

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 Agriculture

Republic of Croatia

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.

Development of River Basin Management Plan

3. Overview of progress made

(a) *Has the action been implemented?*

Yes / In progress / No

Please elaborate (up to 250 words):

The national legislation is harmonized with the *acquis communautaire*. Implementing very demanding water-related *acquis*, in particular in the field of protection of water and water-dependent ecosystems, is a challenge. Its implementation is made possible by the adoption and implementation of planning documents, in particular the River Basin Management Plan (hereinafter: RBMP).

The Draft RBMP was prepared on the basis of the provisions of the Water Act (Official Gazette No. 153/09) and associated subordinate legislation, as well as on the basis of the documents adopted during the process of EU accession negotiations in Chapter 27 Environment. The strategic environmental impact assessment procedure IS conducted during 2012. The content of the document respects the provisions of Article 36 of the Water Act and Article 13 and Annex VII of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). This means that the document gives an overview of the status of waters, an overview of the water monitoring system, and a programme of measures for improving the status of waters in Croatia.

In this moment we are in process of transboundary consultations in respect to Espoo convention with neighbouring countries (Slovenia, Serbia, Hungary, Montenegro, Italy and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and process of public discussion with all stakeholders, public and interested public is finished. All recommendations, objections and comments given through public discussion will be taken into consideration and either accepted or denied will be a part of RBMP with all needed explanations.

The adoption of the Plan is expected upon accession of Republic of Croatia to EU.

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

The main tasks of competent authorities on the international level are adopting and implementing long-term strategies, management plans and action plans for joint measures for water protection and flood prevention/protection in international basins.

For the purpose of the draft RBMP, the results of surface water and groundwater quality monitoring were collected and an analysis of impacts and pressures was conducted in order to assess the status of water bodies and assess the risk of a certain water body failing to achieve or retain good status in accordance with aquatic environment protection objectives. When risks were identified, measures were defined in order to carry out activities to achieve aquatic environment protection objectives.

RBMP has the character of "green development plan" with goals that are planned to be achieved through sustainable management and rational and effective use of water resources without compromising the good ecological status of water taking into account the provisions of the Water Framework Directive.

One of main lacks was amount of measured data and the gaps in data (biological zoological elements, hydromorphological elements and especially data for state of groundwater) and it was an important fact for further development for the Second RBMP.

Many of the achievements have required a cross-sector and cross-disciplinary approach: the

main difficulties were in bringing together all stakeholders to negotiate a workable and sustainable way forward.

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

Implementation and assessment of the RBMP joint programme of measures for Danube River Basin District, and Adriatic River Basin District and planning required to update knowledge of basin resources, and all necessary preparations of second RBMP for period from 2016. to 2021.

The basic aim is the establishment of an integrated and coordinated water regime on the national territory and on river basin districts, which includes the following:

- ensuring sufficient quantities of water of adequate quality for water supply to the population and private needs;
- protection of people and assets from floods and other adverse effects of water, and
- achieving and maintaining the good status of water for the protection of human life and health, protection of assets, and protection of aquatic and water-dependent ecosystems.

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

Due to RC accession to EU and implementation of very demanding water-related acquis, in particular in the field of protection of water and water-dependent ecosystems, was a challenge so political support to sustainable water management issues had to be very strong. None the less AWA provided new view and through collection of possible actions for improving the status of water and water-related ecosystems through their sustainable management was helpful to fulfil all the goal connected to implementation and will be furthermore helpful in fulfilling the main goal: good status of all water and water bodies and sustainable water management.

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

strongly agree / somewhat agree / somewhat disagree / strongly disagree

AWA helped, as mentioned above, with the introduction of new views for highlight importance of EU Directives implementation for improving the status of water and water-related ecosystems. Also it helped with a more global point of view for achieving good status of all water and water bodies and sustainable water management even on transboundary level because water doesn't recognize borders and boundaries.

Since a considerable part of Croatia's waters has a boundary or transboundary character, the even broader cooperation in the water management of the basin countries is recognised. In order to achieve sustainable water management in Croatia, the projects under EU are in preparations and are very important for transboundary water bodies. So the AWA helped and will be further helpful for integration of all actions on national and international level for improving the status of water and water-related ecosystems through their sustainable management.

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

Yes / No

Although AWA was somewhat helpful in highlighting the importance of improving the status of water and water-related ecosystems through their sustainable management; there is a significant work in water management for Republic Croatia, due to our accession to the European Union. Because of the lack in human and fund capacity and due to the new amount of work that we expect as EU member, for now we will pause our submitting and monitoring tables within AWA.

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 safe 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