

**The First Meeting of the Steering Committee,
National Policy Dialogue on IWRM in Georgia**

June 11th, Tbilisi

**Strengthening Regional Cooperation in
Water Sector in South Caucasus**

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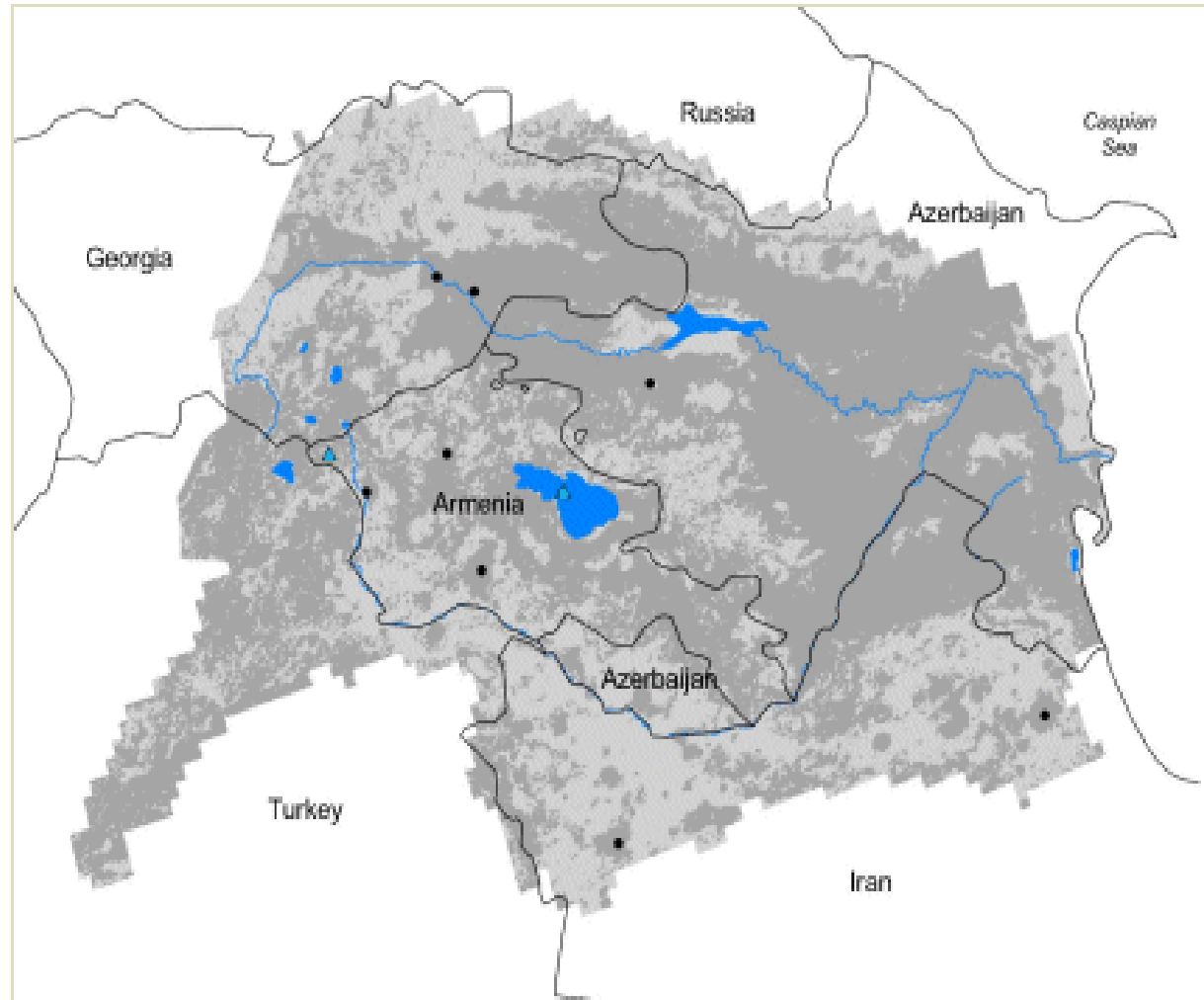
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Kura-Araks Basin

The Kura and the Araks rivers and their tributaries cover three countries (AZERBAIJAN, ARMENIA, GEORGIA) and parts of Russia, Turkey and Iran.

The total area of the basin is more than 200 000 km².

The Kura River catchment area is about 188 000 km² and the Araks catchment area is about 102 000 km².



•After the USSR decline the South Caucasus countries bear the burden of geo-political instability during the lasts decades.

•The Kura-Araks River Basin is localized at the heart of this conflict area.

•Because of the direct cooperation between countries was hindered



Environment and security priority areas

Land degradation

- Soil degradation; contamination due to high levels of pesticides and/or heavy metals (mainly inherited from the Soviet period), salinization and erosion due to poorly maintained irrigation system and rise of water table
- Area affected by deforestation
- Pastures degraded by overgrazing
- Arable land degraded by oil exploitation

Water pollution

- Transboundary and domestic polluted waters
- Coastline and infrastructures affected by sea level rise, and oil pollution
- Coastline affected by bacterial or nutrient loading and coastal erosion

Infrastructure

- Ageing Soviet industrial complex, mining centre or processing plant (oil terminal, refinery,...) major source of air, soil and water pollution
- Nuclear power plant
- BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan); oil pipeline route
- TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia) : Renovated or new multimodal transportation corridor (road, railroad, pipeline)

Security issues

- Former Soviet Union administrative boundaries of autonomous regions. (South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh have been officially disbanded)
- Areas of conflict out of control of central authorities
- Line of contact
- Areas vulnerable to ethnic or political tension
- Concentration of landmines

Quality and Quantity Problems

- Whereas Armenia and Georgia have abundant underground water reserves, which are used as a major source of drinking water, Azerbaijan is almost entirely reliant on the Kura River for all types of water uses.
- Water shortage is acute for Georgia and Azerbaijan, since rainfall disappears from west to east of the basin. The average annual precipitation decline from Turkey to Azerbaijan, where the river flows into the Caspian Sea. Similarly, evaporation rates soar from west to east. Drought periods in the Kura Basin are very common
- Cities and industrial centers are the main sources of pollution, with low capacity of water treatment facilities or their absence in general. Pollution includes organic pollution from untreated sewage (highest share of pollution), heavy metals from mining, hydrocarbons and PCBs. Nutrients and pesticides from agriculture, sediment load from deforestation and flood irrigation practices is also common.

International Legal framework

Country	Helsinki Convention	London Protocol	Industrial Accidents Convention	Aarhus Convention	Espoo Convention
Armenia	-	1999 - S	1997 - R	2001 - R	1997 - R
Azerbaijan	2000 - R	2000 - R	2004 - R	1999 - R	1999 - R
Georgia	-	1999 - S	-	2000-R	-

S - signature, R - ratification

Will accession or ratification of the Convention by the other countries of the region solve all existing problems of Kura River Basin or the up-stream countries will dealt just with the polluter-pays principle ?

Does Political will exist?

- Each of the South Caucasus countries develop a specific political will for international cooperation, but a “joint document” which regulates the protection and use of trans-boundary rivers and lakes approved by all countries of the South Caucasus did not exist

Practical Way of Improvement

- The introduction of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) could be a way to prevent water resources scarcity, industrial pollution, mining activities and the tensions related to water works.
- Common activities for Introduction of EU FWD
- Institutionalisation option towards coordination of international aid

EU Funded Project on “Creation of Enabling Environment for Integrated Management of the Kura-Aras Trans-boundary River Basin”

Overall Objectives

Create and strengthen an enabling environment for integrated management of the Kura-Aras trans-boundary river basin by building on and adding value to the existing initiatives

Specific objectives

- Gain a consensus-based agreement between the three South Caucasus countries, donor organisations and other concerned parties on further steps towards improved and creation of basis for sustainable cooperation and coordination through establishment of regional institutional mechanisms for major participating countries of the Caucasus, including governments, supporting control and coordination of projects (including donor ones) for integrated management of the Kura-Aras trans-boundary rivers basin
- *Adoption of Road Maps for assessment of progress in sustainable management of the Kura-Aras trans-boundary rivers basin with view to introduction of the EU Water Framework Directive*

Current results

- **Country profiles developed on the state of introduction and implementation of IWRM**
- **Comparative analysis conducted (national policy and EU WFD requirements) and pre-figuration of national road maps developed. Based on national pre-figuration Regional Roadmap was developed**
- **Institutional setup option developed and presented to the governments of South Caucasus**
- **RECC: Regional and National road maps submitted and approved by the governments in 2010**
- **Protocols between the Ministries of Environment of South Caucasus countries and REC Caucasus in the process of final approval:**

Protocol

The parties agreed

- To use National Road Maps and Regional Road Map for the implementation of IWRM in the Kura-Aras River Basin as a tool to assess steps and progress of countries in implementation of IWRM principles as well as an initial checklist toward coordination of activities at regional level,
- Recognized REC Caucasus' role of facilitator in the regional environmental development processes and institution supporting coordination of the regional cooperation in the area of Trans-boundary River Basin Management, including introduction of EU WFD directives and IWRM in the Kura-Aras basin,
- Agreed to promote exchange of information and host, upon necessity, regional data-basis related to sustainable water resources management,
- Agreed on RECC serving as Secretariat for organization of work of different technical expert working groups, advisory councils, etc. in the process of elaboration of common approaches and implementation of joint activities (water resources joint monitoring, trans-boundary pilot initiatives, etc.),
- Organize regional stakeholder workshops and round tables, facilitating dialogue on development of regional position (if necessary) of countries for international events, supporting the development of assessment reports at national and regional levels.

Thank you for attention!

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