

NGO: Independent Ecological Expertise Country: Kyrgyzstan

Project: National Action Plan for Khaidarkan mercury mining: Strengthening Environmental Policy and Implementing Outreach Campaign in Kyrgyzstan

SAICM GPA activity numbers: 1; 44; 57; 59; 66; 82; 166



Tailings from the Khaidarkan mercury mine in Kyrgyzstan
Photo : Independent Ecological Expertise



In October, 2011, the Public Association Independent Ecological Expertise started to implement the project “National Action Plan for Khaidarkan mercury mining: Strengthening Environmental Policy and Implementing Outreach Campaign in Kyrgyzstan.” Independent Ecological Expertise began by submitting requests to different government institutions in order to get information on turnover of mercury and its compounds in Kyrgyzstan, including at the Khaidarkan mercury plant. This plant is the only known primary mercury mine in the world that continues to sell its output abroad. It is located in the mountains of southern Kyrgyzstan, and represents approximately 10% of the global mercury market.

The goal of Independent Ecological Expertise’s project was to raise the issues of mercury contamination high on the national agenda of Kyrgyzstan by providing updates and changes to the National Action Plan on Khaidarkan mercury mining, and also to include the issue into the draft Decree for further adoption by the Kyrgyz government.

After Independent Ecological Expertise received replies to their inquiries about turnover of mercury and analyzed the data, they submitted a draft “Concept on measures for mercury management at all phases of its lifecycle in the Kyrgyz Republic” to the representatives and organizations of civil society, as well as the government and the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic, for consideration. This “Concept” included a list of key problems pertaining to international mercury turnover, in particular:

- uncontrolled mercury import and use of mercury containing products;
- collection, transportation, storage and disposal of mercury containing wastes;
- limited export and gradual phasing out of mercury mining; and
- reduction of economic risks related to Khaidarkan mercury mining.

The Concept also contains suggestions for the draft National Action Plan on mercury, with the goal to minimize mercury health and environmental impacts at all phases of its lifecycle; from production, storage, and transportation to use and disposal. To achieve this goal the following objectives were set:

- Strengthening national environmental legislation, ecological standards and norms with due consideration of international experience;
- Political and economic decisions on mercury management should prioritize environmental and health aspects;
- Gradual reduction of mercury export and strict control over import of mercury containing products and wastes; and
- Strengthening of mercury-containing waste management that includes waste collection, transportation, storage and disposal.

Independent Ecological Expertise held a roundtable about mercury management. Representatives of the government, parliament, ministries, businesses, NGOs, international agencies, educational and scientific institutions and mass media took part in the event, and discussed problems concerning negative impacts of mercury on human health and the environment and issues related to mercury and mercury-containing waste management based on the draft “Concept.” Problems related to and perspectives about the Khaidarkan mercury plant were highlighted, and results of the roundtable were published and broadcast in the mass media.

Based on draft “Concept,” the Head of the Apparatus obliged the Ministry of Economy and Antimonopoly Policy and the State Agency of Environment Protection and Forestry to prepare a draft Resolution of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic “On setting up an inter-agency working group to develop a complex of measures on mercury management at all phases of its lifecycle in the Kyrgyz Republic.”