



**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**

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

25 February 2016, Baku, Azerbaijan

*The meeting will take place at the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan
Address: 100-A B. Agaev Street, Baku*

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Agenda

Agenda of the Fifth meeting of the Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue (SC NPD) on Integrated Water Resources Management in Azerbaijan is attached to the minutes

Participants

List of Participants in the Third meeting of the SC NPD on Integrated Water Resources Management in Azerbaijan is attached to the minutes

Summary of Discussions

At a 25 February 2016 meeting in Baku, key stakeholders of the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) Steering Committee of Azerbaijan agreed to finalize the draft State water strategy based on 2 draft proposals (prepared by support of UNECE and ADB) within the next few months. The long-debated strategy, once finalized, will lay the ground for the adoption of the key principles of integrated water resources management (IWRM) and initiate the process of relevant changes in national legislation, bringing it into line with the European Union Water Framework Directive.

Around 30 representatives of different stakeholders and donors attended the meeting in Baku. Participants welcomed the proposal to continue the process of target setting under the UNECE-World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) Protocol on Water and Health. Azerbaijan is a Party to the Protocol, but so far has not defined its national targets, required by the Protocol.

Introduction and Opening

The meeting was opened by Mr Mutallim Abdulhasanov, Head of Division, Environmental Protection Policy Department of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources.



Mr Abdulhaanov made welcoming speech and thanked SC NPD members for their participation in the meeting. He briefly informed them about the importance of development of National Water Strategy(NWS) within the NPD for Azerbaijan based on 2 draft proposals(prepared by support of UNECE and ADB), which considers variety of actions in the sphere of harmonisation of National water resources monitoring, assessment and management practises to internationally accepted practices. He specially stressed project's significant contribution in the sphere of strengthening of capacities of national water management institutions and application of Integrated Water Resources Management(IWRM) based on basin approach according to the principles of EU Water Framework Directive(WFD).



Ms Ulviya Abdullayeva representative of EC Delegation in Azerbaijan welcomed participants of the SC NPD meeting and expressed high importance of the NPD for integration of water management practices in NIS countries to EU legislation. They informed participants about on-going EU-Azerbaijan cooperation programs which are relevant environment and particularly to water management. Particularly was noted that the Action Plan for Azerbaijan prepared by State Commission for the approximation of Azerbaijan to EU environmental legislation stresses the necessity of harmonization of water legislation to EU legislation (including the WFD) and many of the concepts of the WFD including RBMP can be applied in Azerbaijan through the adaption of the country's Water Strategy.

Then Ms Tatiana Efimova, OECD welcomed participants of the SC NPD and informed them that adoption and implementation of NWS can play important role in improvement of water management in Azerbaijan. It was noted that OECD intend to support the process of realization of NPD in cooperation with other donor organizations. It also was noted that during the meeting there will be discussions about creation of some relevant working groups to develop water strategy action plan.



The NPD in Azerbaijan benefits from the related activities implemented by UNECE and OECD. T

Mr Peep Mardiste, NPD Coordinator, UNECE informed SC NPD members that 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 NPDs IWRM objective is to initiate country-specific activities in EECCA countries regarding IWRM. NPDs are aimed to improve regulatory and administrative frameworks for IWRM; help countries in setting their priorities; identify relevant projects that need support and raise the capacity in the countries to addressing the water management challenges. In addition to its original function, the National Policy Dialogues and their Steering Committees also became a national coordination mechanism for water-related projects, carried out under the auspices of international organizations and countries.

Since 2006, UNECE has been carrying out NPDs in IWRM in four countries of former Soviet Union. These policy dialogues have been mainly financed by the European Commission. In 2010, the UNECE has launched the NPDs in Azerbaijan and in a number of other EECCA countries.

The NPD IWRM in Azerbaijan started in April 2010 when a pre-mission by the UNECE representative to Azerbaijan was held. This included meetings with the authorities and relevant national and international stakeholders. The NPD IWRM Steering Committee has been established and a Memorandum of Understanding on a NPD on IWRM was signed in September 2010. The first meeting of the Steering Committee took place on 12 October 2010.

Mr Peep Mardiste then informed that finalisation and adoption by government NWS will be significant step towards application of IWRM in Azerbaijan according to EFD principles.

Then Mr Mutallim Abdulhasanov, Head of Subdivision in Environmental Protection Policy Unit of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources briefly informed participants on the purpose of the meeting.

Talking about the water resources management in Azerbaijan he noted that water policy in Azerbaijan is mainly implemented through water legislation, particularly, through the National Water Code.

SESSION I. Status of reforms in the water sector of Azerbaijan

During session 1 Mr Abdulhasanov informed participants about ongoing reforms in the water sector of Azerbaijan. Then in relation to water policy implementation he noted that most important is the development of a Government strategy for the management of water resources (National Water Strategy). The NPD on IWRM in Azerbaijan has been funded by the European Commission (EC) and OSCE. The Government of Finland contributes with expert support to the preparation of the National Water Strategy. During the Second Steering Committee meeting, in June 2012, a draft of the strategy was adopted as a basis for its further development. In 2014-15 by support of ADB some new proposals have been done in relation to NWS.



The NPD IWRM in Azerbaijan focuses on the development of a governmental strategy for management of water resources based on the principles of international water law and to EU Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Mr Abdulhasanov then noted that now it is necessary to continue work towards NWS development in Azerbaijan, mainly:

- Finalise NWS based on 2 draft document
- Develop NWS action plan

Then Mr Abdulhasanov said that EU EPIRB project is planning to support to finalise NWS and said it would be important also to get some support for development of NWS action plan.

Dr. Rafiq Verdiyev informed participants on above 2 strategy documents .

He told that the overall goal of both of the national water resources management strategy documents is: to enhance and promote all national efforts towards the efficient, equitable, and optimum utilization of the available water resources of Azerbaijan for significant socio-economic development on sustainable basis.

By information of Dr Verdiyev by support of EPIRB project it is expected to work by support of consultative group(to be created) to combine 2 draft water strategy documents and finalise it in coming months to submit to the government for approval

He also noted that it would be good to develop NWS action plan as well.



Then Mr Sahib Hasanzadeh from Head sector in Department Water Resources State Agency of the MES informed participants about Project on reassessment of water resources of Azerbaijan republic and other activities initiated by Water Agency.

Mr Hasanzadeh in his turn also informed that it is important to finalise and adopt water strategy and develop strategy action plan.

SESSION II. Target setting process under UNECE-WHO/EUROPE Protocol on Water and Health

SESSION II. UNECE-WHO/EUROPE PROTOCOL ON WATER AND HEALTH

Mr Peep Mardiste, UNECE and Ms. Leylakhanum Taghizade, Republican Centre of Hygiene and Epidemiology and Ayten Rzayeva informed participants on national targets under the Protocol on Water and Health, and about concrete actions in different regions of Azerbaijan in this area



SESSION III. CROSS-FERTILIZATION WITH THE NPD PROCESS, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS IN AZERBAIJAN

Mr. Rafiq Verdiev briefly informed participants about ongoing EC project “Environmental Protection of International River Basins”. He particularly informed participants about project activities and ongoing pilot projects in Azerbaijan and also on intention of project to support harmonization of Azerbaijan water



legislation

to

EU

Directives.



SESSION IV. DISCUSSION OF THE NEXT STEPS OF THE NPD IN AZERBAIJAN

In the end main discussions were about next steps. It was decided to continue work in the direction of development of NWS and setting and realization of national targets under the Protocol on Water and Health.

Main topics covered below issues:

- Mandate for chairing of the National Policy Dialogue process in Azerbaijan
- Priorities of the National Policy Dialogue in 2016 and beyond
- Ms Tatiana Efimova , OECD
- Mr Peep Mardisete, European Commission Coordinator of the National Policy Dialogue
- Mr Mutallim Abdulhasanov , Head of Subdivision in Environmental Protection Policy Unit of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources

It was noted that strengthening the economic dimensions of Water Strategy is important. There is need to link water policies and economic developments and also put water policies an a sustainable financial path. Different options for strengthening of economic and financial dimensions of water management have been discussed during the session and some practical options have been described.