



PROCEEDINGS OF THE

13th MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL WATER POLICY DIALOGUE ON IWRM IN ARMENIA/4th MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF THE EU “ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OF INTERNATIONAL RIVER BASINS” PROJECT

Date: December 16, 2014

Location: “Picasso Hall” of “Congress” Hotel, 1 Italia Street, Yerevan

The 13th Meeting of the Steering Committee on the National Policy Dialogue on IWRM in Armenia/4th Meeting of the National Coordination Committee of the EU “Environmental Protection of International River Basins” project was chaired by Mr. Artyom Mkhitarian, Deputy Head of the Water Resources Management Agency of the Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia. In the **opening session** Mr. Mkhitarian welcomed the participants of the meeting, and presented the main points of the agenda. The SC members adopted the agenda as it was presented.



Opening Session

Opening statement was also made by Mr. John Barker from the EU Delegation in Armenia, Mrs Tatiana Efimova from OECD/EAP Task Force Secretariat, Mr. Peep Mardiste from UNECE and Mr. Timothy Turner from the EU “International Protection of International River Basins” Project. Mr. Barker highlighted the importance of water projects, and the plans of the EU to continue support both the EU Water Initiative and technical assistance projects of the ENPI countries. In her opening remarks Mrs Efimova highlighted the works towards development of sanitation strategy in Armenia, as well as economic dimension of water resources management. Mr. Mardiste briefly touched upon the works undertaken in Armenia within the Water and Health Protocol, and expressed a hope that the project will have successful continuation. In his opening speech Mr. Turner expressed his appreciation of the joint meeting of the NPD Steering Committee and EPIRB Project NCC in Armenia, given the importance of integration of technical and policy efforts.



Afterwards, Mr. Mkhitarian summarized the status of NPD activities, and updated on recent development in water sector of Armenia. He particularly talked about the recent institutional and structural changes in the water sector of Armenia, the decree of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia on reducing the volumes permitted for water use in Ararat, Hrazdan and Akhuryan water basin management areas, progress made in liquidation and conservation of illegal and abandoned groundwater wells in Ararat valley, Government of Armenia Protocol Session Resolution on expanding the groundwater monitoring network in the country, and finally about the working group, established by the Decree of Prime Minister, which is in charge of preparing proposal to irrigate about 27,000 agricultural lands, which were previously irrigation, but in the last decade are abandoned.

The **first session** of the meeting was facilitated by OECD and included discussion of economic and financial dimension of water sector reforms in Armenia. Mr. Eduard Mesropyan, Director of “Jinj” LLC made a presentation on the works towards development of a national strategy on sustainable sanitation in Armenia. In his speech Mr. Mesropyan presented the main objective and topics of the study, disaggregated investments costs and proposed approaches towards improvement of sanitation sector in Armenia, including collection, transportation and treatment of wastewater. In the follow up Q&A session the participants of the meeting discussed issues related to assessing the sanitation costs, quality of treated wastewater and possibility of re-use, pilot projects, recent developments in constructing wastewater treatment facilities and policy implications.

Afterwards, Mr. Vahagn Tonoyan, Country Water Management Expert, presented the future work on economic dimension of water management reform in Armenia. In his presentation Mr. Tonoyan talked about the assessment of environmental and economic values of water resources, the components, main steps and expected outcomes of the proposed scoping exercise. Mrs Efimova added that the proposed study will also include issues, related to opportunity cost, and the objective of the scoping exercise also includes provision of a decision support tool. In the follow-up Q&A session the participants of the meeting discussed the need to consider also social value of the water, issues related to ecosystem services, existence value, valuation techniques and approaches, and difficulties in monetizing all water uses.



OECD Session

The results of the first session discussions are summarized below:



- *The Steering Committee expresses its gratitude to OECD for supporting the study “Towards Development of a National Strategy of Sanitation in Armenia”, and stresses that the study will serve as a good basis for further works in the sector;*
- *The Steering Committee approves the scope of the proposed work on assessing the environmental and economic values of water, and highlights that it can serve an important tool for efficient decision making on water allocation.*

The **second session** of the meeting was devoted to UNECE project on the Protocol on Water and Health and setting corresponding targets for Armenia. First, Mrs Emma Anakhasyan from the “Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment” NGO presented the main process in implementing the project “Improving Health in Armenia through target setting to ensure sustainable water management, access to safe water and adequate sanitation”. Mrs Nune Bakuntz from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia presented the draft national targets and target dates under the Protocol on Water and Health, according to different target areas. Mr Vahagn Tonoyan then presented the proposed road map to ratification of Water and Health Protocol, and Action Plan to support the implementation of targets and target dates. The presentations were followed by Q&A session, during which the participants of the meeting discussed issues related to additional laws and by-laws, possibility to revise the targets in future, reporting mechanism to which Armenia currently participates, formal adoption of the targets and target dates, and the specific mechanisms to start the ratification process of the Protocol in Armenia.



UNECE Session

Based on the results of discussion the following decision was made:

- *The Steering Committee expresses its satisfaction with the results of the work on setting national targets and targets dates under the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health and its corresponding action plan to support the implementation, as well as the proposed road map for ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health in Armenia, and calls the Ministry of Nature Protection to officially start the process of formal adoption of the Action Plan for implementation of targets and the ratification process of the Protocol.*

The **third session** of the meeting was devoted to EPIRB project. First, the Project Team Leader Mr Timothy Turner presented the project progress. In his presentation Mr Turner talked about the overall project objectives, the progress achieved since the last regional steering committee meeting, monitoring program development, river basin management planning and progress achieved under



these components. Afterwards, Mr Tonoyan presented activities completed in Armenia since the last NCC meeting and plans for the next six months. Mr Tonoyan particularly highlighted the progress in WFD compliant monitoring, joint field surveys, development of river basin management plan for Akhuryan BMA, pilot projects, and public awareness and participation. In the following Q&A session the participants discussed issues related to the linkage of ecological flows and classification systems, correlation between hydro-biological and hydro-morphological monitoring, impact of climate change on water resources, groundwater resources in Ararat valley, increased concentrations of Arsenic in Ashotsk and Armavir regions.

After discussing the overall project progress and planned activities, the sub-contractors of the EPIRB project presented their works. Mr Aram Gevorgyan from “Resource Management” LLC presented the environmental objectives and draft program of measures for the Akhuryan Water basin Management Area of Armenia. In his presentation Mr Gevorgyan summarized the significant pressures in the pilot basin, water bodies delineated as being at risk, defined environmental objectives, and proposed program of measures to achieve the defined objectives, including basic and supplementary measures.

Finally, 2 pilot projects being implemented within the EPIRB Project were presented. Mr Harutyun Yeremyan from the Hydrogeologica Monitoring Centre of the Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia presented the pilot project on refurbishment of groundwater monitoring in Aknashen village of Ararat valley of Armenia. Mr Benyamin Zakaryan from “Geoinfo” LLC presented the pilot project on improvement of water resources management and ensuring efficient water use through development of a system for an automated, centralized, on-line control of actual water use in Metsamor River basin of Akhuryan BMA of Armenia.



EPIRB Session

Based on the results of discussion the following decision was made:

- *The Steering Committee expresses its satisfaction with the progress made in EPIRB project since the last NCC meeting and plans for the upcoming year;*
- *The Steering Committee members will review draft Program of Measures for Akhuryan BMA and submit their written comments in two weeks time;*
- *The Steering Committee expresses its appreciation with the progress in implementation of pilot projects on refurbishment of groundwater monitoring and on-line water use control system.*



In the ***closing session*** of the 13th Meeting of the Steering Committee on the National Policy Dialogue on IWRM in Armenia/4th Meeting of the National Coordination Committee of the EU “Environmental Protection of International River Basins” project the chairman recalled the Steering Committee ***decisions*** made, as follows:

Session 1 - Economic and financial dimension of the water sector reforms in Armenia

- *The Steering Committee expresses its gratitude to OECD for supporting the study “Towards Development of a National Strategy of Sanitation in Armenia”, and stresses that the study can serve as a good basis for further works in the sector.*
- *The Steering Committee approves the scope of the proposed work on assessing the environmental and economic value of water, and highlights that it can serve an important tool for efficient decision making on water allocation.*

Session 2 – UNECE project on the Protocol on Water and Health

- *The Steering Committee expresses its satisfaction with the results of the work on setting national targets and targets dates under the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health and its corresponding action plan to support the implementation, as well as the proposed road map for ratification of the Protocol on Water and Health in Armenia, and calls the Ministry of Nature Protection to officially start the process of formal adoption of the Action Plan for implementation of targets and the ratification process of the Protocol.*

Session 3 – EU “Environmental Protection of International River Basins” Project

- *The Steering Committee expresses its satisfaction with the progress made in EPIRB project since the last NCC meeting and plans for the upcoming year;*
- *The Steering Committee members will review draft Program of Measures for Akhuryan BMA and submit their written comments in two weeks time;*
- *The Steering Committee expresses its appreciation with the progress in implementation of pilot projects on refurbishment of groundwater monitoring and on-line water use control system.*