



**NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE ON INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT UNDER THE EUROPEAN UNION WATER INITIATIVE COMPONENT
FOR COUNTRIES OF EASTERN EUROPE, CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA**

**Report of the Second Steering Committee meeting of National Policy Dialogue on integrated
water resources management in Azerbaijan**

08 June 2012

The meeting was organized by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The meeting was opened by Mr Firdovsi Aliyev, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Ecology and Natural resources, Mr Nicola Di-Pietrantonio, European Commission, Mr Bo Libert, UNECE and Ms Tatiana Efimova, OECD.

In the first session Mr. Arif Akhundov, representative of the newly established State Water Resources Agency under the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Azerbaijan, gave an overview of the status and management of water resources in the country. He stressed in particular the scarcity of water resources, the necessity to develop transboundary cooperation and the concern with regard to pollution and frequent floods as well as the need to improve the structure for water management.

The national consultant, Mr. Rafiq Verdiyev, gave an overview of the draft National Water Strategy. The Water Strategy outlines priority directions and actions for the short and longer term — up to 18 years. The overall objective is to introduce the principles of integrated water resources management (IWRM), as reflected in the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive and the UNECE Water Convention. Key directions of the strategy include strengthening the protection of water resources and ecosystems, meeting the needs of different water users, promoting water saving and improving transboundary water cooperation.

Experts from the Finnish Environmental Institute assessed the draft strategy as well formulated with a good analysis of the background situation and clear, while perhaps ambitious objectives for the future. It was suggested that the Strategy would be developed to more take into account scarcity of water and low-flow situations. The importance of being pragmatic, and to use on-going and planned international projects well in the development and implementation of the Strategy, was stressed as was the need to step by step introduce important issues such as water-use and discharge permits, payments/tariffs and definition of water rights in the national legislation.

The second session was devoted to transboundary cooperation under the National Policy Dialogue umbrella. A presentation on the 20th anniversary of the UNECE Water Convention



by Mr. Bo Libert, Regional Adviser from UNECE, demonstrated the benefits of being a Party to the Convention as well as its main achievements and plans for the future.

Ms. Tatiana Efimova from the OECD presented the results of the recently finalised project on the use of economic instruments in Southern Caucasus and the Kura basin. She also gave an overview of existing economic instruments and their application in Azerbaijan.

The plans and experiences of international projects supporting the implementation of IWRM in Azerbaijan were discussed in the following session. The following projects were presented and opportunities for cooperation between projects discussed: “Trans-Boundary River Management Phase III for the Kura River – Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan”, UNDP/GEF project - “Reducing transboundary degradation in the Kura-Aras river basin” and the EC International Waters project – “Environmental Protection of International River Basins”.

In the final session of the Steering Committee meeting the following conclusions were made with regard to the finalisation of the National Water Strategy:

1. The Working Group and Consultant will update the draft Water Strategy taking into account the comments made during the Stakeholder and Steering Committee meeting.
2. The new draft will be broadly distributed – including to meeting participants – for comments. One month will be given for experts to comment.
3. Comments will be consolidated by the Working Group and Consultant and sent to the Finnish experts for commenting.
4. On the basis on this material including the comments from Finland a consolidated new draft will be produced by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources.
5. The draft Water Strategy will be submitted for official approval by relevant authorities and stakeholders.
6. The latest available draft of the Water Strategy as well as further actions for its implementation will be discussed at the next Steering Committee meeting.
7. After that the Water Strategy will be finalised by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers.

It was further concluded that OECD activities in Azerbaijan will be focused on exploring potential transboundary benefits from improved water management, and organisation of a regional conference on water security and economic aspects of IWRM in Azerbaijan in the beginning of 2013.