

## The “Environment for Europe” mid-term review of the Astana Conference main outcomes: Astana Water Action



### Template for reporting on the implementation of the Astana Water Action

#### I. Background

1. The Astana Water Action (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/5) is a collection of possible actions for improving the status of water and water-related ecosystems through their more sustainable management, prepared for the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference (Astana, September 2011). This initiative aims to provide suggestions for Governments on possible concrete actions to take to better manage their water resources according to the local/national/regional challenges they face. Another objective is to provide arguments for improving the funding basis for water management from all sources.

2. Countries and other stakeholders were invited to commit to implementing some of the actions and to report on their progress at the future meetings of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. Twenty-one countries and four organizations have committed to 75 actions in the framework of the Astana Water Action. These are: Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United States of America, Uzbekistan, UNECE, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Eco-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers, and the International Network of Basin Organization (INBO).<sup>1</sup>

3. At the Astana Conference the Ministers endorsed the Astana Water Action and welcomed the initiatives launched by interested countries and organizations. They invited countries and other actors to implement the Astana Water Action and to report progress to the Committee on Environmental Policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Registered actions committed by countries and organizations under the framework of the Astana Water Action are available on the ECE website (<http://www.unece.org/env/efe/Astana/documents.html>, under the tab “Astana Water Action”). An overview of these actions is presented in the annex to the present document. In addition, a compilation of the actions that were presented at the Astana Ministerial Conference is available in the document ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/INF.40/Rev.1 ([http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2011/ece/ece.astana.conf.2011.inf.40.e\\_rev.1.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2011/ece/ece.astana.conf.2011.inf.40.e_rev.1.pdf)).

4. The Astana Water Action is intended to support countries' efforts in enhancing the sustainable management of water and in greening their economies. The implementation of this initiative can contribute to a large number of international processes and commitments related to water, such as:

(a) Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the future Sustainable Development Goals which are currently under discussion;

(b) Implementation of 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 of other related UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements;

(c) Implementation of water-related directives of the European Union;

(d) Implementation of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention);

(e) The World Water Forum, in particular the seventh World Water Forum, to be held in spring 2015 in the Republic of Korea;

(f) The "Environment for Europe" process.

5. At its eighteenth session in April 2012 CEP invited delegations to report on the progress in implementing the Astana Water Action, using a template to be prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureaux of CEP and of the Water Convention.

6. The secretariat will prepare a document on the basis of responses received from the Astana Water Action stakeholders.

## **II. Template for reporting**

7. The present template is aimed to harmonize the responses by the participating countries and organizations on progress made in implementing the committed actions under the framework of the Astana Water Action.

8. This template should be filled in and submitted to the ECE secretariat (efe@unece.org) as soon as possible and not later than Friday, 31 May 2013.

9. Information should be provided separately on each action included in the country commitments (please refer to the annex of the present document). Information should be provided through filling the template below for each of your committed actions:

### **1. Country/Organization:**

*Regional Administrador Pimenta Machado, Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente/Administração da Região Hidrográfica do Norte, Portugal (APA/ARH do Norte).*

### **2. Title of the action committed to in 2011 (see the annex)**

*Project on Environmental Quality of International Water Courses Natural Reserves Common Integrated Water Resources Management Document between Portugal and Spain – 0470\_CARISMA\_I\_E*

**3. Overview of progress made**

(a) *Has the action been implemented?*

Yes /  In progress /  No

This action of CARISMA involves three financial partners (Confederación Hidrográfica del Miño-Sil, APA/ARH do Norte and City Council of Melgaço). Other non-financial partners are also involved, such as the municipalities covered by the project area, including Arcos de Valdevez (Portugal), Entrimo and Padrenda (Spain).

This project was supported by Peneda-Gerês National Park (Portugal) and also Xurés Park (Spain) and is developed in the river basins of Minho (Trancoso) and Lima (Laboreiro), two transboundary rivers.

The application to POCTEP (INTERREG), amounting to € 1,002,783.33, was approved in 2011, and is now in the final implementation phase.

The project can be summarized in the following items:

Objectives: Develop actions to maintain and improve the excellent preservation status of rivers Trancoso and Laboreiro, which can be declared Nature River Reserves.

Actions: Quality and flow control of water bodies in Laboreiro and Trancoso rivers; Maintaining the water quality of the rivers; Recovery and conditioning of riverbanks; Dissemination and Environmental Education Actions.

Expected results: Maintenance of the ecological conditions of the water bodies and its banks, as well as dissemination and environmental education actions for residents and visitors, aiming to its declaration as International River Nature Reserve.

(b) *What challenges were encountered during the implementation of the action? What lessons were learned?*

During the implementation process, it has been possible to improve the knowledge exchange and experiences on shared water resources management in order to preserve, promote and protect the natural values in transboundary areas, especially in the water sector and conservation of nature.

It should be noted that this involves the creation of the first international river nature reserve in Europe and we want to replicate this model in other international river basins with the aim of encouraging the improvement of the ecological conditions on water bodies.

This cooperation action, as well as to emphasize this common good (water and nature), also aims to promote environmental dissemination and to favor the interchange of populations living on the implementation area.

This concept is, moreover, in the underlying values and goals of the second Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, the Xurés-Gerês Reserve.

This project is in line with the requirements of Article 6 of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) (CE/2000/60), in a distinctly European and transboundary perspective, and may be an example or guide to other international river basins in a similar situation.

(c) *What future steps, if any, are planned in relation to the action implementation/follow up?*

When the project is concluded, based on the excellent cooperation with all partners (and depending on the financial resources availability), we intend to strengthen its dissemination also on the scientific research aspect, the conservation and the study of biological diversity of these river corridors, since they are located in protected areas that integrate the Natura 2000 Network.

This is a good example to promote environmental awareness and protection of water bodies in areas without significant pressures that already have a very good classification, in ecological terms.

#### 4. *Usefulness of the Astana Water Action*

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements and provide an explanation, as appropriate.

(a) *The Astana Water Action was useful to strengthen political support related to sustainable water management issues:*

strongly agree /  somewhat agree /  somewhat disagree /  strongly disagree

We are strongly interested in Astana Water Action, as we consider it an initiative that aims at improving aquatic ecosystems and also their sustainable management, which reinforces the intention of accepting such projects as favorable to the objectives of UNECE.

(b) *The Astana Water Action has helped my country to comply with its international obligations:*

strongly agree /  somewhat agree /  somewhat disagree /  strongly disagree

Yes, because it promotes the dissemination of information in countries and in international organizations with common goals.

Indeed, this involves the compliance with European obligations and international environmental agreements, namely the process Millennium Development Goals, Commitments made Within the "Environment for Europe".

(c) *Would your country be interested in continuing to submit and monitor new actions within the AWA framework in the future?*

Yes /  No

Yes, all actions aiming the sustainable development of water resources and its protection and enhancement are welcome, particularly those involving international cooperation.

The integrated water resources management is one of WFD purposes and the planning process associated with the river basin management plans cycles should give priority to the international shared river basins. Portugal has five river basins shared with Spain, three of which (Minho, Lima and Douro) are located in APA/ARH do Norte jurisdiction area.

## Annex

### **Overview of actions committed in the framework of the Astana Water Action**

#### **Actions by AUSTRIA**

Ambitious urban waste water treatment and drinking water supply nationwide in place

Implementation of IWRM; Improvement of ecosystems by restoration of river continuity and habitat connectivity

Enhancement of renewable energy production - Refurbishment program for small hydro power plants

#### **Actions by AZERBAIJAN**

Development of National Water Strategy of Azerbaijan

#### **Actions by BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

Adoption of the Sava River Basin Management Plan, Programme of Measures

#### **Actions by BULGARIA**

Invest in environmentally friendly sanitation and wastewater treatment, appropriate operation and maintenance

#### **Actions by CROATIA**

Development of River Basin Management Plan

Implementation Plan for water utility directives

Introduction of “recovery of costs for water services” principle

#### **Actions by the CZECH REPUBLIC**

Promoting of concept of integrated water management

Water quality and quantity protection

Water quality and quantity monitoring and assessment

Guarantee of minimum environmental water flow in streams

Application of user-pays and polluter-pays principles

Access to safe water supply and sanitation and its sustainable pricing

Climate change adaptation and IWRM

Transboundary cooperation and IWRM

#### **Actions by ESTONIA**

Improvement of hydro-morphological situation and ecological status of the surface waters

#### **Actions by FINLAND**

Promoting the efficiency of water use in production and consumption

Promoting the national policy dialogues on IWRM and WSS in EECCA countries. Support to the pilot project on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins of the EECCA countries

Promoting integrated water resources management especially climate change adaptation and vulnerability assessment

**Actions by GEORGIA**

Development Climate Resilient Flood and Flash Management Practices to Protect Vulnerable Communities of Georgia

Enhanced Preparedness of Georgia against Extreme Weather Events

National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management

**Actions by GERMANY**

Training and Competence Centre Karlovac

Climate Change adaptation strategy for the Danube River Basin

Regional Dialogue on transboundary water resources management in Southeastern Europe

**Actions by HUNGARY**

National Remediation Program of Contaminated Sites

National Program for the Protection of Drinking Water Sources

Introducing non-structural and more sustainable measures in the Hungarian flood risk management

Management and utilization plan supporting ecological baseline studies along the River Danube in the Gemenc and Béda-Karapanca Region (2006-2011)

Upgrading bilateral transboundary water agreements

Monitoring of wetland habitats and their communities

**Actions by ITALY**

Upgrade existing nationwide water monitoring networks in Italy

Define and monitor environmental flow in the Po river basin district and Arno river basin

Improve utilization of water resources in the agricultural sector in the Po river basin district

**Actions by the Republic of MOLDOVA**

Improvement of landscapes role in formation of water regime. Protection of the Lower Dniester and Lower Prut wetland ecosystems by creation of the “Lower Dniester” National Park and Lower Prut biosphere reserve and initiation of creation of the Lower Dniester transboundary protected area with Ukraine.

Elaboration of the integrated water resources management river basin plan

Ensuring Implementation and maintenance of strict target settings of reduction of the pollution from municipal industrial sources and discharge permits

Improvement of action plans of the emergency situations in industrial accidents.

Water policy dialogues

Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health

Continuation of the implementation of pilot projects on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins and use of the experience exchange platform on Water Convention

Ratification of the new bilateral agreement on transboundary cooperation with Ukraine on the management of Dniester basin waters

**Actions by MONTENEGRO**

Drin Basin/Drin Dialogue: Montenegrin National Consultation Meeting for the management of the Drin Basin.

**Actions by PORTUGAL**

Project on Environmental Quality of International Water Courses Natural Reserves Common Integrated Water Resources Management Document between Portugal and Spain

Drought Warning and Management System

**Actions by ROMANIA**

Improvement of water resources quality by reducing nutrients discharges into water bodies

Implementation of the provisions of the bilateral transboundary waters agreement

**Actions by SERBIA**

Negotiations on trans-boundary water management agreements with neighboring countries

Preparation and implementation of the national Danube River Basin Management Plan

Preparation and implementation of the Sava River Basin Management Plan

**Actions by SWITZERLAND**

Promoting the concept of integrated water management

Water quality: mitigating micropollutants from point and diffuse sources

Remediation of hydromorphological alterations: Strategic planning by the cantons

Climate change adaptation: Adaptation strategy for Water Management

Integrated Flood Prevention

**Actions by UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Assistance to carry out an analysis of the economic ramifications of optimized water-energy resource utilization in the Syr Darya and Amu Darya River Basins

Assistance to carry out an analysis of the impact of Global Climate Change on regional hydrology in the Aral Sea Basin

**Actions by UKRAINE**

Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in Ukraine

Development curricula for water professionals

**Actions by UZBEKISTAN**

Establishment of the new Ramsar Site Kuyumazar reservoir on the territory of Uzbekistan

Establishment of the new Ramsar Site Tudakul reservoir on the territory of Uzbekistan

**Actions by the EAP Task Force**

Strengthening the economic and financial dimensions of water management, including adaptation to climate change

Strengthening institutions for water supply and sanitation

Assessing the water policies and institutions in the Easter Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia

**Actions by Eco-TIRAS**

Development of IWRM plans for Dniester River basin with action program

Promotion of regular bio-monitoring of natural waters, based on macroinvertebrates/algae, for rapid, cost-effective assessment of quality of water bodies

Application of the principle of environmental flow in rivers, ensuring the ecosystem needs/health. Development the use of payments for ecosystem services

Implementation of Dniester River transboundary cooperation

**Actions by INBO**

Preparation of a “Handbook for Integrated Water Resources Management in Transboundary Basins of Rivers, Lakes and Aquifers”

**Actions by the ECE**

Promoting cross-sectoral cooperation with the health, environment, agriculture, forestry, energy, industry and housing sectors

Development of transboundary water cooperation in the Dniester, Drin, Kura and Central Asian transboundary waters

Promoting transboundary cooperation in adaptation to climate change

Promoting the achievement of water related MDGs through the reform of the water sector and the development of concrete targets and target dates

Promoting the role of the ECE Water Convention beyond the ECE region at the global level

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