

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

National Convention Action Plan for I.R. IRAN

Final Draft

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VII. 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 (Ashghabad, 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).

2.1 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
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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 general 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. A 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:

3.1 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.

3.2 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*)

3.3 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)

3.4 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
- NCAP in Farsi made available to the public

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 ENGOs/CBOs/Private Sector Organizations
- Number of joint projects (in partnership with GOs and ENGOs)
- 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

3.5 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 nationally or regionally active websites)

1.1.2 Better media coverage of environmental issues of the Caspian Sea (in collaboration with local networks)

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 holding 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 ENGOs 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 ENGOs/CBOs to get involved in national and regional events (eg. Caspian Day)
- 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” to 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 and to get informed about the latest news
- 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 Hold Caspian Sea Symposium possibly in collaboration with international organizations (addressing the scientific aspects and issues of the Caspian Sea)
- 2.3.5 Prepare field schools for local communities emphasizing on win-win scenarios and sound environmental stewardship through exchange of experience and know-how (possibly expand this programme to regional level)
- 2.4.1 Create targeted awareness building workshops for ministerial authorities and regional administration (involved in *inter alia*: agriculture, fisheries, transportation, and natural resource management) on public participation methods
- 2.4.2 Implement national EIA procedures for all appropriate Caspian project developments, with provisions for public participation.
- 2.4.3 Hold biennial mayoral meetings 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 ENGOs, 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 various 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

NPPS Objectives	NPPS Actions	Indicators	Collaborating Agencies	Timeline
1.1 – Ensure Public Access to information on conditions of Caspian Sea	1.1.1 to 1.1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caspian website • Caspian Hotline 	DoE	Year 1 + 2
1.2 – Ensure Public Access to information on measures taken or to be taken	1.2.1 to 1.2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of Environment Report • NCAP in Farsi available to public 	DoE	Year 1 + 2
2.1 – Promote Public Participation	2.1.1 to 2.1.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of ENGOs/CBOs registered • Number of micro-credit grants to local communities 	DoE, MoI, MoAJ, Cooperatives Org.	After Year
2.2 – Enhance Communication	2.2.1 to 2.2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caspian Film Festival • Caspian Day • Caspian Hotline 	DoE, National and Provincial/Local Media	After Year 2 or 3
2.3 –Provide Environmental Education	2.3.1 to 2.3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Centres • Caspian Symposium • Number of times Caspian mentioned in educational text books for children and Youth 	DoE, Tourism Org., Min. of Education	After Year 2 or 3
2.4 –Engage Local, Regional, Governmental Authorities	2.4.1 to 2.4.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Workshops • Number of private sector institutions involved in NCAP/NPPS implementation • Number of industries adopting ISO 14000 	DoE, MIM	Year 1 + 2
2.5 – Forming Partnerships	2.5.1 to 2.5.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Joint projects between GOs and ENGOs/CBOs 	DoE	Year 1 + 2

Annex I – Map of the Caspian region of Iran

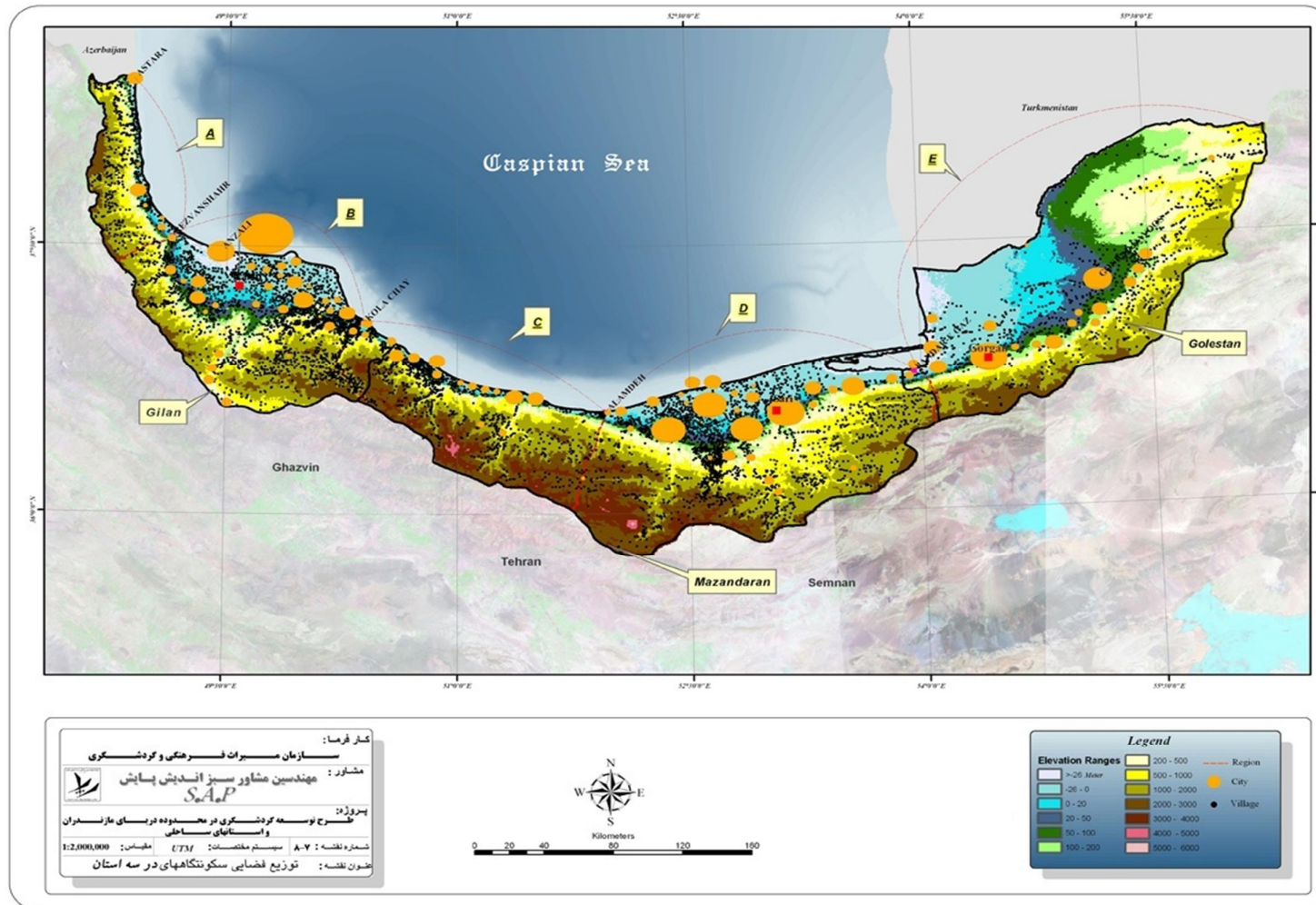


Fig. 1 – Iranian Caspian Coast includes three provinces of Golestan, Mazandaran and Guilan (from East to West) – Courtesy of SAP Consultants

Annex VI – Pictures from the Stakeholders Workshop (March 2011)

