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# Environmental Protection of International River Basins Project (EPIRBP)
# Minutes of Armenia Kick-off Inception Mission Meetings

## Participants:

**Project Team**
Mr Andriy Demydenko, KE1 / Team leader
Mr Zurab Jincharadze, KE2 / Deputy Team leader

**Human Dynamics**
Mr Tumennasan Dolgor, Project Director, Deputy Head, Implementation Department

### Day-I: 12 March 2012

**Water Resources Management Agency - WRMA, Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia**
**Government Building 3, Republic Sq., 375010 Yerevan, Armenia / www.mnp.am**

**11:30 - 12:30**
**WRMA**
Mr Volodya Narimanyan, Deputy Head of the Agency

## Summary of Discussion

The Water Resources Management Agency (WRMA) is part of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia. The role of the WRMA in the Water Code of Armenia is defined as key institution responsible to carry out overall management of water resources, including protection, inspection, licensing of water use, etc. The WRMA coordinates the elaboration and implementation of any national water policy programs, including development and implementation of river basin management planning for the six basin territories of Armenia. In addition the WRMA is responsible for development and maintenance of the State Water Cadastre Information System (SWCIS). The Agency's interest and expectations for a successful implementation of the planned project activities and readiness to support the project team for any technical or administrative/logistic issues seems to be high.

Mr Demydenko presented objectives and main technical activities of the project, as well as the expected outcomes of the mission in Armenia: establishment of the project National Coordination Committee; nomination of representatives in the Regional Steering Committee, selection of a trans-boundary pilot basin for Armenia. It was mentioned that the project understands the complications of the political situation in the region and the difficulty of selecting a pilot area bordering Azerbaijan. It was advised to consider the possible effect of upstream to downstream relationship, however selection will be completely up to the beneficiaries and the project activities will concentrate in the pilot area.

Mr Narimanyan presented the structure of the Agency and its role in formulating basin management plans in Armenia. He described the territorial division of the Water Basin Management Authorities (equivalent of BMOs), their mandates and legal obligations, as well as actual capabilities. It was mentioned that although Basin Management Authorities are considered as owners and direct beneficiaries of the basin management

plans, human and financial resources (2-3 personnel per basin), technical capacity and ability to implement developed by outsourced bodies (or international donor funded projects) river basin management plans, are very limited. Therefore, the WRMA's expects capacity building, onsite staff training, and some other specific assistance activities to be carried out. In addition Mr Narimanyan mentioned that the Government of Armenia has developed a 'model planning document' - a sub-law under the Water Code of Armenia aimed to guide for development of the Basin Management Plans. This is some kind of prototype of the WFD's guidance documents and 80% compliant with it. Therefore the development and implementation of a pilot RBMP should have practical outcomes for Armenia.

Further the meeting focused on the details of the proposed pilot area – the Akhurian river basin, which was suggested by the Armenian beneficiary institutions. As it was explained by Mr Narimanyan, the Akhurian is a very important river for Armenia's economy. Having large artificial reservoir, its water is used for power generation and irrigation; groundwater aquifers are shared between neighbouring countries and used for drinking water supply. Morphologically the basin is highly altered, etc. The river is shared by Armenia and Turkey and has clearly defined trans-boundary effects for Azerbaijan (Nakhichevan) and thus is preferred as a pilot area. However, the Ministry of Nature Protection and the WRMA will discuss other possibilities and will inform on their decision officially.

The composition of the project National Coordination Committee and possible synergy with the EU's ongoing project - 'Support to the EU Water Initiative in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EUWI EECCA)' was discussed as well. As it was highlighted that in the framework of the EUWI National Policy Dialogue OECD plans to conduct pilot studies on water economy and social indicator issues and it is quite possible that the Akhurian basin will be selected as a pilot study in Armenia for that. Therefore cooperation between the two projects will be important and productive for the beneficiary country.

**State Committee of Water Systems - SCWS, Ministry of Territorial Administration of Armenia**
**13 a Vardanants St., 375010 Yerevan, Armenia / www.scws.am**

**15:00 - 16:00**
**SCWS**
Mr Gagik Khachatryan, Deputy Chairman

## Summary of Discussion

The State Committee of Water Systems (SCWS) is an authorized government institution for management of water systems and infrastructure operating under the Ministry of Territorial Administration of Armenia. The SCWS is responsible for operation and maintenance of state owned drinking water supply, irrigation systems, drainage, wastewater collectors, treatment facilities and disposal. The current structure of the Committee is based on the former Soviet 'VodKhozKom' (or the Committee of Water Infrastructure) and includes 3 water intake companies; 5 drinking water supply and sewerage companies; 44 water user associations. The Committee is responsible for outsourcing infrastructure maintenance and operation management to third parties, and supplying irrigations systems for transferring water further to Water Users Associations.

On the one hand irrigation, as well as water supply & sanitation may be accounted for degradation of aquatic ecosystems in Armenia (and the region in general), but on the other hand these systems are vitally important for maintaining the country's economy and livelihoods. Therefore it is important to ensure the SCWS's active participation in the project National Coordination Committee meetings. The SCWS is the largest water user in Armenia and its role in developing a pilot RBMP and implementing the Program of Measures would be highly desired.

Potential pilot areas in Armenia (specifically the Akhurian Basin proposed by the Ministry of Nature Protection) – were discussed. The SCWS considers this proposal as interesting. The Committee has a good amount of technical data on water infrastructure in the basin and decent cooperation experience on distribution of common water resources with Turkey, with whom they share common water resources.

**Environmental Impact Monitoring Centre - EIMC, Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia**
**29, Komitas St., Yerevan 0012, Armenia / www.mnp.am**

**16:30 - 18:00**
**EIMC**
Mr Baghdasar Sngryan, Head
Mr Seyran Minassyan, Deputy Head
Ms Gayane Shahnazaryan, Head of Water Monitoring Division

## Summary of Discussion

The Environmental Impact Monitoring Centre (EIMC) is a state owned non-commercial organization operating under the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia, but at the same time having flexibility to carry out independent studies for scientific, academic, or analytical purposes on a contractual basis. The EMIC is the only authorised organization in Armenia responsible for regular environmental monitoring of surface water quality (in addition of atmospheric air quality and soil contamination). Currently the EMIC conducts regular monitoring of surface water bodies at 131 sampling points (6 to 12 times a year per point), measuring up to 48 physico-chemical parameters. The EIMC does not carry out groundwater monitoring (discussed below), however water samples collected by Hydro-geological Monitoring Centre are analysed by the EIMC chemical laboratory. The hydro-biological and hydro-morphological monitoring are not practiced in Armenia for the moment; however there is a plan to initiate hydro-biological monitoring on the basis of EIMC. In recent years the EIMC has been participating in a number of donor-funded regional trans-boundary projects, including the on-going EU Kura River phase III, and as a result, technical capacity of the organization has improved noticeably.

Along with the WRMA, the role of the EIMC will be significant for the successful implementation of the EPIRB project and therefore it is considered as one of the target institutions in Armenia. The meeting was opened by Mr Demydenko presenting overall project goals, specific objectives and activities, mainly focusing on Component 1, where active participation by the EIMC is expected. Mr Jincharadze presented Component 2 and the initial selection criteria for pilot trans-boundary basins, where most activities of the project will be concentrated. He also explained what would be a main difference between the accomplished or on-going similar projects and EPIRB in terms of introducing three types of monitoring activities required by WFD: surveillance, operational and investigative monitoring; as well as proposal to use data obtained from hydro-biological, hydro-morphological and groundwater surveys, in addition to regular physico-chemical parameters, for analysis of baseline situation and detection of ecological status of water bodies.

Mr Seyran Minassyan, Deputy Head of the Centre expressed his questions and concerns regarding the efficient use of human and financial resources for achieving project objectives. In addition, Mr Baghdasar Sngryan, Head the EIMC, touched the issue of overlapping with results already achieved through other international projects, as well as the risk of plagiarism and negligence towards the opinion of the national beneficiary institutions. These concern were based on negative experience from some already accomplished donor-funded activities in the water sector; on the other hand the EIMC also mentioned positive aspects of working with other international water projects, including accomplished USAID/PA's South Caucasus Water Program, EU Kura River Phase II and the on-going EU Kura River Phase III. After presentation of the wider project team, including key and non-key experts and specific capacity-building

activities dedicated for the monitoring institutions of the beneficiary countries, the EIMC management team expressed optimistic expectations towards achieving the project goals and readiness to support with all possible means. At the end, the issue of recommending experienced national water experts to work with the project was also discussed.

## Day-II: 13 March 2012

**Armenian State Hydrometeorological and Monitoring Service, Ministry of Emergency Situations**
**54, Leo St., 0002 Yerevan, Armenia / www.meteo.am**

**10:00 - 11:00**
**ASHMS**
Mr Levon Vardanyan, Director

**Summary of Discussion**

Aim of the meeting was to introduce the project objectives and expectations to one of the beneficiary institutions, as the ASHMS is the only authorised institution in Armenia for hydrological and potentially hydro-morphological monitoring.

The Armenian State Hydrometeorological and Monitoring Service (ASHMS), also known as ArmStateHydromet, is a subsidiary body operating under the Ministry of Emergency Situations. Formerly the ASHMS (Hydromet) was part of the Ministry of Nature Protection. Its current responsibilities include regular hydrological monitoring of surface water bodies (along with meteorological and agro-meteorological monitoring), for which it operates 7 hydrological stations and 92 hydrological observation posts, mainly poorly equipped or with outdated maintenance.

The meeting was opened by presenting objectives and specific activities for the project implementation. Special attention was paid to Component 1 and particularly introducing different types of monitoring activities at selected pilot areas, including hydro-morphological observations. Different options for selecting pilot basins in Armenia were also discussed.

The Director of the Service, Mr Levon Vardanyan presented the structure, objectives and experience of the institution in regards of working with international donor funded water management projects in the region and the country. He mentioned that after splitting water monitoring in Armenia into three parts - water quality, water quantity and groundwater – formal interactions between the institutions carrying out different types of monitoring became very weak. However, on professional and personal levels links between professionals still exist not only on a national scale, but with the colleagues of neighbouring countries too. Therefore, although the political situation with the neighbours (Turkey and Azerbaijan) is complicated, ASHMS's position on selecting trans-boundary pilot basin downstream to the Araks (the Akhurian river) is positive and they are open for cooperation with the project and other national and regional beneficiaries.

**Hydrogeological Monitoring Centre, Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia**
**Yerevan, Armenia / www.mnp.am**

**11:30 - 12:30**
**Hydrogeological Monitoring Centre**
Mr Khachatur Gharabaghtsyan, Director, Advisor to the Minister
Mr Vahe Sargsyan, Head of Division for Monitoring of Freshwater Network
Mr Harut Yeremyan, Leading Specialist, Division of Water Inventory and Monitoring

Mr Alexander Goginyan, Head of Division for Hydrogeological Monitoring of Mineral Waters
Mr Hovik Aghinyan, Head of Division of Water Inventory and Monitoring

**Summary of Discussion**

The Hydrological Monitoring Centre is a state non-commercial organization re-established under the Ministry of Nature Protection in 2006 on the basis of former Hydro-geological Expedition of the Geological Department of Armenia. Currently the Centre is responsible for observation of quantity and quality of groundwater aquifers. Its financial resources and technical capacity (hardware, datasets, etc.) are somewhat limited. The Centre did not operate for 15 years since 1993, after the breakup of the former Soviet Union. Since 2006, with the help of USAID Water Program, the network began rehabilitation and it currently operates about 70 monitoring points of groundwater resources. However, as hydro-geology experts estimate, there is a requirement to have about 250 monitoring points to cover the whole country, as groundwater is important for Armenia as a strategic drinking water resource.

The project TL and DTL presented the objectives of the project and the planned activities, especially emphasising the role of the Hydrological Monitoring Centre for the successful implementation of the project activities related to the WFD-compliant monitoring programs as well as for assessing data obtained through groundwater monitoring for detecting ecological status of water bodies and their further classification for River Basin Management Planning at pilot areas. The position of the Centre on this regard was enthusiastic, with great expectations over the project results and readiness for their support.

**Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia - MNP**
**Government Building 3, Republic Sq., 375010 Yerevan, Armenia / www.mnp.am**

**15:00 - 17:15**
**MNP**
Mr Edgar Pirumyan, Head of Administration
Ms Margarita Korkhmazyan, Head of International Cooperation Division
Mr Ashot Harutyunyan, Head of Department for Monitoring Strategic Environmental Pograms

**Summary of Discussion**

The meeting in the Ministry of Nature Protection (MNP) focused mostly on the project management and administrative/budgetary issues. Mr Demydenko briefly presented the team, the main components and activities of the project, the expected outcomes and the specific focus of the project activities on pilot areas. Mr Demydenko emphasised the role of the inception mission on delivering first formal messages to the beneficiary institutions and expectations out of it to address three main pending issues: 1) formal nomination of Regional Steering Committee member(s) by the target institutions; 2) composition of a project National Coordination Committee; and 3) selection of a pilot basin area. The meeting also discussed questions related to the composition of the project staff, including key and non-key experts, as well as the role of Country Water Managers (CWM) as crucial figure to link the project resources to the national beneficiary institutions. Mr Pirumyan positively evaluated the importance of the project. He expressed full support from the MNP's side and hope on successful implementation of the project.

**USAID Clean Energy and Water Program - CEW**
**7/1 Aygedzor St., 0019 Yerevan, Armenia**

**16:30 - 17:30**
**CEW**

Ms Lilit Harutyunyan, River Basin Planning Specialist
Mr Benyamin Zakaryan, Hydrology Modelling Specialist
Ms Lusine Taslakyan, Public Relations Specialist

## Summary of Discussion

The USAID-funded Clean Energy and Water Program (CEW) is a four year project to support the country in the sustainable management of the energy and water sectors. The CEW has the following objectives and components to implement:

- Develop capacity for integrated energy and water resource planning;
- Improve local clean energy, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and water management and development practices;
- Improve hydropower and water regulation;
- Donor coordination and public outreach.

Particular interest of the EPIRB team was paid to the first component of the CEW project goals, where the participants found it mutually beneficial to join forces for building capacity of the national water management institutions for river basin planning activities through a series of training sessions and practical exercises planned by both projects.