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

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

1st Regional Steering Committee Meeting
Environmental Protection of International River Basins Project
18-19 July 2012, Conference-hall, Hotel Rus
4, Hospitalna Str., Kyiv 01601, Ukraine

Agenda:

Agenda of the 1st RSC meeting is attached to the minutes

Participants:

RSC members

- **Mr Nicola Di Pietrantonio**, Programme Manager, European Commission
- **Mr Oleksiy Chunariov**, Deputy Head of the State Agency of Water Resources of Ukraine
- **Mr Oleg Shevchenko**, Deputy Head of the Department/Head of the Division of the National Ecological Policy and International Affairs, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine
- **Mr Sergei Zavyalov**, Head of Regulation on Impact on Atmospheric Air and Water Resources Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus
- **Ms Diana Celac**, Main Advisory Office, Ministry of Environment of Moldova
- **Mr Artyom Mkhitarian**, Deputy Head of Water Resources Management Agency, Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia
- **Mr Hamlet Melkonyan**, Deputy Head of the State Hydro-meteorological Monitoring Service, Ministry of Emergency Situations of Armenia
- **Mr Mutallim Abdulhasanov**, Head of Division, Department of Ecology and Environmental Protection Policy, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan
- **Ms Catherine Nakashidze**, Head of Integrated Environmental Management Department, Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia
- **Ms Neli Korkotadze**, Deputy Head of Mineral Resources Management Department, Agency of Natural Resources, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Georgia

EU Delegation to Ukraine

- **Mr Oleksander Klitko**, Sector Manager, EU Delegation to Ukraine

Human Dynamics/Members of Consortium

- **Mr Ivan Davidov**, Project Director
- **Ms Ivelina Dilovska**, Project Director
- **Mr Andriy Demydenko**, Team Leader (KE1), RSC Chairman
- **Mr Zurab Jincharadze**, Deputy Team Leader (KE2)
- **Mr Ralph Michael Jackman**, KE3
- **Ms Tatjana Kolcova**, KE4
- **Mr Bernardas Paukstys**, KE5
- **Mr Vahagn Tonoyan**, CWM, Armenia
- **Mr Rustam Rajabov**, CWM, Azerbaijan
- **Mr Aliaksandr Stankevich**, CWM, Belarus
- **Mr Victor Bujac**, CWM, Moldova
- **Mr Evgenii Grigorenko**, OM, Ukraine
- **Mr Andrey Artov**, Deputy Chairman, CRA "Ekologia I Mir"
- **Ms Zoriana Mischiuk**, Executive Director, NGO "Mama-86"
- **Ms Anna Tsvietkova**, WS Program Coordinator, NGO "Mama-86"



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- **Ms Jovanka Ignjatovich**, Senior Expert, REC CEE

Experts

- **Mr Paul Buijs**, Freelance Expert

Observers

- **Ms Olga Lysyuk**, Head of Water Resources Department, State Agency of Water Resources of Ukraine
- **Mr Andriy Mazur**, Project Director, Trans-boundary River Basin Management for the Kura River - Phase III
- **Mr Harald Leummens**, International Coordinator for Demonstration Projects, UNDP-GEF Project Reducing Trans-boundary Degradation in the Kura-Aras Basin
- **Ms Hanna Plotnykova**, Project Coordinator in Ukraine/Assistant, OSCE
- **Mr Oleksiy Yaroshevych**, Team Leader, Environmental Sector Budget Support Program in Ukraine

Mass Media

- **Mr Oles' Pasichnyi**, Correspondent, Bizreliz Information Agency
- **Ms Elena Gribova**, TV Correspondent, 5th Channel
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Summary of Discussion

DAY 1: 18 July 2012

Session 1: Opening and official welcoming

The meeting was opened by **Mr Nicola Di Pietrantonio**, EC Program Manager and the Project RSC Chairman. **Mr Oleksiy Chynariov**, Deputy Head of the State Agency of Water Resources of Ukraine (SAWR) and **Mr Oleg Shevchenko**, Deputy Head of the Department/Head of the Division of the National Ecological Policy and International Affairs, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine (MENR) made official welcoming remarks on behalf of the key beneficiary institutions and hosts of the 1st RSC meeting.

In his speech **Mr Chynariov** expressed the expectations of the Agency for good practical project results, in particular with regard to the development and implementation of the river basin management plans, and the interest of the SAWR in implementing activities in trans-boundary areas between the riparian countries bordering with Ukraine. **Mr Shevchenko** supported the SAWR's stance with regard to the expected project results in Ukraine, stressed the leading role of the MENR in determining the overall environmental policy in the country and informed the Committee that a final decision on the selection of the pilot river basins of Ukraine will be announced by the MENR shortly. Mr Shevchenko further pointed out that main elements of the state environmental strategy and the state ecological safety goals are well reflected in the EPIRB project objectives and therefore the Ministry will support the launch of the full implementation phase of the project and its further activities in accordance to the RSC decisions and results.

Other welcoming remarks were made by **Mr Oleksander Klitko** on behalf of the EU Delegation to Ukraine and **Mr Ivan Davidov**, Project Director of Human Dynamics, leading company of the project Consortium.

Session 2: Project framework

The second Session of the meeting was dedicated to the activities and results achieved during the Inception Phase. **Mr Nicola Di Pietrantonio** opened this session by presenting the overall background and the management structure of the project. He summarized the outcomes of the process of development of the project ToR, which



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were drafted after an experts mission visited all beneficiary countries to find out the challenges faced by each of them in water resources management. These findings were reflected in the ToR and in the detailed project implementation work plan. Mr Di Pietrantonio also explained the functions of the Regional Steering Committee (the main decision making body of the project) and the National Coordination Committees. Finally, he encouraged the project team and the RSC members to communicate more actively with the EU Delegations in the beneficiary countries and when necessary to the EC Project Manager directly in order to speed up the implementation of activities and solve possible problems.

Mr Andriy Demydenko outlined the project's objectives and presented the inception phase results. On behalf of the project team he expressed an expectation of receiving constructive comments on the completed work and suggestions on further activities from the RSC members and other participants. He stressed that for some pending questions the project team still did not have answers from the key beneficiary institutions and would appreciate receiving them during the meeting. Mr Demydenko's presentation is attached to these Minutes.

The findings of the research activities on the existing national monitoring systems and the tools for assessing data environmental carried out during the Inception Phase findings were presented by the project key and non-key experts in their respective fields. The Open Discussion session that followed the presentations allowed addressing several comments made by the RSC members. Some of these comments were dealt with by the project team immediately; others will be followed up by the team in the revised version of the Inception Report and of its supporting documents.

Some of the most important comments formulated by the RSC members could be summarized as follows:

Mr Hamlet Melkonyan, from the Armenian State Hydro-meteorological Monitoring Service, suggested including an evaluation of climate change and other risks having significant impact on the water resources management while evaluating baseline situations in each pilot basin. He also proposed to select a uniform climate model for forecasting seasonal and annual climate scenarios in the South Caucasus. Some of his other suggestions were related to the possibility to re-assess water and economic balances in the pilot areas, namely in the basins selected by Armenia; evaluating the impacts of water resources formed in non-project countries, (including Turkey) on the water regimes of the pilot basins, etc.

Mr Mutallim Abdulhasanov, representing the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, advised to avoid mentioning highly sensitive political issues in the Inception Report. The nature of this kind of reports is purely technical and so should be the arguments presented therein. Mr Abdulhasanov also suggested that the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan is the main beneficiary for the project, therefore the State Water Resources Agency of the Ministry of Emergency Situations should be mentioned along with "other beneficiary institutions" only. Finally, Mr Abdulhasanov requested the project team to make all correspondence with any national stakeholder exclusively through the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources rather than directly.

Ms Catherine Nakashidze, representing the Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia, commented on the lack of hydrological data for the Turkish part of the Chorokhi pilot river basin that was selected for Georgia.

Ms Neli Korkotadze, representing the Agency of Natural Resources of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Georgia, commented on the current situation of groundwater data availability in Georgia. She informed the committee that in the future it is planned to set up an electronic database on groundwater resources and use; however, current state budget constraints do not allow maintaining regular monitoring in Georgia other than in some sensitive regions of the country.



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Mr Sergei Zavyalov, representing the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus, commented on the issues emphasized in the Inception Report, especially on the inconsistencies between the Belarusian and the EU legislations. He stressed that it is not a priority for Belarus to fully comply with the EU legislation, although many normative acts coming into force at the moment in Belarus are based on the EU acquis. Mr Zavyalov expressed his satisfaction towards the groundwater monitoring section of the report. He suggested that interdependence of ground- and surface waters has to be reflected in the report and climate change issues taken into consideration while developing management plans for the pilot river basins. In addition Mr Zavyalov mentioned that Belarus is planning to adopt hydro-morphological standards for its rivers in 2012 and for its lakes in 2013; therefore it would be of utmost importance to receive project experts' advice before these standards are adopted.

Ms Diana Celac, representing the Ministry of Environment of Moldova, asked for the possibility of legal assistance to accelerate development of water legislation in Moldova. She also suggested allocating more time to the RSC members for reviewing and commenting the draft project documents, at least 2-3 weeks before any event takes place. In response on the legislation assistance request for Moldova, **Mr Di Pietrantonio** pointed out to a possibility of sharing efforts with the other EC funded projects in Moldova such as the ongoing Sector Budget Support and the EU Water Initiative (EUWI EECCA). In addition he did not exclude possibility of using local and international expertise through the project as well. Mr Di Pietrantonio suggested to formally addressing the EU Delegation to Moldova with a request for assessing the feasibility of Moldova's proposal.

Ms Olga Lysyuk, representing the State Agency of Water Resources of Ukraine, commented on the presentation by the project team on hydro-morphological monitoring and on the missing information on qualitative parameters. She was also expecting to see methodological approaches to hydro-morphological monitoring in the report, described at least on a national level, which she could not find in the text. In addition, Ms Lysyuk expressed an interest to review the Legislative and Institutional Gap Analysis (that was not translated into Russian by the time the RSC was held), since, as in Moldova and some other participating countries, Ukraine experiences legislative challenges and assistance of a legal expert would be very much appreciated.

The second half of Session 2 was dedicated to the presentation of the results of another Inception Phase activity: the selection and confirmation of the pilot river basins by partner countries. This activity was presented by **Mr Zurab Jincharadze** (see attached presentation). He described the principles and methodology used while formulating the selection criteria, identifying potential pilot areas and offering a list of potential pilots to the beneficiary institutions for consideration. The Open Discussions that followed this presentation raised questions about trans-boundary cooperation and the need to obtain sufficient data for developing RBMPs. This point was particularly relevant in the case of non-project countries (such as Turkey and Romania).

The issue of the manageable size of the pilot river basins, which is particularly relevant should the Upper Dnieper be selected as trans-boundary pilot for Ukraine and Belarus, was raised by **Mr Sergei Zavyalov**, who noted that the whole basin could not be addressed since the Russian Federation is not participating in the project anymore. However, he did not exclude possibility of receiving hydrological and chemical monitoring data from the Russian colleagues that will help in analysing the baseline situation on the Dnieper upstream of the Belarusian border. **Ms Olga Lysyuk** suggested that Ukrainian and Belarusian beneficiary institutions should decide on a bilateral level which part of the Upper Dnieper has to be considered as a pilot area.

Ms Zoriana Mischiuk, Executive Director of the "Mama-86" NGO, underlined the importance of selecting the Upper Dnieper as a pilot area, since one of the recommendations received by the Dnieper Forum, held on 6-7 July 2012, was to accelerate with the development of the Basin Management Plan for this river. Although the EPIRB



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will work only on a smaller part of the entire basin, it is still very important to develop RBM planning skills for future actions.

Ms Dianna Celac followed up with this discussion by addressing the Prut river basin. She asked the European Commission whether the EPIRB project could also finance a joint project with Romania and Ukraine for the development of a river basin management plan for the whole Prut basin. In his response **Mr Di Pietrantonio** clarified the geographical scope of the project only allows to target non-EU member states, such as those covered by the Eastern Partnership. However, Mr Di Pietrantonio mentioned the possibility to explore ways for establishing cooperation and synergies with the joint Moldova-Ukraine-Romania initiative mentioned by Ms Celac if sufficient information is provided before the start of operations. In addition to this project, **Mr Demydenko** informed the participants about another project on the Prut financed by the Cross-Border Cooperation initiative that will provide equipment to the participating countries on flood assessment and prevention.

DAY 2: 19 July 2012

Session 3: Interaction and synergy with other projects in the region

Mr Di Pietrantonio addressed the issue of the coordination among river basin management projects in the EaP region. He mentioned that operations in the region are growing in number and complexity and that the increasing amount of financial and technical resources allocated to the ENP countries reflects the importance of this region for the EU. Therefore, better coordination across EU initiatives and projects in the region is necessary and an effort is being made to rationalise interventions and avoid overlapping. In this respect, it is important to stress the hierarchy of initiatives in the water sector in the EaP region. The Commission sees the EUWI in EECCA as an umbrella initiative under which a number of projects implemented in the field should operate. Therefore the EPIRB project, as well as other EU-funded interventions, will have to be implemented consistently with objectives of the Water Initiative in each country.

Mr Demydenko informed the participants that a detailed description of the projects mentioned by Mr Di Pietrantonio is provided in the Draft Inception Report and mentioned that the EPIRB project experts have already established contacts with the teams in charge of the abovementioned projects in view of starting cooperation with regard to the implementation of the concrete activities. He subsequently provided an overview of the ongoing cooperation within the European Union Water Initiative process, with particular regard to the National Policy Dialogues.

Mr Jincharadze presented the options for cooperation with the SEIS project (implemented by the European Environment Agency), whose aim is to shift to an electronic format the current environmental reporting and data sharing systems.

Mr Harald Leumens introduced the UNDP-GEF Project on Reducing Trans-boundary Degradation in the Kura-Aras Basin, described the four thematic components of the Project, as well as future plans regarding the preparation of national action plans and programs on integrated water resources management as well as training and workshops conducted for the representatives of different Ministries and other institutions. He expressed his willingness to hold discussions with the EPIRB project in the areas where coordination is most needed: data collection and recording of the information on water quality and development of the respective databases.

Mr Andriy Mazur presented the activities implemented under the Trans-boundary River Management for the Kura River - Phase III project and indicated the milestones of this initiative: preparation of tailor-made draft policy



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documents, proposal for establishing a common approach to water quality assessment in the Caucasus, institutional technical assistance and trainings, specialised technical assistance for field surveys.

Mr Oleksiy Yaroshevych, Team Leader of the Environmental Sector Budget Support Programme in Ukraine, presented his opinion concerning common activities with the EPIRB and expressed his willingness for further discussions and cooperation with the project, particularly regarding the drafting of legal documents and guidelines on RBMPs development in Ukraine.

Session 4: Project activities for the next six months planning period

Mr Demydenko presented the project planning for the next 6 months noting that the participants could find the “Detailed Plan of Activities for next six month” in the Inception Report. There will be four main directions: River Bases Analysis for all pilot basins; Activities 1.3 on water assessment guidelines and 1.4 on monitoring programs as well as obligations of countries according to UNECE Water Convention and Danube Convention.

Mr Jincharadze explained that the activities on River Bases Analysis are very important also for the elaboration of the guidelines on assessment and monitoring. **Mr Demydenko** added about the importance of identification and review of local potential or existing competent authorities and appropriate coordination bodies at local levels responsible for the implementation of activities and selected Programme of Measures defined under the pilot RBMPs.

Mr Chunarev asked Mr Jincharadze to explain in details why additional geographical and economic analyses are needed for Ukraine when such analyses have already been done carried out for the Dniepr River basin. Mr Chunarev also expressed his concerns about the quality of the Hydro-Morphological Assessment Report presented as an annex to the Inception Report and about the involvement of the Ukrainian experts in the project. He added that he wished to see more detailed analyses and recommendations as regards the Hydro-Morphological Assessment. He also listed several institutes dealing with the monitoring issues that were not included in the report and that should be contacted in order to gather additional information.

Mr Jincharadze agreed with Mr Chunarev and added that the Project is not going to replicate activities that were already done. Instead, existing data will be used. Mr Jincharadze also mentioned that this project is not only for Ukraine, but also for 6 more counties and such analyses have to be done for other river basins. In reply to the question regarding the source of the existing data and the persons responsible for providing information to the project, **Mr Demydenko** answered that the project team consists of 5 key experts, several country water managers, as well as several short term experts, who will be invited to contribute at different stages during the Project implementation. This group will perform the work in cooperation with the representative of the beneficiary counties and institutions. **Mr Jincharadze** from answered that the analyses will be conducted not for the whole country but only for the selected pilot basins. He mentioned that based on this information, further activities will be implemented. **Ms Koltsova** promised to take the comments into account in view of revising the Report before re-submission and final approval. With regard to the selection of the experts, Mr Demydenko mentioned that the candidates for the position of short term project experts are proposed to and selected in cooperation with the countries. **Mr Buys** made a remark about the reference conditions by noting that there is plenty of historical data which could be used as a source of information about the development of the riverbed of Dnieper. Therefore, when considering this task, Mr Buys advised to try and assessing all available material in view of gathering sufficient information for establishing the reference conditions.

Mr Zavyalov mentioned that based on the discussions that took place during the RSC meeting he considers that the Inception Report could be approved under the condition that a thorough revision of the document and its



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annexes along the lines of the comments made by the RSC members. He also mentioned that it is important that all the RSC representatives receive the documents well ahead of the next meetings and translated into Russian.

Representatives from Armenia and Moldova made their final remarks regarding the monitoring and analyses topics, as well as on the experts' selection process. They both agreed that the experts have to be approved also by the beneficiary institutions.

Finally, **Mr Demydenko** summarized the meeting by mentioning that the Project Team will take into consideration all the remarks, suggestions and also criticisms expressed by the participants regarding the Inception Report. He apologized on behalf of the Team for both the content and procedural mistakes and committed to correct them in the final version of the report. He therefore asked the partner countries to receive their comments by 10 August at the latest. Regarding the meetings of the National Coordination Committee, Mr Demydenko underlined that starting from September 2012 the Project is going to start planning these meetings. From October onwards the Project will start implementing trainings and seminars related to Activities 1.3 and 1.4, as well as carrying out the analyses of the pilot river basins. As for the selection of the national experts, Mr Demydenko noted that the comments will be duly taken into consideration. Mr Demydenko also underlined the importance of multi-stakeholder communication and noted that the best way of such communication would be the establishment of the National Coordination Committee in each beneficiary country.

At the end of the meeting, **Mr Demydenko** informed the attendees that next SCM will be held in a year time (possibly in the Caucasus) and committed on behalf of the team and the project consortium to deliver tangible results by that time. Mr Demydenko informed the participants that the minutes of the 1st SCM will be prepared and sent to the participants as soon as possible.