

Minutes of the first Steering Committee meeting of the Azerbaijan National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management

The first Azerbaijan's National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management (NPD/IWRM) Steering Committee meeting took place at the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan on 12 October 2010 in Baku. The meeting followed signing of the NPD/IWRM Memorandum of Understanding by Deputy Minister of Ministry of Ecology of Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan Firdovsi Aliev and secretary of the UNECE Water Convention Secretariat Francesca Bernardini on 27 September 2010.

Representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economy, Public Health, Industry and Energy, as well as water companies, non-governmental organizations and academia, participated in the meeting (please see a list of Steering Committee members in Attachment 1 below).

The Steering Committee members discussed major issues, which concern water management in Azerbaijan. The meeting participants stressed that the Government of Azerbaijan is committed to the improvement of the country's environment; in addition to launching of the National Policy Dialogue on IWRM, a comprehensive State programme aimed at improvement of the environmental situation in Azerbaijan for the period 2010–2014 is expected to be adopted in the near future. It was proposed that the NPD/IWRM and Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, which coordinates the NPD/IWRM, would concentrate on preparation of a governmental strategy for management of water resources based on IWRM principles; such a strategy should be elaborated based on the best practices available in other countries where similar strategies have been developed. One of the major focuses of the strategy should be on the use of water for irrigation; therefore, it is important invite to the next NPD/IWRM meeting experts dealing with the water use for irrigation. Another important focus of the NPD/IWRM needs to be transboundary water cooperation since Azerbaijan depends for its water quality and quantity from the neighbouring countries.

The Steering Committee members decided that the main directions of the NPD/IWRM in Azerbaijan should be

- Development of a governmental strategy for management of water resources based on the principles outlined in the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health, as well as other United Nations and EU instruments;
- Transboundary water cooperation with neighbouring Georgia, specifically the preparation of a bilateral agreement on management of shared transboundary waters, is another important issue on the National Policy Dialogue agenda. The policy dialogue in Azerbaijan will also build on recommendations of the recently completed Second UNECE Environmental Performance Review.

It was proposed to organize second Azerbaijan NPD/IWRM Steering Committee meeting in October 2011.

Baku, 12 October 2011