

## 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).<sup>1</sup>

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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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 1 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 (<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2011/ece/ece.astana.conf.2011.inf.40.e.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. For each of your committed actions (please refer to annex of the present document) made in the framework of the Astana Water Action, please provide the following information:

**1. Country/Organization:**

*Please indicate your name, organization and country.*

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**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.*

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

**3. Overview of progress made**

(a) Please indicate whether the action has been implemented:

Yes /  In progress /  No

On 6 February, the amendments entered into force turning the Convention in a global legal framework for transboundary cooperation. It is expected that non-ECE countries can accede to the Convention as of 2014. In addition, the Meeting of the Parties at its sixth session adopted the decision VI/3 facilitating the procedure for accession by non-ECE countries.

**Involvement of non-ECE countries in activities under the Convention:**

Since 2010, non-ECE countries have been increasingly involved in activities under the UNECE Water Convention, for example by participating in meetings, in the areas of work on climate change and on the thematic assessment of the Water-Food-Energy-Ecosystems Nexus etc.

For example, together with INBO, a global network of basins working on climate change adaptation was created. To date, the following basins outside of the UNECE region have joined the UNECE Water Convention network

- Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) / Consultation Mechanism of the North Sahara Aquifer System (SASS),
- Niger basin; project: “Reinforce the knowledge and capacities in integrated water resources management within the Niger Basin to benefit of communities and resilience of ecosystems” , implemented by the Niger Basin Authority
- Congo; Projects implemented by the International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui-Sangha Bassin (CICOS)
- Upper Paraguay River Basin (BAP)
- Mekong River Commission Climate Change Adaptation Initiative (MRC-CCAI) on the Mekong River
- Senegal; project by the Senegal River Basin Development Authority.

**Subregional workshops for non-ECE countries:**

15-16 December 2011, Geneva: International conference on Europe-Asia transboundary water cooperation

12-14 November 2012, Addis Ababa, the second Africa-Targeted Workshop for GEF International Waters Projects focused on expanding the Water Convention to benefit African nations

26-27 June 2012, Rome: International Roundtable on Transboundary Water Resources Management in the Southern Mediterranean

11-12 June 2013, Buenos Aires, All Latin American countries, with one exception, as well as two Caribbean countries – Haiti and the Dominican Republic - met in Buenos Aires to discuss transboundary water cooperation at the invitation of UNECE and partners

20 January 2013, Tehran, an International Workshop was held to discuss how Iran can take advantage of the Water Convention in order to strengthen cooperation and management in its transboundary waters.

(b) Please include, as appropriate, an overview of challenges encountered during the implementation of the action, as well as lessons learned:

- All countries which were Parties to the Convention in 2003 need to ratify the amendments before non-ECE countries can accede to the Convention
- Low knowledge on the UNECE Water Convention at the global level compared to the UN Watercourses Convention
- Lack of financial and human resources to satisfy all requests from non-ECE countries for participation, capacity-building etc.

(c) Please include an overview of future steps planned in relation to the action implementation/follow up, as applicable:

Activities will continue towards meeting the expected outcomes of:

- Increased participation of non-UNECE countries in activities under the UNECE Water Convention
- Increased understanding of the Convention and capacity to apply it outside the UNECE region
- Extension of membership outside the region
- Promotion of transboundary water cooperation at the global level, and deriving increased stability and environmental protection

The programme of work for 2013-2015 under the Water Convention includes the following activities regarding the opening of the Convention:

- 6.1 Building capacity on the Convention outside the ECE region and promoting exchange of experience worldwide
- 6.2 Synergies with the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses
- 6.3 Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility

#### 4. Usefulness of the Astana Water Action

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements and provide 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):

...

(b) *The Astana Water Action has helped your country to comply with the 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)*

...

(c) *Also, please indicate your view on the future of the Astana Water Action, e.g. express whether you are interested in a continuous participation and submission of new actions, as well as monitoring of the implementation of this initiative:*

Yes /  No

*Please elaborate (up to 250 words)*

...

## 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