

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

05 April 2016

Workshop background and objectives

EPIRB 5th National Coordination Committee (NCC) for Georgia was held on April 5th, 2016 in Tbilisi, Georgia and was organised jointly with the EUWI National Policy Dialogue (NPD) Steering Committee Meeting. The main objective of the meeting was to report to the NCC members and other national stakeholders on the results of the project implementation since the last NCC meeting in December 2014 and to present planned activities in Georgia and the region towards the end of the extension period and the Project closure.

Workshop Agenda and List of Participants

Workshop agenda and list of participants of the joint meeting are attached to the document as Annexes Summary of Discussions

Introduction and opening

The official opening of the joint meeting of the EUWI National Policy Dialogue and the EPIRB National Coordination Committee was done by Mr. Teimuraz Murghulia, First Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection, who at the same time serves as the EUWI NPD Steering Committee Head for Georgia. Mr. Murghulia highlighted the importance of the joint meeting, specifically when the EU Member States have ratified EU-Georgia Association Agreement and the country is preparing for implementation of the essential water/environment related directives. Welcoming remarks were also made by Mr. Peep Mardiste, UNECE Regional Coordinator for EUWI NPDs, Mr. Tim Turnet, EPIRB Project Team Leader and Ms. Tatiana Efimova, OECD Programme Manager for EECCA (Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia).

Session 1: Development of water legislation and new phase of the EUWI NPD in Georgia

The first half of the joint meeting was dedicated for the EUWI NPD Steering Committee Meeting, where the status of developing WFD compliant water legislation, including the New Water Code and normative acts for implementing this legislation, were presented by Water Management Service of MENRP. At next presentation UNECE Regional Coordinator for EUWI National Policy Dialogue, Mr. Peep Mardiste informed the audience on the new water management initiative funded by the EC: EU Water Initiative Plus for Easter Partnership Countries (EUWI+ 4 EaP) that is expected to start by July 2016. Further, Ms Eliso Barnovi, Head of Water Resources Management Service, MENRP and Ms Nana Gabriadze, representative of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of the Ministry of Labor,

Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, update the audience on the status of ratification of UNECE Protocol on Water and Health and recommendations for implementation their Target Indicators (a separate and more detailed report on the NPD Steering Committee presentations and discussion to be drafted by UNECE).

Session 2: EPIRB National Coordination Committee for Georgia

The second part of the joint meeting after the lunch break was mostly devoted to the EPIRB National Coordination Committee. At the beginning of the session, the project Team Leader, Mr. Tim Turner has presented EPIRB activities and results conducted in the region since the Project Extension (February 2016), as well as the challenges that the project faced during the implementation period. He underlined the details of every activity and project implementation progress. Also, Mr. Turner discussed planned activities that the project team and the beneficiaries are expected to accomplish before the end of the Extension Period in October 2016.

Mr. Zurab Jincharadze, the Project Deputy Team Leader, presented results of the implementation of EPIRB activities in Georgia since the last NCC meeting (December 2014). Special attention was paid to the following activities, emphasising role of the project results in contributing to implementation of EU-Georgia's

Association Agreement:

- Development of WFD compliant monitoring programmes for surface and groundwater bodies of the Chorokhi-Ajaristkali pilot basin;
- Drafting of the National Monitoring Strategy for monitoring of surface waters, in accordance with European standards;
- Conducting regional hands-on training (Caucasus) in sampling and monitoring techniques of river and lake ecosystems;
- Conducting practical training for all EPIRB beneficiary countries in methodology and technique using GIS tools for identification, delineation and typological classification of surface water bodies;
- Completion of draft River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for the Chorokhi-Ajaristkali pilot basin and revising/adjusting to make more compliant to WFD principles;
- Adding the following WFD elements to the draft RBMP: i) adaptation to climate change; ii) competent authorities; iii) monitoring guidelines for assessment of coastal waters; iv) assessment of the status of coastal waters, based on the Coastal Surveys and other available data, etc.

Further, Mr. Jincharadze discussed on-going activities towards finalisation of the draft RBMP and possible intervention by beneficiary institutions to accelerate adoption of the draft Plan. As part of the RBMP implementation, progress made for the accomplishment of the Pilot Projects were also discussed, including drafting of secondary legislation acts for New Water Code of Georgia and construction and installation of fully automated hydrological monitoring stations in Ajara.

Presentations of Mr. Turner and Mr. Jincharadze were followed by Questions and Answers panel, involving most of the workshop participants. Mr. Vakhtang Tsuladze, Head of Directorate of Environment and Natural resources of Ajara AR, raised a question regarding the type of coastal survey the Project is planning in the pilot basin and upcoming coastal monitoring training in Batumi. Questions

by Ms. Eliso Barnovi, Ms. Nino Chkhobadze (Green Movement) and Ms. Marina Makarova were related to the same issue, in the particular methodology of selecting sampling locations for the planned coastal survey and linkages of the EPIRB activities to EMBLAS project, another EU-funded initiative working on open sea monitoring of the Black Sea.

Comments by Mr. George Dzamukashvili, NPD Coordinator for Georgia, and Ms. Chkhobadze raised another important issue of ways for the adoption of the draft RBMP, or submitting it to the Government of Ajara AR as an alternative measure and to be used as a technical guidance document. Ms. Chkhobadze pointed out that there is precedence that sometimes the Government approves important strategy documents as technical normative acts if there is a discrepancy in the legislation and this could be a case with the draft Chorokhi-Ajaristskali RBMP before the New Water Law gets in force.

Mr Mamuka Gvilava, representing REC-Caucasus, the project sub-contractor hired for drafting the ChorokhiAjaristkali RBMP and most recently extended for adding the Coastal Assessment part to the draft Plan, made very detailed presentation on the process of developing RBMP, methodology used for defining significant environmental issues in the pilot basin, pressures and impacts on river ecosystems, environmental objectives and programmes of measures, as well as the detailed outline of the planned activities towards including assessment of the coastal waters and finalization of the document.

The objectives, expected outcomes and implementation modality of a new Pilot Project - Economic Instruments and Revenue Generation Mechanism for Efficient Water Resources Management in Georgia, to be implemented jointly by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), was presented by Ms. Tatiana Efimova, OECD Programme Manager, and Mr. Malkhaz Adeishvili, representing EPIRB sub-contractor NGO - Georgian Environmental Outlook (GEO). In particular, this Pilot Project will:

- Assess the status of economic instruments for water resource management in Georgia, including analysis on economic instruments in practice for water abstraction charges, pollution charges, water tariffs, payment for watershed services, etc.;
- Quantitative estimates (e.g. on revenue generation potential, on potential savings on investment and operation costs, on affordability of different categories of users;
- Assess necessary steps for water management reform, e.g. i) changes in relevant codes, to implement economic instruments and to earmark revenues; ii) changes in the regulatory framework, to ensure compatibility between economic instruments and other elements of water policies; iii) conditions for effective implementation, including required organizational and institutional changes.

The presentation generated high interests and raised live discussion among the workshop participants. Representatives of the Ministry of Environment, United Water Supply Company of Georgia and National Water Partnership raised concerns regarding the inconsistency of tariffs for water use and costs for recovery, the need for infrastructure rehabilitation, etc. At the end of the discussion, it was suggested by a moderator that the project may have a mid-term discussion workshop to report the public on the findings and proposals by the consultants and review/incorporate feedbacks of stakeholders on the suggested economic instruments.

At the last Plenary Session of the joint meeting, Ms. Marina Makarova, Deputy Head of Water Resources Management Service (MENRP) updated the audience on transboundary cooperation of Georgia with the neighbouring countries, including the on-going process of adopting bilateral agreement with Azerbaijan on cooperation on water issues and plans for similar action with Armenia.

Results of the joint EUWI NPD steering committee and EPIRB NCC meeting, as well as suggestions made by beneficiaries and stakeholders were summarised by Head of the MEPNR Water Resources Management Service, Ms Eliso Barnovi, who appreciated the progress made both teams during the last year and expressed confidence that the new follow-on EU water project (EUWI+ 4 EaP) will pursue the goals of Georgian water sector reform further towards the EU WFD principles. Concluding remarks were also made by EPIRB Team Leader, Mr. Tim Turner and UNECE NPD Regional Coordinator, Mr. Peep Mardiste, who congratulated the NCC and Steering Committee members for very active and productive participation. It was announced that the last Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting of EPIRB project will take place at the end of September in Kiev, Ukraine.