



**MINISTRY OF ECOLOGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF
AZERBAIJAN**

**EUROPEAN UNION WATER INITIATIVE NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE
COMPONENT FOR EASTERN EUROPE, CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA**

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OF INTERNATIONAL RIVER BASINS

**Fourth meeting of the Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water
Resources Management in Azerbaijan**

Fourth National Coordination Committee for ERIRB Project in Azerbaijan

27 February 2015, Baku, Azerbaijan

The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan

Address: 100-A B. Agaev Street, Baku

Languages: Azeri and English, simultaneous interpretation provided

Summary of Discussions

Welcome – Opening remarks

Mr Rasim Sattar-zada, Head of Environmental Policy Department, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources warmly welcomed participants and informed them that The Republic of Azerbaijan is looking for an enhanced cooperation with the European Union. The priority areas for cooperation have been agreed by the Government of Azerbaijan and the European Commission in the country Strategy Paper under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. The mutually agreed EU/Azerbaijan Action Plan shows Azerbaijan's commitment to implement jointly agreed priorities in compliance with the international and European norms and principles. The plan identified priority actions for key environmental sectors including water management. In the European Union the most important piece of legislation covering protection of water environment is the Water Framework Directive.

To support the attaining the UN Millennium Development Goals, the National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) were launched in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) as the main operational instrument under the EU Water Initiative EECCA component. The UNECE Secretariat acts as a strategic partner in implementation of the NPDs in EECCA on integrated water resources management (IWRM). In 2010, the UNECE has launched the NPDs in Azerbaijan and in a number of other EECCA countries. The NPD IWRM Steering Committee has been established and a Memorandum of Understanding on a NPD on IWRM was signed in September 2010. Steering Committee includes representatives of Ministry Of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR), Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES), Ministry of Health (MOH), Amelioration JSC, Azersu JSC, MFA, National Academy of Science (NAS), BSU, NGOs, other national agencies members.

The NPD IWRM in Azerbaijan focuses on the development of a governmental strategy for management of water resources based on the principles outlined in the European Union Water Framework Directive (EU WFD) and the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health, as well as other United Nations and EU instruments. As party to the Convention Azerbaijan actively cooperates to implements requirements under the convention

The Strategy is based on the principles of international water law and to EU Water Framework Directive (WFD).



Azerbaijan Government pays high attention to country's water resources management and protection as a priority sector, through huge investments and policy actions reflected in State Development Programs and other documents. Now Azerbaijan closely cooperates with UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), EPIRB project and other international organizations to manage water resources of the Country according to international standards

Tatiana Efimova, OECD Environment Directorate also welcomed participants on behalf OECD and mentioned that OECD closely cooperates with Azerbaijan and last years supported several activities water resources management, including economic instruments related to water sector and this cooperation will be continued in future through support of implementation of concrete actions directed on strengthening of water policy and management.

Then Ms Annukka Lipponen, Environmental Specialist, Secretariat of UNECE Water Convention informed that after the UNECE has launched the NPDs in Azerbaijan and in a number of other EECCA countries many developments have been observed in this area, including development of National Water Strategy, implementation of Nexus in transboundary pilot river basin and preparation of agreement between Georgia and Azerbaijan on water resources and other activities. She also noted that UNECE will further cooperate with Azerbaijan in the are of water management and area also on issues related to cooperation with Georgia in water sector.

Mr Zurab Jincharadze EPIRB Project Deputy Team Leader In his introductory notes welcomed participants and expressed highly importance of joint NPD and NCC meeting as an opportunity to discuss together priority water issues in Azerbaijan outlined the role of EPIRB project in this process .

Mr Mutallim Abdulhasanov, Head of Subdivision in Environmental Protection Policy Unit of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources informed participants about main purpose of joint EU WI NPD and EPIRB NCC meeting and presented them the drart agenda.

After adopting of the meeting agenda the flow was given to Mr Sahib Hasanzadeh and Rafiq Verdiyev to inform participants about 2 draft water strategies of Azerbaijan developed by support of UNECE and ADB.



Mr Rafiq Verdiyev first informed participants that developed by support of UNECE draft water Strategy aims at the development of water resources management and water protection as well as water supply and sanitation in Azerbaijan to better meet both international and EU level standards and objectives. The Strategy contains goals which are divided into short-term (6 years), medium-term (18 years) and long-term goals. Strategy proposes that the regional administration would be based on the catchment areas.

The Strategy will be supplemented by a separate and more detailed Action Plan which will facilitate the implementation of the Strategy.

The current Strategy document concentrates on the following issues:

- strengthen protection of water resources and aquatic eco-systems
- ensure sustainability and effectiveness in use of water resources
- meet the needs of different water users including improvement of water and sanitation services to all citizens of the country and also irrigation water supply
- identify the needed programmers and projects
- facilitate water protection and sustainable use of water resources
- define the goals of water resources management, the institutional improvements and creation of the legal framework required for the implementation of the Strategy.
- promote of water saving and cost-recovery
- improve the transboundary cooperation



- enhance the participation of the stakeholders in water protection and management planning
- enhance communication between authorities, regional organizations and citizens
- strengthen capacities in the national and regional level

As the water resources in Azerbaijan are not sufficient for meeting all the different needs and interests the Strategy therefore sets clear priorities, such as the access to clean water and sanitation, the reduction of point source pollution and the establishment of cooperation on transboundary water courses. Water safety, adaptation to climatic changes and flood risk management is highlighted in the strategy.

Environmentally sustainable use of the water resources will be the basis on which the long-term economic utilization of the water resources is being built.

Then Mr. Verdiyev told that as Azerbaijan has limited water resources to provide water for irrigation and other uses therefore Water Resources State Agency asked ADB to help to update the draft strategy by giving more attention to agricultural water use and irrigation.

Then Mr. Sahib Hasanzadeh briefly informed participants about draft of updated by support of ADB water strategy. He told that in this document also consider as priority the importance of strengthening of legal and institutional basis for water management and interagency cooperation. There are some proposals in this area also in the sphere of efficiency water use in irrigation by improvement of irrigation infrastructure, application of precise water requirement norms for crops, use of modern irrigation methods and strengthening of capacity of Water User Associations.

During the discussions it was decided to create the group of experts to combine both documents together and based on finalised strategy document develop implementation(action) plan and submit to the government for approval.

Mr Zurab Jincharadze informed participants about project activities in all 6 countries for each of project components and also about planning for coming months. He noted that "Environmental Protection of International River Basins" project is being implemented according to its implementation plan in close cooperation with main beneficiaries and all stakeholders of project countries and has played significant role towards its aim to improve water quality in the trans-boundary river basins of the wider Black Sea region and Belarus.



Mr Jincharadze then presented planned activities for next period March 2015 – August 2015, including development of drafts river basin management plans and organising with main beneficiaries and all stakeholders' public consultations on them. First PC is planned on 23 of April 2015 in Ganja city. He mentioned about regional hydro biological training which will be organised in Georgia in May 2015. The next 5th progress report with all details will be send for stakeholders next week. All relevant information and reports can be downloaded from project web site: <http://www.blacksea-riverbasins.net/en/downloads>.

Mr Rafiq Verdiyev CWME of EPIRB project presented detailed results and specific project activities as well implementation in Azerbaijan for the reporting period since the last NCC meeting on 2 September 2014. He informed participants about developed by project water Monitoring Programmes for surface and groundwater, as well as drafting River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Central Kura pilot area and upcoming Joint Field Surveys in the pilot river basin, as well as data 'gap filling' exercise to obtain missing monitoring data.

Mr Rafiq Verdiyev also informed participants that by support of EPIRB project following pilot projects have been successfully implemented in Azerbaijan in close cooperation and coordination with beneficiary institutes:

- Assistance to preparing secondary legislation in support of the Water Code to introduce the concept and principles of IWRM and approximation and application of the WFD and UWWTD.
- Water resource studies in selected transboundary tributaries in the pilot basin demonstrating IWRM and WFD concepts and objectives, through the establishment of environmental flows and EQOs. The final product will be detailed water resource plans in the tributary basins

It was noted that EPIRB project developed mechanism for application of basin approach in Azerbaijan, including establishment of basin districts and proposals on identification of responsible bodies for application of basin approach in each basin districts as result of implementation of these pilot projects. These proposals after review and approval of NCC members will be submitted to beneficiary organization for adoption in Azerbaijan.



By information of Rafiq Verdiyev starting from April 2015 in Azerbaijan it is planned to implement another pilot project on:

- Investigative monitoring in the upper Kura basin to establish a pollution baseline. The Upper Kura is a complex basin with many problems (point source and diffuse pollution) which cannot all be fully investigated under the project supported gap filling Joint Field Surveys. The proposed pilot will fill key knowledge gaps and strengthen and help prioritise the RBMP.

Planned process for setting of national targets under the Protocol on Water and Health has been presented by , Ms Annukka Lipponen, Environmental Specialist, Secretariat of UNECE Water Convention and Ms. Leylakhanum Taghizade, Republican Centre of Hygiene and Epidemiology of Azerbaijan Republic

Ms Lipponen talked about the Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE Water Convention . Protocol however has been designed as a tool to act at national level. No need to be Party to the Convention. Not open to countries outside UNECE region. The Protocol is the first international agreement of its kind adopted specifically to attain an adequate supply of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation for everyone, and effectively protect water used as a source of drinking water. The Protocol is closely linked to development issues, has been instrumental for MDGs and it is expected that it will further support



sustainable development and future Sustainable Development Goals. The Protocol brings together the environmental and health sides and offers a holistic and non-piecemeal approach

Ms Lipponen told that targets shall be set by countries, within 2 years, to achieve a high level of protection of drinking water against WRD. Surveillance and response systems shall be established within 3 years to identify outbreaks and incidents of WRD and notify the public -only surveillance can prove that progress has been achieved.

The Protocol requires the setting of targets and target dates, the definition of measures to achieve the targets, the monitoring of their implementation and their revision as necessary.

Country targets: Water supply and sanitation (quality, Improved access, system performance, discharge of Wastewater and sludge); Water management (resource quality, recreational water, aquaculture); Health protection (Outbreaks, level of disease)

Set dates: Parties also 1) establish national coordination mechanisms, 2) develop water management plans, 3) establish framework for enforcing drinking water quality standards

Review progress: 1) Parties collect and evaluate data on progress towards target; 2) Parties publish results of data collection and evaluation; 3) Parties review progress; 4) Parties provide summary report through Secretariat to MOP

Targets at level of river basin need to be discussed and agreed with riparian countries. National and local targets need to take transboundary objectives into account.

During the session on **Multi-purpose water reservoirs in Azerbaijan: to make its operations sustainable achieving water policy objectives** a new project was presented by Ms Tatiana Efimova, OECD, which is aimed to address the following aspects:

- (i) How to minimize competition among multipurpose water uses of reservoirs;
- (ii) How to set an appropriate governance to allow coordinated water uses management, and
- (iii) How to address the financing, as well as economic issues, of operating such multipurpose reservoirs



At session on cross-fertilization with the NPD process, technical assistance projects in Azerbaijan Ms. Annukka Lipponen, UNECE and Ms. Lucia de Strasser, UNECE consultant for KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden have presented UNECE project on pilot assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in the Alazani/Ganikh basin.

It was noted that the Nexus approach helps answering specific questions such as:

- How can we meet common **development needs** (food, water, energy) in a sustainable manner without compromising the availability of natural resources (ecosystems)?
- Which **technologies** and what combination and configurations of them are best going to help?
- What **policies** are going to make this feasible and economically viable – and thereby help reduce future tensions?
- And what happens **if we do nothing?**
- What are possible **implications of climate change** on the Nexus system and what future challenges will we face?

And in particular:

- How to **harmonize the actions of authorities** that share the same resources in trans-boundary systems?
- How to create **opportunities for cooperation** across riparian countries?

In the presentation was also discussed draft report on assessment of water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in the Alazani/Ganikh basin and ways of further integration of nexus into development and regional policies of Georgia and Azerbaijan.



In particular it was decided that Nexus should also be included into new water strategy by new drafting group and also implementation plan should duly address nexus issues as well.

In the last session was the NPD activities for 2015 and beyond in Azerbaijan. In the session main attention was given at definition of main directions of EUWI NPD activities in Azerbaijan for 2015 and beyond. Jointly by OECD and UNECE was presented the three main pillars of EUWI EECCA work in 2016-2019, priorities for Azerbaijan.

Summary

Among other decided by the meeting participants for future actions issue were:

- Finalising of State Water Strategy of Azerbaijan, development of action plan for its implementation and adoption by government;
- Setting and implementation of national targets under Protocol on Water and Health;
- To recommend for approval of EPIRB project developed mechanism for application of basin approach in Azerbaijan, including establishment of basin districts and identification of responsible bodies for application of basin approach in each basin districts.