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

Expert meeting of National water policy dialogue in Azerbaijan on integrated water resources management

29 November 2011

Representatives of ministries of foreign affairs, emergency situations, ecology and natural resources as well as participants from Baku State University, AzerSu JSC and Amelioration and Water Economy JSC took part in the meeting. Following the agenda the items proposed by the international experts to be clarified have been discussed.

Azerbaijan has signed an agreement with EU on harmonization of the legislation. There are ongoing water and sanitation projects in Azerbaijan. All projects should and are following requirements of the EU Urban Wastewater Directive. All technologies which are brought to the country are in line with the EU standards. Azerbaijan carries out biological, chemical and physical purification. The purification of Nitrogen is nowadays more prioritized than phosphorus. Azeri limit values for P are 10 times lower than EU.

The new Water resources agency under the Ministry of Emergency Situations had developed a Water action plan in cooperation with experts from the Netherlands.

Presentation of the comments from international experts - Kari Kinunnen

- Most critical problem is the bad drinking water quality, climate change and polluted transboundary waters. The goals proposed by the NWS are too ambitious. However, implementation in the phases and the plan itself (the Roadmap) are a good idea. But implementation of the goals will be very challenging. The plans should be possible to implement and adapted to the country's realities. The Strategy tackles all problems at the same level not giving clear priorities of the importance of different directions of work. It is proposed to develop a clearer prioritization including in the implementation plan.
- Implementing of the WFD requires a lot of biological and chemical background data. The main idea should be to take good ideas and principles from the WFD and adapt them to the priority need and conditions.
- The idea of centralizing all water functions under one agency is good but difficult to implement. It might be better to enhance the cooperation and sell the idea that actually the knowledge and cooperation are the power and thus improve cooperation. The licensing and supervision should be in different organizations in order to work.
- The transboundary water cooperation issues should be strengthened in the NWS.

Proposals: (1) minimizing water use and recycling; (2) taxation encouraging minimizing water use; (3) developing and changing irrigation and farming practices; (4) changing patterns of crop production; (5) cleaner production and technology practices (in most cases these activities are profitable for the industry); (6) constructing multipurpose water

storages especially in the prospective of the climate change; (7) changes in legislation supporting activities on sustainable water resources management; (8) national-wide planning, not case-by-case implementation; (9) transferring waters between the river basins is not every efficient and environmentally friendly; (10) protection of groundwater and pollution prohibition should be part of the legislation.

Concentrate on: (1) quality of the information; (2) biological information; (3) harmonization of the hydrological and quality monitoring (in the same places to calculate reliable mass balance); (4) use of the same GIS throughout entire country and storing all information in GIS in order to combine all data.

Objective of environmental monitoring: Institutions trying to protect their data is a typical feature in post-soviet countries which is not effective and leads to the idea that "the data is power" and insufficient data exchange. The main idea of monitoring is to create knowledge, not distribute data. Purpose of monitoring is to help management. Starting point of the monitoring should be "what we need", not "what we want" and only after that the monitoring programme can be developed. Analysis of collected samples should be carried out by a certified laboratory. Only quality controlled data should be stored in the official data bases. There is no way to manage what is not monitored.

Remarks after the presentation by international experts

The goal was to incorporate the comments and recommendations in the document and then send them for the state revision. Strategies are implemented in many areas of Azeri economy. According to the Constitution all strategies (including the Water Strategy) have to be approved by the Head of the State. Information on the funding, finances, etc. will be included in the main state framework. From the legal side there is a Water Code (addressing wide range of questions) which can be a basis for developing the strategy. All information that doesn't constitute a state secret is public. There is no limitation for state entities to get environmental information.

Azerbaijan has own specific conditions: huge water bodies and irrigation channels. All these aspects will be taken into account in the strategy. IWRM application helps to advance water management. Nowadays with the new technologies the irrigation regime changed and more attention is given to the relation water-product-water. Thus, in the republic there is a reduction of the water consumption by 20%. The goal is not to reach the highest productivity but to get closer to it.

The Strategy should include ambitious goals concerning water supply and network because the economy can support their achievement. Compared to other countries the water losses are too high and one of the aims is to reduce them. The plan is to reduce losses by 40%. Despite Baku being located in an arid zone the amount of precipitation exceeds capacity of the collecting system. Drainage and sewage water systems in Azerbaijan are separated which is a benefit. There is a programme for the monitoring of groundwater.

Most of the problems in the country are related to bad management. A new State Water Resources Agency was created and 60% of water reservoirs are given to this agency. Management and protection of these reservoirs will be carried out by this agency.

Within a flood management programme a national water plan development is considered. Regarding the flood management currently a GIS system is used. To manage cascade reservoirs on Kura River monitoring based on GIS is carried out and used for management of the river. This monitoring includes water quality modeling.

Another issue is water accounting. It was carried out by MENR and Amelioration JSC. There is no registration of the water bodies that are not used for drinking purposes. It would be good if the strategy would include state registration of all water of the country. There is a map of the flood area. To identify the flood areas there is a special programme in the state programme. There is also an action plan for big reservoirs in case of accidents. Within the state programme a risk map and flood are map are prepared. There is a development programme prepared together with the International *Arctic* Science *Committee* (a master plan) and it is used in the risk assessment.

Water protection zones are considered in all legislation. For each water body these protection zones borders are developed. Unfortunately, no responsible authority applies this legislation. Most of the damage is connected to violation of law and construction in protection area. So it was a responsibility of violators not the state. However, when a serious flood occurred the state took all financial responsibility.

There are two types of institutions in Azerbaijan issuing permits. One is dealing with licenses and another with permit activities. When getting big license a fee is paid (40-45 activities). Other forms of water activities require permits (including use of water). If the water user exceeds the limit they pay more. There are problems with both licensing and permitting systems. Recently it was envisioned that these two types of institutions have to be changed into one based on the EU legislation.

The drainage waters (30-40%) are discharged in the Caspian Sea. A usage of sea water in the future should be considered.

Water and sanitation improvement in 60-70 districts lacking proper sewage systems and adequate drinking water supply should be considered (around 1 000 000 people). This issue should also be addressed in the strategy.

Groundwater can be used as a source of drinking water in small areas.

Complex integrated water use scheme should be included in the strategy.

Conclusions

1. The SYKE's comment document will be translated.
2. an draft structure of strategy will be prepared by SYKE in week 49;
3. a group of national experts should prepare a 1st draft under supervision of national consultant(25-30 pages);
4. a seminar with consultants to discuss the strategy should be organized back to back with the Steering Committee meeting;
5. final version of the document to be submitted;
6. the new Agency should be involved in the process (amendment to the MoU);

7. The time schedule for the further process should be proposed within a week by the MoE.