

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe report on implementation of the European Union Water Initiative

National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management in Turkmenistan in 2010

Introduction

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). EUWI includes thematic and regional working groups (regional groups were established for Africa, the Mediterranean, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia). In the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia region, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is the strategic partner to support the policy dialogue process on IWRM and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is the strategic partner for Water Supply and Sanitation.

ECE-supported policy dialogue provides practical assistance to strengthen IWRM in the countries of the subregion. Background documents include the ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health and the European Union (EU) Water Framework Directive (WFD). Information on the NPDs on IWRM is available at <http://www.unece.org/env/water/npd.htm>.

Planning and preparation of the NPD on IWRM in Turkmenistan

Under the OECD-ECE Contribution Agreement for implementation of the NPDs on IWRM,¹ ECE invited the Government of Turkmenistan to initiate a National Policy Dialogue on IWRM. A number of official communications were sent to the Government in 2009/beginning of 2010. At that time, however, ECE did not receive any reply to its communications.

In March 2010, the Government of Turkmenistan invited the ECE secretariat to take part in the international forum “Drop of Water — a Grain of Gold” and to present at the forum information on the EUWI National Policy Dialogues. Presentations on the EUWI NPDs programme were made by an ECE representative at the forum workshop on water quality, organized within the forum Working Group meeting of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS).

¹ Funded by the European Commission in accordance with the European Commission-OECD contract, ID EuropeAid/DCI-ENV/2008/149674/TPS.



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As a part of this mission, meetings were held with the Minister of Water and senior officials of the Ministry of Water Economy, as well as with representatives of other ministries and national and international organizations, at which possible directions of the NPD in Turkmenistan were discussed.

To actually start the NPD in Turkmenistan, communication with decision makers at the highest political level in Turkmenistan was required. In his official letters to President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov, Deputy Prime Minister, Myratgeldy Akmammedov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rashid Meredov, and Minister of Water, Annagendy Yazmuradov, ECE Executive Secretary Jan Kubis addressed issues concerning the start of the NPD on IWRM process in Turkmenistan.²

Plans for the start of the NPD on IWRM in Turkmenistan were further discussed during meetings of Mr. Kubis and ECE Deputy Executive Secretary Andrey Vasilyev with President Berdymuhamedov and other high-level officials in June and September 2010.

As an outcome of the discussions, it was agreed that the NPD on IWRM in Turkmenistan would focus on implementation of the EU WFD principles, including the river basin management approach, and on the principles of the ECE Water Convention (policy advice to the Government of Turkmenistan on the procedures for accession to the Water Convention).

NPD kick-off meeting and a national seminar, “Strengthening integrated water resources management and transboundary water cooperation”, 6 and 7 December 2010

The meeting was held in Ashgabat on 6 and 7 December 2010; it was jointly organized by ECE and the Ministry of Water Economy of Turkmenistan in the framework of the ECE-*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* (GTZ) programme “Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Water Resources Management” and EUWI (from the European Commission grant), and with additional support from Switzerland.

Organizational support was provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Turkmenistan.



² Letters by Mr. Kubis to the President and to Mr. R. Meredov of 23 August 2010; to Mr. R. Meredov and Mr. A. Yazmuradov of 10 October 2010; to Mr. Mr. Akmammedov and Mr. R. Meredov of 17 December 2010.



The seminar agenda was tailored to the needs of the Government of Turkmenistan; it was developed to reflect the expressed interest of the Government to have a seminar that would address key principles and good practices of IWRM and provide information on the ECE environmental conventions. An introductory seminar as such, in the opinion of the Turkmen officials, would allow them to make informed choices for the future of the policy dialogue process. The seminar focused on the following four major issues: (a) IWRM and opportunities provided by NPDs; (b) the ECE Water Convention and future accession by Turkmenistan; (c) the role of the Protocol on Water and Health, the ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and the ECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Industrial Accidents Convention); and (d) participation of Turkmenistan in international projects in Central Asia. Presentations were delivered by ECE staff members as well as two international experts. Two discussion sessions focused on the needs of Turkmenistan in relation to water management and cooperation that could be addressed, among others, in the NPD process in Turkmenistan, and the needs of Turkmenistan in the process of accession to the Water Convention.

The seminar attracted high-level and diverse participation. The Minister of Water Economy, Mr. Yazmuradov, and the Deputy Minister of Nature Protection, Mr. Saparmuradov, participated. The Deputy Minister of Water Economy, Mr. Mukhamedov, co-chaired the meeting. Some 35 participants attended the meeting, mostly at the level of heads of departments, from the Cabinet of Ministers, the *Medjlis* (Parliament), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Nature Protection, the Ministry of Water Economy, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Construction, the State Border Service, the State Sea and River Transport Service, the State Geological Enterprise, the Committee of Hydrology, etc. Also, the Academy of Sciences, the Association of Animal Farming Societies and the Agricultural University participated in the meeting. In addition, UNDP Turkmenistan and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia were present.





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The meeting was broadly reflected in the Turkmen mass media, including an article in the national newspaper in Russian and English with an overview of the seminar; a series of TV broadcasts in the Russian language with an overview of the seminar and interviews of all the ECE representatives and international experts; and a follow-up round table in the Turkmen language on national television, which brought together representatives of different ministries and authorities that had participated in the workshop to discuss the outcomes of the ECE national seminar.

Meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Water Economy and international organizations, 7 and 8 December 2010

At the Ministry of Water Economy additional consultations on NPD on IWRM planning were held following the national seminar.

Meetings also took place at

- The UNDP office with Ms. Narine Sahakyan, Deputy Regional Representative, who was thanked for very efficient organization (logistics, technical support) of the meeting. Also discussed were future cooperation and the possibility of presenting the UNDP Turkmenistan report containing an assessment of the water sector in Turkmenistan at the NPD on IWRM first Steering Committee meeting.
- Europe House with Mr. Theo Hensels, Coordinator, and Ms. Valeriya Danilchenko, Deputy Coordinator. Due to an outdated e-mail address, unfortunately Mr. Hensels and Ms. Danilchenko had not received the ECE invitation to the seminar and had not attended it. At the meeting at Europe House it was agreed that ECE would cooperate to prepare the first NPD Steering Committee meeting, planned for April 2011, and that Mr. Hensels would make an opening presentation. It was also agreed that ECE would send programme materials to Europe House for dissemination.

The EU supports major projects supported in Turkmenistan on education and developing potential. Water management is not yet a part of the EU portfolio for Turkmenistan. ECE therefore gratefully accepted Mr. Hensels offer of assistance to ECE in publicizing the NPD.



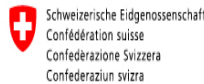
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Conclusions of the NPD kick-off meeting and consultations in Ashgabat in December 2010

- Turkmenistan formally confirmed its decision to start the process of NPD on IWRM;
- The national seminar/NPD kick-off meeting was successful beyond the expectations of ECE: the level of participation, interest and discussions showed the concrete interest of Turkmenistan vis-à-vis cooperation with ECE in the environmental field, including the NPDs. Previous high-level contacts were certainly a key to that success and were thought to constitute a very good platform for further work;
- There were high expectations from the National Policy Dialogue since the country had not yet had major international projects with active involvement of the ministries;
- The first Steering Committee meeting would most likely take place in the framework of the “Drop of Water — a Grain of Gold” International Conference in Ashgabat (2–3 April 2011);
- The Ministry of Water Economy would be the major partner of ECE for the NPD; however, interest was expressed by several other agencies. In the follow-up discussion after the meeting, the Ministry of Water Economy agreed that the Steering Committee could be co-chaired by the Ministry of Nature Protection.
- Also, the Ministry of Water Economy indicated its interest in a pilot project for implementation of river basin management in the framework of the National Policy Dialogue. Such a pilot project could be the first step towards transferring water management from the administrative to the river basin approach, which was not used in Turkmenistan at that time. A joint fact-finding mission to the Tashaus/Dashoguz Region, proposed for the pilot project, could be organized right after the first Steering Committee meeting on 5 and 6 April 2011, following the Steering Committee meeting on 2 and 3 April.
- As one of possible ideas for the content of the NPD, supporting preparation of a transboundary water agreement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan on the Tedjen and Murgab Rivers was discussed. There were good possibilities for developing cooperation on water management with Iran, while communication with the Afghanistan water authorities in the region was almost non-existent at the time. It was agreed to continue the discussion of that idea in the future.
- Application of economic instruments in water management was considered as an important topic for the future (it could be of interest to OECD). The Ministry of Water Economy had constructed innovative drip-irrigation systems in some of the regions of Turkmenistan; however, it was difficult to transfer the maintenance of those systems to the local authorities, as water resources were free in Turkmenistan and the local authorities were not interested in adopting water-saving technologies, especially as it implied retraining of the personnel.



Final comments on NPD on IWRM implementation in Turkmenistan and its funding, and a tentative schedule of NPD on IWRM activities

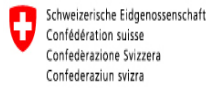
Follow-up communication. On 17 December 2010, the ECE Executive Secretary sent official letters to Deputy Prime Minister Akmammedov and Minister of Foreign Affairs Meredov to thank them and the Government of Turkmenistan for cooperation in the organization of the national seminar. Mr. Kubis also welcomed the cooperation on the proposals discussed at the national seminar: i.e., to organize the first NPD on IWRM Steering Committee meeting on 2 and 3 April 2011; to have the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Water Economy as co-chairs of the Steering Committee; to select national NPD coordinators; and to elaborate a pilot project on a river basin management approach. Therefore, a tentative schedule of the NPD on IWRM implementation in 2011 includes preparation of a mapping report of stakeholders and projects on water in Turkmenistan, two Steering Committee meetings, in April and October 2010, and implementation of a pilot project on the river basin management approach.

Funding. In 2009–2010, support to the start of the NPD on IWRM in Turkmenistan was provided from the funds of the European Commission (see OECD-ECE EUWI report for 2009–2010). Organization of the NPD on IWRM kick-off meeting and the national seminar was supported by the ECE-GTZ Programme “Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Water Resources Management”, funded by the Government of Germany as part of the Berlin Water Process.

Starting in November 2010 up until the end of 2011, the NPD on IWRM in Turkmenistan is being funded by a grant of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ECE; co-financing will be provided from the European Commission-OECD grant (1 person-month of staff costs and travel to Turkmenistan) and from GTZ (organization of one meeting in 2011).

Coordination with the ECE Environmental Performance Review. Implementation of the NPD on IWRM in Turkmenistan will be coordinated with the ECE Environmental Performance Review, especially for the water and international cooperation chapters. The Environmental Performance Review will be conducted for the first time in Turkmenistan in 2011.

Synergies with other donors and international organizations. The NPD on IWRM will build on initiatives already implemented, such as the analytical report prepared within the EU Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) project on Water Governance in Central Asia, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Strategy for Turkmenistan and the UNDP Water Sector Analysis, as well as the analytical reports on IWRM for Turkmenistan and Central Asia by the Global Water Partnership. ECE will establish partnerships in implementing NPD with the organizations present in Turkmenistan, including Europe House, UNDP Turkmenistan, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and other international and national organizations, as appropriate. Possibilities for public-private partnerships could be explored on the topic of water saving technologies. Further synergies and complementarities will be explored with the GTZ funded project “Transboundary water management in Central Asia”, not least through the Aral Sea Basin Programme III (the NPDs in Central Asia are part of the Fourth Component of that Programme).



Annex 1. Background information on water resources in Turkmenistan³

Water management issues have special importance for Turkmenistan. Kara Kum desert occupies around 80 per cent of Turkmenistan's territory. Almost all regions suffer from a deficit of water resources, with the exception of a narrow strip of irrigated land along the middle reaches of the Amu Darya River. Available water resources in Turkmenistan mainly come from agreed water shares of the four transboundary rivers — the Amu Darya, the Murgab, the Tedjen and the Atrek — with the Amu Darya supplying almost 90 per cent of the water. The water from the Amu Darya is further distributed through the system of long-distance channels. Groundwater resources are unevenly available throughout the country's territory. Irrigated agriculture is the main water consumer in Turkmenistan: agricultural production uses 90 per cent of available water (i.e., 9,500 m³/ha). Other economic sectors and water supply for human needs use minor quantities of water.

Transboundary water cooperation is highly relevant for Turkmenistan, which borders Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan. While actively developing bilateral cooperation on transboundary waters, Turkmenistan also participates in the regional cooperation mechanisms on the Aral Sea Basin. The challenges of climate change and the expected increase in water use by Afghanistan is a challenging background for developing long-term solutions for cooperation over shared waters.

Map of Turkmenistan. Source: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>



³ Compiled by Ms. Iulia Trombitcaia, ECE

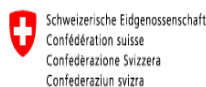


Annex 2. Programme of the National Seminar “Strengthening integrated water resources management and transboundary water cooperation: the role of UNECE conventions and of the EU Water Initiative National Policy Dialogue”

Venue: conference hall, Hotel “President”

Co-chaired by: Mr. Akhmed Mukhammedov, Deputy Minister of Water Economy of Turkmenistan; Mr. Bo Libert, Regional Adviser on Environment, ECE

1st Day	6 December 2010
9.00-9.30	Registration of participants
9.30-10.20	<p>Opening</p> <p>Mr. Annageldy Yazmuradov, Minister of Water Economy of Turkmenistan</p> <p>Mr. Babageldi Annabayramov, Minister of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan</p> <p>Mr. Marco Keiner, Director, Environment, Housing and Land Management, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)</p> <p>Mr. Alexander Nikolayenko, Regional Adviser, <i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH</i></p>
10:20-12.30	<p>Session 1: Integrated water resources management and National Policy Dialogue under the EU Water Initiative</p>
11.00-11.30	<p>Integrated water resources management: concept, major principles and examples (Gulnara Roll, Regional Coordinator on EUWI, ECE)</p> <p>Coffee break</p> <p>Current European practices of IWRM at national and transboundary levels (Wolfgang Stalzer, Austria)</p> <p>National Policy Dialogues on IWRM under EUWI in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Gulnara Roll, Regional Coordinator, EUWI)</p>



12.30-18.00	Session 2: ECE Water Convention
12.30-13.00	Water Convention: a sound framework for promoting IWRM and transboundary water cooperation (Francesca Bernardini, Secretary to Water Convention, ECE)
13.00 -14.00	Lunch break
14.00-16.00	Water Convention: “provisions for all Parties” (Sergei Vinogradov, University of Dundee/Legal Board of the Water Convention) Water Convention: “provisions for Riparian Parties” (Iulia Trombitcaia, ECE Secretariat) Joint bodies: international experience and best practice (Bo Libert, ECE Regional Adviser on the Environment)
16.00-16.30	Coffee break
16.30-18.00	Discussion (Moderated by Bo Libert): Challenges and advantages in the accession to the Water Convention by Turkmenistan Introduction by Mr. Ahmet Muhammedov, Deputy Minister of Water Economy Discussion
18.30	Reception



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2nd Day		7 December 2010	
9.00-17.00		Session 3: ECE legal instruments — a comprehensive framework to manage and protect our waters, environment and health	
9.00-11.00	Protocol on Water and Health: integrating water, health and the environment (Francesca Bernardini, co-Secretary to the Protocol)		
	ECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Lukasz Wyrowski, Officer-in-Charge, Industrial Accidents Convention, ECE)		
11.00-11.30	Coffee break		
11.30-13.00	ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention): obligations, procedures, application to transboundary water projects (Nicholas Bonvoisin, Secretary, Espoo Convention, ECE)		
13.00-14.00	Lunch break		
14.00-15.30	Projects and activities of ECE Conventions in Central Asia (Bo Libert, ECE Regional Adviser on Environment)		
15.30-16.00	Coffee break		
16.00-17:00	<i>Discussion:</i> Priorities, needs and interests of Turkmenistan in the context of ECE legal environmental instruments and the National Policy Dialogue (co-moderated by Kurbangeldy Ballyev, Representative of Turkmenistan in IFAS, and Bo Libert, ECE)		
17.00-17.30	Summing up and conclusions		