

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).¹

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.

¹ 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).

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:

Please indicate your name, organization and country.

Ana Drapa, Ministry of Environment and Climate Changes, Romania.

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

Please indicate the title of the action on the implementation of which you are reporting. Those countries that committed to more than one action please kindly note that a template for reporting should be filled in for each action.

Implementation of the provisions of the bilateral transboundary waters agreement (AWA paragraphs 19 d, e, 20 a,b)

3. Overview of progress made

(a) *Has the action been implemented?*

Yes / In progress / No

Ministry of Environment and Climate Changes (MoECC) of Romania and Ministry of Environment of Republic of Moldova are responsible institutions for the implementation of the provisions of the *Agreement between the Government of Romania and the Government of Republic of Moldova on cooperation for the protection and sustainable use of the Prut and Danube rivers (Chisinau, 20 June 2010)*.

Implementation of the provisions of the above mentioned Agreement is an on-going process.

At its first *ordinary* session (Iași, Romania, 9–11 May 2011) and at its first *extraordinary* session (Cahul, Republic of Moldova, 6–7 December 2011) the Intergovernmental Hydrotechnic Commission (IHC) agreed on the following: Regulation of organization and functioning of the IHC (tasks to be performed, etc.); constitution of permanent subcommissions (on maintenance and operation of the Hydrotechnic Knot Stâncă-Costești on the Prut River, on protection against floods and ice, on quantitative water management and hydrometeorology, and on water quality protection and water bodies biodiversity) and on ad-hoc subcommission; development of specific joint regulations (these regulations are referring to protection and sustainable use of waters, floods risk management, water monitoring, exchange of data and information and to upgrading of the existing 1985 Regulation on the maintenance and operation of the Hydrotechnic Knot Stâncă-Costesti on the Prut River).

At its first meeting each Subcommission has the task to develop its own Regulation of organization and functioning.

The process of elaboration of specific technical regulations by the Romanian side (MoECC and National Administration Apele Române) is on-going.

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

The main challenge is represented by differences between countries in implementing actions due to economic differences/disparities. This also includes the lack of financial resources for participation of experts at the bilateral meetings of Subcommissions. Therefore the annual programme of work agreed by IHC should be developed in a realistic manner/accordingly (e.g. a joint meeting of two Subcommissions).

In this context, no meetings of the Subcommissions took place following the extraordinary session of the JHC. Involvement of technical experts in activities of the Subcommissions provides support to Intergovernmental Hydrotechnic Commission for political decisions related to water resources management issues.

Cooperation (via official letter, e-mails) took place on different topics of mutual interest.

A more effective and close cooperation between institutions is further required for promotion of water related joint projects, especially “Development of the Prut River sub-Basin Management Plan - Romania, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova”.

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

Proposed future steps are as follows:

a. development of joint regulations on different topics according to the existing Agreement

- the draft of the Regulations will be discussed and agreed at meetings of the Subcommissions.

- the final version of the Regulations will be presented as an official document for adoption by the Intergovernmental Hydrotechnic Commission at its ordinary/extraordinary session.
- actions for the implementation of the provisions of the joint Regulations in force.

b. meetings of permanent Subcommissions in order to discuss and to agree on future activities for the implementation of the Agreement.

c. developing and promotion of separate/joint concrete projects on transboundary waters to sustain countries activities (especially the Development of the Prut River Sub-Basin Management Plan - Romania, Ukraine and Republic of Moldova).

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

Ministry of Environment and Climate Changes of Romania pays a great attention to the cooperation with neighbouring countries for the implementation of the existing agreements on transboundary waters (Serbia, 1955 Agreement; Ukraine, 1997 Agreement; Hungary, 2003 Agreement; Republic of Moldova, 2010 Agreement) as well as to the implementation of the Water Convention.

Political support related to the water management issues is provided through the Joint Intergovernmental Commissions, respectively their decisions on the needed activities (better management of the floods on the transboundary rivers, improvement of the water quality, individually or jointly actions during high floods or accidental pollutions of the transboundary waters, development of new water infrastructure - such as works for protection against floods, etc., exchange of information in emergency situations) to be implemented by both countries. Cooperation implies adequate human and financial resources.

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

X strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree

If agreeing, please elaborate how (e.g. European Union Directives, UNECE and other environmental agreements, Millennium Development Goals, Commitments made within the “Environment for Europe” process) (up to 250 words)

Implementation of:

- the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its Protocol on Water and Health, of the Convention regarding cooperation on protection and sustainable use of the Danube River and Convention on the protection of the Black Sea against pollution, *as well as of*
- water-related directives of the European Union, especially Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive.

A special mention should be addressed to the implementation of the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. In Romania, according to provisions of the Treaties Law, the decisions of the Joint Commission agreed at the session (included in the Session’s Protocol signed by the co-chairs of the JC) are approved by the Government. The Governmental Decision as well as the text of the Session’s Protocol is published in the Official Journal/Gazette.

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

x Yes / No

The action committed to in 2011 refers to the *Agreement between the Government of Romania and the Government of Republic of Moldova on cooperation for the protection and sustainable use of the Prut and Danube rivers (Chisinau, 20 June 2010)*. The process of Agreement’s implementation is an on-going/continuously one.

The new actions to be proposed within the AWA framework in the future should be foreseen as joint actions agreed with our partners from Republic of Moldova.

The same approach (proposed joint actions with our neighboring countries) should be considered related to the bilateral cooperation on transboundary waters with Serbia having in mind the actual bilateral cooperation is based on the 1955 Agreement (a proposed action could be the finalization and approval of the new agreement on transboundary waters (negotiation started in 2011). The proposal is made based on the 2011 action submitted by Serbia within the AWA (Negotiations on trans-boundary water management agreements with neighboring countries).

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 save 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
