www.unece.org/index.php?id=34370

The eleventh meeting of the Steering Committee of the Armenian National Policy Dialogue on water resources was held in Yerevan on Thursday, 12 December 2013. The meeting, which was organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), decided on priority areas for national water and health targets to address pressing water issues such as the insufficient quantity and quality of wastewater treatment, massive water losses from inefficient infrastructure and improving access to water and sanitation for the population.

The targets are being elaborated under the UNECE-World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) Protocol on Water and Health within a project financed by Finland.

At the meeting, the project working group presented the final baseline study on Armenia's health and environmental situation and legal framework on water. Some of the challenges highlighted include:

Out of 22 wastewater treatment plants in the country, only 4 are currently operating and are providing only primary, mechanical treatment.
Water losses in the water supply systems for the five main water operators range from 74 to 84 per cent.
560 rural settlements are not covered by water operators and manage their small-scale systems themselves.
Out of 14 main water basins in Armenia only 4 have management plans.

In addition, it was stated that the situation with drinking water and sanitation in schools needs particular attention, but no statistical data was available on the issue.

The Steering Committee meeting, which gathered more than 35 representatives of stakeholders, discussed the results of the study and prioritized nine key target areas for the subsequent process of national target setting. These areas cover such high priority issues for Armenia as access to drinking water and sanitation, the quality of drinking water supplies, the quality of treated wastewater discharged into water bodies and reduction of water-related diseases and their outbreaks. The Committee mandated the project working group to present the draft targets at its next meeting, while the whole process of setting national targets and target dates will be completed by mid-2014.

Armenia signed the UNECE-WHO/Europe Protocol on Water and Health in 1999 and is currently in the process of its ratification.

Note to editors:

National Policy Dialogues (NPDs) on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Water Supply and Sanitation are the main operational instrument of the European Union Water Initiative (EUWI) Component for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. UNECE is the strategic partner for support to the policy dialogue processes on IWRM.

NPDs are under way in the following countries of the region: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Ukraine. More information is available at: www.unece.org/env/water/npd.

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