

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.

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

BULGARIA

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.

INVEST IN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY SANITATION AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT, APPROPRIATE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

3. Overview of progress made

(a) *Has the action been implemented?*

Yes / In progress / No

Please elaborate (up to 250 words):

At this stage there are 7 projects completed with grant EU funds in amount of BGN 78 million.

81 projects for a total of BGN 2.8 billion in process of implementation.

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

(up to 250 words)

The main difficulties concerning the implementation of the projects could be summarized in several groups, as follows:

- Delay in the preparation of the projects for applying under the EU Operational Programme “Environment” including delay in the preparation of the projects under the ISPA which had been aimed at the preparation of the EU structural funds absorption.
- Complexity of the projects requiring lengthy preparation before applying under the EU Operational Programme “Environment”
- Lengthy handling of procedures for selection of contractors to the individual agreements within the projects according to the Public Procurement Act including appeals, most of which are unjustified. Resulting, in particular, from the appeals, the signing of the agreements with the contractors delays about 3 months, but in some cases the delay could be more than 7-8 months.
- There is a huge amount of documentation concerning handling of the public procurement procedures subject to the follow-up of lawfulness.

Insufficient local administrative capacity for the management of the projects.

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

(up to 250 words)

Measures have been undertaken to speed up the implementation of the projects, as follows:

- Signing of prior agreement with the beneficiaries – this measure has as a result the prompt announcement of the public procurement procedures and the signing of agreements with the contractors as well as it speeds up the construction works and ensures the keeping of the final terms for the implementation of the projects.
- Provide trainings for the beneficiaries.
- Filing the projects only on the base of a preliminary view stating that the projects meet the necessary requirements.

As a consequence of the efforts made during the programme period 2007-2013, the Operational Programme “Environment 2014-2020” is going to continue to focus on the priorities oriented to the implementation of the EU legislation, in particular the directives

requiring the use of huge public financial resources. The Operational Programme "Environment 2014-2020" will contribute to the preparation and implementation of the Integrated River Basins Management Plans as well as to the limitation of the negative consequences from the floods and droughts (investments for the improvement of the floods risk management) and to the improvement of the water management.

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):

... Sustainable management of water and greening the economy were the themes of the Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in Astana.

Water is a fundamental driver of sustainable development and green economy.

The Seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference in Astana was a very important political event to discuss what policy mixes and practical tools could be most effective to improve water efficiency by different users and on the base of the discussions to be taken appropriate political commitments.

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)

The projects under the Water Sector of Operational Programme "Environment 2007-2013" oriented to the construction of water supply infrastructure are being implemented in compliance with the EU Directives, as follows:

- Council Directive of 21 May 1991 concerning urban waste water treatment
- Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption
- Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy
- Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks

Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)

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

X Yes / No

Please elaborate (up to 250 words)

The growing importance of the sustainable water management at global and regional scale implies further strengthening of cooperation at different levels.

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