

THEMATIC PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE EVENTS UNDER THE TEHRAN CONVENTION

I. THE TEHRAN CONVENTION AND ITS MECHANISMS FOR ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CASPIAN SEA REGION

1.1 THE TEHRAN CONVENTION: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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The Year 2016 is bound to become a milestone year in the history of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, in short Tehran Convention. It is almost 20 years ago that the five Caspian littoral states and their international partners created the Caspian Environment Programme, a common endeavour to protect the marine environment of this largest landlocked waterbody on earth, as a means also to safeguard and help improve the wellbeing of the coastal populations. As a main outcome of that Programme, ten years ago the Tehran Convention came into force

served, under an interim arrangement, by the European Office of the United Nations Environment Programme, in Geneva. And it was not until last year, at the 5th Meeting of their Conference that the Contracting Parties to the Convention concluded their discussion on how and from where the Convention process would be run: the first four years from Baku, Azerbaijan and after that rotating every four year in accordance with the alphabet.

The period of establishing and building the Convention process seems long but, taking into account international practice of creating intergovernmental ventures of this kind and the political and economic interests involved, the achievements up till to date are commendable. Four protocols have been developed and are awaiting their entry into force: one addressing oil spill incidents; one for the protection of biological resources; one to reduce pollution from land based sources; and one prescribing the need and procedures for assessing and addressing the potential environmental impacts of transboundary activities. National Action Plans have been adopted in all five countries and strategies for informing and involving civil society in protecting the marine environment of the Sea have received a distinct place in the action plans. The Caspian Environment Information Centre, thesaurus for receiving, storing and the exchange of data and information is in an advanced stage of development and governments have adopted and are using a reporting format to account for what they have undertaken to implement the Convention and its protocols. And in all the countries “Caspian Sea Day”, the annual event at 12 August, reminder of the date at which the Convention entered into force, has grown to become a day of public action and awareness raising for keeping the Sea and its coastal areas environmentally clean and sound.

Now, with a Secretariat in the region that is slowly growing in size, the future of the Convention process lies in using the toolbox of legal and other instruments created for networking, coalition building and turning the demonstrated action preparedness of the five Caspian States into the development and implementation of policies and projects which meet emerging and longer term environmental concerns. Some examples.

In all Caspian states monitoring of water quality is being undertaken but there is no coordinated overall view on what is happening with the waters of the Caspian Sea. Common water quality standards and objectives have to be developed and agreed upon, and the monitoring against these standards and objectives has to be harmonized and linked to

a system of data exchange between the monitoring institutions in the countries, which in turn can and should feed into common policy and decision making for preventive and remedial action on the ground. A Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment has been created to undertake this rather complicated task and help to create a legal framework which will secure the commitments of the Governments of the Caspian States towards keeping their part of the Sea clean and safe.

The operational managers of the major oil companies active in the Caspian Sea region have decided to regularly consult each other on how to prevent and deal with oil spill incidents. In addition the oil and gas sector, at the instigation of the governments, has made extensive assessments of the environmental conditions and potential impact of their activities on the parts of the Caspian Sea and coastal areas in which they are active. Assisted by experts from the Contracting Parties, the Convention Secretariat has started to make an analysis of the potential engagement and contribution by the oil and gas sector to the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. The entry into force of the Protocol Concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents, expected to take place this year, will provide an excellent opportunity for not only finalizing the implementation plan for the Protocol, but also starting the process of engagement and support from the oil and gas sector for concrete projects aimed at preventing and addressing potentially adverse impacts of their activities and securing an environmentally sound and sustainable management of the Caspian Sea region.

The increasing concerns related to the growing number of potentially polluting industrial and agricultural effluents and household related sewage in the Caspian Sea, should result into a common effort towards mapping, qualifying and addressing them. The Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land Based Sources, which is hoped to entry into force later this year or early next year, offers a highly suitable framework for combining forces and agreeing on priority actions towards reducing and minimize the impact of such effluents. Experience and expertise in integrated coastal zone management planning, available in other parts of the world and collected under UNEP's Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land Based Activities will be collected and brought to assist.

Species conservation and protection is another issue of growing concern. Not only is the Sea suffering from invasive species, such as the

Mnemiopsis leidyi, but also are seals become endangered and is the sturgeon stock of the Sea close to extinct. The Protocol on the Conservation of Biological Diversity is in high need to be translated into concrete projects, whereas the identification and designation of marine protected areas should start once the Protocol is in force. Actions to protect and safeguard the living resources of the Sea need to be set up in collaboration with the Committee on Aquatic Bio resources (CAB) and specialized and concerned civil society groups.

Assessing, reducing and mitigating the effects of activities which may adversely impact the environment of neighbouring countries or the Sea at large, is not only important from an ecological point of view but will also help promote and secure friendly interstate relationships. The procedures for keeping each other informed of plans for such activities and soliciting mutual understanding and support for measures to prevent and redress potential adverse trans-boundary effects, are captured in the Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Trans Boundary Context, which is close to being ready for adoption and ratification. Work will be done in close cooperation with the Secretariat of the Espoo Convention to train and guide national authorities for applying the procedures and ensuring appropriate consultation with and engagement of civil society organizations and the public at large.

There is a dire need to increase the awareness and involvement of the public in safeguarding the marine environment and exploring the beauty of its coastal areas for the welfare and wellbeing of the population of the Caspian states. Making better use of the opportunities for tourism, sports and leisure is high on the agenda of an increasing number of coastal provinces, regions and oblasts. Though should be given to making the riparian countries join hands and support both national and region specific initiatives aimed at enhancing and enriching the culture and benefits of life in the coastal areas. Implementation of the recommendations of the Tehran Convention Stakeholders meeting, in Astrakhan, on “Caspian Sea Day” this year, will help considerably to enlarge and mobilize the public constituency for these purposes. Both the Governments of the Caspian countries and the Convention Secretariat should do the utmost to facilitate and support civil society organizations in this work.

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE "CASPIAN SEA DAY" WITHIN THE TEHRAN CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOLS FOR SOLVING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF THE CASPIAN SEA *

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The 12th of August is the day when the Tehran Convention came into force. On the initiative of the Iran, The Parties to the Tehran Convention celebrate this day every year.

The “Caspian Sea Day” celebration is based on the provisions of The Strategic Action Program of the Tehran Convention, adopted at the 2nd Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention (Tehran, Iran, November 2008). Its special section considers the participation of civil society in the management of the Caspian Sea environment and underlines the necessity of the public participation in planning and monitoring activities in the field of the Caspian environment.

According to the Strategy for Public Participation (COP-3, Aktau, Kazakhstan, 2010), The “Caspian Sea Day” celebration is the main event Aimed at the implementation of the latter.

“The Caspian Sea Day” has been celebrated in the Russian Federation since 2008, when the National Plan of Action for the Tehran Convention (NCAP) draft was discussed. The oil and gas extraction industry, and the public representatives of the Caspian constituent subjects of the Russian Federation took part in the discussion. At the discussion, the parties also reviewed the problems of optimizing the environmental education in the region and the forming the trilateral partnership of society, government and business.

Since 2008 “The Caspian Sea Day” has been included into the plans of annual activities of the corresponding executive bodies of the Astrakhan Region, the Republic of Dagestan and the Republic of Kalmykia.

*Based on the presentation at the “Caspian Sea Day” celebration, Astrakhan, 2015

In 2010, the events held under “The Caspian Sea Day” were dedicated to the issues of increasing the Tehran Convention potential in the sphere of cooperation with three global Rio conventions - the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In the Astrakhan region, the Republic of Dagestan and the Republic of Kalmykia, measures on cleaning up the shores of the Caspian Sea and the rivers flowing into it, and a number of medium-size investment contests, conferences and seminars for students marked the 10th anniversary of the Tehran Convention (2013).

“The Caspian Sea Day” in 2014 was dedicated to the problems of the conservation of biological diversity and ecosystems in the Caspian Sea, as well as to the problems of the sustainable development of the Russian territories of the Northern Caspian Sea following the results of the 5th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention outcomes (the end of May, 2014), specifically, the adoption of the Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity (“Ashgabat Protocol”) and the increase of the oil and gas sector business participation in the Convention process.

Representatives of the public, business, various executive bodies, and the scientific community, with the support given by the LLC “LUKOIL-Nizhnevolzhsk” and the UNDP/GEF project, discussed and articulated specific recommendations aimed at the conservation of biological diversity in the context of oil and gas development in the northern part of the Caspian Sea, taking into account the activities under the Tehran Convention and its protocols.

Moreover, within the abovementioned event the public participated in the implementation of the “LUKOIL-Nizhnevolzhsk” compensatory measures on release of juvenile sturgeons.

Based on the natural and international law features of the Caspian Sea, the Tehran Convention introduces advanced forms of regional cooperation on prevention, reduction and control of the pollution; protection, conservation and restoration of the marine environment; application of environmental impact assessment in regard to the Caspian Sea marine environment; monitoring of the marine environment status; conduct of researches and developments; exchange of information, etc.

The Convention is a special international legal instrument which regulates cooperation on the Caspian Sea environment protection and sustainable management of its resources, not interfering with its legal status.

The main feature of the Convention is that it ensures international legal regulation of activities on the Caspian Sea environment protection under such conditions when provisions of the existing maritime conventions are not directly applicable to the Caspian Sea, as the Caspian Sea status and all problems related with economic and other activity in its water zone are to be resolved by an agreement among the Caspian states only.

However, the Convention is a framework one; hence, the provisions of the Tehran Convention provide the development of a number of thematic protocols qua legal instruments setting out specific requirements for quite a narrow range of the environmental activity.

The Tehran Convention, qua a mechanism for implementation of its provisions, envisages elaboration and implementation of the Strategic Action Program for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea in order to prevent, reduce and control the Caspian Sea marine environment pollution, as well as for its protection, conservation and restoration.

The key point of the Tehran Convention is the recognition of the Caspian Sea ecological integrity. Any impact on the marine environment of the Caspian Sea, wherever it occurred, becomes, in essence, transboundary, due to this objective and widely recognized fact. In other words, any anthropogenic intervention in the Caspian Sea ecosystem affects, in varying degree, all Caspian states disregarding issues of the interstate demarcation and the legal status of the Caspian Sea. Therefore, creating a system of the thematic protocols under the Tehran Convention allows the “attunement” of this legal instrument in order to solve various problems of the Caspian Sea which are somehow connected to the protection of the marine environment, and so that such solutions do not predetermine the legal status of the Caspian Sea.

At the sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention, which are held on a regular basis, the Parties confirm the intention of the Caspian states to continue the cooperation on creating and implementing four priority protocols to the Tehran Convention:

Concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents; for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities; for the Conservation of Biological Diversity, and for Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context which has not yet been adopted.

The most important issues of ensuring the navigation safety in the Caspian Sea are associated with the prevention of accidents and other cases with potential oil pollution of the marine environment. The Article 13 of the Tehran Convention addresses “environmental emergencies” in particular and obliges the Contracting Parties to undertake appropriate measures. The problem field of this article corresponds to the thematic focus of the Protocol Concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents. This Protocol has been elaborated since 2001 with the support of the international Caspian Environment Program and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). By now the Protocol, signed in 2011 in the city of Aktau, Kazakhstan, has entered into force.

The provisions of the Tehran Convention Article 7 “Pollution from land-based sources” envisage “measures to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the Caspian Sea from land-based sources”. In this context in December 2012, in Moscow the Parties to the Tehran convention adopted the Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities, prescribing appropriate measures to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the Caspian Sea from land-based sources.

The Tehran Convention, per se, extends the ecological requirements of the maritime law concerning prevention, reduction and control pollution from ships, to the Caspian Sea water zone. The Article 9 of the Convention prescribes to undertake “agreed measures, procedures and standards taking into account corresponding international standards” in order to “prevent, reduce and control pollution of the Caspian Sea from vessels”, and offers opportunities for the elaboration of the relevant thematic protocol.

The Tehran Convention also considers issues of the prevention of oil (and other) pollution of the marine environment during the implementation of prominent projects on extraction and transportation of hydrocarbons, as for a long time the Caspian Sea waters are actively used

for both activities aimed at the exploitation of bio-resources and at the development of considerable hydrocarbon deposits.

Possible future changes in the Caspian Sea marine environment are determined, to a large extent, by the fact that most coastal states continuously implement the strategy of expanding the exploitation of oil and gas deposits in the Caspian Sea and its transport potential. The Convention obliges to undertake all necessary measures in order to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the Caspian Sea resulting from the seabed activities. It encourages the expected future cooperation on the corresponding thematic protocol development.

The Tehran Convention mechanisms can contribute to finding the middle ground between the exploitation of the oil/gas and biological resources of the Caspian Sea, and ensuring environmental safety of both aspects at conducting such activities. It can also contribute to further promoting of the Russian initiative on the transfer of the “zero” discharge technology for drilling wells (and for the whole gas and oil complex activity) in the Northern Caspian Sea, which is especially valuable in the context of environmental and fishing problems, and the entire Caspian Sea.

The basic mechanism for identifying and monitoring the pollution impact on the Caspian Sea marine environment is the ecological monitoring. The ecological monitoring should be comprehensive and maintain a high degree of its components mutual complementability. An important element of this monitoring is the biological component, related, inter alia, to the identification and control of alien species populations' status.

In accordance with the Tehran Convention approaches to the Caspian Sea marine environment monitoring, further development of the comprehensive industrial monitoring, performed in the course of prospecting, exploration and production of hydrocarbons, should be supported.

The special article of the Tehran Convention and the corresponding articles of the Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity and the Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities cover the issues of conducting the Caspian Sea marine environment monitoring.

The Tehran Convention also covers a set of issues related to protection, conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biological resources. A distinctive feature of the Teheran Convention approach to this subject is the consistent application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management in the Caspian Sea.

The living aquatic resources management should take into account the ecological and geographical integrity of the Caspian Sea, they should be based on the modern ecological principles, including the requirement to protect the key habitats of fishing objects and the normal functioning of the Caspian Sea ecosystem.

The Tehran Convention, as well as the Ashgabat Protocol, includes issues of the biological diversity conservation into the rational management of the biological resources of the Caspian Sea as a “natural” basis for this economically important and directly affecting the interests of the coastal population activity.

It is important to realize the priority of the creation of the Caspian Sea common system of specially protected natural objects as the basis for the conservation of biological diversity and for the Caspian Sea biological resources importance. This system, including the establishment of “cross-border” coastal and marine protected areas and water zones, can be created on a bilateral basis and without interference with the Caspian Sea legal status.

The Tehran Convention obliges the Parties to cooperate on almost entire spectrum of the Caspian Sea environmental problems on both bilateral and multilateral floors, including the development of protocols, prescribing additional measures, procedures and standards for the implementation of this Convention. The effective strategy for such cooperation is the intensification and coordination of the environmental efforts undertaken both by the governmental agencies and by the regional public organizations.

1.3 INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS IN SUPPORT OF THE TEHRAN CONVENTION ACTIVITY

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The Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention), signed by all the Caspian littoral states in Tehran in fall 2003 and entered into force in August 2006, is the international legal base for the regional co-operation at the Caspian on the sphere of environmental protection and rational nature use. This Convention is an evidence of recognition the commonality of the Caspian environmental problems and necessity in the interstate collaboration to address them.

The co-ordination of the international environmental activity in the Caspian Sea region was undertaken under the UN Caspian Initiative, which organized the UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank experts' mission around the countries of the region in 1995. The follow-up activity of the major UN structures on the Caspian environmental topic was based on the findings of this mission.

This activity, in particular, extended the UNEP initiatives on the development of a framework convention for the environmental protection co-operation at the Caspian and was linked to the results of the UNEP-ROE organized in Geneva in 1995 and 1996 meetings of experts from the states of the region on the legal mechanism for the regional environmental co-operation.

At the same time, even in 1993-1994 the decisions of the 4-th and 5-th sessions of the Interstate Ecological Council of the CIS identified as a priority in the frameworks of the Agreement on Cooperation with UNEP the issues related to the assistance to the development of the convention to address the environmental problems of the Caspian Sea, what was completely corresponding to the outcomes of the First meeting of UNEP International Task Force on Impacts of Climate Change in the Caspian Sea Region held in Moscow in 1994.

Since mid-1997 the implementation of the UNEP project "Integrated Environmental Management of the Volga-Caspian Region"

had started. The project was aimed at the support to the development of the legal instrument for the regional environmental co-operation (future Tehran Convention), as well as the development of concept for Caspian Sea environmental monitoring and modern methods of integrated aquatic ecosystems management. The first stage of the support to the development of the framework convention on environmental co-operation in the Caspian was implemented under this project. In 1998 and 2000 the first meetings of the experts from the countries of the region took place, which laid the foundations of the convention down.

Since 2000, the drafting of the convention has been incorporated as an element of activity (the UNEP contribution) into the international Caspian Environment Programme (CEP), which involves the formation of a regional structure to ensure environmental cooperation of the Caspian littoral countries with the support from UNEP, UNDP, GEF, World Bank and EU/TACIS, as well as the coordination of relevant activities in the region.

The CEP implementation had commenced in 1998 after the agreement of thematic components and institutional structure. The CEP thematic areas included:

- Establishment of institutional capacity and development of regional convention;
- Biodiversity protection;
- Bioresources management;
- Coastal zone management taking into account the water level fluctuations;
- Monitoring and data management;
- Formation of portfolio for priority investments;
- Development and implementation of the Strategic Action Programme;
- Public participation, including its awareness.

The first CEP phase (1998-2002) had allow to arrange for the interaction among the Caspian littoral states and their international partners, establish institutional mechanisms and working intercommunications in the shape of 11 Caspian Regional Thematic Centres (CRTCs), which gathered the initial information, develop the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA), regional Strategic Action Programme (SAP) and National Caspian Action Plans (NCAPs).

TDA included: the list of environmental quality objectives (EQOs), preliminary draft SAP, review of the state of the environment of the

Caspian Sea and major identified problems, additional materials and causal analysis.

SAP presented the general plan for interaction of all CEP partners, what formed the framework for their political, legal, regulatory, and investment activity for the development of the environmental management of the Caspian.

As part of the SAP, the Strategic Biodiversity Conservation Plan (SBCP) was developed, which, in particular, contained recommendations on major species conservation, control of introduction of alien species and measures to decrease the impact of the *Mnemiopsis ctenophore* on the Caspian ecosystem, treatment of ballast waters, improvement of the regional protected areas system, and restoration of priority vulnerable habitats.

The NCAPs of the countries reflected the actual tasks, the solution of which would also facilitate the transboundary conservation of the marine environment of the Caspian.

The outcomes of the thematic direction of activities under the first CEP phase were the ground for the formation of such mechanisms of the Tehran Convention activity, as the Strategic Convention Action Programme (SCAP), Public Participation Strategy (PPS), National (Tehran) Convention Action Plans (NCAPs). The support to the first round of negotiation process on the development of the relevant protocols was also provided.

The second phase of the CEP (2003-2007) was implemented with the support from the GEF/UNDP as the project “Towards a Convention and Action Programme for the Protection of the Caspian Sea Environment, Phase II (CEP-SAP)”, which provided the support in the implementation of the Tehran Convention, including the process of the development of the protocols to it, and a number of activities linked to the results of the initial CEP stage, including:

1. Implementation of the SAP in the priority directions: biodiversity conservation, invasive species, and persistent toxic substances;
2. Implementation of the regional co-ordination of the NCAPs implementation;
3. Improvement of the state of the environment through the implementation of the small-scale investing, supported by the Small Grants Programme.

The quantitative assessment (preliminary inventory) of the coastal and marine habitats of the Caspian was made. The maps of environmentally vulnerable zones were made, which supplemented the data base on biodiversity and became a part of the regional plan for oil-spills related cooperation.

The guidelines on the protection and restoration of the ecologically vulnerable zones, Caspian Seal Conservation Action Plan, and management plan for adaptation to sea level fluctuations of lagoons with significance for biodiversity.

The All-Caspian eco-net of specialists, institutions, NGOs, and other stakeholders was formed in the course of the second CEP phase.

In coordination with the GEF project on ballast waters the CEP Action Plan on Invasive Species was developed, including the facilitation of the development of proposal for introduction of *Beroë Ovata* jellyfish into the Caspian and/or other means of biological control of *Mnemiopsis*, as well as the recommendations on the establishment of the Caspian regional body for assessment and permitting of species introduction; assessment of amount of invasive species' transfer with ballast water of ships to/from the Caspian Sea took place, as well as studies of ways and means of controlling invasive species in the port of Astrakhan.

The degree of the Caspian Sea pollution was assessed, and its sources were identified. The assessment of distribution and composition of persistent toxic substances (PTSs) in rivers, sediments and coastal waters was performed. The regional and national action plans for monitoring and combating the pollution with PTSs were developed. The use and location of stocks of pesticides were explored.

The assessment of land-based sources of pollution, including the sources of pollution of the coastal area in the major river basins (Kura/Aras, Volga up to Volgograd, Sefidrud, and Ural) was improved, the flux of major pollutants from the Volga Cascade and Mingechaur reservoir was identified. Moreover, the studies of pollution of coastal waters, bottom sediments, marine waters, and assessment of impact of the key transboundary contaminants had been continued, and activities for the national and regional plans for combatting marine litter were developed.

Based on the new data the TDA, SAP, and NCAPs were revisited with particular attention to the transboundary issues.

To promote the stakeholders participation in the marine environment management the following was made:

- The data base of contact points in media and multimedia means for journalists were developed, the CEP bulletins were issued;
- The consultative body with the participation of the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA) and a number of local oil-and-gas development, transport and fisheries sector companies was established;
- The public participation strategy was formulated; and
- The next rounds of the environmental small grants and micro grants programmes took place.

The obtained results were used to develop a draft Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities and draft Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity to the Tehran Convention, as well as in the future, relevant programme activity of the Tehran Convention.

The third phase of the CEP (2007-2012) was implemented in form of the GEF/UNDP project “The Caspian Sea: Restoring Depleted Fisheries and Consolidation of a Permanent Regional Environmental Governance Framework “CaspEco”. The project activities were aimed at the support to the Tehran Convention activity and adoption by all Caspian littoral states of the eco-system based bioresources management, including the agreement of tasks on the conservation of biodiversity with the tasks in the sphere of fisheries complex.

To facilitate the Tehran Convention in clarifying the recommendations for regulation of invasive species in the Caspian Sea in accordance with the Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity to the Convention the activities on Mnemiopsis have been proposed.

One of the important was the activity initiated the process for the development and formation of the Caspian sea Environment Monitoring Programme (EMP), which is currently being developed under the Tehran Convention. These works were based on the TACIS project ‘Caspian MAP’. The draft EMP in part of the hydrometeorological monitoring was developed.

This activity is aimed at the implementation of the provisions of the monitoring related article of the Tehran Convention (Art. 19) and is

linked to the activity of the Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC), whose elaboration has also been commenced under the Project.

A number of project activities was made to facilitate the implementation of strategies and measures on increasing the reproductivity of the Caspian anadromous fish species, including the projects to increase the efficiency of salmon farms in Iran.

The problems of genetic variation in extant populations and sustainable use of sturgeon gene pool were studied in collaboration with FAO. The trial actions aimed at identifying, restoring and/or enhancing access to natural spawning grounds were carried out, the All-Caspian list of natural spawning grounds and habitats of the Caspian sturgeon and salmon are located upstream and below the dam was compiled.

The recommendations for improving the quality of wetlands/spawning grounds during the spring and summer floods were developed and options for fish passages for major anadromous species were considered.

In the context of the implementation of activities aimed at supporting the development and implementation of the relevant provisions of the Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity to the Tehran Convention the activity was initiated on the formation of the Circum-Caspian network of specially protected areas, wildlife habitats and essential fish habitats of the ecosystem of the Caspian Sea, which later became a network of protected areas of the Caspian sea (GYTS), fixed by the provisions of this protocol.

The recurrent round of the small grants and micro grants programmes and their implementation had supported the participation of the coastal communities in the works on the conservation of the Caspian bioresources.

The component of the project “Strengthening of the regional environmental protection structure of the Caspian Sea” was in general directed at ensuring the financial stability of the Tehran Convention Secretariat operation and implementation of a number of activities envisaged by the biannual Programmes of Work of the Tehran Convention, such as, for instance:

- Promotion to the coordination at the national and regional levels and institutional support of the Tehran Convention and its protocols;

- Consideration of possibilities for establishing the thematic partnerships and joint programmes in support of the Tehran Convention and its protocols and co-operation with the private sector, including the effective process/mechanism of assistance to identification and financing the investment projects in the region;
- Facilitation to the Caspian littoral countries in revisiting the National Caspian Action Plans (NCAPs) and their translation into the National (Tehran) Convention Action Plans (NCAPs);
- Implementation of the public participation strategy (PPS) with a view to actively support the requirements of the Tehran Convention and its protocols and promotion to the development of the mechanism for sharing data/information – web-based Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC) grounded on the data on the state of the environment of the Caspian obtained during the CEP implementation period.

The EU/TACIS project “The Caspian Water Quality Monitoring and Action Plan for Areas of Pollution Concern” (Caspian MAP) was implemented after the Convention was signed to help countries of the region to organize the preparation of the agreed regional marine environment monitoring programme; provision of information support to national and regional marine environment quality management action plans in areas of major pollution sources, as well as development of the Action Plan to reduce the Caspian pollution (taking into account the studies under the CEP).

The Caspian MAP Project was based on the understanding that the intensive increase in the development of the hydrocarbon fields at the coast and offshore should organically be linked with local socio-economic development plans and programmes. At the same time, the Project had identified the difference in the level of development of the legislative and regulatory documents on environmental monitoring in the Caspian littoral countries.

In addition to the listed projects the Tehran Convention was implemented also through the realization of other international projects in the countries of the region. For instance, in the Russian Federation such UNDP/GEF projects as “Strengthening the Marine and Coastal Protected Areas of Russia” and “Mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into Russia’s energy sector policies and operations” facilitated the addressing of the problems related to the Caspian biodiversity conservation, with the

latter having a number of recommendations specifically oriented at the requests of the Tehran Convention and its EMP.

The implementation of the integrated international projects in the Caspian Sea region promoted the timely identification and addressing of the concrete environmental problems of the region under the conditions of activation of exploitation of the Caspian natural resources from energy and biological to recreational and ecosystem.

The two decades experience of international environmental protection co-operation in the region demonstrated that the agreed implementation of a serial of thematic projects facilitated the progress in the formation and implementation of the Tehran Convention as the most important and effective tool for organization of the regional interaction on resolution of the environmental problems.

1.4 CASPIAN ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING PROGRAM UNDER THE TEHRAN CONVENTION AS AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR ENSURING THE ECOLOGICAL SAFETY OF THE REGION

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*The upgrade of current monitoring system of marine environment of the Caspian Sea suggested in the frame of Tehran Convention for the Protection of the Sea. Increasing of controlled media and parameters of state and pollution of marine waters and bottom sediments was argued. It is necessary add to the current set of monitored parameters several persisted organic pollutants having regional important, including pesticides. It was suggested in the frame of new international monitoring programme to pay special attention to the population dynamics *Mnemiopsis leidy* and other marine biological resources.*

1.5 CASPIAN ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CENTRE UNDER THE TEHRAN CONVENTION (CEIC)

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At the request of the interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention, GRID-Arendal (Norwegian Information Centre to support UNEP) in cooperation with the national information focal points from five Caspian littoral countries and with the financial support of the British Petroleum Company and its associated project partners, the Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC) was established. This was done in accordance with Article 19 of the Tehran Convention which envisages the establishment of a centralized database and information management system for the purpose of posting and disseminating information on the status of the Caspian Sea environment and acting as a virtual network of the cooperating national institutions.

The CEIC online version was launched at the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention. That event was welcomed by the ministers of the participating countries, high-level officials and other participants of the Conference, since the CEIC online version could potentially be used as an effective instrument for the Convention implementation.

Thus, CEIC is now officially recognized as a mechanism for the collection, storage and dissemination of the environmental information available to the Tehran Convention Parties and other stakeholders through the interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention administered by the Regional Office for Europe of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). In this regard, CEIC is linked to the official website of the Convention and plays the central role in the introduction of a unified reporting system and the environment monitoring program developed by the Parties to support the collective policy and decision-making on the protection of the Caspian Sea marine environment. While functioning within a larger monitoring and reporting network, CEIC has opened a dialogue with the existing European networks such as the Shared Environmental Information Systems (SEIS) under supervision of the

European Environment Agency (EEA).

Although different partners and national information focal points welcome the virtual network creation, it is recognized that CEIC has not yet overcome the initial development stage. There is a need for training and capacity building in the field of information management; harmonization, streamlining and optimization of information flows, and mostly important, integration and organization of interaction with a large group of collaborating institutions that possess the necessary information. The feedback from the countries stressed the need to expand the list of participants and to develop the system further. There was made an assessment of how to meet these needs best by updating the site, its fine-tuning and introducing new functions that could be implemented within the framework of CEIC.

In a region like the Caspian Sea region, where the exchange of information is not sufficiently active and is a relatively sensitive process, a system that enables continuous flow of information to CEIC should be established. This is necessary to ensure sustainability of the network, its promotion and encouragement of new organizations to cooperate.

In addition to the common sources of information, which, undoubtedly, require further development, there is a need to search for new data channels and their visualization means. At the initial stage, the representatives of the countries emphasized that geographic information systems (GIS) should become a key component of the environmental information management in CEIC, acting as a necessary tool to enhance the opportunities for data exchange among stakeholders in the region.

The first stage of data transmission, mainly of the databases of projects of the Caspian Environmental Program (CEP) was successfully completed. However, further work is required to harmonize the data on the portal. There is a need to develop a set of standards and indicators to structure information, which is uploaded to CEIC, to ensure the normal operation of the overall reporting system. As a first step, a general assessment should be made in consultations with stakeholders.

Although CEIC was developed for a specific group of stakeholders - primarily governments - it became clear that there was a need for a close cooperation on the exchange of information among a wider group of organizations identified as users and participants. This is also necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of the online service in order to

maintain it active and dynamic developing.

Currently, negotiations are underway to implement the project second stage which will take into account the above mentioned needs and will be implemented on the basis of the permanent Secretariat of the Tehran Convention.



Организации / стороны участвующие в проекте.

CEIC Portal NGO Private sector TC interim Secretariat (node)

Donor EEA GRID Regional focal point (GRID) Local authorities

Public Scientific community

Organizations/parties involved in the project

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT OF THE CASPIAN SEA*

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Article 21.2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea , in short Tehran Convention states that “The Contracting Parties shall endeavour to ensure public access to environmental conditions of the Caspian Sea, measures taken or planned to be taken to prevent, control and reduce pollution of the Caspian Sea in accordance with their national legislation and taken into account provisions of existing international agreements concerning public access to environmental information”.

Rules 36 to 38 of the Rules of Procedure of the Tehran Convention, adopted at the first Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Tehran Convention (COP1), in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, 23 – 25 May 2007, provide for participation of non-governmental observers in the open Meetings of the Conference of the Parties. Unless at least one of the Parties present at the Meeting objects, any international or national body or agency can participate if it is qualified in matters covered by the Convention and has at least two months before the Meeting informed the Secretariat of its wish to be represented.

The strategic Convention Action Program adopted at COP2, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 10 – 12 November 2008, makes a plea for “strengthening the participation of civil society, together with the institutional and legal frameworks, in the environmental stewardship of the Caspian Sea”. The Action Program, inter alia, recommends the establishment of NGO partnerships, the incorporation of the Caspian Public Participation Strategy in the National Caspian Action Plans, the establishment of a fund for micro grants to support coastal community

*Based on the presentation at the “Caspian Sea Day” celebration, Astrakhan, 2015

action, and the creation of a Friends of the Caspian program with annual events.

Between COP2 and COP3 (Aktau, Kazakhstan, 10 – 12 August 2011), a meeting of Caspian Stakeholders was held in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 13 – 14 March 2009, a Strategy for Civil Society Engagement in the Caspian Sea Marine Environment was developed, and work on National Public Participation Strategies was initiated in all Caspian littoral States. The Strategy for Civil Society Engagement (Public Participation Strategy) was agreed upon by the meeting of Senior Officials of the Parties on Procedural and Institutional Issues, Geneva, Switzerland, 25-29 May 2010, and submitted to COP3 as document TC/COP3/9. The strategy contained an analysis and a number of recommendations to improve access to information and participation in decision making and action towards the implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols, at the local, national and international (regional) levels.

At COP4 (Moscow, Russian Federation, 10 – 12 December 2012) the Ministers “welcomed the finalization of the Public Participation Strategies of the Contracting Parties as a part of the Action Plans containing measures on the implementation of the Tehran Convention at the national level or NCAPs”; “committed to promote stakeholder involvement in the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols”; and “requested the interim Secretariat to regularly update the synthesis report based on the national reports of the Contracting Parties”.

All 4 Protocols to the Tehran Convention - “Aktau” Protocol concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents, adopted at COP3; “Moscow” Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land Based Sources and Activities, adopted at COP4; “Ashgabat” Protocol for the Conservation of Biological Diversity, adopted at COP4; and the Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Trans-boundary Context (EIA), not yet adopted – contain articles on information exchange.

In addition, in the Moscow Protocol the Parties commit “to promote the participation of local authorities and the public in- as well as facilitate access to information about measures and decision making necessary for the protection of the marine environment and coastal areas of the Caspian Sea against pollution from land based sources and activities (article 15).

In the Ashgabat Protocol the Parties commit to involve, train and educate local communities and wider populations in the development and management of protected areas (article 10), to inform the public of the value and vulnerability of protected areas and threatened species, and of the scientific knowledge gained through nature conservation programmes, and to promote the participation of public and conservation organizations in measures necessary for the protection of protected areas and threatened species (article 18).

In the EIA Protocol the Parties commit to ensure, at an early stage, effective public participation in the EIA procedure of proposed activities (article 4)

All five Contracting Parties to the Tehran Convention have adopted National Convention Action Plans which include measures concerning the mobilization, involvement and participation of provincial and local authorities, the private sector, civil society organizations and the public at large in decision making and measures to protect the marine environment of the Caspian Sea, in accordance with their national legislation. Parties have reported on these measures using the Unified Reporting Format adopted at COP3. At COP5 it was decided to issue such national reports on a three year basis starting from 2014.

A main vehicle for civil society engagement in the protection of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea has been the yearly organization in each of the riparian countries of “Caspian Sea Day”, established to celebrate the entry into force of the Convention on 12 August 2006. With the support from the Convention budget, the countries on 12 August each year mobilize civil society in discussions, awareness raising events, clean up rallies and other festivities, and report back and exchange information with each other of the conduct and success of the “Caspian Sea Day” celebration in their country.

In cases civil society organizations have requested and were admitted as observers in meetings of the Convention. However, there is no organized civil society representation in the countries nor is there a coordinated exchange of information and representation of civil society organizations to Convention related meetings.

Designated Information Officers of the Caspian littoral states, assisted and co-ordinated by GRID Arendal, a UNEP associated Centre of Excellence on environmental assessment related matters, have created the web-based

Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC), a centralized database and information management system, for hosting and distributing information on the state of the environment and on action taken to protect the marine environment of the Caspian Sea.

A first Caspian Sea State of the Environment (SOE) report was launched in 2011. The report was prepared under the auspices of the interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention by GRID Arendal with the support and inputs of designated information officers in the Caspian countries. A procedure for the preparation of the SOE second report, based on the guidance of COP5, has been discussed and adopted at the second Preparatory Committee meeting for COP6, in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, 31 May – 3 June 2015. The procedure includes the collection and analysis of information provided by stakeholders (private sector and civil society organizations).

Recommendations. It is important that civil society representatives inform each other of the arrangements and practises 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, mobilize and support civil society of concrete initiatives and action to protect and sustainably manage the sea and its coastal areas. Gaps and differences in approach should be highlighted and compared and country specific recommendations should be formulated and brought to the attention of their governments and the Convention Secretariat.

Civil society organizations should endeavour 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 to relevant meetings under the Convention and its Protocols.

Civil society organizations should, preferably collectively, 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 timely inform them, solicit their inputs and promote collaboration.

Civil society organizations should establish and maintain close ties with the designated information officers in their country with a view to feed into and profit from the CEIC and contribute to National and SOE reporting.

Civil society organizations should develop and assist in implementing and soliciting funding and other types of support for training and public information activities, such as “Caspian Sea Day”, aimed at protecting and conserving the environment of the Sea and its coastal areas.

1.7 DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR THE CASPIAN SEA REGION[†]

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Tourism industry has been rapid and uncontrollable in its development although its negative impact on the environment has also been raised during the last decades. It should be noted that both private and public sectors have had contributions in this situation. In fact, tourism development has interfaced with the original characteristics of the area upon which it relied for attracting tourists. This means that tourism industry is not ecologically sound, although mostly ecologically based. (Zahedi, 2010, P.1) Krippendorf had argued that the world needed a new, less exploitative form of tourism that could be considered with regard to its capacity to contribute to gross national happiness by measuring '...higher incomes, more satisfying jobs, social and cultural facilities, and better housing' (Krippendorf,1987).The concept of 'sustainable tourism' has evolved since Krippendorf's statement, and Butler (1993) subsequently defined 'sustainable development in the context of tourism' as...tourism which is developed and maintained in an area (community environment) in such a manner and at such a scale that it remains viable over an indefinite period and does not degrade or alter the environment

[†]Based on the presentation at the “Caspian Sea Day” celebration, Astrakhan, 2015

(human and physical) in which it exists to such a degree that it prohibits the successful development and well-being of other activities and processes (Butler, 1993, p.23) (Responsible tourism, p.21.)

Some international policies and global foci about sustainable tourism (or in relation to it) are as follows:

- Agenda 21 as an outcome from Rio Earth Summit (1992):'... formulation of environmentally sound and culturally sensitive tourism programs as a strategy for sustainable development' of tourism (responsible tourism, pp.2-3 .)

- The 7th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD): The commission asked the governments to fight against poverty by maximizing tourism potential (1999 .)

- UNEP's Tour Operators Initiative (TOI): Providing environmental, social, and economic indicators for tour operators.

Here are some examples of sustainable and responsible tourism initiatives from different stakeholders:

- The United Nations World Tourism Organization' Sustainable Tourism Eliminating Poverty Program.

- The International Trade Centre of the United Nations Conference on Trade and development.

- The Tour Operators' Initiative (TOI) for Sustainable Tourism Development.

- The association for Independent Tour Operators (AITO) (Responsible tourism, p.12).

If the environment quality- including natural and cultural- is preserved, the tourism industry will survive for the future generations. Not only us but future generations have the right of having high quality resources. It seems that the main idea about sustainable tourism is to recognize tourism as an activity that is either positive or negative. We need planning and policy-making for tourism growth to provide a balance among tourism activities, namely tourism, policy, and planning. It is believed that sustainable tourism is a harmonious relationship among different participants for protecting natural and cultural resources. Sustainable development should provide better living conditions for all the members of the society. Tourism infrastructure should be created by sustainable development, so that natural resources and tourism industry are kept for the future. It is also important to see how sustainable conception, its principles and subtleties can be included and developed in

the context of tourism infrastructure, and what potential effect they might have in order to achieve harmony in economical, social, and ethical levels as well as in tourism .The system of tourism oriented towards a mass development also has some negative impacts on the environment.

The notion of sustainable tourism is now an established and significant discourse within tourism studies (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007). Richards and Wilson (2006) argue that ‘Many consumers, tired of encountering the serial reproduction of culture in different destinations are searching for alternatives’. Many authors use ‘alternative’ cultural tourism experiences which mean sound, interactive, real, and educational offerings through tourism. An example which can be mentioned in this regard is the enthusiasm of tourists to visit Maories in New Zealand and to be familiar with them. In this case, Maori communities are developing ‘alternative’ cultural experiences to introduce their culture thoroughly. So, alternative tourism depends on the involvement and interaction between tourists and locals, something that is not seen in traditional cultural tourism. By searching for new models of cultural tourism, academics believe in the role of "creativity" for destinations development as a strategy.