Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea

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Items 5 and 12 of the provisional agenda

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORTING

Note by the interim Secretariat

The Caspian Sea State of the Environment report 2010, issued by the interim Secretariat to the Tehran Convention and the CaspEco Project Coordination and Management Unit (PCMU) in pre-printed version, was based on existing reports and documents developed in the context of the Caspian Environment Programme (CEP) and through major projects, and on information collected through a questionnaire.

It was put together by GRID Arendal with the assistance of country nominated experts and during its preparation subject to rounds of comments by the governments of the Caspian States.

The report followed the Driving Forces-Pressures-State-Impacts-Responses methodology, known and used in various other fora, including the OECD and the EEA.

It was acknowledged that the State of the Environment (SOE) Report had to be put together in the absence of:

- an information-for collective decision-making needs assessment;
- related agreed regional environmental quality objectives and standards based on sets of hydro-chemical, hydro-biological and hydro-physical characteristics, and
- a network of monitoring institutions with sufficiently harmonized monitoring methodologies and capacity.

Also, while national State of the Environment reporting is based on data sharing required by law, an international legal instrument on data sharing still needs to be developed and agreed upon.

In the meantime:

- an Environmental Monitoring Program (EMP) was developed with its implementation entrusted to the revitalized Working Group on Monitoring
- a Unified Reporting Format was adopted and has been utilized by the Contracting Parties to report on the implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols
- a proposal for a regional framework and network for Tehran Convention and Protocol Compliance Monitoring and Assessment, including the preparation of a next Caspian Sea SOE report has been circulated.

The second Caspian Sea State of the Environment (SOE) Report may, similar to the first, follow the Driving Forces-Pressures-State-Impacts-Responses methodology.

For the preparation of the second report, the Unified Reporting Format-based National reports on the implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols can be used, as well as relevant parts of National State of the Environment Reports. This information may already partly have been stored and be available in the Caspian Environment Information Center (CEIC) which mutatis mutandis would be expected to integrate all new and emerging data and information.

Parties need to decide up to what extent use can also (continued to) be made of historic information, and how information collected by the private sector can be obtained and should be handled. From the inputs to the strategy for engaging the private sector, in particular the oil and gas industry, in the Tehran Convention process, it is clear that the oil and gas industry is holding a large amount of data and information, based on extensive and often long term environmental monitoring activities and practices.

As in the case of the first SOE-Report, it may be agreed that the second report be prepared under the auspices of the Tehran Convention Secretariat, with the actual work done by a team of designated national experts (NCLOs and/or designated information officers and/or experts in charge of national SOE-reporting) coordinated and supported by GRID Arendal. Two intergovernmental reviews would take place, one to consider and approve the outline; and one to undertake a final review and reach consensus on the text of the report.

The Working Group on Monitoring may be pre-consulted on the structure and outline of the report. Parties also need to decide how and up to what extent an independent scientific screening of the draft Report should take place and who should be involved.

Parties may consider and agree that the impact and response of parts of the report include information and recommendations of both a national and regional character.

Parties may set a timeline for the preparation and issuing of the second SOE-Report, as well as for future SOE-Reports.

Suggested action:

The Conference of the Parties may wish to:

Request the (interim) Secretariat, resources permitting, to coordinate and oversee the preparation of a second SOE-Report, based on the principles and guidelines contained in document TC/COP5/6 and for publication in conjunction with COP6.