

Project Concept Note for the follow-up meeting of the 2010 SPECA Economic Forum

Ashgabat 7-8 June 2011

Project Title	Strengthening implementation of UNECE multilateral environmental agreements and enhancing transboundary cooperation in Central Asia	
Outcome	<p>Objectives of the project:</p> <p>To contribute to strengthened environmental governance and performance in the countries of Central Asia;</p> <p>To strengthen transboundary cooperation regarding environmental issues between Central Asian member countries and enhanced cross-border interaction with their neighbouring countries</p>	
Indicative Funding Requirements	Total estimated budget:	\$ 2 900 000 over three years
Potential Sources of Funding	[Donor(s): [Development Bank(s): Other Resources:	No funding pledged so far
Expected start date	January 2012	
Expected Duration	3 years	
Implementing Organisation(s)	<p>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.</p> <p>Cooperation will be sought, as appropriate, with the: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Euro), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), European Union (EU), Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC), International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS).</p>	
Country/Countries	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as UNECE and non-UNECE member neighbouring countries (including Afghanistan)	
Submitted by	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe	
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1 Background

UNECE member countries have identified a number of challenges to human health and the environment and are seeking regional solutions to them. The international community has established a set of environmental norms and standards to protect human health and the environment from adverse effects of human activity and other phenomena, and to facilitate informed and participatory environmental decision-making and access to justice. Among these norms and standards, five environmental conventions and a number of protocols to these

agreements were negotiated by UNECE member States¹. UNECE has proven to be a unique and successful pan-European forum for the negotiation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and the promotion of their implementation.

The implementation and ratification of the above MEAs by the UNECE member countries not only supports the protection and improvement of the region's environment and its population's quality of life, but also promotes stability and security in the region. The status of implementation and ratification of the above MEAs is uneven across the UNECE region. The countries with economies in transition, and in particular the countries of Central Asia are experiencing difficulties. The legal and institutional frameworks in these countries, as well as the management practices, are often weak and not enforced.

2 Justification

Activities aimed at strengthening local human capacities and promoting good practice have been launched in order to assist the above-mentioned countries in accomplishing the more demanding tasks expected from them by the UNECE MEAs. These activities have received positive feedback from the recipient countries and have also been positively evaluated by donors. They give a firm foundation for transforming the growing interest with regard to the UNECE MEAs into a stronger political commitment and support from high-level policy makers. Regular policy dialogues on existing and emerging issues related to the benefits and implementation of UNECE MEAs is important to maximize the positive outcome from on-going and future capacity building and other project efforts.

The proposed project will aim to enhance the understanding and political acceptance of the UNECE MEAs by applying an integrated approach. In Central Asia, the legal implementation, practical application and enforcement of international environmental law and, in particular, the UNECE MEAs is poor. Among the key challenges are:

- Insufficient capacity to apply the UNECE MEAs in practice at the national and local levels (legal, administrative and institutional frameworks, appropriate human capacities and financial resources);
- On the political level there is a lack of understanding and acceptance of the UNECE MEAs; The insufficient level of cooperation between ministries and agencies responsible for water, environment, land-use planning, justice, emergency situations etc is a further bottleneck; and
- Inefficient transboundary cooperation among countries in Central Asia and their neighbours, a key factor in the implementation of most of the UNECE MEAs which have an important transboundary dimension.

3 Expected Output(s)

Enhanced understanding and political acceptance of the UNECE multilateral environmental agreements in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which would enable or lead to:

- (a) Enhanced implementation and increased accession to the agreements; and
- (b) Strengthened transboundary cooperation regarding environmental issues between Central Asian UNECE member countries and enhanced cross-border interaction with their neighbouring countries (including Afghanistan).

¹ Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and its Protocol on Long-term Financing of the Cooperative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Long-range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe, Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Protocol on Heavy Metals and Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone; Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment; Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its Protocol on Water and Health; Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents; and Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers.

In addition, the project will also contribute to an increased cooperation, development of synergies and increased efficiency in the outreach work of the UNECE MEA secretariats.

The present project is designed to address the challenges identified above: to develop capacity, to raise the necessary understanding and political acceptance of the UNECE MEAs among the countries of Central Asia and to strengthen transboundary cooperation. The project is expected to contribute to an increased political willingness within these countries to address the environmental issues covered by the UNECE Conventions. Furthermore, the project will support the efforts of the countries of Central Asia to strengthen cross-border interaction between them and their non-UNECE neighbouring countries. It will build on previous efforts but aim to deepen significantly the cooperation between UNECE MEAs and the Central Asian countries.

The project's implementation is based on the active cooperation and simultaneous involvement of all UNECE MEA secretariats. It is expected that this will lead to an improved efficiency in the UNECE and an important experience for the future organization of work in the secretariat.

4 Proposed Approach & Strategy, including Capacity Development Response

An active dialogue with the Central Asian countries and decision makers will be a central principle for project implementation: only activities that are agreed on with the respective countries can and will be implemented. The active engagement of the respective countries is a precondition for project implementation.

The project emphasizes the increase of knowledge about the UNECE MEAs, and in particular their significant benefits and limited costs. This is expected to enhance the understanding and thus political acceptance of these agreements among high-level policy-makers in the countries of Central Asia. UNECE, with its convening power, is well positioned to gather and meet with high-level policy makers and officials to discuss and obtain a clear commitment to implement and accede to the UNECE MEAs on the national as well as transboundary levels.

National meetings or consultations will be organized where high-level political officials from the UNECE member countries of Central Asia will convene with UNECE management and be provided with information on the objectives and benefits of the UNECE environmental agreements. These national meetings/consultations will be used to discuss specific objectives and define activities for each country (see below) and for increasing political support for a more effective implementation and the accession to additional ECE MEAs by the Central Asian countries.

Based on agreements with the Central Asian countries, the UNECE will support the achievement of the project goals in each country by organizing national policy meetings focused on the implementation of the UNECE MEAs in each of the countries. The meetings will be organized at the request of the Central Asian countries and will usually cover several but not necessarily all Conventions. The meetings will build on existing activities of the Conventions in the region and strive to achieve synergies, for example by organization of back-to-back meetings with other planned events in the subregion. These meetings will be modeled on the experience of the national policy dialogues on integrated water resources management. The intersectoral dialogue will aim at generating an understanding of existing challenges in the implementation of UNECE MEAs and developing solutions on how to overcome these challenges in each of the countries.

UNECE, with its proven record of successfully promoting transboundary cooperation, is well placed to facilitate such cooperation between the countries of Central Asia and, in cooperation with partners, to assist them in enhancing their interaction with countries neighbouring the subregion.

In a second phase of the project, and at the request of Central Asian countries and as a result of preceding activities a series of bilateral or multilateral workshops will be held between the UNECE member countries of Central Asia addressing specific issues related to the transboundary dimension of the UNECE MEAs.

The final step of the project focuses on involving the countries neighbouring Central Asia. In parallel to the development of cooperative efforts between the UNECE member countries of Central Asia, a subregional high-level conference or separate meetings will be held to identify opportunities for cross border interaction beyond the Central Asian subregion. This event(s) is expected to generate new proposals for further cooperative actions in the realm of the environmental issues addressed under the UNECE MEAs, thereby promoting solutions offered by UNECE MEAs beyond the subregion.

Logical framework for the project

Expected results of the project:		
Enhanced understanding and political acceptance of the UNECE multilateral environmental agreements in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which would enable or lead to:		
(a) Enhanced implementation and increased accession to the agreements; and		
(b) Strengthened transboundary cooperation regarding environmental issues between Central Asian UNECE member countries and enhanced cross-border interaction with their neighbouring countries.		
Activities	Actions	Measurable indicators of success
1. <u>Meetings between UNECE management and high-level government/political officials</u> in recipient countries (5 meetings; one in each recipient country)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare issues for discussion and necessary documentation specific to each country prior to the meetings • Present key objectives and benefits of joining the UNECE MEAs • Exchange information on the current status of implementation and ratification of the UNECE MEAs and existing policy-oriented challenges • Discuss the further steps within the project 	Relevant high-level government/political officials in each recipient country expressing in writing: readiness to implement the project; understanding of the benefits of joining the UNECE MEAs; and political commitment to support the implementation and ratification of the agreements
2. <u>National meetings or consultations</u> for key stakeholders relevant to UNECE MEAs (up to 10 meetings; 2 per country)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare agenda and documentation specific to each meeting • Identify appropriate participants/stakeholders • Build understanding on the existing national policy-oriented challenges to implementation and ratification of the UNECE MEAs • Identify and agree on solutions to overcome these challenges • Prepare meeting reports including conclusions and recommendations on the steps to forward implementation and ratification of the UNECE MEAs 	Appropriate participants/stakeholders taking part in the meeting as identified prior to the meetings Concrete steps to forward implementation of the UNECE MEAs are drawn up and agreed at the meetings
3. <u>Relevant information and communication on UNECE MEAs</u> (in Russian):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a cost/benefit analysis of joining the UNECE MEAs • Update Russian versions of UNECE MEA websites • Prepare and disseminate a Booklet on "Overview of UNECE MEAs - the difference they make" • Prepare and disseminate leaflets on Specific information on each UNECE MEA • Prepare and disseminate Quarterly UNECE MEA Newsletters 	Positive feedback and increased demand from recipient countries Increased visits of the UNECE MEA websites

Activities	Actions	Measurable indicators of success
4. <u>Bilateral/multilateral workshops</u> to enhance transboundary cooperation under the UNECE MEAs between UNECE member countries of Central Asia (up to 10 workshops)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify further opportunities for bilateral transboundary cooperation and the benefits it will bring Facilitate the understanding of the challenges to bilateral transboundary cooperation Encourage bilateral dialogue on strengthening transboundary cooperation Facilitate and provide advice on how to draw up cooperative agreements 	<p>Participating countries have an increased understanding of opportunities, benefits and challenges to strengthen bilateral cooperation, as contained in meeting reports</p> <p>Participating countries are ready to discuss how to forward transboundary cooperation and, if possible, ready to institutionalize it, as contained in meeting reports</p>
5. <u>Subregional high-level conference</u> on how to strengthen transboundary cooperation between the UNECE member countries of Central Asia and to enhance cross-border interactions with their neighbours (one event in Geneva)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify all relevant partners Facilitate the presence of national and local authorities of neighbouring countries Build an understanding of the need to strengthen subregional cooperation beyond the UNECE Central Asian countries Facilitate an exchange on subregional opportunities and benefits of strengthening transboundary cooperation 	<p>Conference conclusions and recommendations including specific proposals for new cooperative follow up action</p> <p>Increased interest in UNECE MEAs from non-UNECE member countries</p>

5 Annual Work Plan

PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List activity results and associated actions</i>	TIMEFRAME				PLANNED BUDGET
	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Amount \$
1. Activity A1 – Meetings between UNECE management and high-level government/political officials in recipient countries (5 meetings)					90,000
2. Activity A2 – National policy meetings/workshops for key stakeholders relevant to UNECE MEAs (up to 10 meetings/workshops; 2 per country)					500,000
3. Activity A3 – Relevant information and communication on UNECE MEAs (cost/benefit analysis; Russian versions of websites; booklets, leaflets and newsletters)					130,000
4. Activity B1 – Bilateral/multilateral workshops to identify opportunities and specific challenges in transboundary cooperation under the UNECE MEAs between countries of Central Asia (up to 10 workshops)					500,000
5. Activity B2 – Subregional high-level conference on how to strengthen transboundary cooperation between the UNECE member countries of Central Asia and to enhance cross-border interactions with their neighbours (one event in Geneva)					180,000
6. Staff (1P4 (215,000) and 1G position (115,000) x 3 years)					990,000
7. National experts, advisers and consultants					120,000

8. Preparation of final report including external project evaluation				20,000
Total staff and activities				2,530,000
13% UNOG overhead costs				328,900
TOTAL				2 858,900