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



A project implemented by a Consortium led by Hulla & Co. Human Dynamics KG

**Environmental Protection of International River Basins Project (EPIRBP)
Minutes of Georgia 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
Ms Ivelina Dilovska, Project Director, Implementation Department

Day-I: 6 March 2012

Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia
6, G. Gulua St. 0114 Tbilisi, Georgia / www.moe.gov.ge

13:00 - 13:45

MOE Georgia

Mr George Zedginidze, Deputy Minister
Ms. Nino Tkhlava, Head of Department, Environmental Policy and International Relations

Summary of Discussion

The meeting was mostly focused on the expected project results and the benefits the participating countries will derive by applying key elements of the EU Water Framework Directive on pilot basin areas. Georgia's role and specific informal 'mandate' of bridging upstream and downstream river basins of the South Caucasus was particularly praised by the participants. TL pointed out the importance of receiving formal support from the Ministry in nominating members of the project Regional Steering Committee and the National Coordination Committee. The team also discussed the requirement of selecting pilot basin areas in close cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and other key stakeholder groups. It was agreed that, to assist with this process, the Project Team will develop a concept paper on the pilot basins selection criteria (such as sensible effects of upstream to downstream water use, existence of large reservoirs, dams, drainage and irrigation infrastructure, etc. affecting river flow and morphology, ecosystems degradation, vulnerability to climate change consequences, water scarcity, manageable size of a basin, etc.) specific to each region or country, and will distribute it among the beneficiaries along with 'scoring cards' for choosing from several pilot basin options to be pre-identified by the project team.

The Deputy Minister Zedginidze put special attention on the following issues:

- Commenting on the ToR, p.10, 1.4.4 – the MOE has never been and is not a State Minister's Office. The MOE is equal to MENR;
- The need to coordinate the activities of donor-funded international projects in the field of environment in general and water resources management in particular with a view to avoid overlapping and use scarce financial resources more efficiently;

- Capacity building and knowledge transfer for the Ministry staff and related institutions;
- Adding/strengthening activities for awareness rising campaigns on water & sanitation and other environmental issues in the form of formal and non-formal education in schools and universities;
- Designing a 'Clearing House' mechanism to increase visibility of participating countries (including Georgia) on water related and other environment information to facilitate access to data and information for local and international audience.

Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia
6, G. Gulua St. 0114 Tbilisi, Georgia / www.moe.gov.ge

15:30 - 16:30

MEP Georgia

Ms Marina Makarova, Head of Water Protection Division, Department of Integrated Environmental Management

Ms. Maia Javakishvili, Chief Specialist, Department of Environmental Policy and International Relations, ENPI-SEIS NFP

Summary of Discussion

Another meeting in the Ministry of Environment has focused more on technical issues. The project team explained in detail the project goals, the activities to be carried out and the methodology. The team has first and foremost paid attention to the idea that the project is not of demonstration character and all activities of beneficiaries will take place in reality to address some key principles of the EU WFD in a selected pilot area. On behalf of the Ministry of Environment Ms Makarova expressed high interest in the successful implementation of the project activities, including the development of WFD compliant River Basin Management Plans and particularly the implementation of key Program of Measure activities to be identified through the planning phase. Regarding the selection of pilot basins for the project activities, the Ministry seems to prefer the Adjara region of the Black Sea coast, where strong governing structure for environmental administration are in place and thus potential ownership for a pilot RBMP is well visible, since, contrary to other administrative regions of Georgia, regional environmental authority are still located there. Besides, the regional environmental laboratory in Batumi is well equipped and has qualified staff for carrying out comprehensive monitoring programs.

In addition of the above, the team discussed possible synergies with the on-going ENPI-SEIS (Shared Environmental Information Systems) process for common and reliable data exchange mechanisms on water resources both at national and regional level, including the Southern Caucasus and the wider Black Sea area. It was also mentioned that the results and findings of the project that will be uploaded on the project website should be compliant with SEIS water dataset for the ENPI East region (Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus).

The Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus - REC Caucasus
23, Chavchavadze Ave. 2nd floor, 0179 Tbilisi, Georgia / www.rec-caucasus.org

17:00 - 17:45

REC Caucasus

Ms Sophiko Akhobadze, Deputy Director

Summary of Discussion

The REC Caucasus is the only authorised regional environmental centre having mandates from the governments of all three Southern Caucasus countries and besides is a key player in the non-governmental

sector for the implementation of EU-funded projects in the region. Therefore meeting with their team was important first of all for finding common grounds while implementing the project. Special attention was paid to the REC's experience in IWRM facilitation and public awareness and community mobilization activities for various EU funded regional projects, as well as possible synergy with Public Involvement and Awareness Rising Activities (act. 2.7 of the project ToR) for EPIRB. REC Caucasus recommended to try to include as much as possible the local communities/civil organisations in project activities.

Day-II: 7 March 2012

National Environmental Agency - NEA

150, D. Aghmashenebeli Ave. 0112 Tbilisi, Georgia / www.meteo.gov.ge

10:00 - 13:00

National Environmental Agency

Mr Shalva Javakhadze, Head of Agency

Mr Ramaz Chitanava, Head of Hydrometeorology Department

Ms Marina Arabidze, Head of Environmental Pollution Monitoring Department

Mr Merab Gaprindashvili, Deputy Head of Geological Hazards Management Department, Head of Engineering Geology Division

Mr Giorgi Kordzakhia, Advisor to the Head of Agency

Summary of Discussion

The meeting with the National Environmental Agency (NEA) was important as the agency will be a key institution for the implementation of the project Activity 1. The NEA is the only existing legitimate institution in Georgia responsible for all types of monitoring activities for surface, ground and coastal waters (including hydrological, chemical and hydro-biological), as well as for collection, processing and dissemination of environmental data and information. Therefore, discussion on the project activities and expected outcomes was very detailed. Expectations from this project are high; and therefore all relevant departments guaranteed their willingness to actively participate and provide all necessary data and human resources for its successful implementation.

Special attention was paid to the following issues:

- Insufficient technical capacity of the existing monitoring network, especially absence of regular groundwater monitoring network and fragmented character of hydro-morphological observations;
- Archived hydro-geological data on groundwater aquifers and quality of groundwater exists mostly on paper (1:50,000 scale detailed hydro-geology map) and has to be digitalized to be suitable for use;
- Although several training sessions demonstrating methodologies and techniques of hydro-biological monitoring have been conducted by on-going and completed water management projects, awareness and skills for such monitoring is very low in the region. According to the existing water code, NEA's Pollution Monitoring Department is responsible for hydro-biological monitoring in Georgia. There exists necessary monitoring equipment purchased through the EU funded Kura River Phase II project; however the monitoring staff will need intensive training to be able to implement these skills in reality;
- It is very important to build the project activities on the results of on-going Kura River phase III project, as there are many similarities in their goals and objectives of the two projects. For example, the Kura River phase III will update the methodology for water quality classification and assessment and will identify reference conditions for surface waters in the trans-boundary pilot areas of Alazani (Georgia-Azerbaijan) and Khrami-Debed (Georgia-Armenia) river basins. Therefore

it was advised that the EPIRB will use the results of the mentioned activities for the assessment of the ecological status of water bodies in the pilot basin areas;

- Different options for selecting pilot basin areas in Georgia were discussed. The project team proposed the following conditions as selection criteria for the pilot basins: possible trans-boundary effect of a proposed pilot area; existence of monitoring network and availability of hydro-geological, hydrological and water quality data; interest of the country in terms of strategic groundwater resources; existence of basin management units, or administrative structures to maintain ownership for the project results, in particular River Basin Management Plan and Program of Measures to be implemented as a follow up. It was agreed that the project team will develop more detailed and specific criteria and submit them to the Agency for final selection before June in view of the discussions to be held at the first Regional Steering Committee meeting.

In addition the project team asked the appropriate units (departments) of the Agency for a short written update of the current status of observation methodology, network and technical capacity of hydro-morphological/hydrological (Head of Hydrology Division, Mr Vakhtang Geladze), hydro-geological (Head of Engineering Geology Division, Mr Merab Gaprindashvili) and chemical/hydro-biological (Head of Pollution Monitoring Department, Ms Marine Arabidze) monitoring of surface and ground waters.

Ministry of Energy and Natural resources - MENR, Agency of Natural Resources - ANR
6, G. Gulua St. 0114 Tbilisi, Georgia / www.menr.gov.ge

15:00 - 15:45

MENR Georgia

Mr Giorgi Tatishvili, Deputy Head, Agency of Natural Resources, ANR

Mr Archil Adamia, Head of Department of Natural Resources, MENR

Summary of Discussion

Agency of Natural Resources is a new institution working under the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources. As the Agency is responsible for licensing and management of groundwater resources in Georgia, it is one of the key beneficiary institutions for the project. The meeting had introductory character, as the Agency was not informed properly on the project. Main developments and the conclusions from the meeting are as follows:

- Possible role and interest of the Agency of Natural Resources for development and use of a pilot RBMPs was discussed;
- From discussing Agency's internal functions and general groundwater licensing requirements the project team found common point of interest in applying some EU/WFD principles while elaborating licensing conditions to the potential bidders;
- Agency's particular interest in groundwater aquifers may assist in selection of a pilot basin area with sensible trans-boundary effects on groundwater resources;
- Existence of territorial/regional management units of the Agency and MENR in general will be important to maintain ownership after development a pilot RBMP and for implementation of some key Program of Measures;
- MENR and the Agency are ready to participate actively in the National Coordination Committee and the Regional Steering Committee meetings (if requested);
- After reading ToR document the Agency will send their comments and suggestions (if any) to the project team.

UNDP/GEF project: Reducing Transboundary Degradation of the Kura Aras River Basin
56, Barnovi St. 0179 Tbilisi, Georgia / www.kura-aras.org

16:30 - 17:15

UNDP/GEF

Ms Mary Matthews, Project Coordinator/CTA

Mr Harald Leummens, Demonstration Projects Coordinator

Mr Seiichi Sasaki, IWRM Coordinator

Summary of Discussion

The project team has visited the UNDP/GEF project office to meet their Chief Technical Advisor and other staff members and find out in which capacity the two projects can complement each other and, most importantly, coordinate their activities to meet the Contracting Authority's and beneficiaries' interests. The UNDP/GEF Kura-Aras project is the third and final phase of the GEF's Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) series in the Southern Caucasus. The main objective of the project is to identify the trans-boundary problems in the Kura-Aras river basin with regard to four key issues:

- Variation and reduction of hydrological flow;
- Deterioration of water quality;
- Ecosystem degradation in the river basin;
- Increased flooding and bank erosion.

Other components of the project include: Development of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) plans at national level and Strategic Action Program for the entire basin; Stakeholders Involvement in IWRM process and NGO forum; Demonstration Projects for the selected sub-basins in each country were identified by the project team for the key trans-boundary issues.

The EPIRB team has found particularly interesting the following training sessions planned by the UNDP/GEF project and clearly sees areas for cooperation in this direction between the two projects:

1. Scientific Training in Rapid Ecological Assessment, Environmental Flows and Bio-monitoring to take place on 27-30 March in Tbilisi. The training is aimed at national environmental monitoring agencies responsible for water quality monitoring in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as other scientific institutions working on water assessment; and
2. IWRM Academy consisting of 9 training modules and to be conducted in three blocks from April to September 2012 in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The training will be conducted for participants nominated by the beneficiary institutions, who will then use the acquired knowledge in water management related activities in each country.

USAID/Global Water for Sustainability (GLOWS) Program:
Integrated Resources Management in Watersheds of Georgia – INRMW
14, T. Tabidze St. 0179 Tbilisi, Georgia / www.georgia.globalwaters.net

16:30 - 17:15

INRMW

Ms Mariam Shotadze, Country Program Director

Ms Eliso Barnovi, Country Program Deputy Director, Technical Coordinator

Summary of Discussion

The aim of the meeting with the USAID/GLOWS project was to find synergies and possible joint or complementary activities between the two projects. Primary goal of the INRMW project is to introduce sustainable natural resource management, including water, soil, vegetation and ecosystems, in targeted watershed areas of Georgia. The project has selected 3 large pilot basins - Rioni, Alazani and Iori for their

activities. However, to reflect upstream to downstream relationships, they mostly focus on smaller sub-watersheds in these areas and work closely with the local communities and municipal authorities. One interesting solution INRMW applies is to identify local self-governance and municipal authorities as owners of the management plans and assist them further during the implementation phase through a 'small grants' program a program of technical assistance in accordance to the needs identified by the Ministry of Environment Protection and donor assistance and investment proposals for local municipalities.

The EPIRB team has found particularly interesting INRMW's experience in selecting pilot basins and their approach to transferring ownership for the project to local communities. It is likely to elaborate some joint actions between the two projects further for achieving sensible results in public awareness rising and behavioural change in the Georgian part of the Black Sea Drainage Basin by elaborating necessary skills for integrated and sustainable management of water recourses, knowledge transfer and promoting participation of local authorities in decision-making processes.