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

**National Convention Action Plan for I.R. IRAN**

**Final Draft**

***Deputy for Marine Environment,***

***Department of Environment, I.R. Iran***

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List of Abbreviations

CBO Community-based Organization

CEP Caspian Environment Programme

DoE Department of Environment

EIA Environmental impact assessment

FRWO Forests, Rangelands and Watershed Organization

MIM Ministry of Industries and Mines

MoAJ Ministry of Agricultural Jihad

MoE Ministry of Energy

MoI Ministry of Interior

NGO Non-governmental organization

PMO Ports and Maritime Organization

SCAP Strategic Convention Action Programme

SC Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

Shilat Fisheries Department of Iran

TDA Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNEP United Nations Environment Programme

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**This report is kindly dedicated to the game-guards of the Department of Environment who have risked their lives for the Caspian Sea and its living resources**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

It was just recently during the COP III meeting in Aktau, Kazakhstan (10-12 August, 2011) that ministers of all littoral states stressed on the importance of developing NCAPs with special emphasis on ways and means to ensure ministerial coordination and mainstreaming concerns for the marine environment of the Caspian Sea in overall government policy, as well as on short, medium and long-term budgets requirements and confirmed the intention of their respective governments to adopt, endorse, and initiate implementation of NCAP before the Fourth meeting of COP.

The National Convention Action Plan (NCAP) for I.R. Iran has taken about a year to develop and has been prepared with kind support from the Tehran Convention Secretariat (UNEP/GEF) and CaspEco project. The aim of NCAP for Iran is to help implement the objectives of Tehran Convention and its protocols, considering that also a Strategic Convention Action Plan has been prepared for the region and adopted since November 2008. The SCAP is a comprehensive, long-term agenda and framework for the implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols over a period of 10 years. In general, NCAP for Iran follows the structure of SCAP, closely linked to articles of Tehran Convention.

Chapter I provides a background and history of events which led to Tehran Convention, and the existing need for preparation of NCAP. In addition, some barriers and recommendations of the previously prepared NCAP (National Caspian Action Plan, 2007) are presented.

Chapter II gives an overview of the country especially the Caspian region, its population, socio-economic and biodiversity features. This section helps in understanding the main environmental issues of the Caspian coast of Iran, and how national priorities merge with regional ones.

NCAP Objectives are presented in Chapter III, closely following the SCAP and TC objectives. In Chapter IV, actions and indicators for NCAP are identified, and in Chapter V allocated budgets for each action is shown, as well as a tentative timeline for implementation.

Chapter VI emphasizes on the institutional arrangements that are necessary for implementation of NCAP including coordination mechanisms between various stakeholders. Chapter VII analyzes the role of public participation in implementation of NCAP.

Chapter VIII suggests a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for NCAP, and Chapter IX, identifies some possible risks and barriers for implementation. At the end, some recommendations are given to overcome those barriers.

**Table 1- NCAP Summary**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NCAP Objectives** | **NCAP Actions** | **Indicators** | **Leading Agencies** | **Collaborating Agencies** | **Timeline (Start)** | **PP** | **Budget (Available)** | **Budget****(Required)** |
| **1.1**  | 1-1-1 to 1-1-10  | LB Protocol + Pollution from Land-based sources (municipal, agricultural and industrial waste waters) reduced by at least 5% by the end of 2016  | DoE  | MIM, MoE, MoI, MoAJ, FRWO  | 2011-2012 | Yes |  |  |
| **1.2**  | 1-2-1  | Protocol developed | Caspian Oil Company (KEPCO)  | -  |  | - |  |  |
| **1.3**  | 1-3-1  | Protocol developed | PMO  | -  |  | - |  |  |
| **1.4**  | 1-4-1  | Protocol developed | DoE, Ministry of Oil  | PMO, Shilat  |  | - |  |  |
| **1.5**  | 1-5-1 to 1-5-4  | LB Protocol + Pollution from land-based sources (dams, dredging, land reclamation) reduced by at least 5% by the end of 2016  | DoE  | PMO, MoE, Tourism Org., MoI  | 2011-2012 | Yes |  |  |
| **1.6**  | 1-6-1 & 1-6-2  | Biodiversity Protocol + no new invasive alien species introduced to the Caspian Sea  | DoE, PMO  | -  | 2011-2012 | Yes |  |  |
| **1.7**  | 1-7-1 to 1-7-10  | Oil Protocol  | PMO, DoE, MoI  | -  | 2011-2012 | Yes |  |  |
| **2.1**  | 2-1-1 to 2-1-7  | Biodiversity Protocol + A preliminary list of threatened species prepared and biodiversity hotspots introduced  | Shilat, DoE  | -  | 2011-2012 | Yes |  |  |
| **2.2**  | 2-2-1  | Related protocols developed  | MoI  | PMO, DoE. FRWO, MoAJ  |  | Yes |  |  |
| **2.3**  | 2-3-1 & 2-3-2  | Related protocols developed  | MoE  | MoI  |  | - |  |  |
| **3.1**  | 3-1-1 to 3-1-5  | EIA Protocol  | DoE  | MoE, MIM, MoI  | 2011-2012 | Yes |  |  |
| **3.2**  | 3-2-1 to 3-2-8  | Protocols | DoE  | MFA  | 2011-2012 | Yes |  |  |
| **3.3**  | 3-3-1 to 3-3-5  | A State of the Marine Environment report prepared  | DoE  | MoE, MIM, MoAJ, FRWO  | 2011-2012 | Yes |  |  |
| **3.4**  | 3-4-1 to 3-4-9  | At least 15 doctoral thesis reports prepared related to NCAP activities  | DoE  | Universities , Research Institutes, Others  |  | Yes |  |  |
| **3.5**  | 3-5-1 & 3-5-2  | Caspian Data Centre established (with electronic access)  | DoE  | MoI  |  | Yes |  |  |

**\*PP=Public Participation**

**I. Introduction**

**1. Background**

In 2003, the Caspian littoral states, comprising Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, and Turkmenistan, signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea. Following ratification by all five Governments of the Caspian littoral states, **the Tehran Convention entered into force on the 12th August 2006. The objective of the Tehran Convention is *the protection of the Caspian environment from all sources of pollution including the protection, preservation, restoration, and sustainable and rational use of the biological resources of the Caspian Sea*.**

However, what lead to Tehran Convention was series of projects and activities that were initiated in late 1990s to protect and promote sustainable use of natural resources of the Caspian Sea. The following paragraphs provide a summary of those activities and events prior to the signing of the Convention and its entry into force:

* 1. **First Phase of the Caspian Environment Program (CEP) – 1998 to 2002**

In May 1998, the Caspian Environment Program (CEP) was launched in Ramsar, as a regional umbrella program by the five Caspian Littoral States (Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan) with support and collaboration of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), UNDP, World Bank, UNEP and EU/Tacis. **The overall goal of the CEP was “environmentally sustainable development and management of the Caspian environment, including living resource and water quality, so as to obtain the utmost long-term benefit for the human population of the region, while protecting human health, ecological integrity and the regions sustainability for future generations.”**

The first phase (May 1998-June 2002) of the Caspian Environment Program (CEP) was successful in conducting the baseline studies, necessary to assess the state of the environment in the Caspian Sea and come up with a **Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA**) report. TDA was then used to prepare a **Strategic Action Program (SAP)** for the Caspian that was approved by Caspian Steering Committee in November 2003. The SAP specified the region’s long-term vision for the Caspian environment and a set of strategic objectives, targets and specific interventions. As a follow-up measure, each littoral state prepared its own **National Caspian Action Program (NCAP)**.

* 1. **Second Phase of the Caspian Environment Program (CEP-SAP) – 2003 to 2007**

Regional approval and GEF support were secured in April 2004 for a follow-up 3-year project entitled **“Towards a Convention and Action Programme for the Protection of the Caspian Sea Environment”.** In addition, the second phase of the Caspian Environment Program supported implementation and further development of the SAP and NCAPs. More specifically, the **CEP-SAP Project** had four main objectives:

* To commence implementation of the SAP in the priority areas of biodiversity, invasive species and persistent toxic substances.
* To continue with specific capacity building measures to ensure a regionally owned CEP coordination mechanism capable of overseeing full implementation of the SAP and NCAPs and consolidate/update the TDA and SAP following a series of information gap-filling measures.
* To strengthen environmental legal and policy frameworks operating at regional and national levels, and where necessary improve implementation and compliance of those frameworks.
* To achieve tangible environmental improvements in priority areas by implementation of small-scale investments supported by a matched small grants program.
	1. **Tehran Convention and its protocols**

The Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (known as Tehran Convention) was **adopted in November 2003** in Tehran, by the Caspian Littoral States, noting continued deterioration of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea due to pollution arising from various sources, including the discharge, emission and disposal of harmful and hazardous substances, wastes and other pollutants, both in the sea and from land-based sources.

By **entering into force on 12 August 2006**, Tehran Convention along with its protocols, was aimed to became the **first legally binding agreement** between the Caspian littoral states, laying down the general requirements and institutional mechanisms for environmental protection in the region.

At the First Meeting of the State Signatories (Tehran, July 2004), the Caspian government representatives agreed to initiate the development of protocols for priority areas of concern, namely:

1. **Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in Transboundary Context**
2. **Protocol on Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities**
3. **Protocol on Biodiversity Conservation**
4. **Protocol Concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Cooperation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents**

The State Signatories to the Tehran Convention also requested that consideration be given to the possibility of developing additional **Protocol on Fisheries**. It is worth noting that at present only one protocol (iv) is signed and ratified by all Contracting Parties (during COP III, 10-12 August in Aktau - Kazakhstan) and the other three are still being negotiated.

* 1. **The CaspEco Project (2008 - 2012)**

CaspEco project builds upon a solid foundation of regional cooperation put in place by the five Caspian states and the Caspian Environment Program over a period of more than 10 years (1998-2008). With continued catalytic support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the project aims “***to restore depleted fisheries and consolidate a Permanent Regional Environmental Governance Framework for the Caspian Sea”*.** The project objectives are two-folds: 1) to **halt the decline** in bio-resources and restore depleted fisheries in the Caspian Sea, using the **ecosystem-based management approach**; and 2) to **strengthen regional governance mechanisms** and make it more sustainable.

The key outcomes sought under the two above objectives are:

* Improved ecosystem-based aquatic bio-resources management; Invasive species mitigation; Implemented policies & measures to increase reproductive success of Caspian’s diadromous fish species; Application of circum-Caspian approach to habitat conservation; and increased coastal communities participation and contribution to improved bio-resources conservation;
* Operational and sustainable Tehran Convention institutions; Coordination and synergy with other projects and activities including effective donor coordination and engagement; Implementation of Strategic Convention Action Plan (SCAP) at regional level and NSCAP at national/sub-national level; Enhanced stakeholders’ engagement in the Tehran Convention process and improved public access to information.

**2. Justification for NCAP**

With signing and entry into force of Tehran Convention in August 2006, and preparation and adoption of the Strategic Convention Action Program (SCAP) in November 2008, it deemed necessary that Tehran Convention and SCAP be translated into **National Convention Action Programs (NCAPs)** to facilitate implementation of Tehran Convention and its protocols at regional level. For this purpose, there was a need to review the previously prepared NCAP (National Caspian Action Plan) undertaken during CEP-II (2003-2007) and update it with the goals and objectives of Tehran Convention and its protocols.

* 1. **Strategic Convention Action Program (SCAP)**

In moving towards implementation of Tehran Convention (TC), Article 18 (paragraph 2) of the TC requests key stakeholders to cooperate in the formulation of an Action Plan for the protection of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea. In preparing for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COPI – Baku, May 2007), it was acknowledged that the Convention Action Plan should emerge from the review of the previously prepared SAP under CEP-II (2003-2007), taking into account the new requirements under Tehran Convention and its protocols. In accordance with the Programme of Work adopted by COP I, the Interim Secretariat prepared a draft of the Strategic Convention Action Plan (SCAP) for consideration in COP-II. **SCAP was adopted in Teheran (I.R. Iran) on 12 November 2008**.

The SCAP is a comprehensive, long-term agenda and framework for the implementation of Tehran Convention and its Protocols over a **period of 10 years**. Intermediate revisions of the Action Program may be decided upon by the meetings of the Key Stakeholders in order to take into account new protocols or other emerging developments related to the implementation of Tehran Convention. **SCAP is to be implemented through National Convention Action Programs (NCAPs) and regional Programs of Work for the periods between meetings of the Conference of the Parties. As a result, each littoral State is to review and adjust its existing National Caspian Action Plan (NCAP) to align them better with the objectives and requirements of the SCAP.**

* 1. **National Caspian Action Plan**

As mentioned previously, during the first phase of CEP (1998 - 2002) baseline studies as well as a Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and a Strategic Action Program (SAP) had been prepared and approved by the Caspian Steering Committee in November 2003. The SAP specified the region’s long-term vision for the Caspian environment and a set of strategic objectives, targets and specific interventions, and was to be followed by National Caspian Action Programs to be prepared by each littoral state.

**I.R. Iran prepared its National Caspian Action Plan during the first phase of CEP based on results of a consultative workshop with key stakeholders (2001) to identify key issues, and propose some priority interventions to be undertaken at national level to save the Caspian Sea.** The report identified population growth, unemployment, inadequate laws/regulations, and insufficient environmental awareness as some of the key issues, and in return proposed some actions such as improvement of solid waste and sewage management, protection of biodiversity and prevention of land degradation.

In 2007, and under the second phase of CEP (known as CEP-SAP), there was an attempt to revisit the National Caspian Action Plan with the aim to **assess and evaluate the implementation status** and to address new transboundary issues. This assessment report did a thorough study of the National 5-Year Development Plan (2001-2006), and governmental budgets and plans, reviewed environmental laws and regulation, **identified barriers and challenges for implementation of the National Caspian Action Plan and made some recommendations.**

During this revision, the report concluded that “**even though SAP and NCAP were not embraced by all ministries as a policy guideline for their environmental activities in the Caspian area, many of the interventions and actions implemented by different ministries/organizations were quite in line with the targets identified under the CEP-SAP**”.

Some of the recommendations of the National Caspian Action Plan were as follows:

* **NCAP need to be approved at highest level**: Stakeholders involved in preparing the National Caspian Action Plan were mainly experts and not decision-makers, therefore the information that was exchanged did not get the attention of decision makers and was not considered as an obligation/full commitment by various government sections. NCAP/SAP never got endorsed by the Government and at the most it was endorsed by the CEP host Institution (the Marine Bureau of the Department of the Environment). While NCAP needs to be approved at higher levels of decision-making (eg. Governor’s Office in each coastal province, High Council of the Environment, Office of the President, Cabinet of Ministers) in order to become a policy paper.
* **A National Coordination Structure is needed:** There was no follow up intra-agency communication and coordination mechanism for NCAP implementation.
* **M&E mechanisms should be foreseen in NCAP:** Even though the Caspian Sea Priority Environmental Actions were somewhat incorporated in the environmental plans of the 4th Five Year Development Plan, no timeframe and no follow up mechanism was foreseen. SAP and NCAP did not contain any follow-up/ monitoring /implementation plan.
* **Institutional and financial arrangements are needed:** The financial modalities of the NCAP/SAP implementation remained vague; for example, the task of fund-raising for the NCAP and SAP implementations was assigned to the SAPICs/ NFPs which was quite unrealistic because they did not posses such authority.

**3. Objective of NCAP**

A National Convention Action Plan may act as a guidance document prepared at national level, in line with regional agreements and priorities. Ideally, NCAP should be considered by the three Caspian provinces for policy guidance, while at the national level the document is part of the development strategy defining regional and national priorities based on the Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan (2011-2016).

**4. Scope**

The scope of this report is the territorial waters and coastal areas of I.R. Iran within the jurisdiction of the three Caspian coastal provinces of Guilan, Mazandaran, and Golestan (see map in Annex I).

**5. Principles**

Pursuant to the Article 5 of Tehran Convention, the following principles shall guide actions to achieve the objectives of NCAP and to implement its provisions:

(a) the “precautionary principle”, by virtue of which, where there is a threat of serious or irreversible damage to the Caspian Sea environment, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent such damage;

(b) “the polluter pays” principle, by virtue of which the polluter bears the costs of the pollution, including its prevention, control and reduction;

(c) the principle of “accessibility of information” on the pollution of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea according to which government agencies provide each other with relevant information in the maximum possible amount.

**6. Methodology for preparation**

In preparing the National Convention Action Plan for I.R. Iran, first of all a desktop review of the key background documents such as Tehran Convention, SCAP, National Caspian Action Plan and its revisit was conducted.

**On Sept. 2010**, a workshop was held in **Almaty (Kazakhstan)** to clarify the goals and objectives of a National Public Participation Strategy (NPPS). Unfortunately the national consultant was not able to attend this meeting, however, a brief presentation was given by the Iranian delegation and feedbacks received on NPPS.

Then, on **20th February 2011**, a one day **initiation workshop** was held between key stakeholder organizations. The workshop was organized with support from the Deputy for Marine Environment of the Department of Environment and was conducted using a participatory approach by engaging a professional facilitator. During the workshop, a formal presentation on the goals and objectives of Tehran Convention was made by the National Convention Liaison Officer (Ms. Farnaz Shoaie), the general framework for preparing the NCAP was explained by the national consultant (Ms. Lisa Pourlak), and a follow up discussion was held on methodology for preparation of NCAP. The discussion was focused on whether NCAP should address national issues and national priorities (using DPSIR method) or take a more regional stand by following up the SCAP model. It was explained by the national consultant that in the framework of this consultancy, NCAP will have to follow the SCAP goals and objectives, without necessarily conducting a baseline study on the Caspian issues and setting up new objectives. One of the key outcomes of the meeting was a table **(Table 1)** where each organization according to its general mandate, mentioned where it stands regarding roles and responsibilities in achieving TC and SCAP objectives.

The first regional meeting on **NCAP (Ashghabad, March 2011)** was critical in clarifying the general framework in which NCAP should be prepared. In this two-day workshop which was organized by the Interim Secretariat of Tehran Convention each country presented its preliminary approach to NCAP preparation and provided inputs for decision-making over the general structure of NCAP and how NPPS would fit in it. As a result, Mr. Oleg Guchgeldiyev was introduced as the lead international consultant to coordinate between countries in preparing their NCAP, and Mr. Daniel Nixdorf to provide support regarding NPPS. A preliminary outline for NCAP structure was proposed at the end of the meeting to help in comparing various reports for regional purposes. Some other points that were agreed during the meeting were as follows:

* + NCAP should identify the countries priorities within the implementation of the Tehran Convention.
	+ NCAP should underline specific actions for contributing to regional efforts. These actions should be clearly defined.
	+ NCAP has to include clear analysis and description of the mechanism of implementation of the Tehran convention in the country; describe all institutions to be involved
	+ NCAP has to reflect potential challenges and risks in the implementation of the plan and how the country will deal with those.

After having made a decision regarding integration of NPPS into NCAP, the national consultant designed a questionnaire and with support from DoE Deputy for Marine Environment sent it to the three Provincial DoE offices (Mazandaran, Golestan and Guilan). The main goal of this questionnaire was to identify the areas where public participation would be necessary in helping with environmental protection, according to government officials. A sample questionnaire is attached (**Annex II**) and the results are explained in section VII of this report.

During the process of preparation of NCAP, a preliminary proposal was also prepared by the national consultant to allow for parallel work on NCAP/NPPS at national level. However this proposal is still being examined for funding.

Regarding NCAP work, a follow-up regional meeting was held in **Geneva in July 2011**, whereby each country had to present its draft NCAP according to the structure proposed and agreed during the Ashghabad meeting and as proposed by Oleg Guchgeldiyev. A draft NCAP report was also provided for comments.

To prepare the final draft of NCAP for I.R. Iran, each NCAP objective has been considered separately classified according to TC and SCAP objectives. The added value of this methodology is that it directly shows the relationship and linkage of NCAP with regional programmes and action plans. NCAP more specifically provides valuable information on who does what and how each government and non-government organization may help in implementation of the regional programmes (such as SCAP).

Regarding the procedure for approval of Final Draft of NCAP, the following chart is proposed:

**Figure 1- Procedure for preparation and approval of NCAP**

NCAP – Final Report (December 2011)

Stakeholders workshop II

Early December

Ashgabad Regional Meeting, November 2011 Regional Meeting July 2011

NCAP – Final Draft (October 2011)

Compilation of approved sectoral plans and budgets from the 5th National Dev. Plan

Geneva Regional Meeting July 2011

NCAP – Draft One (July 2011)

Stakeholders workshop I

March 2011

Ashgabad Regional Meeting March 2011

It is worth mentioning that the country’s Fifth ّFive-Year National Development Plan was approved in summer 2011 within the Parliament, however the annual approved budgets are still being finalized. Thus, it is recommended that a second stakeholders workshop (probably in early December) should be held by the Deputy for Marine Environment (DoE) to share the present NCAP with other stakeholder organizations and get their feedbacks and approval before the NCAP document is finalized and ready to be presented in COP IV.

**II. Current Environmental Issues**

**1. Background**

The main driving forces for development in the Caspian region of Iran may be summarized as follows:

* **Highly populated:** The Caspian region of Iran has a land area of58678 sq. km which constitutes about 4% of the country’s land area and 8% of the total population (6.3 million out of 75 million). The average population density however is almost 3 times higher (140/sq.km.) than the average population density in the country (45/sq.km). It is worth mentioning that 90% of the total population lives below 200m of altitude (in plain areas or mountain platueas). The Caspian coastline of Iran is more than 800km long. There are three coastal provinces: Guilan, Mazandaran and Golestan, with main population centres as Rasht, Amol, Babol, Sari, and Gorgan.
* **High agricultural productivity:** The Alborz mountain range separates the Caspian region from the rest of the country, to form a narrow strip of land along the Caspian Sea, extending from east to west, with altitudes ranging from -29 (seaside) to 5671 m (highest peak in the country – Damavand). The northern of the Alborz mountain range are covered by dense Hyrcanian forests (more than 2.1 million ha – 37% of total land area). However, much of the forest has been converted to other land use forms namely rangelands (+1.7 million ha - over 30%) and agriculture land (+1.8 million ha - 31%).
* **Significant fisheries:** There are 79 species of fish in the southern Caspian region, 24% of which are endemic and 59% native. 48% of these species are freshwater fish, 23% migratory and 29% only live in the sea. The average annual catch for some economically important species such as sturgeon from 2001-2006 decreased from 35 tons in Golestan province (2001) to less than 5 tons in Guilan (2006).
* **Rapid Urbanization:** Since about 40 years ago, northern parts of Iran have become popular for tourism and services sectors. Especially in the past decade, the rate of urbanization has been accelerated with rise in land price and conversion of agricultural land to residential areas or tourism resorts, namely in the Mazandaran Province (between towns of Babolsar and Ramsar).
* **Tourism pressure:** The climate is mainly subtropical (with avg. temperatures rising from min. 2-4 degrees to max. 29-32 degrees) . Rainfall level is high ranging from more than 2m/yr in the western part (with an avg. 500-600mm/yr) to less than 200mm/yr in the eastern part. An important and emerging sector is in the Caspian region of Iran is tourism. Up to 3 million visitors come to the Caspian coast in peak seasons (spring and summer) and during long-week end holidays.

As a result, the emerging environmental issues that the coastal provinces need to deal with are the following:

- Coastal degradation and land reclamation as a result of rapid urbanization
- Deforestation and erosion due to expansion of rangelands and agricultural lands
- Agricultural run-off
- Solid waste due to population pressure and urbanization
- Wastewater discharge (urban and industrial)
- Gradual degradation wildlife habitats
- Gradual decline in fisheries (also due to regional impacts)
- Gradual decline in water quality (freshwater and marine)

In here, it is worth mentioning that the National Caspian Action Plan (2001) referred to population growth, unemployment, inadequate laws/regulations, and insufficient environmental awareness as some of the key environmental issues, and in return had proposed measures such as improvement of solid waste and sewage management, protection of biodiversity and prevention of land degradation.

**2. Current environmental priorities**

Regarding environmental priorities of the country it is best to refer to the Five-Year National Development Plans and see how the environment has been brought into the national policies and agendas:

* During the Second Development Plan (1995-1999) environmental concerns were for the first time expressed in the national planning.
* During the Third Development Plan (2000-2004), environmental policies were considered as cross-cutting themes and specifically addressed in two main articles (104 and 105). While the latter Article proposed **EIAs for large projects**, the former Article emphasized on looking at **carrying capacity of ecosystems** especially rangelands and forests, the implementation of “**polluter pays**” principle, support for **environmental NGOs**, reduction of air pollution in six major cities of the country, development of **Free Zones on the Caspian Coast**, relocation of industries from dense urban areas.
* In the Fourth Development Plan (2005-2009), the approach to environment became more holistic. Number of related Articles increased from 2 to 13, and important issues such as biodiversity protection, economic valuation, and environmental awareness. In Articles 61 and 63, mentioned the Caspian Sea. In Article 61, implementation of **waste management** in the three northern provinces (on the Caspian coast) was mentioned, and in Article 63, some Caspian coastal areas were mentioned as Free Economic Zones, and **integrated coastal zone management** was recognized as mandatory. In Article 67, ecosystem-based management approach was enacted and particularly with respect to Spatial Planning for the three northern basins on the Caspian coast.
* The **Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan (2011-2016)** pays special attention to environmental protection:

**Article 187**

a) For protection, restoration and sustainable use of the environment, the Government needs to prepare **Ecosystem-based Integrated Management** and Action Plans for vulnerable and fragile ecosystems of the country (Amendment 1: DoE is responsible to identify and prepare the list of marine and coastal areas that have **high ecological sensitivity**).

b) The Government has the responsibility to establish an organization specifically on Development of Marine and Coastal Areas to prepare plans for improvement in Swimming Areas (under supervision of MoI).

**Article 188:** To facilitate investment opportunities, DoE is responsible to prepare the necessary **environmental standards** to be published in a book to be reviewed in 5 years. All investments in all sectors are obliged to comply with these standards.

**Article 189:**

a) To promote public awareness and environmental protection and sustainable development, DoE is responsible to prepare an **Education and Awareness Plan** which will be implemented in collaboration with other agencies without charging any fees.

b) DoE is responsible to take the necessary measures to establish the **Environmental Database** of the country at national and provincial levels to allow for better monitoring and evaluation, as well as access to information.

**Article 190:** All governmental and non-governmental agencies are expected to help in implementation of the **Green Management Plan** to reduce waste and consumption in water, electricity and other primary sources of energy and products (such as paper).

**Article 191:**

a) **Ecosystem-based Management** needs to be implemented in all sensitive ecosystems, especially in the Urmia Lake.

b) To **reduce hunting pressure**, and protect biodiversity, the Government is responsible to review its policies in providing hunting permits. Permits need to be issues based on assessments of the dynamics of the wildlife population.

**Article 192:**

**To reduce pollution sources** that cause environmental degradation, all industries are obliged to:

* Undergo EIA for large projects
* Assess pollution sources and levels , and report voluntarily
* To follow environmental standards for water, air, and else

Amendment 1: Government needs to prepare **environmental costs** table and determine the economic value of natural resources, and include these figures in national budgets and planning.

**Article 193:**

1. Cities with population above 200 thousand, that are coastal or near wetlands, need to comply with **Urban Waste Management Plans**, and try to recycle, using new technologies (eg. Vermi-compost) especially to reduce organic waste.
2. DoE is responsible to take the necessary measures in **reducing air pollution** to comply with international standards (determine sources of dust storms and greenhouse gases and take measures to control).
3. Any new industrial and mining use **of wetlands is** prohibited after 2012.
4. Government is responsible to apply **Integrated Management in wetland ecosystems** in collaboration with all stakeholders including user groups.

**3. Vision on the country’s regional roles:**

I.R. Iran has been a member of a number of international and regional commitments. In fact, the Ramsar Convention (on internationally important wetlands) was for the first time hosted by Iran back in the 1970s in the city of Ramsar, located on the Caspian coast. The following table is an attempt to summarize some the country’s international commitments that are related to the environmental field:

**Table2- List of relevant conventions and national/regional plans or programmes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rio Conventions + national planning frameworks** | **Date of ratification / completion** |
| UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) | May 1996 |
| CBD National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) | February 2001 |
| UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) | June 1996 |
| UNFCCC National Communications (1st, 2nd, 3rd) | 1st (March 2003); 2nd (under preparation)  |
| UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) | 1996 |
| UNCCD National Action Programmes (NAP) | 2004 |
| BASEL Convention on the Control of Transboundry Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal | 5th January 1993 |
| International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC) | 1997 |
| Stockholm Convention (SC) | February 2006 |
| SC National Implementation Plan (NIP) | July 2008  |
| GEF National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) | 2008 |
| Strategic Action Programmes (SAPs) for shared international water-bodies  | Tehran Convention (2003) Kuwait Convention (1979) |

 *Source: Fazel and Ramboli, 2009*

With a narrow but extremely important coastline, from socio-economic and ecological point of view, it is a national and international/regional interest for Iran to play an active role in promoting sustainability of its development activities that are dependent on Caspian Sea and its resources, such as including agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and other sectors.

Therefore, considering some of the emerging issues, it seems that the country needs to focus its efforts within the next 5-10 years on addressing pollution from land-based sources (agricultural, industrial and urban), pollution from alien and invasive species and from other human activities (such as land reclamation projects). The country needs to also take a more active role in protecting and restoring marine living resources (including endangered and threatened species), and promote integrated coastal management, also better adapt to sea level fluctuations.

Based on the vision I.R. Iran aims to contribute to regional efforts and play leadership role in some areas such as coastal zone management and biodiversity conservation. This will further help the country to move towards implementation of Tehran convention as well as identify main directions of the assistance to the country to strengthen its regional participation and Tehran Convention.

Therefore, I.R. Iran may play a leadership role in the following areas:

* Leadership in development and introduction of sustainable coastal development mechanisms and practices, including integrated coastal zone management;
* Leadership in monitoring and conservation of unique Caspian biodiversity, including commercially valuable fish species, water birds and relict coastal forests and wetlands;
* Leading in research and know-how in promoting the conservation of key sturgeon species;
* Role model in the region in promoting public awareness and educations, as well as engaging public participation in environmental initiatives.

**III. NCAP OBJECTIVES**

The main goal of NCAP is to help regional efforts in implementation of Tehran Convention and its protocols in order to prevent, reduce and control pollution (Objective 1 of Tehran Convention), and protect, preserve and restore the marine environment (Objective 2 of Tehran Convention). To better move towards the above goals, a third objective has been added for NCAP Iran which is to strengthen the existing capacities that are necessary for implementation of Tehran Convention, its protocols, SCAP and NCAP. Thus, the following presents the list of three main objectives and 15 specific objectives under **NCAP (2011-2016) for I.R. Iran**:

**OB 1 - Prevent, Reduce and Control of Pollution**

* 1. Pollution from Land-Based Sources
	2. Pollution from Seabed Activities
	3. Pollution from Vessels
	4. Pollution Caused by Dumping
	5. Pollution from Other Human Activities
	6. Alien and Invasive Species
	7. Environmental Emergencies

**OB 2 - Protect, Preserve and Restore the Marine Environment**

* 1. Marine Living Resources
	2. Coastal Zone Management
	3. Caspian Sea Fluctuation

**OB 3 – Strengthen the Existing Capacities**

* 1. EIAs
	2. Regional cooperation
	3. Monitoring
	4. Research and Development
	5. Exchange and access to information
1.
2. **Actions and Indicators**

The following table presents the complete list of Actions under NCAP objectives that are forseen for the next five years (2011-2016). Those actions that are in line with National Five-Year Development Plan have been marked separately (\*\*\*). Areas where some action is being taken (plans/projects) are marked by (\*) :

**Table 3- Table of NCAP Actions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **NCAP Objectives** | **Actions** |
| **1-Prevention, Reduction and Control of Pollution** |  |
| 1-1 prevent, reduce and control pollution of the Caspian Sea from **land-based sources***.(Article 7 of TC)* | 1-1-1 co-operate in the development of related **protocols** 1-1-2 prevent, control and reduce emission of pollutants **at source** through application, *inter alia*, of low- and **non-waste technologies\*\*\*** 1-1-3 prevent, control and reduce emission of pollutants from land-based **point sources** through licensing of **waste-water discharges** by competent national authorities\*\*\*1-1-4 licensing of **waste-water discharges** based on promoting the use of environmentally sound technology\*\*\*1-1-5 impose requirements stricter than above when the quality of the receiving water or the affected ecosystem of the Caspian Sea so requires1-1-6 apply various treatments to **municipal waste water,** and where necessary in a step-by-step approach\*\*\*1-1-7 apply best available environmentally sound technology to reduce **organic substances** inputs from industrial and municipal sources\*\*\* 1-1-8 develop and implement appropriate measures based on best environmental practices for the reduction of inputs of **organic substances** and **hazardous substances** from **non-point sources**, including agriculture\*1-1-9 take measures on conservation and **full liquidation** for some coastal sources of pollution that continue to have negative impact on the Caspian Sea1-1-10 establish joint bodies responsible for identifying and resolving potential pollution problems, in a **transboundary** context  |
| 1-2 prevent, control and reduce pollution of the Caspian Sea resulting from **seabed activities** *(Article 8 of TC)* | 1-2-1 co-operate in the development of **related protocols** to Tehran Convention |
| 1-3 prevent, reduce and control pollution of the Caspian Sea from **vessels** *(Article 9 of TC)* | 1-3-1 co-operate in the development of **related protocols** and agreements to Tehran Convention, prescribing agreed measures, procedures and standards taking into account relevant international standards |
| 1-4 prevent, hindrance, reduce and control pollution of the Caspian Sea caused by **dumping** from Iranian vessels and aircrafts\* *(Article 10 of TC)* | 1-4-1 co-operate in the development of **related protocols** to Tehran Convention, prescribing agreed measures, procedures and standards to that effect |
| 1-5 prevent, reduce and control pollution of the Caspian Sea resulting from any **other human activities -** not previously covered *(Article 11 of TC)* | 1-5-1 prevent, reduce and control pollution associated with **land reclamation** 1-5-2 prevent, reduce and control pollution associated with **coastal dredging\***1-5-3 prevent, reduce and control pollution associated with **construction of dams\*\*\***1-5-4 reduce the possible negative impact of anthropogenic activities aimed at mitigating theconsequences of the **sea-level fluctuations** on the Caspian Sea ecosystem. |
| 1-6 prevent the introduction into the Caspian Sea and to control and combat **invasive alien species**, which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species *(Article 12 of TC)* | 1-6-1 prevent the **introduction** of invasive alien species into the Caspian Sea1-6-2 control and **combat** invasive alien species, which threaten ecosystems, habitats and species\* |
| 1-7 protect human beings and the marine environment against consequences of natural or man-made **emergencies** *(Article 13 of TC)* | 1-7-1 cooperate to protect human beings and the marine environment against consequences of natural and man-made emergencies\*1-7-2 apply preventive, preparedness and response measures, including **restoration** measures 1-7-3 conduct **risk assessment** by identifying hazardous activities, capable of causing environmental emergencies (identify likely sources of discharge, itemization of available equipment and human resources, temporary storage and final disposal of oil/hazardous waste (while keeping a minimum level of pre-positioned equipment operational)1-7-4 carry out **environmental impact assessment** of hazardous activities, and implement risk reducing measures, while notifying other Contracting Parties of any such proposed or existing activities1-7-5 Set up **early warning systems** for industrial accidents and environmental emergencies1-7-6 establish **a national system** of operation response to pollution caused by oil/ hazardous substances, including programs of exercise and staff training to improve the state of readiness and board oil pollution emergency plan for ships\*\*\*1-7-7 in the event of an environmental emergency, or imminent threat thereof, **notify** at appropriate levels and without delay the Contracting Parties likely to be affected 1-7-8 establish and maintain adequate **emergency preparedness** measures, including measures to ensure that adequate equipment and qualified personnel are readily available, to respond to environmental emergencies\*1-7-9 implement related protocols by designating a **Competent National Authority** and national **operational contact points** who would review implementation of protocols and **submit reports** to the Secretariat**\***1-7-10 Review national legislation for **compensation claim** and promote the development of regional agreements for liability and compensation in the event of oil spills (including restoration measures) |
| **2-Protection, Preservation and Restoration of the Marine Environment** |  |
| 2-1 protect, preserve, restore and use rationally the **marine living resources** *(Article 14 of TC)*  | 2-1-1 develop and increase the potential of living resources for **conservation, restoration and rational use** of environmental equilibrium in the course of satisfying human needs in nutrition and meeting social and economic objectives 2-1-2 maintain or restore populations of marine species at levels that can produce the **maximum sustainable yield** as qualified by relevant environmental and economic factors and taking into consideration relationships among species\*2-1-3 ensure that marine species are **not endangered** by over-exploitation\*2-1-4 promote the development and use of **selective fishing gear** and practices that minimise waste in the catch of target species and that minimise by-catch of non-target species\*2-1-5 protect, preserve and restore **endemic, rare and endangered** marine species\*\*\*2-1-6 conserve biodiversity, habitats of rare and endangered species, as well as **vulnerable ecosystems\*\*\***2-1-7 co-operate in the development of related **protocols\***  |
| 2-2 Manage the **coastal zone** *(Article 15 of TC)*  | 2-2-1 develop and implement **national strategies and plans** for planning and management of the land affected by proximity to the sea**\*\*\*** |
| 2-3 protect, preserve and restore the marine environment from Caspian **Sea level fluctuation** *(Article 16 of TC)* | 2-3-1 co-operate in the development of related **protocols** to Tehran Convention2-3-2 undertake the necessary **scientific research** and, insofar as is practicable, the agreed measures and procedures to alleviate implications of the sea level fluctuations of the Caspian Sea\* |
| **3- Strengthen existing capacities in:** |  |
| 3-1 conducting **EIAs** *(Article 17 of TC)* | 3-1-1 apply procedures of **environmental impact assessment** of any planned activity, that are likely to cause significant adverse effect on the marine environment of the Caspian Sea\*\*\*3-1-2 co-operate in the development of related **protocols** to Tehran Convention\* |
| 3-2 promoting **regional cooperation** *(Article 18 of TC)* | 3-2-1 continue to co-operate in formulating, elaborating and harmonising rules, standards, recommended practices and procedures consistent with Tehran Convention and with the account of requirements, commonly used in international practice, in order to prevent, reduce and control pollution of and to protect, preserve and restore the marine environment of the Caspian Sea.\*3-2-2 continue to co-operate in the **formulation of an Action Plan** for the Protection of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea in order to prevent, reduce and control pollution and to protect, preserve and restore the marine environment of the Caspian Sea.\*3-2-3 continue to **collect, compile and evaluate data** in order to identify sources that cause or likely to cause pollution of the Caspian Sea and to **exchange information** among the Contracting Parties, as appropriate\*3-2-4 continue programmes for **monitoring quality and quantity of water**\*3-2-5 in implementing **contingency plans** for pollution emergency cases\*3-2-6 to elaborate **emission and discharge limits for waste** and to evaluate the effectiveness of control programmes\*3-2-7 to elaborate **water quality objectives and criteria** and to propose relevant measures for maintaining and, where necessary, improving existing water quality\*3-2-8 to develop **harmonised action programmes** for the reduction of pollution loads from municipal and industrial point and diffuse sources, including agriculture, urban and other runoff\* |
| 3-3 conducting **monitoring** *(Article 19 of TC)* | 3-3-1 establish and implement individual and/or joint programmes for **monitoring environmental conditions** of the Caspian Sea\*3-3-2 agree upon **a list and parameters of pollutants** which discharge into the Caspian Sea and concentration in the to be regularly monitored\*3-3-3 at regular intervals, carry out individual or joint **assessments of the environmental conditions** of the Caspian Sea and the effectiveness of measures taken for the prevention, control and reduction of pollution of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea.3-3-4 harmonise rules for the setting up and operation of monitoring programmes, measurement systems, analytical techniques, data processing and **evaluation procedures** for data quality\*3-3-5 develop **a centralised database** and information management system to function as a repository of all relevant data, serve as the basis for decision-making and as a general source of information and education for specialists, administrators and the general public\*\*\* |
| 3-4 conducting **research** and development*(Article 20 of TC)* | 3-4-1 co-operate in the conduct of research into and development of **effective techniques** for the prevention, control and reduction of pollution of the Caspian Sea\* 3-4-2 develop up-to-date methods for the assessment of the **toxicity of harmful substances** and investigations of its affecting process on the environment of the Caspian Sea\*3-4-3 develop and applying **environmentally sound or safe technologies\*** 3-4-4 methods of **phasing out** and/or substitution of substances likely to cause pollution\*3-4-5 develop environmentally sound or safe methods for the **disposal of hazardous substances**\*3-4-6 develop environmentally sound or safe techniques for **water-construction works** and water-regulation\*3-4-7 assess the **physical and financial damage** resulting from pollution\*3-4-8 improve knowledge about the **hydrological regime** and ecosystem dynamics of the Caspian Sea including sea level fluctuations and the effects of such fluctuations on the Sea and coastal ecosystems\*3-4-9 study the levels of **radiation and radioactivity** in the Caspian Sea\* |
| 3-5 facilitating exchange and access to **information** *(Article 21 of TC)* | 3-5-1 directly or through the Secretariat **exchange** on a regular basis information, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention.3-5-2 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 national legislation\*\*\* |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **NCAP Objectives**  | **NCAP Actions**  | **Indicators**  |

**Table 5- Indicators for NCAP**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1.1  | 1-1-1 to 1-1-10  | Related Protocol signed and ratified + Pollution from Land-based sources (municipal, industries, agriculture) is reduced by at least 5% by the end of 2016  |
| 1.2  | 1-2-1  | Related protocols developed  |
| 1.3  | 1-3-1  | Related protocols developed  |
| 1.4  | 1-4-1  | Related protocols developed  |
| 1.5  | 1-5-1 to 1-5-4  | Related Protocol signed and ratified + Pollution from land-based sources (dams, dredging, land reclamation) reduced at least by 5% by the end of 2015  |
| 1.6  | 1-6-1 & 1-6-2  | Related Protocol signed and ratified + no new invasive alien species introduced to the Caspian Sea  |
| 1.7  | 1-7-1 to 1-7-10  | Related Protocol implemented at national level  |
| 2.1  | 2-1-1 to 2-1-7  | Related Protocol signed and ratified + A preliminary list of flora and fauna of the south Caspian prepared and biodiversity hotspots introduced  |
| 2.2  | 2-2-1  | Related protocols developed  |
| 2.3  | 2-3-1 & 2-3-2  | Related protocols developed  |
| 3.1  | 3-1-1 to 3-1-5  | Related Protocol signed and ratified  |
| 3.2  | 3-2-1 to 3-2-8  | Regional agreements reached through development of protocols to Tehran Convention  |
| 3.3  | 3-3-1 to 3-3-5  | A State of the Marine Environment report prepared based on monitoring results for the south Caspian Sea  |
| 3.4  | 3-4-1 to 3-4-9  | At least 15 doctoral thesis reports prepared related to NCAP activities  |
| 3.5  | 3-5-1 & 3-5-2  | Caspian Data Centre established (with electronic access)  |

1. **Financial Mechanisms & Timeline**

Any plan of action need to have its related financial mechanism and timeline. One reason for drafting NCAP for Iran based on regional and national priorities was to make sure the plan will have the necessary budget for its expected actions. Thus, part of the NCAP budget will come from national sources and another part from international/regional sources. It is best to estimate these budgets on an annual basis to overlap the national system of budgeting which is also annual. However, this budget maybe extrapolated to 5 years which is the total period for this NCAP report.

**Table 6- Financial costs of NCAP for I.R. Iran**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NCAP Objectives**  | **NCAP Actions**  | **Estimated Total Cost** **(US $)** | **Available National****Budget (2011-2012)**  | **Additional Required Budget (US $)** |
| **1.1**  | **1-1-1 to 1-1-10**  |  |  |  |
| **1.2**  | **1-2-1**  |  |  |  |
| **1.3**  | **1-3-1**  |  |  |  |
| **1.4**  | **1-4-1**  |  |  |  |
| **1.5**  | **1-5-1 to 1-5-4**  |  |  |  |
| **1.6**  | **1-6-1 & 1-6-2**  |  |  |  |
| **1.7**  | **1-7-1 to 1-7-10**  |  |  |  |
| **2.1**  | **2-1-1 to 2-1-7**  |  |  |  |
| **2.2**  | **2-2-1**  |  |  |  |
| **2.3**  | **2-3-1 & 2-3-2**  |  |  |  |
| **3.1**  | **3-1-1 to 3-1-5**  |  |  |  |
| **3.2**  | **3-2-1 to 3-2-8**  |  |  |  |
| **3.3**  | **3-3-1 to 3-3-5**  |  |  |  |
| **3.4**  | **3-4-1 to 3-4-9**  |  |  |  |
| **3.5**  | **3-5-1 & 3-5-2**  |  |  |  |

**Table7- Timeline for NCAP Implementation**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NCAP Objectives** | **NCAP Actions** | **2011** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** |
| 1.1 | 1-1-1 to 1-1-10 | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\* | \* |
| 1.2 | 1-2-1 | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
| 1.3 | 1-3-1 | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
| 1.4 | 1-4-1 | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* |
| 1.5 | 1-5-1 to 1-5-4 | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\* | \* |
| 1.6 | 1-6-1 & 1-6-2 | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\* | \* |
| 1.7 | 1-7-1 to 1-7-10 | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\* | \* |
| 2.1 | 2-1-1 to 2-1-7 | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\* | \* |
| 2.2 | 2-2-1 | \*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\*\* |
| 2.3 | 2-3-1 & 2-3-2 | \*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\*\* |
| 3.1 | 3-1-1 to 3-1-5 | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\* | \* |
| 3.2 | 3-2-1 to 3-2-8 | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\*\* |
| 3.3 | 3-3-1 to 3-3-5 | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\* | \*\*\* | \*\* | \* |
| 3.4 | 3-4-1 to 3-4-9 | \*\* | \*\* | \*\* | \*\* | \*\* |
| 3.5 | 3-5-1 & 3-5-2 | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\*\* | \*\*\*\*\* |

1. **Institutional Arrangements**

Interagency collaboration is very important in NCAP formulation and implementation. As mentioned previously during a multi-stakeholder workshop (Feb. 2011) various government agency representatives expressed their role with respect to NCAP work which has been summarized below:

**Table 8- Institutional Involvement of Various Agencies in NCAP Implementation**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NCAP Objectives**  | **NCAP Actions**  | **Lead Agencies**  | **Collaborating Agencies**  |
| **1.1**  | **1-1-1 to 1-1-10**  | **DoE**  | **MIM, MoE, MoI, MoAJ, FRWO**  |
| **1.2**  | **1-2-1**  | **Caspian Oil Company (KEPCO)**  | **-**  |
| **1.3**  | **1-3-1**  | **PMO**  | **-**  |
| **1.4**  | **1-4-1**  | **DoE, Ministry of Oil**  | **PMO, Shilat**  |
| **1.5**  | **1-5-1 to 1-5-4**  | **DoE**  | **PMO, MoE, Tourism Org., MoI**  |
| **1.6**  | **1-6-1 & 1-6-2**  | **DoE, PMO**  | **-**  |
| **1.7**  | **1-7-1 to 1-7-10**  | **PMO, DoE, MoI**  | **-**  |
| **2.1**  | **2-1-1 to 2-1-7**  | **Shilat, DoE**  | **-**  |
| **2.2**  | **2-2-1**  | **MoI**  | **PMO, DoE. FRWO, MoAJ**  |
| **2.3**  | **2-3-1 & 2-3-2**  | **MoE**  | **MoI**  |
| **3.1**  | **3-1-1 to 3-1-5**  | **DoE**  | **MoE, MIM, MoI**  |
| **3.2**  | **3-2-1 to 3-2-8**  | **DoE**  | **MFA**  |
| **3.3**  | **3-3-1 to 3-3-5**  | **DoE**  | **MoE, MIM, MoAJ, FRWO**  |
| **3.4**  | **3-4-1 to 3-4-9**  | **DoE**  | **Universities , Research Institutes, Others**  |
| **3.5**  | **3-5-1 & 3-5-2**  | **DoE**  | **MoI**  |

1. **Public Participation Strategy**

**1. Background**

While a separate NPPS document has been prepared for Iran, which may be considered as a supporting draft, it has been recommended (Ashgabad, March 2011) to include NPPS in the NCAP to ensure that civil society is adequately informed and engaged in the NCAP activities.

Tehran Convention (Article 21) puts emphasis on Exchange of and Access to Information and elaborates on stating that:

 1. The Contracting Parties shall directly or through the Secretariat exchange on a regular basis information, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention.

2. 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 taking into account provisions of existing international agreements concerning public access to environmental information.

On the other hand, SCAP stipulates that “the principle of public participation, including communities, individuals, and concerned organizations shall be given the opportunity to participate, at the appropriate level, in decision-making and management processes that affect the Caspian Sea. This includes providing access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities and effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings to engage all stakeholders to exercise their rights effectively. Public authorities shall widely disseminate information on the work proposed and undertaken to protect and rehabilitate the Caspian Sea.” (TC/COP3/9)

To enhance civil society participation and to promote Caspian Environmental Stewardship, SCAP has proposed the following:

* Encourage Participation of Public and other Stakeholders
* Enhance Communications and Information sharing
* Promote Environmental Education
* Work closely with national, provincial and local governmental authorities
* Form partnerships

Public participation has been integrated also in the NCAP document for I.R. Iran, namely under the Objective 3 which aims to “Strengthen the Existing Capacities” in Exchange and access to information (3.5). In terms of NCAP implementation, there are certain areas where the public can and should play a more meaningful role, while in some areas, the public has no role to play, for example in reducing pollution from seabed-activities. The following table is a quick list of those areas of NCAP where the public may play a role:

**Table 9- Role of Public Participation in implementation of NCAP, SCAP and Tehran Convention Objectives**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NCAP OBJECTIVES** | **NCAP Actions** | **NGOs** | **CBOs** | **Private Sector** | **General Public** |
| 1.1 | 1-1-1 to 1-1-10 | X | X | X | X |
| 1.2 | 1-2-1 | - | - | X | - |
| 1.3 | 1-3-1 | - | X | X | - |
| 1.4 | 1-4-1 | - | X | X | - |
| 1.5 | 1-5-1 to 1-5-4 | X | X | X | X |
| 1.6 | 1-6-1 & 1-6-2 | X | X | X | X |
| 1.7 | 1-7-1 to 1-7-10 | X | X | X | X |
| 2.1 | 2-1-1 to 2-1-7 | X | X | X | X |
| 2.2 | 2-2-1 | X | X | X | X |
| 2.3 | 2-3-1 & 2-3-2 | - | X | X | X |
| 3.1 | 3-1-1 to 3-1-5 | X | X | X | X |
| 3.2 | 3-2-1 to 3-2-8 | X | - | X | - |
| 3.3 | 3-3-1 to 3-3-5 | X | X | X | X |
| 3.4 | 3-4-1 to 3-4-9 | X | X | X | - |
| 3.5 | 3-5-1 & 3-5-2 | X | X | X | X |

**2. Potentials and Pitfalls**

To find out more about the role of the public in environmental protection, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to the DoE Provincial Offices of the three coastal provinces (Annex II). The answers to these questions reflect some real potentials and pitfalls in proceeding with public participation work.

**2.1 Potentials**

* There are many active NGOs and CBOS at provincial levels that have built good working relationship with GOs and are trusted by them because they have the necessary skills, motivation and experience
* These NGOs are working on various environmental issues (pollution reduction, biodiversity conservation, public awareness and education through workshops, publications, media coverage)
* Strong local community presence and traditional know-how of natural resource management could be mobilized to help conservation process (refer to UNDP/GEF/SGP projects, Caspian Cluster)
* Strong private sector presence and interests to invest in the Caspian region

 **2.2 Pitfalls**

* Public awareness about environmental issues of the Caspian is relatively low (information is not there)
* Role of the public is usually minimized to a one-way communication (public awareness raising campaigns by GOs)
* Insufficient financial support and expertise within GOs to fully involved/engage the public (NGOs, CBOs, private sector, …) in environmental activities/projects
* Official recognition and legal approval mechanism has been cumbersome for NGOs and CBOs (official registration easier as institutes or cooperatives which may have tax implications).
	1. **Recommendations**

Some recommendations that emerged from the questionnaires regarding increased public participation in the Caspian were as follows:

For increased participation of NGOs

* GOs need adequate training, budgeting and personnel for working with NGOs
* Official recognition and legal approval will help in this regard
* Form joint partnerships in holding round-table discussion groups, seminars, events, exhibitions, projects
* Moral support from GOs is needed

For increased participation of local communities

* Raise awareness about environmental issues of the Caspian (through public media, local gatherings, festivals, schools and curricular activities, etc.)
* Form joint partnerships in holding local consultation meetings, training sessions, community projects
* Create incentives (ecological, economical and socio-cultural) for environmental conservation and sustainable use
* Moral support from GOs is needed

For increased participation of the public

* Raise awareness about environmental issues of the Caspian (through public media, billboards, festivals, newspapers, brochures, posters, etc.)
* Encourage public involvement in projects such as Clean-up campaigns

**3. National Public Participation Strategy**

A National Public Participation Strategy (NPPS) shall invest on the existing potentials and try to avoid pitfalls, while building on the above recommendations:

* 1. **Vision:**

The public participates in pollution prevention, control and reduction to the Caspian Sea and in protection, preservation and restoration of the marine resources of the Caspian Sea.

* 1. **Mission:**

Ensure public has access to information on environmental conditions of the Caspian Sea and measures taken or planned to be taken, and is given the opportunity to participate at appropriate levels in decision-making. *(Article 21 of Tehran Convention; SCAP)*

* 1. **Strategic Objectives:**

OB 1: Exchange and ensure access to information on environmental conditions of the Caspian Sea, measures taken or planned to be taken (Article 21 of Tehran Convention)

OB 2: Encourage Civil Society participation in Caspian environment stewardship (SCAP)

* 1. **Actions and Indicators**

**OB 1: Exchange of and Access to Information**

1-1 Ensure public access to information regarding the environmental conditions of the Caspian Sea

1-2 Ensure public access to information regarding measures taken or planned to be taken

***Indicators:***

* An active website for the south Caspian
* A State of the Environment Report for the south Caspian
* A Caspian Hotline to report on environmental issues

**OB 2: Civil Society participation in Caspian environment stewardship**

2-1 Promote participation of the public and other stakeholders

2-2 Enhance communication and information sharing

2-3 Provide Environmental Education

2-4 Engage local, regional and governmental authorities

2-5 Encourage forming partnerships

***Indicators:***

* Number of active NGOs/CBOs/Private Sector Organizations
* Number of joint projects (in partnership with GOs and NGOs)
* Number of times Caspian mentioned in educational texts for children and youth
* Number of micro-credit grants to local communities /NGOs/Private Sector to help in implementation of NCAP activities
* Number of industries adopting ISO 14000
	1. **More detailed actions:**

1.1.1 Establish an active website for the south Caspian (linked to the general website of the Caspian Environment Programme or other regionally active websites)

1.1.2 Better media coverage of environmental issues of the Caspian Sea (in collaboration with the region and international organizations)

1.1.3 Translation of the already published materials on the Caspian Sea (under various projects and programmes) in Farsi

1.2.1 Publish a State of the Environment Report for the south Caspian (Biannually)

1.2.2 Promote presence of decision-makers in media and discussion groups/interviews

1.2.3 Translation of NCAP into Farsi and its wide dissemination

2.1.1 Facilitate the registration process of environmental NGOs and CBOs at provincial levels

2.1.2 Strengthen environmental NGO and CBO Networks among the three coastal provinces of the south Caspian Sea (eg. Networks of fishermen, hunters, farmers, etc.)

 2.1.3 Provide adequate training and budget to government organizations to work with NGOs and CBOs (eg. Learn to apply the participatory approach in decision-making)

2.1.4 Promote and try to implement the NCAP and its Public Participation Strategy at governmental levels

2.1.5 Encourage national and local NGOs /CBOs to get involved in regional events (eg. Caspian Day, Friends of the Caspian competitions)

2.2.1 Designate a separate Radio/TV programme nationally/locally to disseminate information on the state of the Caspian Sea and its issues

2.2.2 Strengthen awareness of environmental issues in the Caspian Sea through publications, posters, banners, pamphlets, etc.

2.2.3 Establish an international film festival on documentaries about the Caspian Sea (linking socio-cultural, economic and ecological aspects)

2.2.4 Promote “Caspian Day” and raise environmental awareness for specific target groups about the Caspian environment (values and threats)

2.2.5 Designate a Hotline for the public to report back on issues of concern on the Caspian environment

2.3.1 Create attractive visitor centres near Caspian tourism hotspots to promote nature conservation and education for various target groups (Caspian Environmental Information, Communication, and Education Centres)

2.3.2 Develop academic curriculum materials focusing on Caspian environmental issues for various target groups (children, youth, ...)

2.3.3 Encourage the development of university level curricula for ecology and environmental science in conjunction with international institutions featuring Caspian issues.

2.3.4 Promote Caspian Sea Symposium in collaboration with international organizations (addressing the scientific aspects and issues of the Caspian Sea)

2.3.5 Prepare field schools for local coastal enterprises and targeted populations emphasizing win-win scenarios and sound environmental stewardship (exchange of experience and know-how between locals communities), and expand the programme regionally if possible

2.4.1 Create targeted awareness building campaigns for ministerial authorities and regional administration involved in *inter alia*: agriculture, fisheries, transportation, and natural resource management on public participation

2.4.2 Implement national EIA procedures for all appropriate Caspian project developments, including provisions for public participation.

2.4.3 Hold biennial mayoral conferences sponsored by national and international partners to foster networking among coastal local authorities and enhance their participation in implementing Tehran Convention and its protocols

2.4.4 Develop training programmes for regional and municipal authorities on modern techniques for wastewater and municipal waste treatment.

2.5.1 Promote environmental partnerships between NGOs, government and private sectors to address specific Caspian issues by implementation of the National Convention Action Plan activities

2.5.2 Develop Stakeholder Dialogue Groups at the national level and exchange experience at the regional level to improve dialogue opportunities for stakeholder groups

2.5.3 Develop a programme to encourage implementation of cleaner technologies by local industries corresponding to ISO 14000.

2.5.4 Set up a fund for micro-grants addressing coastal community development schemes and local environmental issues, in partnership with the private sector and international donor community (eg. UNDP/GEF/SGP).

**Table 10- Summary Table on NPPS:** (showing possible linkage with different government agencies)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NPPS Objectives** | **NPPS Actions** | **Indicators** | **Lead Agencies** | **Collaborating Groups** | **Budget Required** | **Timeline** |
| 1.1 – Public Access | 1.1.1 to 1.1.3 | Caspian website | DoE | Other agencies and NGOs |  | Year 1 + 2 |
| 1.2 – Public Access | 1.2.1 to 1.2.3 | State of Environment Report + NCAP in Farsi | DoE | Other agencies and NGOs |  | Year 1 + 2 |
| 2.1 – Public Participation | 2.1.1 to 2.1.5 | # NGOs/CBOs registered | DoE, MoI, MoAJ, Cooperatives Org. | Other agencies, NGOs, CBOs |  | After Year  |
| 2.2 - Communications | 2.2.1 to 2.2.3 | Caspian Film Festival, Caspian Day, Caspian Hotline | DoE, National and Provincial/Local Media | Other agencies, NGOs and CBOs |  | After Year 2/3 |
| 2.3 -Env. Education | 2.3.1 to 2.3.5 | Visitor Centres | DoE, Tourism Org., Min. of Education | Other agencies, academia, NGOs, CBOs |  | After Year 2/3 |
| 2.4 –Local Authorities | 2.4.1 to 2.4.4 | Technical Workshops | DoE, MIM | Other agencies, academia, NGOs, CBOs, Private sector org. |  | Year 1 + 2 |
| 2.5 - Partnerships | 2.5.1 to 2.5.4 | Caspian Symposium | DoE | Other agencies, NGOs, CBOs, private sector, academia |  | Year 1 + 2 |

1. **M&E Mechanisms**

The M&E mechanism contains the country’s approach to monitor the performance of NCAP over time. To this end, a monitoring and evaluation plan is prepared in advance, including the actions and indicators for monitoring, the responsible bodies, and frequency of monitoring, as well as the time-frame for reporting on monitoring results.

It is worth noting that all aspects of NCAP (formulation, approval, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, revision and re-formulation) need to be following a multi-stakeholder decision-making process. The following figure illustrates the cycle NCAP needs to follow to make sure it moves in the right direction:

**Fig. 2- Proposed M&E Mechanism for NCAP**

Source: Deribe, 2010?

While DoE remains the sole body to follow up the NCAP progress, in here it is proposed that an expert level **Working Group** should be formed composed of official representatives of key stakeholder organizations. Members of the academia as well as knowledgeable and active NGOs and CBOs representatives could also be part of this working group. The Working Group which will be at the core of the M&E work, will meet every 2 months to review progress towards NCAP objectives and actions, while also helping to facilitate implementation of NCAP through member organizations. It is worth noting that this model has been already practiced for two major wetlands, Urmia Lake and Lake Parishan, both Ramsar Sites and Biosphere Reserves located, in north-west and south of Iran, respectively (CIWP, 2011).

There will also be a **Secretariat at national level** to coordinate the NCAP work as well as other matters related to Tehran Convention. This office needs to be established within DoE’s Deputy for Marine Environment, building upon the capacities already in place (Convention Liaison Office). The National Secretariat will support all logistical matters, and will be the contact point with the Secretariat for the Convention. Once the NCAP has been adequately revised and new actions proposed, a **Caspian High Council** (or in its absence the High Council of the Environment) will be responsible to approve the necessary changes to the NCAP document.

**Table 11- Proposed M&E mechanism for NCAP**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **M&E Bodies** | **Reporting frequency** | **Location** | **Collaborating bodies** |
| National Secretariat for Tehran Convention | Weekly | Department of Environment (Deputy for Marine Environment) | All other key stakeholder agencies through Caspian Working GroupProvincial Governor offices for the three Caspian Provinces Public participation offices of DoE and other agencies |
| Caspian Working Group | Bi-monthly | Rotational  | Experts and representatives of key stakeholder agenciesActive and competent NGOs and CBOsOutstanding members of Academia  |
| Caspian High Council | Annually | Parliament? | Representatives of key Ministers and Heads of Agencies |

A tentative ToR for the above subsidiary bodies have been prepared and presented in Annex III.

1. **Possible Risks and Barriers**

While formulation of NCAP did face some barriers, it is certain that its implementation will also face some risks and barriers. Some of the highlights and lowlights of NCAP formulation work have been summarized in the following table:

**Table 12- Highlights and Lowlights of NCAP Preparation**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Highlights** | **Lowlights** |
| Active Convention Liaison Office  | NCAP/NPPS contract came rather late (Sept. 2011) and NCAP work only started 8 months ago  |
| Full support from DoE’s Deputy for Marine Environment (eg. funding the Stakeholders Workshop and engaging in a Participatory Approach, nomination of consultant to participate in Regional meetings)  | No parallel national work/initiative (NCAP work had very limited budget) Mechanism for meeting and sharing NCAP with other national consultants was not in place  |
| Smooth communication with the TC Secretariat and its Advisor s for preparation of NCAP/NPPS (Oleg G. and Daniel Nixdorf)  | Technical support from the Secretariat was not adequate and in harmony with what was required  |
| Full technical support from CaspEco project (when required)  | Little budget available through CaspEco ($5000) despite the importance of the NCAP/NPPS document  |
| Regional Meetings were very effective in moving the NCAP/NPPS work forward  | Participation in Regional meetings was usually short notice  |

Some of the possible barriers that the NCAP work might face are at approval stage, due to time constraints, NCAP might not be approved at highest levels. Also gaps in national plans and budgets need to be addressed through international funding. Another shortcoming might be related to the lack of inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms and who should be in charge of reporting/monitoring and evaluation.

**Recommendations**

Here are some quick recommendations to overcome some of the barriers proposed in the previous section:

For Approval mechanisms:

* Share present NCAP document with key stakeholders representing various organizations (first meeting was held in March 2011, second meeting to be held in early December 2011) to get final feedbacks
* Get approval of the High Council of the Environment
* Include national budgets in the present NCAP based on compatibility with national plans/projects/programmes
* Identify gaps in national budgets and seek international support in those areas

For Implementation mechanisms:

* Build on the existing networks and mechanisms by forming a Caspian Working group where representatives of key organizations take part
* Short/medium/long term financing should be based on national budgets and plans (5th National Development Plan, Sectoral Plans, Provincial bdugets)
* Reporting/monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be strengthened through the existing Convention Liaison Office within DoE’s Deputy for Marine Environment with more staffing and equipment

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**Annex I – Map of the Caspian region of Iran**



**Fig. 1 – Iranian Caspian Coast includes three provinces of Golestan, Mazandaran and Guilan (from East to West) –** *Courtesy of SAP Consultants*

**Annex II – Questionnaire designed for assessment of public participation**

This questionnaire has been prepared for preparation of the National Convention Action Plan for the Caspian Sea and its resources in the context of the Tehran Convention and the Caspian Environment Programme. Please select one or more possible answers for each question.

**1-List some of the NGOs and CBOs that are active in the field of environment:**

a-………………….

b- …………………..

**2-What kind of objectives for these NGOs and CBOs are following up?**

Pollution reduction

Biodiversity conservation

Environmental education and awareness

 Others (name them)

**3-What is the mechanism for collaboration between your organization and these NGOs/CBOs?**

Promote environmental awareness and education (through publication of posters, etc.)

Hold festivals and other awareness raising campaigns and workshops

Work closely in implementation of projects

Others (name them)

**4-How do you think NGOs and CBOs might contribute to the goals and objectives to your organization?**

Promote environmental awareness and education (through publication of posters, etc.)

Hold festivals and other awareness raising campaigns and workshops

Work closely in implementation of projects

Others (name them)

**5-What kind of difficulties you (your organization) might face while working with NGOs/CBOs?**

Legal barriers (unregistered NGOs, etc)

Operational challenges (inadequate training and capacities)

Administrative barriers (lack of funding and expertise to work with NGOs/CBOs)

Others (name them)

**6-At present, what kind of incentives are used by your organization to encourage NGO/CBO participation?**

Existence of an office for Public Relations or Public Participation

NGO/CBO networks (thematic or geographical)

Projects with strong public participation component

Others (name them)

**7-Name some of the NGOs/CBOs that are well trusted by your organization:**

a-……………

b-………………

**8-What are the main reasons for selecting the above NGOs/CBOs?**

a-………………..

b-……………….

**9-What are the main criteria for selection of NGOs/CBOs as partners in conservation work?**

Official registration

Expertise and the actual capacity to do the work

Scientific knowledge and background

Others (name them)

**10-What are the main reasons for disconnecting NGOs/CBOs from your organization?**

Lack of legal status (unregistered)

Lack of sufficient expertise

Low scientific knowledge

Irrelevant work (such as working for profit, or political aims)

**11-What are your suggestions for strengthening the working relationships between government and non-governmental organizations?**

……………..

………………

**12-To what extent local communities (farmers, fishermen, herders, etc) degrade the environment?**

Very little

Little

To some extent

Very much

**13-How can local community participation be enhanced to help governmental goals in environmental protection?**

Through awareness raising (eg. Media)

Through field work (participation and on job training)

Through scientific learning and training (classrooms, etc.)

Others (name them)

**14-What kind of barriers might exist between you (your organization) and local communities?**

No common language

Administrative hurdles

Lack of know-how and knowledge among local communities

Others (name them)

**15-What are your suggestions for enhancing the working relationship between governmental organizations and local communities?**

……………….

………………….

**16-To what extent do you think the public is informed about the Caspian and its environmental issues?**

Very little

Little

To some extent

Very much

**17-To what extent do you expect change in attitudes while public awareness increases?**

Very little

Little

To some extent

Very much

**18-What kind of incentives there might be for the public to better collaborate with environmental agencies?**

Ecological values

Economical values

Moral and intrinsic values

Others (name them)

**19-What are your suggestions for enhancing collaboration between the public and the government agencies in charge of the Caspian and its resources?**

a-………………

b-……………….

c-……………….

**Name: (optional)…………………………………………..**

**Position: (mandatory)…………………………………..**

**Annex III – Tentative Terms of Reference**

To enhance inter-agency collaboration, the following institutional mechanisms are proposed:

**1. Forming a Caspian High Council supported by a Caspian Working Group**

The Caspian High Council shall consist of one representative from each of the key stakeholder agencies (Department of Environment, Fisheries Organization, Ports and Marine Organization), who shall have one vote. Each representative may be assisted by one or more advisers, from the Caspian Working Group.

 The first meeting of the Caspian High Council shall be convened not later than twelve months after the date of approval of NCAP. Thereafter, the High Council and Caspian Working Group shall hold ordinary meetings at regular intervals to be determined by the first meetings.

The Chairmanship of the meetings and location shall be determined in the first meetings. All decisions of the High Council and Working Group shall be made by unanimous vote of members.

During the first meetings also decisions shall be made on establishing other institutions as deemed necessary; the arrangements for the permanent national Secretariat of the Convention, including its location and staffing; the rules of procedure and financial rules.

Functions of the High Caspian Council and Working Group shall be:

(a) to keep under review the implementation of the Convention, its protocols and NCAP;

(b) to keep under review the content of the Convention and its protocols;

(c) to consider and adopt any additional protocols or any amendments to the Convention or to its protocols and to adopt and amend the annexes to the Convention and to its protocols;

(d) to receive and consider reports submitted by the Contracting Parties and to review and evaluate the state of the marine environment and, in particular, the state of pollution and its effects, on the basis of reports provided by key stakeholders and by any competent international or regional organisation;

(e) to consider reports prepared by the Secretariat on matters relating to the Convention;

(f) to seek, where appropriate, the technical and financial services of relevant international bodies and scientific institutions for the purposes of the objective of the Convention;

(g) to establish such subsidiary bodies as may be deemed necessary for the implementation of the Convention and its protocols;

(h) to appoint the Executive Secretary of the Convention and such other personnel as may be required, taking into account the equitable representation of the key stakeholders.

(i) to perform such other functions as may be required for the achievement of the objective of the Convention.

**2. Establishment of permanent national Secretariat for the Convention**

 The Secretariat shall be comprised of a National Executive Secretary of the Convention and such other personnel as required to perform the functions specified hereafter.

The National Executive Secretary shall be the chief administrative officer of the national Secretariat of the Convention, and shall perform such functions which are necessary for the administration of the work of the national Secretariat of the Convention, as determined by the Caspian High Council and in accordance with the rules of procedure and financial rules adopted by key stakeholders.

The functions of the National Secretariat shall be:

(a) to arrange for and service meetings of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies;

(b) to prepare and transmit to the Contracting Parties notifications, reports and other information received;

(c) to consider enquiries by and information from the Contracting Parties and to consult with them on matters relating to the implementation of this Convention and its protocols;

(d) to prepare and transmit reports on matters relating to the implementation of this Convention and its protocols;

(e) to establish, maintain the database of and disseminate national laws of the Contracting Parties and international laws relevant to the protection of the Caspian Sea;

(f) to arrange, upon request by any Contracting Party, for the provision of technical assistance and advice for the effective implementation of the Convention and its protocols;

(g) to carry out functions as may be established under the protocols to this Convention;

(h) to co-operate, as appropriate, with relevant regional and international organizations and programmes;

(i) to perform such other functions as may be determined by the Conference of the Parties.