

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

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**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Sixth Meeting
... 2016, Baku, Azerbaijan**

Working Group on (Environmental) Monitoring and Assessment
(Note by the Secretariat)

Introduction.

At its 5th Meeting, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 30 May 2014, the Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention decided to establish a Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment. At the first Preparatory Committee Meeting for COP6 (PrepCom1), Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, 24-27 November 2014, the Representatives of the Contracting Parties requested the (interim) Secretariat to invite the Contracting Parties to nominate up to two members of the Working Group and to prepare terms of reference for consideration and approval by the second Preparatory Committee Meeting (PreCom2) and COP6.

By letter of 27 February 2015, the Contracting Parties were requested to nominate up to two members of the Working Group.

At PrepCom2, Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, 31 May – 3 June 2015, the Representatives of the Contracting Parties reviewed and agreed on the name and terms of reference of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment. The nominated members of the Working Group met informally, elected Mr. Alexander Postnov, Deputy Director of the State Oceanographic Institute, Roshydromet, Russian Federation as Acting Chair, and agreed on the work in the months ahead.

It was also agreed that the first meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment will take place from 20-22 January 2016.

By letter of 18 June 2015, the Contracting Parties were requested to confirm or, if they would wish so amend the nomination of their member(s) of the Working Group.

Attached are the Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (Annex 1), its composition (Annex 2) and the Report of the informal Meeting of the Working Group on 3 June 2015 (Annex 3).

Suggested Action

The Meeting may wish to:

1. Adopt the Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, contained in Annex 1;
2. Endorse its composition as contained in Annex 2;
3. Welcome the progress made in identifying and implementing priority issues of its agenda, and;
4. Agree that priority should continue to be given to the development of a basic set of water quality standards and objectives in support of the Protocol on Monitoring, Assessment, Reporting and Information Exchange.

Annex 1

Terms of Reference Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment to the Tehran Convention

At its 4th Meeting, in Moscow, Russian Federation, on 12 December 2012, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention):

- Welcomed the Environmental Monitoring Programme (EMP) contained in document TC/COP4/7 as “the basis for continuation of this activity and capacity building and regional cooperation for monitoring the parameters which determine the quality of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea”, and
- Requested the (interim) Secretariat “to continue and promote its implementation with the involvement and/or support of the CaspCom (Coordinating Committee on Hydrometeorology and Pollution Monitoring of the Caspian Sea), the GEF, the EU, and other stakeholders”.

At its 5th Meeting, in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 30 May 2014, the Tehran Convention Conference of the Parties:

- Welcomed the MoU between the CaspCom and the (interim) Secretariat of the Tehran Convention, contained in document TC/COP5/5);
- Welcomed the proposed Regional Framework and Network for the Tehran Convention and Protocol Compliance Monitoring and Assessment contained in document TC/COP5/5;
- Decided to establish a Working Group on Monitoring and Information Exchange; and
- Requested the (interim) Secretariat to initiate and service intergovernmental consultations related to the development of a legal framework for information sharing in support of the implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols, and in consultation with the Working Group on Monitoring and information Exchange.

At the first Preparatory Meeting for COP6, in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, on 27 November 2014, the Representatives of the Parties considered a proposal by the (interim) Secretariat for a legal instrument on data and information sharing, as well as the views of experts on Caspian Regional Water Quality Standards and Objectives, and agreed that a legal instrument on data and information sharing should/could, *inter alia*:

- Provide the framework for the implementation of the EMP and the role of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment therein;
- Include a set of water quality standards and objectives

In light of the above and within available resources, the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment will carry out the following tasks and responsibilities:

1. Keep under review the implementation of the Caspian EMP as required and develop proposals on institutional and operational procedures for a sustainable environmental monitoring system, including a network of national monitoring institutions and national focal points;
2. Carry out a gap analysis of the required monitoring capacity and study the compatibility of national methodologies, including identification of resource requirements to ensure harmonization;

3. Develop regional guidelines for the implementation of the EMP including a quality assurance system taking into account national standards;
4. Develop a basic set of regional and/or if required subregional water quality standards, taking into account the approach suggested in the expert view paper mentioned above;
5. Develop water quality objectives based on the agreed water quality standards;
6. Advise on the role and place of agreed water quality standards and objectives in a legal instrument for monitoring and information exchange;
7. Identify the needs for and provide advice on capacity building as well as on the EMP implementation arrangements in pilot coordinated monitoring cruises;
8. Provide inputs for and oversee the preparation of the draft Report of the State of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea;
9. Develop procedures for regular exchange of monitoring and assessment related information among the Contracting Parties through the Secretariat;
10. If necessary the present terms of reference will be reviewed pursuant to the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention.

The Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment will be composed of up to two representatives per Contracting Party. It will be established and its composition decided by the COP and function under the auspices of the Secretariat of the Tehran Convention.

The Chair of the Working Group shall be elected from its members and may be reelected every two years.

Annex 2**Composition of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment****Azerbaijan**

Mr. Sokhrab Rahimov (sohrabrahimov@hotmail.com)

Mr. Elchin Mammadov (evmamedov@mail.ru)

Iran

Mr. Reza Sheikholeslami (reza.sheikholeslami@gmail.com)

Mr. Ziaeddin Almassi (zialmassi@gmail.com)

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Mr. Baktybek Duisebek (baktybek424@mail.ru)

Ms. Ainur Ortbayeva (ai_ortbayeva@list.ru)

Russia

Ms. Tatiana Butylina (okpd@eco-cip.ru)

Mr. Alexander Postnov (alexander.postnov@mail.ru, Acting Chair)

Turkmenistan

Mr. Batyr Ballyyev (bbmnpt@yandex.ru)

Annex 3

Report of the informal Meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment 3 June 2015

The newly formed working group met in Baku on 3 June 2015. In accordance with its draft ToR, the Group elected Dr. Alexander Postnov, Deputy Director of the State Oceanographic Institute (SOI), Roshydromet, Moscow, Russian Federation as acting Chairperson with an understanding that both the composition of the working group and its chairperson subjected to approval by the Contracting Parties during COP-6. The group noted that since a Russian representative had been elected as the acting chairperson, the Russian Federation was entitled for one more expert representing the country in the working group. Thus, Dr. Alexander Korshenko, head of Laboratory for marine pollution monitoring, SOI, initially meant as alternate to Mr. Postnov became a full member of the group.

The acting chairperson expressed his views on the issues which could be addressed by the working group at its first meeting tentatively scheduled for late January 2016. They were:

(a) to evaluate the Party's preparedness for implementation of the Caspian Environment Monitoring Programme (EMP) previously welcomed by COP meetings. In this connection, the WG members could prepare descriptions of the national monitoring programmes, including information on the responsible agencies, implementing organizations, number of sampling sites, list of sampled marine environmental parameters, chemical analyzing capabilities (laboratory equipment and personnel), etc.;

(b) to elaborate approaches to establishment of the regional marine water quality standards taking into account the sets of maximum allowable concentrations (MACs) of pollutants in marine waters legally established in 4 of 5 littoral countries. As a first step, the established MACs could be compared across the littoral states and against those introduced by European Union. Besides, it was proposed to examine principles used in Europe, US and Canada for establishing standards for pollutants in bottom sediments and biota as well as for identifying sub-regions for the purpose of setting sub-regional marine environment quality standards;

(c) to evaluate the Party's preparedness for raw data exchange provided that the protocol on monitoring and data exchange has been negotiated and come into power. Such an evaluation could be based on an analysis of the country's legislation related to information exchange with abroad. Besides, the willingness of the Parties to share the available data on the water quality with other countries for a proper assessment of the state of the Caspian Sea marine environment could be evaluated.

After a brief discussion, the members of the group agreed with the proposed areas of activities for the next 7 months and requested the acting chairperson to provide them a questionnaire in support of the outlined plan.