interaction with experts in other countries should be developed. When establishing national identification and notification systems, governments should benefit from the experience of other countries. The participants emphasized the need to be able to consult each other, particularly when determining the potential transboundary effects of hazardous activities. It was suggested that countries should enhance their efforts to exchange information and share good practices on potential transboundary effects, have contingency plans for environmental accidents in place and increase their collaboration with neighbouring countries and with industries that have installations close to their borders. The participants also requested the development of a simple guide or template for the notification of hazardous activities.

9. It was stressed that in order for countries to benefit fully from the Assistance Programme, they needed to finalize their self-assessments and national action plans. For countries wishing to join the European Union, linkages between the Convention and

¹ All references to Kosovo in this document should be understood in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Directive 2012/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directive 96/82/EC (the Seveso III Directive) were highlighted.

10. An important issue regarding inconsistent use of the terms “category” and “class” in Annex I to the Convention was raised in the margins of the subregional workshops; “category” is used to refer, on the one hand, to the numbers (1–21) used to identify the substances and mixtures listed in Part I of the Annex and, on the other, to the classification of these substances and mixtures according to the GHS (e.g. acute toxicity, category 1). The GHS criteria were developed in order to permit classification and labelling based on “hazard classes” (hazardous properties) and “hazard categories” (degree of hazard within a hazard class). Because the GHS, in which these terms are clearly defined and consistently used, has been implemented in many countries, they are used in that manner in chemical-related legislation worldwide. It was noted that the use of these terms in the context of the Convention was particularly confusing when using the location criteria, which refer to “categories” of substances and mixtures that predate the alignment of Annex I with the GHS. At the participants’ request, the Convention’s Bureau considered the matter and decided to prepare a draft decision amending the Guidelines to facilitate the identification of hazardous activities for the purposes of the Convention (ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/4) for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

11. Generally speaking, the participants emphasized the importance of subregional workshops as an opportunity to consult with experts from other countries and requested that more such workshops, including on notification of hazardous activities and on industrial accident notification (including training in use of the ECE Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) system), be organized.

B. Project on Strengthening implementation of and accession to the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Central Asia project

1. Project implementation and overall outcome

12. The Project on Strengthening implementation of and accession to the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Central Asia is being implemented during the period March 2016–March 2019 with financial support from the Russian Federation, which, together with Belarus, is also providing expertise through international experts who advise and guide national experts in the beneficiary countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The project was formally launched at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Ljubljana, 28–30 November 2016). During the biennium 2017–2018, the Project entered its key implementation phase with activities in all five beneficiary countries and a subregional workshop.

13. In addition to promoting accession to and implementation of the Convention, the project supports beneficiary countries’ efforts to enhance their industrial safety, thereby protecting human health and the environment. Its main target groups are government officials and experts from the national competent authorities on industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response with the engagement of the private sector, civil society and academia as appropriate.

14. The project has increased understanding of the Convention’s key requirements and enhanced capacities for the assessment of industrial safety and the development of national implementation and accession plans. Each of the five beneficiary countries has undertaken a

self-assessment of industrial safety and implementation of the Convention in accordance with the Strategic Approach under the Convention's Assistance Programme and has developed an action plan for raising the current level of industrial safety. These documents were reviewed and approved by the Convention's Working Group on Implementation. As a result of the project, awareness and understanding of the main requirements of the Convention were increased.

15. The Project also showed that the countries of Central Asia require further support in order to meet all of the Convention's requirements and improve their industrial safety. National expert group meetings have increased understanding of the division of responsibilities among authorities and of the need to further strengthen inter-agency cooperation.

2. National expert group meetings in the five beneficiary countries

16. During the period 2017–2018, a national expert group meeting was held in each of the project's beneficiary countries with in-kind contributions in the form of expertise provided by Belarus and the Russian Federation.

17. The meetings served as a forum for discussion and for the exchange of experience and information among the national and international experts. The participants stressed the importance of clarifying the role of the point of contact under the IAN system and obtaining or restoring access to it, as well as the need to clarify the procedure for notification of hazardous activities and to develop a notification template. Such a template was subsequently prepared through cooperation between the project's international experts, the Working Group on Implementation and the secretariat and was endorsed by the Working Group (ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/11, annex III). Another important outcome of the project is the draft Implementation Guide to the Convention for Central Asian Countries (in Russian), which addresses the questions asked and issues raised at the national expert group meetings.

18. The meetings also streamlined cooperation with regional actors, including the Central Asia Centre for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction, which will host the subregional workshop and was represented at some of the national meetings.

3. Subregional workshop for Central Asia on industrial safety and transboundary cooperation

19. The subregional workshop for Central Asia on industrial safety and transboundary cooperation (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 25–26 September 2018) will provide a platform for subregional exchange, initial transboundary consultations and decisions on future hazardous activities notification. It will allow countries in the subregion to share their experience in implementing the Convention and preparing national self-assessments and action plans and to identify remaining priorities and challenges and ways of addressing them. It will also showcase project outcomes for international donors and partners, explore synergies and possibilities for future cooperation and serve as a forum for presenting, and gathering feedback on, the draft Implementation Guide to the Convention for Central Asian countries.

20. Despite the achievements of the project on strengthening implementation of and accession to the Convention in Central Asia, the hazardous activities falling within the scope of the Convention have not yet been identified in any of the countries in the subregion, nor have any consultations or notifications of hazardous activities been carried out. Transboundary cooperation, while enhanced through the subregional workshop, is still rather weak. The need for follow-up projects and activities was highlighted at the final event of the project.

C. Training on environment and emergencies and hazardous industrial activities: Training of trainers and subsequent training

21. ECE, together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Environment Unit and other partners, organized a training of trainers (ToT) workshop on environment and emergencies and hazardous industrial activities (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 23–24 October 2017). Five staff members of the Central Asia Centre for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction and seven representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were trained on preparedness for and response to environmental emergencies, including industrial accidents, and the application of the Convention with a focus on the identification of hazardous activities and use of the Flash Environmental Assessment Tool (FEAT)² methodology. The training increased the participants' knowledge of environmental emergencies, hazards and disasters and included practice in identifying hazardous activities. On 25 and 26 October 2017, the newly trained trainers (under the supervision of the ToT facilitators) trained 13 representatives of the above four Central Asian countries, applying the methodology and using the materials provided during the workshop.

D. High-level awareness-raising in Ukraine

22. A high-level awareness-raising mission to Ukraine and related bilateral meetings were organized with funding from Germany. The Government of Ukraine co-organized bilateral meetings between the Convention secretariat and the relevant national authorities (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the State Emergency Service,) (Kyiv, 18 April 2018) and a high-level multi-stakeholder meeting (Kyiv, 19 April 2018). The latter meeting had 42 participants, of whom 28 were the representatives of various Ukrainian authorities, including the State Emergency Service; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; the Ministry of Regional Development, Construction, Housing and Utilities; the Ministry of Infrastructure; the State Labour Service; the State Water Resources Agency; the State Border Guards Service; and the State Architecture and Construction Inspectorate. In-kind contributions in the form of expertise were provided by the European Union, Germany, the Republic of Moldova and Slovenia.

23. The relevant authorities of Ukraine were informed about ECE's work in the areas of environmental governance, industrial safety and the prevention of accidental water pollution. Awareness of the Convention and its Assistance Programme, including the potential benefits for Ukraine, was raised. It was explained that accession to the Convention will help Ukraine to bring its legislation and regulations in line with European Union industrial safety and environmental protection standards pursuant to its Association Agreement. The workshop also highlighted the links between implementation of the Convention and of the Seveso III Directive, which Ukraine undertook to finalize in 2019.

24. As a representative of the State Emergency Service concluded, "Ukraine desperately needs to accede to the ECE Industrial Accidents Convention"; accession and implementation would enable the country not only to enhance industrial safety at the national level, but also to play an important role in improving regional and cross-border cooperation.

² The Flash Environmental Assessment Tool (FEAT) was developed by the UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit in cooperation with partner organizations, including ECE.

25. In follow-up to the meetings, Ukraine has agreed to designate a focal point and a competent authority or authorities under the Convention and has informed the ECE Executive Secretary that steps are being taken with a view to accession to the Convention.

E. ECE pilot project to strengthen the safety of mining operations, in particular tailings management facilities (TMFs), in Kazakhstan and beyond in Central Asia

1. Project approach and objectives

26. The two-year project is being implemented during the period December 2017–December 2019 with funding from the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment. It will benefit from synergies with the Assistance in safety improvement of tailings management facilities in Armenia and Georgia project implemented by EcoPeace, an Armenian NGO, with a financial contribution from Germany (see Section IV (B) below) and seeks to encourage the exchange of information on tailings management facility (TMF) safety in various subregions.

27. With the overall objective of strengthening the safety of mining operations, the project seeks to enhance Kazakhstan's expert and administrative capacity to reduce water-related risks by improving TMF management, including control measures to prevent the release and ensure the environmentally sound management of mercury. It will help the Kazakh competent authorities to rate TMFs based on the hazards that they pose for human health and the environment with a focus on those that are likely to cause transboundary pollution. It will also strengthen knowledge of the international conventions on chemical and waste management, including the importance of their ratification and implementation by Kazakhstan with a view to improved TMF management, as well as of the relevant guidance materials.

28. The project is being implemented in close cooperation with the competent authorities of Kazakhstan under the Convention (the Ministry for Investments and Development, the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Internal Affairs) and in partnership with other international and regional organizations and NGOs.

29. Key activities include a national inception workshop, a hazard inventory, the mapping of TMFs, a training event at a TMF site and a subregional workshop.

2. Inception workshop

30. The project's inception workshop, (Astana, 7–8 November 2018) is being co-organized by the Convention secretariat and the competent authorities of Kazakhstan.

31. As a result of this workshop, an interministerial working group on water management and TMF safety will be established and national priorities for enhancing TMF safety identified. The workshop will serve as a discussion forum allowing national authorities to improve institutional coordination of TMF safety and industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response. Kazakhstan will benefit significantly by enhancing its national expert and administrative capacity to reduce water-related risks, and its competent authorities will be helped to identify and rank TMFs according to the hazards that they pose for human health and the environment with a focus on facilities that may cause transboundary pollution. The workshop and future activities under the project will also support Kazakhstan's implementation of the recommendations arising from ECE environmental performance reviews (EPRs), including that "a broad programme for the management of existing mining

tailings, including hazardous and radioactive tailings, should be developed, financed and implemented” (recommendation 9.4, first and second EPRs, 2000 and 2008, respectively)³.

32. Overall, the workshop seeks to strengthen knowledge about international legal instruments and guidance materials in the field of chemical and waste management in order to improve TMF management and strengthen implementation of the Convention and, by enhancing water management and reducing related risks, of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

F. Awareness-raising workshop for Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan on the Industrial Accidents Convention (Geneva, Switzerland, 6 June 2018)

33. The workshop was organized by the secretariat at the request of the OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan and in response to needs voiced by Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan at the national expert group meetings held under the Project on Strengthening implementation of and accession to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Central Asia. It was attended by four representatives of Kyrgyz national authorities and five representatives of Uzbek national authorities.

34. The workshop sought to raise awareness of the benefits of accession to the Convention and the opportunities offered to beneficiaries of its Assistance Programme. The participants deepened their knowledge and understanding of the main requirements of the Convention and related activities in the Central Asian subregion. Following the meeting, the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Kyrgyzstan was designated as the point of contact for the IAN system. The event also allowed the participants to exchange knowledge and experience in implementing the Convention in their respective countries and benefitting from various Assistance Programme activities.

II. From assistance to cooperation

35. The Assistance Programme has evolved over time. Its original function – the provision of assistance to countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia by countries in other parts of the ECE region – has changed and evolved in the direction of mutual support and cooperation; and can now be considered to be an Assistance and Cooperation Programme, as per the Convention’s draft long-term strategy until 2030 (ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/5, para 25). This change was encouraged by the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting (Geneva, 3–5 December 2014).

36. During the biennium 2017–2018, the Programme’s beneficiary countries have been increasingly cooperating with and supporting each other and taking full ownership of activities. The implementation of multi-year, multi-country projects has facilitated the exchange of knowledge and experience among beneficiary countries and improved transboundary cooperation through subregional projects and activities. This has become particularly apparent under the Strengthening implementation of and accession to the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Central Asia project, where Belarus (also a beneficiary of the Assistance Programme) provided expertise and advice on implementation of the Strategic Approach to countries in Central Asia. The Assistance in safety improvement of tailings management facilities in Armenia and Georgia project and the pilot project to strengthen the safety of mining operations, in particular

³ www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environmental-performance-reviews/enveprpublications/environmental-performance-reviews/2008/2nd-environmental-performance-review-of-kazakhstan.html.

tailings management facilities (TMFs), in Kazakhstan and beyond in Central Asia have also encouraged the involvement of experts from Eastern Europe and the Caucasus in the provision of training and guidance to countries in the Caucasus and Kazakhstan and in the sharing of experience across subregions.

37. The Working Group on Implementation, which includes members from both beneficiary and donor countries under the Programme, continues to oversee assistance activities and to provide guidance for national efforts to prepare self-assessments and action plans under the Strategic Approach. This arrangement has benefited activities under the Assistance Programme during the biennium; members of the Working Group have advised on the development of national self-assessments and action plans, the development of a template for notification of hazardous activities and a draft Implementation Guide for to the Convention for Central Asian countries. The draft long-term strategy for the Convention until 2030 (ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/5), prepared in consultation with the Working Group and agreed by the Bureau, proposes that the Assistance Programme be renamed the Assistance and Cooperation Programme in order to better reflect its current function and the progress achieved.

III. Implementation of the Strategic Approach in 2017–2018

A. New self-assessments and national action plans received from countries in Central Asia

38. During the current biennium, new self-assessments and national action plans were received from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as a result of additional support provided within the framework of the Project on Strengthening implementation of and accession to the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Central Asia. The project's international experts and the members of the Working Group on Implementation who are responsible for the Central Asian subregion reviewed the draft self-assessments and action plans, which were subsequently finalized by national experts and submitted to the secretariat and the Working Group, which noted with satisfaction the countries' progress in implementing the Strategic Approach.

B. New self-assessments received from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus

39. In 2018, Armenia and the Republic of Moldova submitted revised self-assessments and Montenegro submitted its first self-assessment. The Working Group on Implementation encouraged each of these countries to submit an action plan based on the self-assessment and, on that basis, to make project proposals in line with the Strategic Approach.

IV. Key outcomes and achievements of other assistance activities

A. Final workshop under the Raising Knowledge among Students and Teachers on Tailings Safety project

40. A final workshop under the Raising Knowledge among Students and Teachers on Tailings Safety project (Dnipro, Ukraine, 16–17 May 2017) concluded implementation of the project, which had begun during the previous biennium.

41. The project was implemented thanks to an in-kind contribution from Germany and was coordinated by a national technical university, Dnipro Polytechnic. It addressed TMF-related problems in Ukraine at a practical level using the Checklist for contingency planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters (TMF Checklist)⁴ based on the ECE Safety guidelines and good practices for tailings management facilities and the Tailings Hazard Index, used to rank TMF hazards at the national level. Training provided by international and Ukrainian experts facilitated the exchange of both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. The project also reviewed Ukraine's domestic legislation and its efforts to meet its obligations under Directive 2006/21/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 on the management of waste from extractive industries and amending Directive 2004/35/EC pursuant to its Association Agreement with the European Union.

42. The following products were developed under the Project:

- (a) An e-learning course TMF safety on the Moodle Platform of the National Mining University, offered at four universities;
- (b) An analysis of Ukrainian legislation's compliance with the requirements of European Union law and a roadmap of its implementation in the context of improving TMF safety;
- (c) An improved methodology for the comprehensive evaluation of TMF safety;
- (d) An updated national TMF database and an interactive map using the Google Maps platform;
- (e) Recommendations on improving Ukraine's TMF system.

B. Assistance in safety improvement of tailings management facilities in Armenia and Georgia project (November 2017–November 2019)

1. Overall approach, objectives and activities

43. The Project on Assistance in safety improvement of tailings management facilities in Armenia and Georgia ⁵ (November 2017–November 2019) is being implemented under the Convention's workplan with funding from the Federal Environment Ministry of Germany Advisory Assistance Programme. Implementation of the project is led by EcoPeace, an Armenian NGO, and supported by an advisory board of international experts.

44. The project seeks to improve and strengthen the capacities of competent agencies and industrial enterprises in Armenia and Georgia; improve the management of disasters caused by industrial accidents, including those with transboundary impact; and increase the level of preparedness of industrial enterprises using industrial storage basins (tailings) as target facilities.

45. The long-term goals include incorporating the TMF checklist methodology into Ukraine's legislation and ensuring its adaptation and further sustainable use in other countries of the ECE region.

⁴ www.unece.org/environmental-policy/conventions/industrial-accidents/publications/official-publications/2016/checklist-for-contingency-planning-for-accidents-affecting-transboundary-waters/docs.html.

⁵ In the 2017–2018 workplan (ECE/CP.TEIA/32/Add.1) and the draft 2019–2020 workplan for the implementation of the Convention (ECE/CP.TEIA/2018/7), the Project is listed as: "Project on Improving the Safety of Tailings Management Facilities in the Caucasian Region – Training and Legislative Options".

46. The project has five objectives:
- (a) Analyse the legislative and administrative situation in Georgia and Armenia;
 - (b) Provide training by international experts to mining sector specialists and competent authorities in Georgia and Armenia;
 - (c) Transfer the knowledge acquired through training of trainers in Georgia and Armenia to representatives of the local authorities responsible for TMF management;
 - (d) Raise awareness of the potential benefits of the Kura Alert and Alarm System, developed as part of a German project implemented in the South Caucasus (2003–2006), using the Khrami-Debed river basin with a focus on enhancing disaster resilience and emergency preparedness at TMFs along the Debed River);
 - (e) Revise the TMF methodology, taking into account the possibility of implementing similar training events in other countries of the ECE region and maintaining ongoing contact with the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents, which will provide professional guidance and assessment of activities throughout the project based on international experience.
47. Activities under the Project since its inception in 2017 include:
- (a) Analysing the legislative and administrative situation by:
 - (i) Updating Georgia’s national action plan and finalizing the first draft of the analysis of the existing legislation on tailings management; and
 - (ii) Revising and finalizing the Handbook on the Safe Management of TMFs in the Territory of the Republic of Armenia (renamed the Safety Requirements and Operation Rules for TMFs), developed jointly by Armenia’s Ministry of Nature Protection and Ministry of Emergency Situations;
 - (b) Compiling country-specific recommendations:
 - (i) A TMF training exercise, including a transboundary emergency scenario, will apply the TMF Checklist in the context of the Caucasus region. After the exercise, the trainees will make proposals for further improvement of the Checklist.
48. The following meetings were held in 2018:
- (a) Meeting of the project’s Advisory Board (Yerevan, 23–24 May 2018); the Board is composed of international experts representing Austria, Czechia, Germany, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Ukraine. The outcomes will include:
 - (i) A preliminary TMF assessment for Armenia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan based on the applied TMF methodology and regional specificities;
 - (ii) Distribution of the revised methodology to the participants;
 - (iii) Exchange of the international experts’ experience with TMFs and sectoral legislation (ongoing; four meetings of the Advisory Board will be held during the project period);
 - (iv) TMF mapping in Armenia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan (ongoing throughout the project period);
 - (b) International training (Yerevan, 3–7 September 2018) and preparatory activities:

- (i) Compilation of comments by Advisory Board members with a view to further improvement of the TMF methodology (ongoing throughout the project period); and
- (ii) Revision of the TMF methodology prior to the training of trainers workshop (Tsaghkadzor, Armenia, 4–6 September 2018) based on recommendations of the experts and comments of the Advisory Board (ongoing throughout the project period).

2. Synergies between TMF projects in the Caucasus and Central Asia

49. There are apparent synergies between the project and the ECE pilot project to strengthen the safety of mining operations, in particular tailings management facilities (TMFs), in Kazakhstan and beyond in Central Asia. These include the following shared objectives:

- (a) Increase the level of preparedness and strengthen the capacities of operators and national authorities;
- (b) Improve TMF safety;
- (c) Improve the management of disasters caused by industrial accidents in the project countries;
- (d) Implement the TMF methodology and Tailings Hazard Index (THI) classification throughout the ECE region; and
- (e) Ensure the adaptation and further sustainable use of the methodology in other ECE countries with high-risk TMFs.

50. Both projects include among their activities an analysis of the legislative and administrative situation in the respective countries; TMF mapping; use of the TMF Checklist, which can also be used to train inspectors and operators; and transfer of the knowledge acquired through training of trainers to representatives of the local authorities responsible for TMF management.

51. In particular, the pilot project to strengthen the safety of mining operations, in particular tailings management facilities (TMFs), in Kazakhstan and beyond in Central Asia will present and disseminate the project outcomes and share lessons learned during two previous TMF safety projects in Ukraine.⁶ It should therefore be regarded as a “connectivity” meeting designed to showcase the experience gained and outcomes achieved from the various projects, link beneficiary countries in the various subregions and establish a TMF safety network in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia with a view to future knowledge and information exchange.

⁶ John Vijgen and Irina Nikolaieva, *Improving the safety of industrial tailings management facilities based on the example of Ukrainian facilities* (Dessau-Roßlau, Umweltbundesamt, 2016), available at www.unece.org/index.php?id=45348; and Dmytro Rudakov and Iryna Nikolaieva, *Raising Knowledge among Students and Teachers on Tailings Safety and its Legislative Review in Ukraine* (Dessau-Roßlau, Umweltbundesamt, 2018), available at www.umweltbundesamt.de/en/publikationen/raising-knowledge-among-students-teachers-on.

C. Assistance activities supported by the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents

52. During the biennium 2017–2018, the Joint Ad Hoc Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents (Joint Expert Group), established under the Water Convention and the Industrial Accidents Convention, has led or supported a number of assistance activities on application of the guidelines and checklists developed under its auspices, including by organizing or participating in exercises, workshops and seminars. The details, key outcomes and achievements of these activities are summarized below.

1. Exercise on the Odra River, Poland (September 2017)

53. The Polish-German exercise, organized by the International Commission for the Protection of the Odra River against Pollution (ICPO) and the Joint Expert Group, took place on 4 and 5 September 2017.

54. On 4 September 2017, German firefighters from the Odra-Spree (Brandenburg) region and Polish fire brigades from the Lubuskie region took part in a simulation of an oil tanker spill. The exercise enhanced the participants' knowledge and capacities in testing the installation of new booms on the riverbanks, allowing the countries to improve their retention and containment of potential pollution release despite the strong currents of the Oder River. This was a key achievement since the current systems in both countries have been assessed as somewhat ineffective in that regard.

2. Application of the TMF Checklist in the Caucasus and Hungary

55. Within the framework of the Project on Assistance in safety improvement of tailings management facilities in Armenia and Georgia (November 2017–November 2019), the Joint Expert Group assisted countries in their efforts to apply the TMF Checklist. In particular, a practical exercise (Yerevan, 3–7 September 2018) organized by the Joint Expert Group (see section IV (B) above), included practical application and proposals for improvement of the Checklist. Following the exercise, proposals for further improvement of the checklist were requested.

56. The Joint Expert Group will also participate in an exercise on accidental water pollution and an international workshop on the harmonization of contingency planning for accidents affecting transboundary waters, to be organized and hosted by Hungary and held in Százhalombatta and Budapest on 2 and 3 October 2018, respectively. At that workshop, the co-chair of the Joint Expert Group will deliver a presentation on application of the Checklist during contingency planning and presentations by country representatives will provide an opportunity to share experience with accidental pollution prevention and contingency planning in transboundary waters and to discuss application of the Checklist.

Annex

Activities carried out under the Assistance Programme during the biennium 2017–2018

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Beneficiary countries</i>	<i>Date and place</i>
Subregional workshop for South-Eastern Europe on industrial accidents prevention	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ⁷	21–23 February 2017, Zagreb
Subregional workshop for the Caucasus and Eastern Europe on industrial accidents prevention	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine	11–13 April 2017, Minsk
National expert group meeting under the Project on Strengthening implementation of and accession to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Central Asia	Kyrgyzstan	16–18 May 2017, Bishkek
National expert group meeting under the Project on Strengthening implementation of and accession to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Central Asia	Kazakhstan	20–22 June 2017, Astana and Borovoe, Kazakhstan
Training on environment and emergencies and hazardous industrial activities: Training of trainers	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	23–24 and 25–26 October 2017, Almaty, Kazakhstan
National expert group meeting under the Project on Strengthening implementation of and accession to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Central Asia	Turkmenistan	24–26 January 2018, Ashgabat
National expert group meeting under the Project on Strengthening implementation of and accession to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Central Asia	Uzbekistan	7–9 February 2018, Tashkent

⁷ Representatives of Kosovo attended the workshop at the invitation of the European Union, through the TAIEX instrument of the European Commission

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Beneficiary countries</i>	<i>Date and place</i>
National expert group meeting under the Project on Strengthening implementation of and accession to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents in Central Asia	Tajikistan	13–15 March 2018, Dushanbe
High-level awareness-raising mission to Ukraine and related bilateral meetings	Ukraine	18–19 April 2018, Kyiv
Awareness-raising workshop for Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan on the Industrial Accidents Convention	Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan	6 June 2018, Geneva, Switzerland
Subregional workshop for Central Asia on industrial safety and transboundary cooperation under the Project on Strengthening implementation of and accession to the Convention in Central Asia	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	25–26 September 2018, Almaty, Kazakhstan
National inception workshop under the ECE pilot project to strengthen the safety of mining operations, tailings management facilities (TMFs), in Kazakhstan and beyond in Central Asia	Kazakhstan	7–8 November 2018, Astana
