

**Tehran Convention Stakeholders' Meeting
12-13 August 2015, Astrakhan**

**Draft Statement by the representatives of civil society and other stakeholders of the
Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea
(Tehran Convention)**

We the participants of the Stakeholders' Meeting of the Tehran Convention, conscious of:

- Article 21 para. 2 of the Tehran Convention and its Rules of Procedures;
- Article 6 of the Aktau Protocol Concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Cooperation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents;
- Article 15 of the Moscow Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea Against Pollution From Land Based Sources and Activities;
- Articles 10 and 18 of the Ashgabat Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity;
- Article 4 of the Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (EIA);
- the Strategic Convention Action Program;
- the Tehran Convention Strategy for Civil Society Engagement;
- the National Public Participation Strategies (NPPSs) as integral part of the National Convention Action Plans (NCAPs);

as well as being conscious of growing risks of adverse effects on the ecological state of the Caspian Sea marine environment from active development of the Sea's natural resources and expressing common interest in the implementation of the provisions of the Tehran Convention aimed at organizing effective cooperation of the Parties to reduce such environmental risks,

have agreed on the following recommendations for enhanced civil society engagement in the Tehran Convention process and necessary steps in the sphere of ensuring the environmental safety of economic and other activities in the Caspian Sea region:

1. The Parties are encouraged to support, revitalize and extend national civil society networks, as formed during the preparation of the NPPS, and interlink these national networks to form a Caspian regional network of civil society representatives, which should meet on a regular basis, for example in the form of a “Caspian Sea Forum”. Rules of procedure and major details of such a regional forum should be developed by the civil society representatives.
2. Civil society organizations with the assistance of the national governments should endeavor to create and maintain a civil society network in their countries, in particular the provinces bordering the Caspian Sea, and to interlink that network with networks in the other Caspian states, with a view to organize a coordinated lobby and joint initiatives in support of the Tehran Convention process, including representation with inputs at relevant meetings under the Convention and its Protocols.
3. It is important that civil society representatives inform each other of the arrangements and practices in their countries with respect to public access to information on the state of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea and the efforts of their governments to inform civil society, mobilize it and provide support to it in concrete initiatives and actions for the protection and sustainable management of the Sea and its coastal areas.
4. Civil society organizations should, preferably collectively and in accordance with their respective capacities, identify which issues and themes in the agenda and Program of Work of the Convention and its Protocols warrant their attention, involvement and cooperation, in order to allow the Convention Secretariat to in a timely manner inform them of activities, solicit their inputs, promote collaboration and ensure their involvement in respective Convention meetings.
5. Within the regional network interaction, the civil society representatives shall be identified and agreed upon to participate in and present the consolidated position of civil society and other stakeholders at the meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention, as well as at other relevant technical Convention meetings.

6. Civil society representatives shall closely cooperate with the designated National Environmental Information Officers (EIOs) and promote and use the Caspian Environmental Information Center (CEIC) as central information and communication hub on the Caspian Sea environment and the Tehran Convention activities, including the provision of input under the preparation of the national reporting and state of the environment reports. The CEIC should incorporate a conveniently operable “Caspian Sea Forum” section to promote virtual information exchange among the civil society representatives and other stakeholders. Furthermore, it is reasonable to provide the CEIC with regularly updated information on ongoing environmental activities in the Caspian littoral states which would allow for increased effectiveness of the Tehran Convention implementation.

7. Within the regional network, civil society representatives shall exchange experience and practices to enhance civil society engagement with representatives of the other Parties. They shall identify differences and gaps in the implementation of the NPPS and to that end make recommendations to their respective governments for enhancing civil society engagement with due regard to national specifics.

8. Public access to information (e.g. via the CEIC), public participation in the (transboundary) environmental impact assessment procedures, as well as in integrated coastal zone management are of particular importance for effective stakeholder engagement. The Parties shall make all efforts to implement activities to that effect within the framework of the Tehran Convention.

9. The Parties to the Convention are urged to take into account the expertise and experience of national and regional civil society organizations and, if appropriate, integrate them in the implementation activities of the Tehran Convention Program of Work, in particular, in the area of environmental monitoring, assessment and information exchange.

10. The Parties to the Convention are urged to encourage and support the development of education under the scientific-educational foundation “Caspian Floating University” aimed at scientific research collaboration and sharing of scientific information between civil society representatives and other stakeholders on the Caspian Sea environment. Research on Caspian Sea environmental problems concerning issues related to biodiversity conservation, ecological safety of oil and gas extraction, ecological tourism etc. shall be included into educational programs of preschool, school and higher education in environmental education and awareness-raising of the public in the Caspian Sea region.

11. Reports and outcomes of international projects which support or supported the implementation of the Tehran Convention shall be made accessible through the CEIC. The Parties shall support the continuation of international environmental projects in the Caspian Sea region. In particular joint environmental studies and monitoring of the Caspian Sea biodiversity and ecosystems shall be undertaken and intensified, including of hydrocole habitats and the restoration of the number of transboundary sturgeon fish. Common strategies for the conservation of Caspian basin sturgeon fish species, joint control of the Caspian seal population and in the field of the management of environmental risks due to the exploitation of the Caspian oil and gas resources and their transportation shall be prepared. Joint scientific expeditions should be carried out and accompanied by an operative awareness of the public and other stakeholders, and their progress and results shared through media and the CEIC.

12. The Parties to the Tehran Convention are urged to take into account the concrete proposals for organizing the interaction among the Convention stakeholders (Appendix 1) and for the provision of ecological safety under the utilization of the energy resources capacity of the Caspian Sea (Appendix 2) that were formulated by this Meeting and are attached to this Statement.

13. Civil society organizations and other stakeholders should assist in fund raising for activities to enhance their engagement in the Tehran Convention implementation.

14. The Parties to the Convention are urged to provide support for capacity building to the relevant national and regional civil society organizations and advocate for the setup of a micro grants program and pilot projects to implement the concrete thematic directions of the Tehran Convention to support local NGOs and communities' activities on the protection of the Caspian Sea environment.

15. The Parties to the Convention are urged to provide support for enhancing mass media participation to inform the public about the activities under the Tehran Convention. It is recommended to install various information displays in communities in order to attract the public to the conservation of the Caspian Sea natural resources.

17. The Parties to the Convention are urged to consider the importance of sustainable and ecologically oriented tourism for the protection of the Caspian Sea coastal areas and environment.

We the participants of this Stakeholders' Meeting of the Tehran Convention request the host Party of the Meeting, the Russian Federation, (or the Tehran Convention Secretariat) to submit our recommendations for enhanced civil society engagement in the Tehran Convention process to the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP6) for consideration.

Appendix 1

Proposals for the organization of interaction among civil society and other stakeholders under the Tehran Convention

The effective interaction of the parties, interested in addressing environmental problems of the region, is the necessary condition for the achievement of synergetic effect and success of such activity. In modern terms, the trilateral partnerships among business, public and authorities seems to be most successful from the environmental point of view. The public councils/chambers under the executive bodies and/or national representation of local and regional levels, as well as patronized by big business forums and projects, meetings within the EIA procedures and “public hearings”, and even the Caspian Day events could become the basis for such partnerships.

For a long-term cooperation of the public, authorities and business on issues of providing the environmental safety of management in areas that ensure the normal functioning of the Caspian Sea ecosystem and the purity of its marine environment, it is necessary to achieve the parity of importance of these parties in making decisions on economic (or other) development of land and water areas. Such an approach requires the availability of the developed forms of the civil society in the region, financial and ideological independence of its environmentally oriented structures on the one hand, and the formation of multilateral partnerships, including the public, business and authorities, as an instrument for regulating interests and preventing conflicts in the implementation of economic projects and searching for ways of environmentally acceptable development of the whole Caspian on the other.

For an all-round facilitation of the formation of actual “grounds” for the stakeholders’ discussions with mandatory involvement of academia to assist the implementation of the provisions of the Tehran Convention and other environmental agreements in the Caspian region to address the concrete environmental problems of the region, it is necessary to include the following topics into the discussions:

1. Establishment of the network of stakeholders on the support to the Tehran Convention, including the public, to ensure effective interaction. Such a network should promote the building of the relevant capacity of the public support to the international co-operation in the littoral regions of the countries through means of mutual awareness and co-ordination of the corresponding efforts of the stakeholders and taking into account the agreed interests of stakeholders under the formation and implementation of the state and inter-state environmental policy;
2. Facilitation of establishment of trilateral partnerships “business – public – authorities” and development of recommendations on economic and administrative measures of regulating the impact of specific groups of stakeholders on the environmental condition of the Caspian Sea;
3. All-round expansion of participation of regional media in informing the population on the activity of the Tehran Convention, as well as in formation of public assistance to such activity;
4. Organization of campaigns in local media to promote and ensure compliance with environmental legislation in the region, including the provisions of environmental conventions;
5. Support to and facilitation of holding the annual events dedicated to the Caspian Day (August 12), as well as of the Caspian Sea Forum on a regular basis;

6. Organization of a regular (annual) publication of a booklet (information bulletin) on the NGO activity on addressing the Caspian Sea environmental problems and holding of meetings of the public from the region dedicated to the Caspian Day;
7. Development of a review of historic and cultural traditions of nature use in the Caspian region;
8. Inclusion of environmental components into social studies, surveys and other forms of questioning of the region's population;
9. Recognition as expedient the formulation within the socio-economic development plans of the countries of activities linked to the implementation of the activity under the Tehran Convention;
10. Formation of networks of public environmental monitoring with support to registration and certification of water bodies, to activities related to Important Bird Areas etc., as well as to actions on clean-up, prevention of juvenile fish kill in residual temporary ponds, on conservation of coastal forests etc.;
11. Organization of various public informational-environmental actions with involvement of scholars and students:
 - extension of provision of information on the Tehran Convention, its features, potential possibilities and actual activities to address the environmental problems of the Caspian Sea in the practice of university and school environmental education;
 - use of possibilities of the regional Special Protected Areas, like, for instance, the Astrakhan State Natural Biosphere Reserve, in the formation of environmental imperative of life values of the younger generation;
12. Support to and ensuring real effectiveness and relevance of the procedures of the public environmental expertise and the public component of Environmental Impact Assessments of economic projects likely to have adverse effects for the marine environment of the Caspian Sea and the coastal areas environment;
13. Organization by the actors of the oil and gas business in the Caspian in the frameworks of the support of the Tehran Convention of the contests for the most “environmentally friendly” oil-and-gas company in the region, including the public awareness component. Engaging media and the public to the assessment of such “environmental friendliness”;
14. Carrying out socially and environmentally oriented actions by the business sector that are interested in implementing their own environmental policies, including the introduction of technologies similar to “zero discharge”, and in image creation of environmentally sound activities on the basis of ensuring their own economic efficiency.

Appendix 2

Proposals on the provision of ecological safety under the utilization of the energy resources capacity of the Caspian Sea, including the environmental risks, as consistent with the Tehran Convention

The outcomes of the discussion allowed forming the following findings and recommendations:

1. When planning activities to ensure the environmental safety of growing exploitation of the Caspian Sea energy capacity, special attention should be paid to the scientific validity of assessment of relevant environmental risks, on the basis of accounting tectonic and geochemical specifics of the Caspian Sea and its parts. Planning for fundamental research and engineering studies for specific economic projects in the Caspian should take into account these features of the water body in accordance with the provisions of the Tehran Convention and its thematic Protocols.
2. The preliminary and current assessments of the risks of emergencies related to the potential contamination with hydrocarbons, or arising during construction or repair works in water and at the seabed, as well as the integrated assessments of the damage likely to be caused by such situations should be carried out and agreed upon on the regional level in planning and implementing major projects of energy-resource complex in the Caspian Sea. It is recommended to perform the complex insurance of specified risks of emergencies, including the responsibility to “third parties”.
3. In the framework of conventional obligations on the use of the best available and environmentally friendly technologies it is necessary to seek to disseminate the best available technologies for environmental monitoring of the marine environment, “zero discharge” and other methods to minimize potential damage during the construction, operation, repair and dismantling of the infrastructure of offshore production and transportation of hydrocarbons in the Caspian Sea. Special attention should be paid to the ecological rationale for the necessity in dismantling of waste elements of such infrastructure or the adoption of measures for creation on their basis of “artificial reefs” and other substrates for the Caspian biota, as well as to grant the status of “specially protected” to such areas.
4. Geological exploration, production, transportation and primary processing of minerals in the water area should be carried out in the time mode and using the best available methods minimizing the negative impact on the marine environment of the Caspian Sea to an acceptable, scientifically grounded level. Holding of any environmentally unsafe activities during and in the water areas and coastal zones of special ecological significance and bioresources significance, vulnerability and sensitivity should be limited, even up to a total ban.

5. The development of an integrated environmental monitoring of various levels, from local to all-Caspian, with inclusion of components of geodynamics and microseismic monitoring, engineering and environmental studies and research etc. is a prerequisite for adequate assessment of environmental risks and provision of environmental security and sustainable development of the energy-resources capacity of the Caspian. At the local level, the use of modern methods and reasonable expansion of objects for environmental monitoring should facilitate identification of sources, effects and boundaries of actual impacts of the development of offshore oil-and-gas fields on the marine environment on the background of changes of its states under the integral impact of natural and anthropogenic factors, as well as degree of responsibility of specific mining companies. There should be the all-round facilitation to the success of the all-regional Caspian Sea Environmental Monitoring Programme, which is developed in support of the Tehran Convention, the findings of which could provide the general representation of the “modern” norm of the state of the dynamic marine environment of the Caspian and its natural areas as the baseline for identification of environmental risks.

6. The application of the EIA procedure in a transboundary context by the member countries of the Espoo Convention and the early entry into force of the Protocol on EIA in a Transboundary Context to the Tehran Convention would contribute to the responsible environmental management and provision of acceptable for the region level of ecological safety of the utilization of the energy-resources capacity development projects.

7. When assessing the environmental risks of oil-and-gas and transport capacity development of the coastal freshened shallow waters – especially in the North Caspian, the particular vulnerability of these areas of all-Caspian ecosystem, related to both the effect of “natural” decline in biodiversity in these transition zones, and to distinct ecotone character of these water areas, formed by the long-term quasi-regular fluctuations of the Caspian Sea level, should be taken into account. These areas are of priority for marine environmental studies and research.

8. When assessing the environmental risks of oil-and-gas and transport capacity development of the deep and precipitous coastal areas of the Caspian Sea, their specificity associated with exposure to seismic and microseismic occurrences, with the development of mud volcanism, availability of fresh water discharge zones, landslides and other insufficiently studied phenomena, should be taken into account. These areas are also of high priority for marine environmental studies and research.

9. Pursuant to the obligations under the Tehran Convention the joint environmental and geological-environmental studies in the Caspian region in the field of assessment of environmental risks of nature use, development of efficient and adapted to the conditions of the region methods to prevent, reduce, control and combat the effects of the marine environment pollution, as well as to mitigate the effects of the Sea level fluctuations, including the assessment of vulnerability of different parts of shallow water and coastal areas to the combined effect of natural and anthropogenic factors, should be developed.

10. In modern conditions, the informational provision of and support to projects related to the development of the Caspian energy resources include an effective GIS component. The formation of a system of information complexes of local, sub-regional and regional levels based on the GIS technologies and available portal for environmental awareness of the public and other stakeholders, to provide “feedbacks” in the “business – society – authorities” system would facilitate the solution of engineering and management tasks of various levels. In this regard, the contribution should be made to the development of an information center (CEIC) formed under the Tehran Convention, providing it with the modern valid data and information.

11. The development of a system for compensation activities on reduction of adverse effects of and risks under the development of marine oil-and-gas fields should be based on the obligations took by all the littoral states under the Tehran Convention and its protocols. In particular, in line with the Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities to the Tehran Convention it would be expedient to precede the implementation of new offshore oil-and-gas projects implementation with the reduction of corresponding amount of similar pollution from other sources, primarily land-based and related to waters of rivers flowing into the Caspian Sea. Pursuant to the Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity to the Tehran Convention the reduction of environmental risks of the development of the Caspian energy capacity at the qualitative level would be facilitated by the development of protected areas network as the scientifically grounded system of highly valuable, key, significant and representative presentation of all diversity of the Caspian habitats.

12. The suggested measures on clarification and localization of environmental risks of the development of infrastructure for exploitation of energy-resources capacity of the Caspian in the countries should be reflected in the National (Tehran) Convention Action Plans and, in perspective, summarized in the Strategic Convention Action Plan/Program.