Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of five Central Asian States - Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan, and my own country - the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Chairman,

We attach great importance to the issue of mitigating the environmental consequences of uranium mining and associated nuclear fuel cycle activities in the production of nuclear weapons, a subject identified at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and addressed at all subsequent Review Conferences.

There are number of different tailings with toxic radioactive wastes left by the mining industry on the territories of the Central Asian States. The conditions of the tailings have further deteriorated over the past decades, after those industries were shutdown or reoriented, and in a number of cases the situation is close to catastrophic.

This situation is aggravated by the fact that many burial sites of highly toxic and firstly uranium waste are located in active seismic regions, landslide risk areas, prone floods and high groundwater zones and nearby river banks, which form the foundation of the extended water basin of the Central Asian region. In the event of natural disaster, natural degradation of protective structures, the highly toxic substances from these tailings will surely seep into the rivers and other fresh water sources. It would have major consequences not only for millions of people and the environment, but also for the whole sustainable development process in the countries of the region. It could take several decades and significant financial resources to mitigate the consequences of such accidents and disasters.

To respond to these challenges the Central Asian States are actively engaged in efforts at national and international levels to avert the radioactive threat posed by uranium tailings ponds. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, in cooperation with UNDP and other international organizations, organized a high level international forum “Uranium tailings: local problems, regional consequences, global solution”, which was held in Geneva on 24 June 2009. The United Nations General Assembly has adopted resolution “The Role of the International Community in Averting the Radiation Threat in Central Asia” on 20
December 2013, noting the importance of remediating areas affected by former uranium extraction plants and recognizing the need to devise and promote effective programmes and projects for the responsible and safe management of radioactive and toxic waste in Central Asia.

It is important to mention the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, among the innovative features of which are provisions that call for efforts to remediate the environmental damage to the region resulting from prior nuclear weapons activities. Article 6 of the Treaty devoted to the Environmental Security states that Each Party undertakes to assist any efforts toward the environmental rehabilitation of territories contaminated as a result of past activities related to the development, production or storage of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, in particular uranium tailings storage sites and nuclear test sites.

In this regard I have the honour to present on behalf of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan the Working paper on Environmental Consequences of Uranium Mining in order to reiterate the appeal of the previous NPT Review Conferences to all Governments and international organizations that have expertise in the field of clean-up and disposal of radioactive contaminants to consider giving appropriate assistance, as may be requested, for radiological assessment and remedial purposes in this affected area.

Thank you.