

**NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE ON INTEGRATED WATER
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN TAJIKISTAN UNDER EU WATER INITIATIVE**

FIFTH MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

23 May 2013
Dushanbe, Tajikistan

DRAFT MINUTES¹

Venue: Conference Room, Dushanbe Plaza State Enterprise, 38/1 Rudaki Ave., Dushanbe
Languages: Russian and English with simultaneous translation

1. Opening of the meeting

Rahmat Bobokalonov, Minister of Land Reclamation and Water Resources, Eduard Auer, Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation to Tajikistan, Doris Hertrampf, Ambassador of Germany, Hinrich Thoelken, representative of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norimasa Shimomura, UNDP Country Director, and Peep Mardiste, UNECE Regional Coordinator for the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on IWRM, greeted the participants to the meeting. Minister Bobokalonov announced that it is very likely that Tajikistan will sign the agreement on transboundary cooperation with Kyrgyzstan on 27 May during the next trip of the President to Bishkek.

2. Adoption of the agenda

Minister Bobokalonov, Chairman of the Steering Committee, presented the draft of the agenda to the members of the Steering Committee and to other invited participants. There were no additional remarks and suggestions from the participants.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Steering Committee were also submitted to the participants. There were no additional remarks and proposals. Therefore, the agenda of the current meeting and the minutes of the fourth meeting of the Steering Committee were adopted by consensus.

3. Session 1: Experience of Transboundary Water Management

Daler Holmatov, member of the Conference Secretariat, presented the progress made with the preparatory activities for the High Level International Conference dedicated to the Year of International Water Cooperation. The goal of the conference is to advance cooperation particularly in transboundary contexts. The four topics of this conference are that water cooperation is key to poverty reduction, social equity and gender equality, creates economic benefits, helps preserve water resources and protect the environment and builds peace. Side events, an exhibition and excursions are being organized. There is still need, however, for professional moderators. Invitations were sent and a second meeting of the International Steering Committee will take place shortly.

¹ The minutes will be approved at the next meeting of the Steering Committee



Bozor Rakhmonov, representative of the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government, presented the latest development of the cooperation process in the area of hydrology and nature protection between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Both countries are members of international conventions, which facilitate the exchange of information. There are several related projects supported by other organizations. Monitoring was irregular, so automation was increased and border guards were involved. Much was done on the Afghan side to improve security. The next meeting will take place in Kabul in November 2013.

Alexandr Nikolayenko, Regional Advisor of the Transboundary Water Management Programme in Central Asia (TWM CA), GIZ, discussed transboundary water management in Isfara river basin in the framework of the program. An innovative approach to river basin planning was presented. The binational commission will have clear terms of reference based on international best practice to ensure its sustainability. The implementation of this project relies greatly on local expertise. An outline will facilitate cooperation and this will contribute to ease tension in the region. In this regard, Minister Bobokalonov highlighted the good cooperation with Kyrgyzstan, which provided water to Tajikistan from a reservoir during the summer. He underlines that cooperation benefits all countries in the region.

After these presentations, there were some comments, questions and answers from the participants, who highlighted the role of UNDP Tajikistan in the Bartang river basin, as well as the need to define the basin covered by the future commission in Isfara (now the natural area is being used) and to settle existing debts. There is potential for the modernization of existing technology and for sharing methodology between GIZ in Isfara and Hydromet in the Panj river basin. Minister Bobokalonov also mentioned the need to make information available to everyone online. Also, there is room for increased cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the irrigation subsector.

The Steering Committee takes note of the information provided on the preparations for the International Conference on Water Cooperation, on cooperation about hydrology and nature protection between Tajikistan and Afghanistan and on cross-border controls in the Isfara river basin in the framework of the GIZ Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia Program and further recommends highlighting these and other relevant activities in the framework of the International Conference on Water Cooperation.

Before leaving, Minister Bobokalonov anticipated the following session and mentioned that important documents on the reform had been submitted by the ministry to the government for approval. He qualified the Draft Strategy and the Implementation and Investment Plan as very useful documents. The Draft Strategy is currently being finalized and this will be one of the last opportunities to contribute to it. The Implementation and Investment Plan, instead, will not be discussed now but at future meetings with wider participation, particularly of donors.

Session 2: Revised draft of the Strategic Plan for Water Sector Reform and presentation of the draft Report on Analysis of Water Legislation for its Improvement and Introduction of Integrated Water Resources Management Principles in Tajikistan

Anvar Kamolidinov, Senior Research Fellow, Tajik Branch of SIC ICWC, who chaired the rest of the meeting, presented in detail the revised draft of the Water Sector Reform Strategy, focusing on the challenges of the water sector, institutional structures and processes. He qualified it as a long term process, which requires in-depth analysis and care-

ful planning. He also indicated how the comments of the previous steering committee meeting were dealt with:

- The Ministry to stay in charge of land reclamation, flood protection and large scale land development;
- More attention to NGOs as important actors in the reforms process;
- Data collection and sharing discussed in more detail;
- Feedback from users during a specially organized workshop were incorporated.

He finished by requesting the participants to provide final comments before the document will be finalized by 10 June 2013 and circulated according to the appropriate government channels for final official comments

Anatoly Kholmatov, representative of UNDP Tajikistan and member of the Task Force on Water Legislation, presented information about the work implemented by the Task Force for the improvement of the Water Code of Tajikistan. He focused in particular on repetitions and inconsistencies in legislation and the need for harmonization. Several legal documents were analyzed and new draft resolutions were proposed. Because of the amount of legislation that needs to be revised, the conclusion was reached that it is necessary to work on a new Water Code. However, more work needs to be done and donor support is needed. After careful analysis, proposals will be prepared and shared with other ministries before being submitted to the government for approval.

After these presentations, there were some comments, questions and answers from the participants, who highlighted the amount of work ahead and the need to prioritize. It was proposed that all relevant ministries set up task forces for the revision of water legislation. Concerns were voiced about the consequences of the reform for local water supply and sanitation and for pump and irrigation facilities maintenance and operation. For this reason, a pilot basin approach was adopted, but economic and financial issues still need to be fully addressed. Moreover, inconsistencies between the law on water user associations, which exempts them from taxes, and the tax code, which does not. Participants also asked which functions of the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources will be performed by the MIROB and insisted on the need to transfer assets in good condition.

The Steering Committee takes note of the progress made with the Water Sector Reform Strategy and with the Water Code, it recommends finalizing the Implementation and Investment Plan for the irrigation and drainage subsector, particularly the financial component, as soon as possible for its presentation at the next meeting of the Steering Committee and it encourages the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources to continue working for the improvement of the Water Code in collaboration with all the relevant institutions and stakeholders.

Session 3: Experience of international and other organizations in implementation of IWRM in Tajikistan and opportunities for future cooperation in the framework of the National Policy Dialogue

Ben Hell, representative of the EU Delegation to Tajikistan, emphasized the importance of involvement of local communities and of water users associations in the design and development of Water Sector Reform, which the Tajik government committed to launch in

early November this year. He suggested that the Implementation and Investment Plan is finalized in a draft form by then. Since 2006, the EU provided assistance to the water sector with about 25 million euros. This was done working at the transboundary and regional level, but also at local level through the support to WUAs and the improvement, in collaboration with the EBRD of the water supply system and financial and operational management in six water utilities as well as supporting the policy dialogue in the Water Sector. Once the Water Sector Reform is fully launched, the EU may then be able to consider water as fully part of bilateral cooperation with Tajikistan.

Anatoly Kholmatov, representative of UNDP Tajikistan, focused on IWRM in transboundary river basins, particularly Isfara, where support was provided to water users associations, water supply and sanitation facilities and capacity building. UNDP Tajikistan will focus its future activities on the Syr Darya river basin.

Ruslan Sadykov, representative of SDC in Tajikistan, recalled the activities implemented since 1998 in the framework of an IWRM regional level project in the Fergana valley and announced the launching of a new national level project on IWRM. For the period 2012-2015, the Swiss government committed some 14 million dollars to support the implementation of IWRM in the Syr Darya river basin. Priorities for SDC are support to the implementation of Water Sector Reform through the rehabilitation of infrastructure, capacity building at the ministerial level, improvement of the information system in the region and improved inventory, as well as support to the NPD and to the reforms initiated by the government.

Christian Melis, representative of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, recalled that priorities lay in capacity building, regional cooperation and small hydropower. In this line, several trainings were supported, as well as Afghan-Tajik bilateral cooperation and analysis of the socio-economic impact of small hydropower, with focus on the importance of maintenance to increase capacity of existing plants. Activities for next year will be centered upon capacity building at the national and regional level.

Katy Unger-Shayesteh, CAWa project coordinator, presented the regional hydrological network and data management. Eight stations were put into operation, monitoring water discharge, glacier movement and seismography. The goal is to improve weather and runoff forecast. Many datasets are available, including a simulation of regional climate change up to 2100, detailed land use maps and snow cover.

Barbara Janusz-Pawletta, representative of the German-Kazakh University, mentioned that the university is expanding its programs and is looking for scholars from different disciplines to join it. Its binational programs provide many opportunities for exchange with Germany. Trainings are open to young experts from partners such as the Tajik Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources, as well as other participants in the NPD.

The Steering Committee takes note of the projects of the European Union, UNDP, SDC OSCE, CAWa and the Kazakh-German University and welcomes the coordinating role of the NPD to harmonize the actions of projects of international organizations in the water sector.

Session 4: Final report on setting targets in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health

Kholmahmad Nazarov, Deputy Head of the Sanitary and Epidemiological Service, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Tajikistan, recalled the process of target setting and the contents of the Protocol on Water and Health, which benefited from the input of the last meeting of the NPD Steering Committee, which were collected and analysed.

Sami Kamolov, associate professor of Tajik Technical University in Dushanbe and PWH project coordinator, shared the main targets that have been identified, prepared on the basis of objectives that have already been adopted by Tajikistan and of input from Oxfam. He announced that the final report is about to be issued. He requested for feedback on proposed indicators.

After these presentations, there were some comments, questions and answers from the participants also about the previous session. They highlighted that 14 million dollars may not be enough for the Syr Darya river basin and recalled that in 2006 a large research project was carried on there. Requests were made to share the feasibility study and final report and about methodology. Also, it was recalled that there is a human right to clean water and that a law must be developed with clear and realistic indicators such as the ones developed in the framework of the target setting project. Questions were raised about funding for new institutions and the role of NGOs in the reform process. Support was expressed for the pilot project approach.

The Steering Committee takes note of the final report on the setting targets in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health project presented by the working group and recommends submitting the targets proposed in the report in due course for approval and further developing the indicators taking into consideration the local situation.

Session 5: Consultations on water in post-2015 Global Development Agenda

Peep Mardiste, UNECE Regional Coordinator for the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on IWRM, presented the process for the definition of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Eleven thematic consultations took place in over 60 countries, including a broad consultation on water (drinking water, water management, sewage, etc.). Water consultations also took place in Tajikistan on 10 May. An Open Working Group of thirty countries was created by the UN General Assembly and meets every month in New York. It is open to participation of any other interested country. Everyone hopes that there will be a separate water related SDG. Final decision by General Assembly is due Autumn 2014.

In the debate that followed, words of appreciation were pronounced by civil society representatives about the environmental protection orientation and questions were raised about the Water Sector Reform Strategy. Based on its experience, GIZ expressed its availability to write up the terms of reference of the bodies that will be created at the basin level.

The Steering Committee takes note of the ongoing consultations on the global agenda after 2015 and supports giving the priority to water issues as a separate Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

4. Conclusions of the Steering Committee meeting and decisions on future activities

Anvar Kamolidinov, summarized the outcomes of the meeting and thanked the participants for their active participation and support. He highlighted in particular the forthcoming signature of the bilateral agreement with Kyrgyzstan.

The sixth meeting of the Steering Committee is tentatively scheduled for the autumn of 2013 in Dushanbe. It is reminded that, pursuant to the decisions of the fourth meeting of the Steering Committee, the thematic focus of the sixth meeting should be irrigation and drainage.

The draft minutes of the meeting will be produced in the coming days and submitted to the participants for consideration.

ANNEXES

- 2-1 Draft Agenda of the fifth meeting of the Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on IWRM in the Republic of Tajikistan
- 2-2 Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on IWRM in the Republic of Tajikistan
- 3/2-1 Third Revision of the Water Sector Reforms Strategy Plan
- 3/3-1 Target setting in the context of the Protocol on Water and Health in Tajikistan