

The “Environment for Europe” mid-term review of the Astana Conference main outcomes: Astana Water Action



Template for reporting on the implementation of the Astana Water Action

I. Background

1. The Astana Water Action (ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/5) is a collection of possible actions for improving the status of water and water-related ecosystems through their more sustainable management, prepared for the Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference (Astana, September 2011). This initiative aims to provide suggestions for Governments on possible concrete actions to take to better manage their water resources according to the local/national/regional challenges they face. Another objective is to provide arguments for improving the funding basis for water management from all sources.

2. Countries and other stakeholders were invited to commit to implementing some of the actions and to report on their progress at the future meetings of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy. Twenty-one countries and four organizations have committed to 75 actions in the framework of the Astana Water Action. These are: Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United States of America, Uzbekistan, UNECE, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Eco-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers, and the International Network of Basin Organization (INBO).¹

3. At the Astana Conference the Ministers endorsed the Astana Water Action and welcomed the initiatives launched by interested countries and organizations. They invited countries and other actors to implement the Astana Water Action and to report progress to the Committee on Environmental Policy.

¹ Registered actions committed by countries and organizations under the framework of the Astana Water Action are available on the ECE website (<http://www.unece.org/env/efe/Astana/documents.html>, under the tab “Astana Water Action”). An overview of these actions is presented in the annex to the present document. In addition, a compilation of the actions that were presented at the Astana Ministerial Conference is available in the document ECE/ASTANA.CONF/2011/INF.40/Rev.1 (http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2011/ece/ece.astana.conf.2011.inf.40.e_rev.1.pdf).

4. The Astana Water Action is intended to support countries' efforts in enhancing the sustainable management of water and in greening their economies. The implementation of this initiative can contribute to a large number of international processes and commitments related to water, such as:

(a) Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the future Sustainable Development Goals which are currently under discussion;

(b) Implementation of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health, as well as of other related UNECE Multilateral Environmental Agreements;

(c) Implementation of water-related directives of the European Union;

(d) Implementation of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention);

(e) The World Water Forum, in particular the seventh World Water Forum, to be held in spring 2015 in the Republic of Korea;

(f) The "Environment for Europe" process.

5. At its eighteenth session in April 2012 CEP invited delegations to report on the progress in implementing the Astana Water Action, using a template to be prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureaux of CEP and of the Water Convention.

6. The secretariat will prepare a document on the basis of responses received from the Astana Water Action stakeholders.

II. Template for reporting

7. The present template is aimed to harmonize the responses by the participating countries and organizations on progress made in implementing the committed actions under the framework of the Astana Water Action.

8. This template should be filled in and submitted to the ECE secretariat (efe@unece.org) as soon as possible and not later than Friday, 31 May 2013.

9. Information should be provided separately on each action included in the country commitments (please refer to the annex of the present document). Information should be provided through filling the template below for each of your committed actions:

1. Country/Organization:

Please indicate your name, organization and country.

...

2. Title of the action committed to in 2011 (see the annex)

Please indicate the title of the action on the implementation of which you are reporting. Those countries that committed to more than one action please kindly note that a template for reporting should be filled in for each action.

...

3. Overview of progress made

(a) Has the action been implemented?

Yes / In progress / No

Please elaborate (up to 250 words):

Ad Action 1 (Urban wastewater treatment and drinking water supply):

Austria has put considerable efforts in increasing connection rates to public water supply and wastewater treatment networks. Since 1959 about 55 billion Euros were spent in building water and sanitation infrastructure until end of 2011. These investments were generated through public subsidies. About 43 billion Euros in the sanitation infrastructure and 12 billion Euros in building water infrastructure.

For the years 2010 - 2013 an amount of 355 million Euros of public support is available for extending water supply and waste water treatment infrastructure. These efforts resulted in connections rates of more than 90% to public water supply systems and of about 94% to public sewer systems with adequate advanced wastewater treatment.

Additionally, a nation-wide initiative was launched at beginning of 2013 to evaluate the current status of water supply and sewer system infrastructure in order to provide the necessary financial means for rehabilitation on the mid- and long-term perspective (<http://www.wasseraktiv.at/vorsorgen>).

Ad Action 2 (Improvement of river continuity and habitat connectivity):

In line with requirements of the EU-WFD (2000/60/EC), the First River Basin Management Plan (NGP 2009) identifies a number of important surface water bodies, where measures to restore river continuity as well as to provide environmental flows have to be implemented with highest priority - latest by 2015. In total 140 Mio. Euros have been made available for the period 2009-2015 for the implementation of related measures to restore and improve ecological status of surface water bodies. Since 2009 more than 40 Mio. Euros were spent for restoration of river continuity with federal contributions (subsidies) of about 20 Mio Euros. Additionally, more than 55 Mio Euros were spent for restoration of river morphology with federal contributions of about 24 Mio Euros.

Ad Action 3 (Enhancement of renewable energy production, refurbishment of hydropower plants):

Austria committed itself in frame of the EU Climate and Energy package to cover about 34% of total energy production by renewables until 2020. Enhancement of renewable energy production is based on three pillars: new installations, refurbishment of existing installations and enhanced energy efficiency. Beside other renewables, hydropower generation contributes significantly to meet this goal.

A considerable number of Austrian surface water bodies are in use for hydropower generation contributing to about 60% of total electricity generation. The potential for hydropower generation is already exploited to a large extent (about 5.200 hydropower plants exist). For further development of hydropower generation, an Austrian Water Catalogue was launched in 2012, which allows a transparent and reliable evaluation of new hydropower projects in order to balance the potential for hydropower generation with ecological value of surface water bodies (see http://www.lebensministerium.at/wasser/wasser-oesterreich/wasserrecht_national/planung/erneuerbareenergie/Kriterienkatalog.html).

The refurbishment of existing hydropower plants to improve its efficiency with simultaneous compliance with ecological requirements (e.g. river continuity, environmental flows) is supported by financial incentives as well as by providing advice to owners of small hydropower plants (e.g. Upper Austria, where until 2011 the technical upgrade and ecological restoration of 243 small existing hydropower plants was finished using 4,8 Mio Euro funds and 37,2 Mio Euro investments.).

(b) What challenges were encountered during the implementation of the action? What lessons were learned?

(up to 250 words)

From Austrian point of view, the following major challenges were faced during the implementation of the above mentioned actions:

- Restricted availability of financial resources for improvement of ecological status of surface water bodies along with competing budgetary allocations; as a result prioritization of surface water bodies for implementation of measures either until 2015, 2021 or 027 was carried out
- Enhancing hydropower generation in order to meet the requirements of the European Renewable Energy Directive without compromising to achieve the good ecological status of all water bodies as required by the EU-WFD; the Austrian Water Catalogue is setting transparent and binding criteria for assessing appropriateness of sites for new hydropower plants.

(c) What future steps, if any, are planned in relation to the action implementation/follow up?

(up to 250 words)

Actions 1, 2 and 3 will be pursued consequently also in future, because efforts will take considerable time (besides the respective amount of human and financial resources).

4. Usefulness of the Astana Water Action

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements and provide an explanation, as appropriate.

(a) The Astana Water Action was useful to strengthen political support related to sustainable water management issues:

strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree

Please elaborate (up to 250 words):

The Austrian River Basin management policy is mainly driven by European legislation and international agreements, such as the International Convention for the Protection of the Danube River or the UNECE Water Convention. Due to considerable efforts in water management sector during the last decades, Austria has made significant progress towards sustainable water management practises, even though challenges do still exist. However,

beyond existing and ambitious obligations, the Astana Water Action somewhat provided an useful “outside view” and a “moral incentive” to continue as well as to review current water management practises.

(b) *The Astana Water Action has helped my country to comply with its international obligations:*

strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree

If agreeing, please elaborate how (e.g. European Union Directives, UNECE and other environmental agreements, Millennium Development Goals, Commitments made within the “Environment for Europe” process) (up to 250 words)

See also our answers to question 4a.

(c) *Would your country be interested in continuing to submit and monitor new actions within the AWA framework in the future?*

Yes / No

Please elaborate (up to 250 words)

Austria is open to contribute to the evaluation of the Astana Water Action framework also in future with an information density comparable to this questionnaire.

Annex

Overview of actions committed in the framework of the Astana Water Action

Actions by AUSTRIA

Ambitious urban waste water treatment and drinking water supply nationwide in place

Implementation of IWRM; Improvement of ecosystems by restoration of river continuity and habitat connectivity

Enhancement of renewable energy production - Refurbishment program for small hydro power plants

Actions by AZERBAIJAN

Development of National Water Strategy of Azerbaijan

Actions by BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Adoption of the Sava River Basin Management Plan, Programme of Measures

Actions by BULGARIA

Invest in environmentally friendly sanitation and wastewater treatment, appropriate operation and maintenance

Actions by CROATIA

Development of River Basin Management Plan

Implementation Plan for water utility directives

Introduction of “recovery of costs for water services” principle

Actions by the CZECH REPUBLIC

Promoting of concept of integrated water management

Water quality and quantity protection

Water quality and quantity monitoring and assessment

Guarantee of minimum environmental water flow in streams

Application of user-pays and polluter-pays principles

Access to save water supply and sanitation and its sustainable pricing

Climate change adaptation and IWRM

Transboundary cooperation and IWRM

Actions by ESTONIA

Improvement of hydro-morphological situation and ecological status of the surface waters

Actions by FINLAND

Promoting the efficiency of water use in production and consumption

Promoting the national policy dialogues on IWRM and WSS in EECCA countries. Support to the pilot project on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins of the EECCA countries

Promoting integrated water resources management especially climate change adaptation and vulnerability assessment

Actions by GEORGIA

Development Climate Resilient Flood and Flash Management Practices to Protect Vulnerable Communities of Georgia

Enhanced Preparedness of Georgia against Extreme Weather Events

National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management

Actions by GERMANY

Training and Competence Centre Karlovac

Climate Change adaptation strategy for the Danube River Basin

Regional Dialogue on transboundary water resources management in Southeastern Europe

Actions by HUNGARY

National Remediation Program of Contaminated Sites

National Program for the Protection of Drinking Water Sources

Introducing non-structural and more sustainable measures in the Hungarian flood risk management

Management and utilization plan supporting ecological baseline studies along the River Danube in the Gemenc and Béda-Karapanca Region (2006-2011)

Upgrading bilateral transboundary water agreements

Monitoring of wetland habitats and their communities

Actions by ITALY

Upgrade existing nationwide water monitoring networks in Italy

Define and monitor environmental flow in the Po river basin district and Arno river basin

Improve utilization of water resources in the agricultural sector in the Po river basin district

Actions by the Republic of MOLDOVA

Improvement of landscapes role in formation of water regime. Protection of the Lower Dniester and Lower Prut wetland ecosystems by creation of the “Lower Dniester” National Park and Lower Prut biosphere reserve and initiation of creation of the Lower Dniester transboundary protected area with Ukraine.

Elaboration of the integrated water resources management river basin plan

Ensuring Implementation and maintenance of strict target settings of reduction of the pollution from municipal industrial sources and discharge permits

Improvement of action plans of the emergency situations in industrial accidents.

Water policy dialogues

Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health

Continuation of the implementation of pilot projects on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins and use of the experience exchange platform on Water Convention

Ratification of the new bilateral agreement on transboundary cooperation with Ukraine on the management of Dniester basin waters

Actions by MONTENEGRO

Drin Basin/Drin Dialogue: Montenegrin National Consultation Meeting for the management of the Drin Basin.

Actions by PORTUGAL

Project on Environmental Quality of International Water Courses Natural Reserves Common Integrated Water Resources Management Document between Portugal and Spain

Drought Warning and Management System

Actions by ROMANIA

Improvement of water resources quality by reducing nutrients discharges into water bodies

Implementation of the provisions of the bilateral transboundary waters agreement

Actions by SERBIA

Negotiations on trans-boundary water management agreements with neighboring countries

Preparation and implementation of the national Danube River Basin Management Plan

Preparation and implementation of the Sava River Basin Management Plan

Actions by SWITZERLAND

Promoting the concept of integrated water management

Water quality: mitigating micropollutants from point and diffuse sources

Remediation of hydromorphological alterations: Strategic planning by the cantons

Climate change adaptation: Adaptation strategy for Water Management

Integrated Flood Prevention

Actions by UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Assistance to carry out an analysis of the economic ramifications of optimized water-energy resource utilization in the Syr Darya and Amu Darya River Basins

Assistance to carry out an analysis of the impact of Global Climate Change on regional hydrology in the Aral Sea Basin

Actions by UKRAINE

Implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in Ukraine

Development curricula for water professionals

Actions by UZBEKISTAN

Establishment of the new Ramsar Site Kuyumazar reservoir on the territory of Uzbekistan

Establishment of the new Ramsar Site Tudakul reservoir on the territory of Uzbekistan

Actions by the EAP Task Force

Strengthening the economic and financial dimensions of water management, including adaptation to climate change

Strengthening institutions for water supply and sanitation

Assessing the water policies and institutions in the Easter Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia

Actions by Eco-TIRAS

Development of IWRM plans for Dniester River basin with action program

Promotion of regular bio-monitoring of natural waters, based on macroinvertebrates/algae, for rapid, cost-effective assessment of quality of water bodies

Application of the principle of environmental flow in rivers, ensuring the ecosystem needs/health. Development the use of payments for ecosystem services

Implementation of Dniester River transboundary cooperation

Actions by INBO

Preparation of a “Handbook for Integrated Water Resources Management in Transboundary Basins of Rivers, Lakes and Aquifers”

Actions by the ECE

Promoting cross-sectoral cooperation with the health, environment, agriculture, forestry, energy, industry and housing sectors

Development of transboundary water cooperation in the Dniester, Drin, Kura and Central Asian transboundary waters

Promoting transboundary cooperation in adaptation to climate change

Promoting the achievement of water related MDGs through the reform of the water sector and the development of concrete targets and target dates

Promoting the role of the ECE Water Convention beyond the ECE region at the global level