



Capacity for Water Cooperation Workshop on Legal, Institutional and Technical Aspects of Managing Transboundary Groundwaters Almaty, Kazakhstan, 29-31 May 2012

Background

The Capacity for Water Cooperation (CWC)¹ project aims to strengthen the capacity of transboundary water management in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA). The objective of the project is to create a framework for exchange of experience between river basins and countries on regulatory, institutional, methodological and other aspects of integrated management of transboundary waters. Five CWC workshops have been conducted since 2004 on specific themes related to transboundary water cooperation.

In the last decades, EECCA countries have focused their efforts on building transboundary cooperation primarily on surface waters. Currently they face increasing challenges to establish sound frameworks for management and protection of groundwaters and express the need for knowledge and best practice with regard to legal, administrative, and technical aspects of management and protection of groundwaters, especially in transboundary context.

Activities focusing on transboundary groundwaters under the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) date back from the early 1990s and is an important area of work in the current workplan 2010-2012. Following up to the decision of the fifth Meeting of the Parties to the Convention (November 2009), the application of the principles of the Convention to transboundary groundwaters has been investigated. As a result of the work of the Legal Board under the Convention, draft Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters are being developed. The Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters will be submitted for adoption by the Convention's Meeting of the Parties in November 2012. The Provisions will support countries in improving the legal basis of cooperation on shared groundwaters.

The work carried out in the International Shared Aquifer Resources Management Programme (ISARM) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) International Hydrological Programme (IHP) supported the process that led to the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/104 of 9 December 2011 and the Draft Articles on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers.

Workshop on Legal, Institutional and Technical Aspects of Managing Transboundary Groundwaters

The workshop builds on the earlier work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and UNESCO on transboundary groundwaters in the region, and the workshops organized in cooperation with Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It will benefit from the inventory and assessment of transboundary groundwaters in the region compiled in the Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters (UNECE, 2011).

The workshop will assist countries in improving the management of and cooperation on transboundary groundwaters, thereby increasing implementation and application of the Water Convention. It will promote good governance in the field of water.

¹ See <http://www.unece.org/env/water/cwc.htm>

The workshop is organized jointly by UNECE, OSCE, UNESCO and the Center “Cooperation for Sustainable Development” (Almaty, Kazakhstan) with financial support from the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The participation includes policy and decision makers in field of groundwater management and transboundary waters, legal and technical experts, academia and NGOs.

Objectives and scope

This 6th CWC workshop will build capacity of government officials and other experts in EECCA countries on the legal and technical aspects of management and protection of groundwaters, with a focus on transboundary groundwaters. Specifically, the workshop aims to:

- Familiarize the participants with existing processes, technical studies and legal frameworks related to management of transboundary groundwaters;
- Present the experience of countries and joint bodies in the UNECE region on the management and protection of groundwaters and the application of IWRM to transboundary groundwaters;
- Initiate dialogue and exchange of information on legal and institutional frameworks and management practices in EECCA subregion;
- Discuss the draft Model Provisions on Transboundary Groundwaters with with representatives of the countries of EECCA;
- Develop recommendations on the management and protection of transboundary groundwaters, including improvement of legal and institutional frameworks for cooperation in EECCA subregion.

The programme includes presentations on 1) international law and its application to groundwaters drawing from the work of the UN International Law Commission with the support of UNESCO and the UNECE Water Convention’s Legal Board, on 2) transboundary groundwater governance globally and on 3) different management aspects related to transboundary groundwaters. Countries and joint bodies will share their experience in this area and the EECCA countries in particular will present on their groundwater management situation and the legal basis. An overview of ISARM’s activities in Central Asia with a focus on the current status of scientific knowledge on transboundary aquifers in the subregion will be presented.

Expected Results

The workshop will increase the level of expertise in the field of transboundary groundwater management among decision makers and water managers in the EECCA subregion and will initiate the discussion on policy, legal, administrative and other measures to improve the management and protection of groundwaters at both national and transboundary levels.

Recommendations on the management and protection of transboundary groundwaters in EECCA subregion developed in the workshop will be disseminated widely and reported on during the Working Group on Integrated Water Resources Management (3-5 July 2012) and the sixth Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention (28-30 November 2012).

The recommendations, presentations and other materials from the workshop will be made available through the UNECE Water Convention’s web site.

Practical Information

The workshop will take place in Hotel Kazzhol² in Almaty, Kazakhstan, 29-31 May 2012. It will start at 9.30 am on Tuesday, 29 May and end at 1pm on Wednesday, 31 May. Simultaneous interpretation in English - Russian and Russian-English will be provided. A field visit to well field in Talgar (30 km from Almaty) where groundwater is abstracted will be organized in the afternoon of 31 May and all participants are invited to attend.

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The organizers have made booking for single economy hotel rooms in Hotel Kazzhol for the participants of the workshop. For those participants who have been informed that the costs of their accommodation will be covered, the organizers are booking rooms and will pay to hotel directly. For fully funded participants, the organizers will cover the taxi costs from the airport to the hotel and back. A pick up service will be organized for such participants. During the workshop lunch and coffee breaks will be provided by the organizers.

For further information on the programme, please contact Ms. Annukka Lipponen in the secretariat of the Water Convention (e-mail annukka.lipponen@unece.org, tel. +41 22 9172666) and on the practical aspects, please contact Ms. Asem Bodauova (e-mail csd.ase@gmail.com) and Mr. Nikolay Chmelevskiy (e-mail csd.nikolay@gmail.com), in the Center “Cooperation for Sustainable Development” (tel. +7 727 255 84 21, 267 64 72).