

**UNECE****United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

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Central Asian experts undertake training in Moscow under UNECE project on dam safety

An international training course for high-level officials and experts from Central Asia opened today in Moscow. In a week-long training, delegations from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan will have the opportunity to find out about the experience of the Russian Federation with regard to the maintenance and management of hydro-technical installations in that country, as well as to hear about recent scientific developments in this area. The training course is organized in the framework of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) project "Capacity-building for cooperation on dam safety in Central Asia", with financial support from the Russian Federation and additional support from the Eurasian Development Bank. The training programme was developed in close cooperation with the Russian Research Centre on the Safety of Hydro-technical Installations under the Scientific and Research Institute of Energy Facilities.

The course is a timely response to the need to ensure safe exploitation of large hydro-technical facilities in Central Asia, in particular large dams. Countries of Central Asia have a developed water infrastructure which includes hundreds of dams and reservoirs built 40 to 50 years ago. This infrastructure is of great importance for the economy of the region — it contributes to seasonal and long-term regulation of river flows for drinking water supply, industrial water uses, irrigation and hydropower. It also serves as an efficient means to address floods and droughts. However, ageing dams and lack of funding for their adequate maintenance, coupled with population growth in flood plains downstream from the dams, represent increased risks to life, health, property and the environment. The eventual failure of a dam could have disastrous consequences in downstream regions and countries.

The UNECE dam safety project, which is implemented in cooperation with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, assists Central Asian countries in establishing effective national legislation and technical regulatory frameworks as well as in strengthening regional cooperation on dam safety. The project has already resulted in the development of a model law on dam safety and a draft regional agreement to facilitate cooperation in this area. The training course in Moscow complements these efforts by strengthening cooperation between the Russian Federation and Central Asian countries and promoting exchange of knowledge and expertise.

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UNECE Information Office
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Phone: +41 (0) 22 917 44 44
Fax: +41 (0) 22 917 05 05
E-mail: info.ece@unece.org
Internet home page: <http://www.unece.org>

For further information please visit: <http://www.unece.org/env/water/damsafety.htm> or contact:

Mr. Bo Libert
UNECE Regional Adviser on Environment
Phone: +41 (0)22 917 2396
e-mail: bo.libert@unece.org

Note for Editors:

The project “**Capacity-building for cooperation on dam safety in Central Asia**” was initiated in 2006 with a major financial contribution from the Government of Finland. It aims to help Central Asian countries to set up or revise national dam safety regulatory frameworks, to achieve their harmonization and to promote subregional cooperation for information exchange and notification in case of accidents or emergency situations related to hydro-technical infrastructure. An overview of dam safety issues in Central Asia has been prepared in the framework of the project (see UNECE publication “Dam Safety in Central Asia: Capacity-building and Regional Cooperation” http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2010/wat/Publication/MPWAT%2026%20_E.pdf)

The **Russian Research Centre on the Safety of Hydro-technical Installations** (ZAO “NTZ Gidrotehbezopasnosti”) provides informational, scientific and methodological support for certifying the safety of hydro-technical infrastructure in industry and the energy sector, organizes inspection of the physical state of such infrastructure and assesses the risk of accidents and possible damage in case of accidents at hydro-technical installations. The Centre also develops safety criteria for hydro-technical installations.

The **International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS)** was established in the early 1990s by five Central Asian States — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — to implement in a coordinated way the various practical measures and programmes that have been developed to overcome the impacts of the Aral Sea crises and to improve environmental and socio-economic conditions in the Aral Sea basin.

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UNECE Information Office
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Phone: +41 (0) 22 917 44 44
Fax: +41 (0) 22 917 05 05
E-mail: info.ece@unece.org
Internet home page: <http://www.unece.org>