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Baku

On Monday, 28 November 2011, Government representatives of Azerbaijan and Georgia met in Baku to discuss a draft bilateral agreement on the shared water resources of the Kura River Basin as part of a joint United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)-Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) project under the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC). The consultations were constructive and will result in a revised draft for discussion by the two Governments.

Azerbaijan and Georgia rely on the water in the Kura Basin as a key source of drinking water, for sanitation, municipal and industrial water use, and for irrigated agriculture, among other uses. Increased variation and reduction of hydrological flow, deterioration of water quality and ecosystem degradation, as well as flooding and bank erosion, are some of the issues that need to be addressed jointly by the two Riparian States.

The draft agreement, which was officially submitted in advance of the meeting to Azerbaijan and Georgia for review, provides a framework for cooperation between the two countries on water pollution prevention and control, conservation of biodiversity, emergency situations, data and information sharing and public participation. The draft agreement also envisages the establishment of a joint commission for the protection and rational use of water resources of the Kura River Basin.

The project on the Implementation of the UNECE Water Convention and Management of Transboundary Watercourses Shared by Georgia and Azerbaijan has provided technical assistance to Georgia in identifying its legal and financial needs for accession to, and implementation of, the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention).

The meeting was another step in the increasing engagement of UNECE in water management in South Caucasus. National Policy Dialogues on integrated water resources management are actively developing in all three countries after the signing of a memorandum of understanding in October 2011 between the Georgian Ministry of Environment Protection and UNECE.

The signing of a bilateral agreement by Azerbaijan and Georgia would contribute to the implementation of the UNECE Water Convention in the Southern Caucasus. One of the requirements of the Convention is that countries must enter into bilateral or multilateral agreements regarding the prevention, control and reduction of transboundary impacts on water resources.

For further information please visit:http://www.unece.org/env/water/caucasus.html or contact:

Mr. Bo Libert
UNECE Regional Adviser on Environment
Phone: +41 (0)22 917 2396
E-mail: bo.libert@unece.org

Note to Editors:

Project on implementation of the UNECE Water Convention and management of transboundary

watercourses shared by Georgia and Azerbaijan

The objective of this project is to support Georgia in its analysis of the possible ratification and implementation of the UNECE Water Convention and to strengthen transboundary water cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia. The project is funded by Canadian International Development Agency in Canada and is implemented in collaboration with OSCE. The objectives of the project are:

- An analysis of the consequences and costs of the ratification and implementation of the UNECE Water Convention by Georgia.
- To support Georgia in preparations for ratification and implementation of the UNECE Water Convention.
- To strengthen transboundary water cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The Environment and Security Initiative (www.envsec.org) was established in 2003 and includes OSCE, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, the United Nations Development Programme, UNECE and the United Nations Environment Programme. The ENVSEC Initiative works to assess and address environmental problems, which threaten or are perceived to threaten security, societal stability and peace, human health and/or sustainable livelihoods, within and across national borders in conflict prone regions.

The UNECE-supported National Policy Dialogues on integrated water resources management programme assists Governments of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in promoting implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM) in line with the principles of the UNECE Water Convention, the Protocol on Water and Health, the European Union Water Framework Directive and other UNECE and European Union instruments.

National Policy Dialogues on IWRM are the main operational instrument of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI), an international partnership that aims at contributing to the achievement of the water related Millennium Development Goals. UNECE is the strategic partner to support the policy dialogue process on IWRM. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is the strategic partner for water supply and sanitation.