



**Environmental Protection of
International River Basins Project**
Contract No. 2011/279-666

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This project is funded by
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Environmental Protection of International River Basins Project (EPIRBP)

**Date: 26th of March 2012, 10 am, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection
of the Republic of Belarus (MNREP)
10 Kollektornaya Street, Room 221, Minsk**

**Kick-off meeting Part I
Meeting of HD Delegation with MNREP representatives only**

Agenda:

Changes in the Environmental Legislation of Belarus in 2011 (MNREP)
EPIRB Project registration related issues (MNREP)
Project budget presentation (Human Dynamics)
Selection of the pilot river basins (exchange of opinions)
Make up of water and economic budgets (brief discussion)

Participants:

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus

- **Sergei Zavyalov**, Department Head, Dpt. Of Regulation on Impact on Atmospheric Air and Water Resources (kick-off meeting chairman)
- **Tatiana Slizh**, Division Head, Div. of Water Use and Protection
- **Marina Filipyuk**, Department Head, Dpt. of International Cooperation
- **Elena Shnitkova**, Consultant, Dpt. of International Cooperation
- **Victor Rybak**, Director of Republican Unitary Enterprise "Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources" (CRICUWR)
- **Vladimir Korneev**, Department Head, Dpt. of Water Monitoring and Cadastre (CRICUWR)
- **Aleksandr Stankevich**, Center Head, State institution "Republican Center for Radiation Control and Environmental Monitoring"
- **Aleksandr Rachevskii**, Group Manager of International Projects, State Institution "Republican Hydrometeorological Center"

Human Dynamics

- **Andriy Demydenko**, Team Leader
- **Tumennasan Dolgor**, Project Director
- **Bernardas Paukstys**, Key Expert 5



Summary of Discussion

Official welcoming

The meeting was opened by Ms Marina Filipyuk. She welcomed the HD Delegation and introduced the MNREP participants. Then Mr Andriy Demydenko presented the representatives of HD Delegation.

Mr Sergei Zavyalov welcomed the beginning of the Project and wished its successful run in Belarus. He informed that the specialists of the Ministry got acquainted with the Project ToR's and said that as the elaboration of ToR took about two years, some changes happened over that time. Several policy documents that were at the elaboration stage in the Ministry now are completed and already approved; in particular, the Water Strategy of the Republic of Belarus until 2020 was adopted in 2011. The Program of Social and Economic Development for the next 5 years was also adopted. The Program includes some ambitious progress indicators with respect to water use, water losses and reduction of water polluting substances. The Environmental Protection Strategy (EPS) until 2025 was adopted in 2011 as well. The EPS has a section that relates to the water sector. The Ministry has launched the National Environmental Monitoring Program for the next 5 years and this is already the third five-year monitoring program. The implementation of this program also has a section dedicated to the water sector. At present, the Ministry is working on the draft of the document that will set the new norms for water polluting substances on the basis of the regulations foreseen in the Water Frame Directive and in other related Directives. The norms will be set for water polluting substances and for sewage waters as well. The section on groundwater needs further development though.

At present, the Ministry is working on the changes to be introduced into the new edition of the Water Code, which was last revised in 1998. Mr Zavyalov hopes that by the end of 2012 the new edition will be revised by all stakeholders and submitted to the Government. At the same time, the Ministry began cooperation with several other international projects and some of them have similar tasks. For example, there is the EU/UNDP project "Support to the development of a comprehensive framework for international environmental cooperation in the Republic of Belarus". The national implementing agency of the project is the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection. The project includes the water block related to the introduction of changes to the national legislation, and in the first place is oriented at the technical aspects of hydro-chemical, hydro-biological and hydro-morphology monitoring. It is important that the experts of the EPIRB project meet those of the mentioned international project to discuss the tasks and the final products of both projects in order not to do the same work twice.

Mr Andriy Demydenko thanked for the interesting speech and mentioned that the aim of the inception mission consists of collecting remarks, questions and comments to the ToR, and said that this process for Belarus has just begun. All work during the inception phase (6 months) will be reflected in the inception report which is due by the end of June 2012. The inception meeting of the Regional Steering Committee is planned for mid-July 2012. Mr Demydenko asked for the possibility to get from the Ministry as the main project beneficiary an official letter with remarks



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and comments to ToR in any language. The remarks of other stakeholders of the project are also important.

Mr Demydenko explained the management structure of the project, experts' structure of the project (country water managers, key and non-key experts), explained the budget structure of the project and other terminology of the project. Given the scale of the project, it is necessary to create several steering committees. Mr Demydenko explained that the ToR relate to the Component A (river component) of a larger programme. Component B (sea component) of the project will be launched in the course of 2012 and a joint steering committee for both components will only be possible when the latter would be running. The Regional Steering Committee (RSC) has to be established to manage the project. Every beneficiary country should appoint a representative to the RSC. The EC Project Manager will be also a member of the RSC. The role of the RSC is to determine whether the project is implemented in the right way. The decisions of the RSC are important, but decisions related to budget aspects are taken by the EC. The RSC meeting in July will summarize the results of the inception phase. In order to manage the project at national level the National Coordination Council (NCC) has to be created. The NCC will embrace all national and pilot basin stakeholders. The NCC will play a key role in the successful implementation of the project. The Consultant can provide recommendations, but the decision about the NCC composition is to be made by the beneficiary country. It was suggested to use the mechanisms currently being employed for the EU Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues to for setting up the EPIRB NCC.

The key objective of the project is to apply the principles of the Water Frame Directive by means of development of River Management Basin Plans in selected trans-boundary pilot basins. With this respect an official decision about the selection of the pilot basins has to be made. The decision should be grounded on consultations with the neighboring beneficiary countries. A proposal concerning the guiding criteria for the pilot basins' selection will be circulated shortly but a final decision should be made before the end of the inception phase or earlier if possible. After that the project implementation in the pilot basins could begin. As the project budget is limited, the work of the project will be mainly concentrated in those pilot basins. The ToRs have suggested the Prypyat river basin as a shared pilot basin for Belarus and Ukraine. This suggestion is not final and it should be confirmed during the inception phase. The Project team confirms its willingness to hear other suggestions from the Ministry. The project team would also suggest another Ukraine-Belarus joint river basin pilot: by considering some sub-basin in the upper Dnieper the participation of the Russian Federation would be made possible as well.

Mr Sergei Zavyalov asked two questions. The first question was why Mr. Demydenko mentioned only five countries given that the Eastern Partnership unites 6 countries. Mr. Demydenko explained that when he talked about 5 countries he meant 5 Country Water Managers (according to the ToR 5 CWM will be identified for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova and Russian Federation), and Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader will respectively be located in Ukraine and Georgia (according to ToR). The second question was regarding the project budget. Mr. Demydenko explained that the budget consists of 2 parts – Incidental Expenditure (3 million Euro)



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and Project Expenditure (including expert fees). Total value of the project is 7.5 million Euro. The implementing company of the project is Human Dynamics.

Mr Sergei Zavyalov has mentioned that the selection of the pilot river basin regions should depend upon the results of other water related projects.

Summary of Mr. Zavyalov's questions:

- The Ministry would like to know the project activities foreseen for Belarus and the need for project registration with government authorities. A clear position by the Consultant as to the financial resources distribution among beneficiary countries is vitally important. The registration requires the list of key project activities (the work of the national experts, implementation of pilot projects, research work, and other activities) and the overall budget of the project. The registration is important in order to legalize the financial resources that are supplied to the country. What types of activities can be paid out by the project funds (the work of the national experts, conduction of seminars/other activities, etc)? Will the funds be transferred directly to Belarusian organizations or will the activities be financed, for example, from the Kyiv office? Is the procurement of equipment foreseen in the budget?
- There were two examples with respect to project registration. The former EU-funded regional Joint Rivers project was not registered in Belarus, but was implemented anyway. Projects of this type can be implemented without registration, but in this case the local experts have to pay their income taxes (currently 12%) to the budget of Belarus. What about the other example?

Question from Mr Vladimir Korneev:

- Is it mandatory for the Consultant to have registration in order to finance project activities? For example, for the UNDP office it is essential to obtain the registration of a project, as without it the organization would not be able to spend money in the country.

Mr. Demydenko's replies:

1. The project activities are listed in article 4.2 of the ToR.
2. The list of items that could be eligible under the Incidental Expenditures budget heading can be found in article 6.5 of the ToR.
3. There will be no equipment procurement.
4. If Belarusian authorities require project registration, the project team will comply with such a requirement and proceed according to the rules of the registration that will be provided by the relevant Ministry.

Mr. Dolgor's replies:

1. The registration of the project is a must for Human Dynamics.
2. The project budget consists of 2 parts, the Fees part and the Incidental Expenditures part. Under the Fees the project pays the experts for their input as well as other projects expenses such as project offices, missions, etc. The IE budget is 3 million Euro and it is



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allocated to activities to be implemented in the six countries. However, this does not imply a transfer of money to the individual country budgets as such. It is difficult to provide a specific amount to be allocated to each country because, being most of the activities trans-boundary in character, a clear-cut division is hardly possible.

Mr. Rachevskii gave an example about the way how the project budget amount for the Water Governance Project (WGW) in Belarus was submitted for the project registration with the Ministry of Economy of Belarus (the contractor of the WGW was a Mott MacDonald-led Consortium and Mr. Rachevskii held the position of National Coordinator in this project). For the project registration the indicative budgets for all beneficiary countries including Belarus were submitted and then once a year the Mott MacDonald Consortium informed the Ministry of Economy of Belarus with an official letter on the actual annual expenditures for Belarus. The actual expenditures included fees paid to Belarus experts, payments for seminars and fees paid to foreign experts who worked for Belarus.

Mr Demydenko said that the same approach for EPIRB project registration could be used if so requested.

Mr Rachevskii continued with the pilot basins selection. He said that 2 pilot regions for the EPIRB project in Belarus could be initially identified, namely: Prypyat basin region and Dnieper basin region. Both are large basins and work on them requires the participation of Ukraine. At present, good cooperation with Ukraine in the Prypyat basin is in place. Considering the project's interest in attracting the Russian Federation in project activities Mr Rachevskii had a question regarding Dnieper basin. Could the trans-boundary middle river basin which is the inflow to the large trans-boundary river basin be selected?

Mr Demydenko said that there is no restrictions on this issue, as in any cases all those inflows relate to the Dnieper basin and as a recommendation, the Dnieper river basin is more interesting than Prypyat as a pilot region, because the work on the Prypyat basin may represent a repetition of the work already done in this basin by other projects. A RBMP was also developed for Prypyat in a previous project. The general recommendations are to choose the pilot basin which has good pool of data, on the one hand, but was not so explicitly worked out, like Prypyat. It would be nice to choose the upper part of Dnieper basin as in this case, at least from a hydrological point of view, the Russian Federation may participate in the pilot with Ukraine and Belarus. Potential political issues can be overcome by selecting one river basin, but preferably river basin management plan for upper stream part of the basin for one country and downstream plan for another country, like it was suggested for Armenia and Azerbaijan. It was clear there would be no joint project between those countries, but Armenia may prepare upper stream river basin management plan in the Araks basin and Azerbaijan – for the downstream part of the same river. This will result in two working pilot regions hydrologically united and water related authorities of both countries found this idea very promising. The river basin management plan will be made at a district level, not for the whole Dnieper basin. Recently, Ukraine received 35 million Euro as Sector Budget Support (SBS) of the environmental policy in Ukraine, directly invested into the state



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budget of Ukraine. The SBS aimed, in particular, at the elaboration of several pilot river basin management plans and it is recommended by the EC to make the pilot basins of this SBS initiative and those of the EPIRB project coincide at least in pilot regions,. In addition, the EPIRB project should absorb the results/data obtained from implementation of UNDP/GEF funded projects in this area.

Mr. Rachevskii commented regarding Prypyat river basin. To his opinion the Prypyat basin region could still be considered attractive as a pilot region, because much work has already been done on this basin. If the EPIRB project could finance the creation of Prypyat river basin management plan and a complex scheme for use and protection of water resources, this would be beneficial to the Belarus Republican budget in terms of savings. Additionally, it would be helpful to distinguish the difference between the scheme and the management plan, and determine the necessary changes to the environmental legislation in order to make a smooth transition from the complex scheme to the management plan. It would be interesting for the Russian Federation (RF) as well, because Belarus and Russia have almost identical schemes. At present, Russia is actively elaborating schemes for the Dnieper river basin.

Mr. Demydenko replied that Mr. Rachevskii's idea could be considered along with other possible options for the project. However, it is unlikely that Russia would be as interested in Prypyat river basin scheme as it would be in the scheme for the Dnieper basin. Unfortunately, the project budget is not large enough to cover in full all elaboration costs for the management plan or the complex scheme for each country. Unfortunately the project cannot replace national financing. On the other hand, if a country will take a decision to form a group of people which will work on elaboration of a management plan or complex scheme, assign an organization responsible for the results (it should be also clear within the organization who is personally responsible for what), approve a budget for the development, then the project could help. The final version of the criteria for pilot river selection will soon be prepared by Zurab Jincharadze (Deputy TL) and will be sent to all beneficiary countries.

Ms. Tatiana Slizh has suggested considering the issue of making up water and economic balances for the transboundary parts of the rivers. During the meeting with Russian colleagues in October 2011 they found out that both countries seem to have the needed legislation base for making up balances. However, there is lack of understanding of how to make the general balance on a trans-boundary river. Russian colleagues suggested making up such balances only where there are the regulated water bodies. It turns out that Belarus and Russia do not have such water objects. We will have the similar meeting with our Ukrainian colleagues soon and will going to ask their opinion/position as to making up water and economic balances for the trans-boundary rivers.

Ms. Slizh added that they would like to understand for what water objects such water and economic balances have to be made, for the regulated ones or for the objects with intense anthropological load, or objects with irretrievable water losses, or objects with the changes of hydro-geological regimes, etc.



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Mr Rachevskii finally mentioned that it would be very interesting to have the ground water project together with Ukraine in one pilot region, ideally with attracting of EU resources. Mr Zavyalov will have a meeting with Mr Mamayev in Ukraine on March 29 and will discuss this issue.

Mr Demydenko replied that the ground water component is essential in choosing the pilot region. The HD expert Mr Bernardas Paukstys could provide details on this matter if needed.

**Kick-off meeting Part II (General meeting)
Meeting of HD Delegation with MNREP and stakeholders
Room #518**

Agenda:

Introduction of general meeting participants
Official welcoming (MNREP and EUD in Belarus)
EPIRB Project presentation
Questions and answers

Participants (list with contact data is attached as an Addendum):

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus

- **Sergei Zavyalov**, Department Head, Dpt. of Regulation on Impact on Atmospheric Air and Water Resources (kick-off meeting chairman)
- **Tatiana Slizh**, Division Head, Div. of Water Use and Protection
- **Marina Filipyuk**, Department Head, Dpt. of International Cooperation
- **Elena Shnitkova**, Consultant, Dpt. of International Cooperation
- **Irina Komosko**, Department Deputy Head, Dpt. of Nature Management and Innovation Development
- **Victor Rybak**, Director of Republican Unitary Enterprise "Central Research Institute for Complex Use of Water Resources" (CRICUWR)
- **Vladimir Korneev**, Department Head, Dpt. of Water Monitoring and Cadastre (CRICUWR)
- **Svetlana Utochkina**, Center Deputy Head, State institution "Republican Center of Analytical Control in the Sphere of Environmental Protection"
- **Anatolii Sukharev**, Division Head, Div. of Manufacturing, Legal, Personnel and Methodical Work, Hydro-meteorological Department
- **Aleksandr Rachevskii**, Group Manager of International Projects, State Institution "Republican Hydro-meteorological Center"
- **Aleksandr Stankevich**, Center Head, State institution "Republican Center for Radiation Control and Environmental Monitoring"
- **Olga Berezko**, Department Head, Dpt. of Hydrogeology and Underground Waters Monitoring, Republican Unitary Enterprise "Belarusian Research Geological Exploration Institute"(State Enterprise "BRGEI")



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Regional Committees for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection

- **Yurii Godun**, Chief Specialist, Dpt. of State Control for Protection and Use of Water Resources, Brest Regional Committee of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection
- **Nataliya Savitskaya**, Department Head, Dpt. of State Control for Protection and Use of Water Resources, Gomel Regional Committee of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection

European Delegation to the Republic of Belarus

- **Elena Rakova**, Project Coordinator, Environmental Protection and Power Engineering Projects

Coordination Bureau of EU TACIS Program

- **Evgenii Odinets**, Bureau Expert

Republican Bodies of Public Administration of the Republic of Belarus

- **Denis Ugorenko**, Department Chief Engineer, Dpt. of Monitoring and Forecast of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Emergency Situations
- **Yuliya Novik**, Department Chief Inspector, Dpt. of International Cooperation, Ministry of Emergency Situations
- **Nikolai Vinnichuk**, Division Chief Engineer, Division of Melioration and Water Industry, Department of Melioration and Water Industry, Ministry of Agriculture and Food
- **Nataliya Kapushova**, Department Chief Engineer, Dpt. of Communal Services and Power Engineering, Ministry of Housing and Communal Services

Human Dynamics

- **Andriy Demydenko**, Team Leader
- **Tumennasan Dolgor**, Project Director
- **Bernardas Paukstys**, Key Expert 5

Summary of Discussion

The general meeting was officially opened by Mr Zavyalov. He welcomed all meeting participants and wished successful implementation of the EPIRB Project. The official welcoming was continued by Ms Rakova. She said the EU now is one of the main donors for Belarus and the EU does not provide credits to Belarus, but gives grants. The important feature of the EU work is that it works with the state sector, contrary to many other international organizations which prefer to work with the private sector. The Ministry is the main partner of the EU in Belarus. More and more bilateral regional projects on environmental protection are implemented. She said the EUD will provide any help for project implementation if needed.

After all participants introduced themselves, Mr Demydenko presented the project (presentation is attached as an Addendum).



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Summary of questions and answers:

- Ms. Utochkina asked what types of laboratories will participate in the project: those that make hydro-biological and hydro-morphological analysis or hydro-chemical laboratories also will be considered?

Mr Demydenko replied that the project's priority is hydro-biological, chemical, and hydro-morphological monitoring of water quality including groundwater. The selection of laboratories will also depend on the pilot region. The pilot region has to be selected by the beginning of July and all countries will soon receive pilot region selection criteria as recommendations.

- Ms. Berezko asked Mr Bernardas Paukstys (Key Expert #5, who mentioned during presentation that every beneficiary country selects a number of underground water bodies.) what can be considered as groundwater body?

Mr. Paukstys replied that a groundwater body is a three-dimensional object. He recommended having clear separation of the unconfined waters and the artesian waters. The main principle for selecting groundwater bodies is the possibility for status analysis. An object should have both quantity and quality status. Hydro-dynamic and hydro-chemical parameters are to be used for determining the groundwater bodies. Bodies with the same hydro-dynamic and hydro-chemical status can be determined as groundwater body.

Comment by Ms Savitskaya: in the opinion of Gomel Regional Committee of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, the Dnieper river basin is an optimal pilot region, given its trans-boundary character and interest for Ukraine (as Ukraine consumes 80% of drinking water from the Dnieper basin).

Mr. Zavyalov replied that the whole Dnieper basin region cannot be considered as the pilot region because of its size. According to ToR a sub-basin can be selected as a pilot region as well. However, the Ministry has to consider about which pilot region to select and will take a decision by the beginning of July.

Comments by Mr. Korneev: CRICUWR is pleased and satisfied that the hydro-morphology aspect is considered in the project (as the third component of the Water Framework Directive). CRICUWR has some experience in the complex schemes elaboration and will readily share that experience within the framework of the project.

Mr Demydenko asked to send the comments of CRICUWR officially, in order to include them into the Inception report as part of the country's official comments to the ToR. The point about the comparison of methodologies of complex schemes and management plans elaboration can also be considered if submitted officially.

Comments by Mr. Rachevskii: Mr Rachevskii recommended considering the work of the chemical laboratories and all other related aspects (certifications, international standardizations (ISO), sufficient number of such laboratories, education and professional trainings of lab staff) in the framework of the EPIRB Project. He specified that in all post-Soviet countries the chemical



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laboratories still play very significant role in water monitoring. Definitely, the transition from chemical to hydro-morphological and biological indicators is necessary. However, this should be a step-by-step transition. The project should have a detailed section on groundwater monitoring development and the influence of groundwater on trans-boundary basins.

Comments by Mr. Korneev: the river basin or sub-basin management plan should include in any case all three components: hydro-chemical, hydro-biological and hydro-morphological.

Ms Utochkina supported Mr Korneev's comment on the future use of modern hydro-biological and hydro-morphological, but stated that for the pilot basin a list of priority hydro-chemical indicators has to be prepared. At present, there are 41 hydro-chemical indicators, but probably not all of them are of top priority.

Comments by Mr. Paukstys: when evaluating river basin management plans the European Commission found out the lack of biological monitoring data in all project countries. Historically, in all post-Soviet countries the chemical monitoring of the general environmental parameters has a strong position. Therefore, although chemical monitoring will be key in preparing the river basins management plans, other specific hydro-biological and hydro-morphological data has to be collected and used to this purpose. The availability of data is one of the key criteria for the pilot region selection.

Comment by Mr Zavyalov: For pilot region selection it is important to consider the issue of water and economic budgets, and the presence of regulated water bodies with neighboring countries, and, of course the availability of the needed data, plus the need of obtaining data for the groundwater bodies.

Comment by Mr Rachevskii: as Mr Demydenko mentioned during his presentation, the lack of river basin management structures can be an obstacle in the work on the pilot river basin. In Belarus we do not have such structures or the corresponding legislation needed to set up such structures. However, we do have enough administrative resources to implement river basin management plans.

Mr Demydenko replied that the WFD does not determine the structure of basin organization in the country; it says just that RBMP should have the organization-owner. However, if there are no local organizations/authorities at all to own a river basin plan (like in Ukraine, where the Ministry of Environment being the main beneficiary of the project has recently lost all subordinated oblast branches) problems can occur with the implementation of RBMP.

Final request by Mr Zavyalov: Mr Zavyalov asked to remove from the Risk Section in ToR the position regarding risk of possible participation of Belarus in the project depending on the mutual relations with the EU. Mr Dolgor and Mr Demydenko promised to take this into account.

Mr Zavyalov thanked to all meeting participants and promised to select the pilot basin and the composition of the National Steering Committee by June 20, 2012 and closed the meeting.