

International Conference on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, Decommissioning, Environmental Protection and Remediation: Ensuring Safety and Enabling Sustainability



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CGULS Activities in Central Asia and expansion to Africa

Since the mid-1940s, uranium mining and processing activities have been conducted in Central Asia, primarily in the regions intersecting the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan. After the cessation of these activities in the 1990s, numerous uranium legacy sites emerged, comprising abandoned mining and milling facilities, waste rock and ore dumps, tailings piles and ponds. These sites present significant environmental and public health risks due to physical, radiological, and toxicological hazards associated with the remaining contaminated materials. The lack of means and safety requirements for sustainable remediation poses a challenge for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, leading to a call for international support from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). To address this challenge, the IAEA established the Coordination Group for Uranium Legacy Sites (CGULS) in 2012, aiming to facilitate cooperation among the affected Member States and organizations involved in regulatory control, managing and remediating these areas contaminated by past practices and activities.

Building upon the collaborative efforts, the remediation of uranium legacy sites has made significant progress in Central Asia. With joint efforts of CGULS, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Commission, and other donors, successful remediation has been completed in certain sites in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The work and targets are described in Strategic Master Plan, which is updated every 5 years.

Building on its existing infrastructure and Central Asian experience, CGULS plans to launch CGULS Africa, expanding its support to other countries in need of safety infrastructure for successful implementation of remediation efforts. This expansion aims to transfer expertise, foster cooperation and promote safe management of uranium legacy sites in several African countries.

The presentation will include examples of activities completed and planned within the CGULS aiming at ensuring safety of remediation projects, protection of the public and the environment, knowledge and capacity building in Central Asia. Synergies with other international initiatives will be provided. The authors will also present the plans and current activities for expanding the gained experiences to selected African Member States ensuring safety and sustainability of remediation activities.

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