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Almaty/Geneva

At the "Managing water information in Central Asia" workshop, held on 7 December in Almaty, Kazakhstan, organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), more than 50 representatives of Central Asian countries, international organizations and donors debated steps to be taken to improve quality and access to information on transboundary water resources in the region. Based on the discussion and presentations during the workshop a proposal for improving management and exchange of water information will be presented by UNECE in the beginning of 2012.

While there are currently efforts under way to develop information exchange in the framework of several projects and institutions (e.g., the Central Asia Regional Water Information Base Project, http://www.cawater-info.net), strengthening the availability of reliable information would be a key contribution to water management and transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia. However, for various reasons exchange of information within and between States remains difficult. Important bottlenecks include a low capacity for collecting, managing and quality-controlling the information, as well as insufficiently developed or even deteriorating monitoring networks.

Participants in the workshop discussed ways to improve cooperation between different actors as well as how to raise the political willingness to share information. The need to develop coordinated efforts among Central Asian countries, regional and international organizations and donors to strengthen the national data-regional information axis was stressed. In that connection, a number of concrete actions were outlined to build capacity at all levels, in particular:

Capacities for regularly communicating water and related environmental information in a synthesized format to regional and national decision makers and the public.

Regional capacities for the integration and management of comparable national information.

National capacities for the improved collection and sharing of the related data.

The workshop was organized by UNECE in the framework of the UNECE-German Agency for International Cooperation Project "Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Water Resources Management".

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Note for editors:

The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) of 1992 aims to strengthen national measures and transboundary cooperation for the protection and ecologically sound management of transboundary surface waters and groundwaters. Joint monitoring and information exchange is an important aspect of the Water Convention. Thirty-seven States and the European Union are Parties to the Water Convention. In Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are Parties to this instrument.

The German Agency for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)) is an international cooperation enterprise for sustainable development with worldwide operations, which supports the German Government in achieving its development policy objectives.

The Berlin Water Process was launched at the first "Water Unites" Conference (Berlin, 1 April

2008). The Process is an important part of the water and environment pillar of the European Union’s Central Asia Strategy. The Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia Programme is implemented by GIZ under the Berlin Water Process to optimize cooperation in the Central Asian water sector and improve the lives of people in the region. The UNECE-GIZ project is part of this Programme.