



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
14th MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL WATER POLICY DIALOGUE ON WATER
SECTOR ISSUES IN ARMENIA**

*December 14, 2015
Yerevan, Armenia*

According to the Decree No 139-A of November 30, 2015 of the Chairman of the State Committee on Water Systems (SCWS) of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Armenia, a new Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on water sector issues in Armenia was formed. The Committee includes representatives of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Nature Protection, SCWS, Ombudsman's Office of Armenia, as well as representatives of scientific institutes and universities, non-governmental organizations and private sector. In total, the Steering Committee has 23 members.

The 14th Meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) of the National Policy Dialogue on Water Sector Issues in Armenia was chaired by Mr. Volodya Narimanyan, Deputy Head of the SCWS of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Armenia.



14th Meetings of the Steering Committee of the NPD on Water Sector Issues in Armenia



The objective of the meeting was to discuss the status of NPD activities and recent developments in water sector of Armenia, as well as the progress in implementation of the EU WFD principles in Armenia. The meeting also served as platform for establishing synergies with other international water projects implemented in Armenia.

In the **opening session** Mr. Narimanyan 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 statement were made by Mr. Aram Harutyunyan, Chairman of the SCWS of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Armenia, Ms. Tatiana Efimova from OECD/EAP Task Force Secretariat, and Mr. Peep Mardiste from UNECE.

The **first session** of the meeting was devoted to UNECE/WHO Protocol on Water and Health in Armenia. Mr. Mardiste made a brief introduction on the works about the Protocol internationally and in Armenia particularly. Mr. Oliver Schmoll, Programme Manager on Water and Sanitation in the World Health Organization (WHO), presented the key provisions and activities of the UNECE/WHO Protocol on Water and Health. Ms. Nune Bakuntz, Deputy Director of the National Centre for Disease Control and Prevention of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia, presented the health component of the UNECE/WHO Water and Health Protocol, and implications for Armenia. Ms. Armine Arushanyan, Chief Specialist of the Department of Water Supply and Sanitation Systems of the SCWS, presented the water supply and sanitation issues in Armenia in line with the Water and Health Protocol. Finally, Ms. Emma Anakhasyan from the “Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment” NGO presented the role of public participation in implementing the Water and Health Protocol.

Based on the results of the presentations and follow-up discussion the following decision was made:

- *The Steering Committee welcomes the new project on Water and Health Protocol in Armenia, and approves the works implemented so far.*
- *The Steering Committee stresses the importance to continuing the works towards ratification of the Protocol in Armenia, as well as formal adoption of the targets either through Government Resolution or Government of Armenia Protocol Session Resolution.*
- *The Steering Committee highlights the legal gap in regulating the use of wastewater for irrigation*

The **second session** of the meeting was facilitated by OECD and included discussion of economic and financial dimension of water sector reforms in Armenia. Ms. Efimova summarized what has been done in economic reforms of water resources management in Armenia and then outlined the scope of potential works on water valuation in Armenia. Afterwards, Mr. Vahagn Tonoyan, water management expert, made a brief presentation on the proposed assessment of the value of water for different economic and environmental uses in Armenia, including direct use values, indirect use values and non-use values. In his presentation Mr. Tonoyan described the main steps of the proposed study and the expected outcomes.

The results of the presentations and follow-up discussions of the second session are summarized below:

- *The Steering Committee highlights the importance of the proposed study on assessment of the value of water for different economic and environmental uses in Armenia and approves the scope of work.*
- *The Steering Committee prioritizes the study as important tool for proper valuation of water, and calls for possible in-depth study in the irrigation sector, as well as assessment of the alternative value of the water.*
- *The Steering Committee proposes the study team to have meetings with all respective stakeholder agencies and organizations while proposing tools for assessing the direct, indirect and non-use values of water.*

The **third session** of the meeting was devoted to synergies with other international water projects implemented in Armenia.



Mr. Tonoyan presented the EU funded “Environmental Protection of International River Basins” Project progress up to date, activities in the extension period and cooperation with the EUWI National Policy Dialogue in Armenia.

Mr. Varazdat Mkrtychyan from the Water Sector PIU of the SCWS presented the reservoir construction progress in progress in Armenia. Particularly, he presented JICA funded project on reconstruction of Yeghvard Reservoir, KfW Bank funded project on construction of Kaps Reservoir and related gravity system, and French Development Agency funded project on construction of Vedi Reservoir.

Ms. Magda Avetisyan, Team Leader of the USAID funded “Advanced Science and Partnership for Integrated Resource Development” project, presented the main components of the project, which aims to reduce the rate of groundwater extraction in the Ararat Valley to sustainable rates.

All the presentations of the projects were followed by Q&A session, during which the SC members discussed the coordination between the projects and synergies with the Government priorities in water sector of Armenia.

The **fourth session** of the NPD Steering Committee meeting was devoted to discussion of the next steps of the NPD in Armenia. First, the SC members discussed the announcement made by the representative of the Ministry of Nature Protection (MNP) of Armenia, with which the Ministry insisted that Water Resources Management Agency (WRMA) of the MNP should chair the NPD Steering Committee meetings. Mr. Narimanyan and Mr. Mardiste once again stated the pre-history of the NPD process in Armenia, which included rotating chairmanship of the SCWS and WRMA. The members of the SC agreed that the chairmanship is a technical issue and the important aspect is that the NPD is a platform for a dialogue between the stakeholder organizations. Thus, the SC decided to take into consideration the announcement made by the representative of the Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia, and at the same time reaffirmed that the NPD is an open platform for all stakeholder organizations to support inter-sectoral cooperation in water sector.

Also, the Steering Committee welcomed the initiative by the SCWS of the Ministry of Agricultural of the Republic of Armenia to update the list of the NPD Steering Committee and invited SCWS to chair the NPD process, based on the principle of rotating chairmanship as laid down in the 2006 MOU between the EU, UNECE, OECD, SCWS and MNP.

Afterwards, the SC members discussed the priorities of the NPD in Armenia in 2016. Several priorities for future works were mentioned by the SC members, such as the need for development of irrigation water quality norms; developing a law on irrigation, pursuant to the best international practice; revision of the Water Code of Armenia to regulate sanitation issues; and exploring the effectiveness of subsidies in irrigation sector. It was agreed that further priorities might be presented during the next SC meeting of the NPD, tentatively planned to be held in April-May 2016.

In the **closing session** of the 14th Meeting of the Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on Water Sector Issues in Armenia the chairman recalled the Steering Committee **decisions** made, as follows:

DECISIONS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

1. The Steering Committee welcomes the initiative by the State Committee on Water Systems of the Ministry of Agricultural of the Republic of Armenia to update the list of the NPD Steering Committee and invites SCWS to chair the NPD process, based on the principle of rotating chairmanship as laid down in the 2006 MOU between the EU, UNECE, OECD, State Committee on Water Systems and the Ministry of Nature Protection;
2. The Steering Committee takes into consideration the announcement made by the representative of the Ministry of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia, and at the same time reaffirms that the NPD is an open platform for all stakeholder organizations to support inter-sectoral cooperation in water sector;



3. The Steering Committee welcomes the new project on Water and Health Protocol in Armenia, and approves the works implemented so far. SC stresses the importance to continuing the works towards ratification of the Protocol in Armenia, as well as formal adoption of the targets either through Government Resolution or Government of Armenia Protocol Session Resolution. The SC highlights the legal gap in regulating the use of wastewater for irrigation;
4. The Steering Committee highlights the importance of the proposed study on assessment of the value of water for different economic and environmental uses in Armenia and approves the scope of work. SC prioritizes the study as important tool for proper valuation of water, and calls for possible in-depth study in the irrigation sector, as well as assessment of the alternative value of the water. The SC proposes the study team to have meetings with all respective stakeholder agencies and organizations while proposing tools for assessing the direct, indirect and non-use values of water;
5. Among the priority topics for the follow-up works within the NPD in Armenia the Steering Committee emphasizes the following needs:
 - (a) the need for development of irrigation water quality norms,
 - (b) developing a law on irrigation, pursuant to the best international practice,
 - (c) revision of the Water Code of Armenia to regulate sanitation issues,
 - (d) exploring the effectiveness of subsidies in irrigation sector.