



INTERNATIONAL WATERS RESULTS NOTES

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The Caspian Sea_ Restoring Depleted Fisheries & Consolidation of a Permanent Regional Environmental Governance Framework –CaspEco

GEF Agency Project ID: PIMS 4058 IW FSP, Project Status: Active



1. Fostered Inter-sectoral cooperation at national level and multi –state cooperation at regional level towards ecosystem based management of aquatic bio-resources of the Caspian Sea,
2. Strengthened regional environmental governance through finalization of three ancillary protocols to the Tehran Convention, signing of the protocol on oil spill incidents, endorsement of the Strategic Convention Action Plan, development of National Convention Action Plan(s) and National Public Participation Strategy(s)
3. Assisted the countries to agree to promote existing interagency cooperation to an intergovernmental fisheries management agreement and political commitments to apply ecosystem-based joint actions on sustainable fisheries and bioresources.

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PROJECT OBJECTIVE

This project builds upon a solid foundation of a regional cooperation for Caspian environmental conservation put in place by the five Caspian states (Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Russian Federation and Turkmenistan) and the Caspian Environment Program over a period of more than 10 years (1998- 2007) with substantial catalytic support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Building on these achievements this **project's objective is to strengthen regional environmental governance and apply new thinking to the sustainable management and conservation of the Caspian's bioresources.**

The project supports the littoral states' efforts to halt the decline in bioresources and to restore depleted fisheries in the Caspian Sea, through the implementation of agreed actions, and to fully operationalize and make the Caspian Sea's regional environmental governance mechanism sustainable.

The major focus of GEF involvement will be to assist the countries to agree on the political commitments made to ecosystem-based joint action on sustainable fisheries and bioresources and introduce institutions and reforms to catalyze implementation of policies reducing over-fishing and benefiting communities. The project's two-pronged approach focuses on bolstering ecosystem based management of aquatic bioresources; and Strengthened regional environmental governance.

The key outcomes sought under the two main components are: Improved ecosystem-based aquatic bioresources management; Invasive species mitigation; Implemented policies & measures to increase reproductive success of Caspian's diadromous fish species; Application of circum-Caspian approach to habitat conservation; and increased; Coastal communities participate in and contribute measurably to improved bioresources conservation; Operational and sustainable Tehran Convention institutions; Coordination and synergy with other projects and activities including effective donor coordination and engagement; Implementation of Strategic Convention Action Plan (SCAP) at regional level and NSCAP at national/sub-national level; Enhanced stakeholders' engagement in the Tehran Convention process and improved public access to information.

RESULTS: PROCESS

INDICATOR # 1-[INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF TEHRAN CONVENTION IS FULLY OPERATIONAL AND SUSTAINABLE]

The institutional and sectoral context at the national level is well established and dominated by Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries or Departments of Environment, Ministries of Agriculture and Fisheries, and various research and monitoring institutions attached to Environment and Fisheries. The main institutional and policy gap at the national is the lack of role clarity in the existing coordination mechanism, in particular with regards to bio-resources management issues in some countries. To enable these different Ministries to work effectively together and bring the environmental issues to the fore, the project, as well as the Convention established national coordination and implementation structures for the implementation of the Convention and its protocols.

The Tehran Convention is a sustainable development convention addressing the priorities and interests of a wide range of government agencies. In order to engage and ensure broad national support and participation in the implementation of the Convention and its protocols, the Strategic Convention Action Programme was endorsed and Biennial Convention Plan of Work (2009-2010 and 2010-2011), were implemented. Development of the National Strategic Convention Action Plans (NSCAPs) were initiated. The NSCAPs are being finalized.

Within the framework of the NSCAP each country will establish an inter-Ministerial Coordination mechanism. The project assisted the countries through the development of guidelines, demonstration of best practices and the provision of other forms of technical assistance and advice to finalize the NSCAPs. In Turkmenistan, the President's Office has established an "Inter-agency Commission on Caspian Issues at the President of Turkmenistan" chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

National Focal Point nominated National Project Coordination Officer (NPCO) in each country who is acting as the day-to-day national implementation liaison, monitoring and coordinator at the national level of the SCAP, NSCAP. Each littoral country also nominated a National Convention Liaison Officers (NCLO). The tasks and activities of the NCLO relate to the implementation of the Convention and its SCAP- based Programme of Work (PoW). The project will monitor implementation of the SCAP and the NSCAPs and will assist the countries to revisit and update the SCAP and the NSCAPs in the last year of the project.

Generated financial support by the Caspian littoral states for the administration of the Convention and its Protocols, and promoted regional negotiations on the location of the Tehran Convention Permanent Secretariat (TCPS).

In their 25-point declaration on 16 October 2007, in Tehran, the Presidents of the five Caspian Sea countries noted the need to finalize the procedural aspects of the Tehran Convention as soon as possible, especially as regards the location of the permanent secretariat to the Convention.

Ministerial Statement of the Third Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention held in Aktau (August 10-12, 2011), reflect strong political will of the contracting parties to finalize the decision on the location of the Permanent Secretariat to the Tehran Convention before the end of the year 2012 at the Forth Conference of the Parties which is to be held in Moscow in 2012.

The region was promoted through number of regional negotiation to finaliz draft ancillary protocols in priority areas : (i) Protocol on Biodiversity Conservation; (ii) Protocol on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context; (iii) Protocol for the Protection of the Caspian Sea against Pollution from Land based sources of Pollution and Activities; and (iv) Protocol concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Cooperation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents.

The Protocol Concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Cooperation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents (Aktau Protocol) was signed at the Third Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention, which was held in Aktau (August 10-12, 2011).

The first three protocols are almost finalized pending minor issues to be negotiated at the preparatory meeting for the Forth Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention (COP IV) which is to be held in Moscow, in 2012. It is anticipated to sign these protocols at the COP IV. TCIS is responsible for advancing and servicing further negotiations and activities in preparation and anticipation of protocol ratification and implementation. A New Protocol on Environmental Monitoring and an Intergovernmental Agreement on Fisheries Management are on the way.

INDICATOR # 2- Littoral States Implement Strategic Convention Action Programme (SCAP) as adopted by the COP-II at regional level and approve and implement NSCAP at national/sub-national level.

Updated knowledge-based and enforceable Strategic Convention Action Programme (SCAP) was endorsed by the Caspian Littoral States and National Convention Action Plan (NSCAP) for each Caspian littoral state was developed to facilitate national-level implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols. The implementation of the NSCAP will be under the responsibility of each Contracting Party and will be coordinated under the umbrella of the inter-ministerial coordination structure.

Protocols require collection of specific information and reporting. For example, the Biodiversity protocol calls for the monitoring of alien species, ecological systems, habitats, and biological characteristics of sensitive areas. Harmonized data will allow countries to apply common approaches and criteria to the implementation of TC protocols. Standard reporting formats for the primary types of technical (quantitative) data and programmatic (qualitative) was developed and endorsed per data requirement under each protocol in order to ensure adequate monitoring of protocol , SCAP and NSCAP implementation.

INDICATOR # 3 .ENHANCED STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT IN THE TEHRAN CONVENTION PROCESS AND IMPROVED PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON THE STATUS OF THE CASPIAN SEA ENVIRONMENT.

Creation of a website-based “Caspian virtual partnerships” engaged in the implementation of the Tehran Convention and its protocols as a part of Caspian Information Centre was initiated. Aligned and streamlined Public Participation Strategy (PPS) to better support the requirements of the Convention and its protocols with the overall objective to strengthen the involvement of the civil society in the Caspian Sea region in the implementation of the Tehran Convention. National Public participation Strategy is an integral part of NSCAP, therefore, ensures national commitments for its implementation.

So far two regional stakeholders meetings, enabled regional NGO community to exchange experiences, Strategize and coordinate their input to the Tehran Convention process. Further support to the strengthening of the civil society engagement in the Convention process will be provided through regular regional NGO meetings that will allow the regional NGO community to exchange experiences, strategize and coordinate their input to the Convention process.

The project Enhanced data and information sharing through the establishment of a web-based CIC, incorporating available environment status data, accessible and transparent for public – as a critical element to facilitating good regional environmental governance and to meet the requirements of the Tehran Convention, in particular Art. 21. Upon request of the COP, the CIC will also be the host to a Tehran Convention website and to the above mentioned “Virtual NGO Partnership”.

A unified, integrated, and affordable Caspian ecosystem monitoring program (EMP) among all five Caspian countries, inter-linked with the Virtual Caspian Information Center and Reporting Format endorsed by the Caspian Littoral states to establish an internationally accessible database on environmental health parameters in the Caspian Sea.

In close collaboration with main stakeholders and on the basis of scientific assessments, the first “Biennial State of the Environment of the Caspian Sea” was prepared and presented at the Third Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention (August 10-12, 2011).The SOE is aiming at ensuring and improving the availability of regular comprehensive reports providing accurate, up-to-date and accessible information about environmental conditions of the Caspian Sea and thereby enhancing the consciousness of the civil society.

RESULTS: STRESS REDUCTION

INDICATOR#1 –[ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT (EBM) BEGUN TO BE ADOPTED AND PRACTICED BY THE CASPIAN STATES]

Regional collaboration on bioresources management and conservation is in its nascent stages in the Caspian region. New analytical models and decision support tools for Ecosystem based Bioresources Management was developed. Moreover, development of Caspian Ecoregional Assessment to generate data for ecological modelling tools, enabled Caspian scientists to create an ecological pathway model

utilizing “Ecopath” software(a fisheries-based ecosystem-modeling tool to help stakeholders to understand better the complex biological inter-relationships of the Caspian ecosystem.

INDICATOR # 2- [Capacity building for bioresource governance and management].

Cooperation on bioresources management in the region is fraught with political sensitivities The Commission on Aquatic Bioresources (an inter-agency regional body involved in bioresources management and conservation in the Caspian established in 1992) is the only official regional body conducting joint research on bioresources and making decisions on utilization, of shared stocks, including sturgeons, kilka and seals. Although the CAB is officially responsible for making decisions based on sound scientific principles of sustainable fisheries management, traditional fishery management were reluctant to recognize the importance of natural environmental variability and complexity as essential features of healthy ecosystems and necessary for sustained fish production and instead viewed natural variability as an impediment to achieving optimal production.

The CAB has no legal basis and this hampers the authority and effectiveness of the Commission itself and the ability of CAB to build its capacity. With no legal basis, it is difficult for member states to obtain funding from their governments for CAB. This is also hampering the finalization of an inter-governmental agreement on common fishery policy for shared stocks. As in many other parts of the world, there are environment/fisheries management gaps. Traditionally, environmental institutions and fisheries institutions rarely have worked together, one seeking to conserve and the other seeking to utilize. Establishment of the four working groups of the CaspEco project (on EBM, fish spawning grounds, fish passages, and seal special protected areas) having members from both the institutions paved the way for close cooperation between the environmental and fisheries institutions.

The project strengthened regional bioresources management effectiveness and institutional capacity through bridging the bioresource conservation and management skills gap among Caspian countries, and contributing to the activities of the CAB and its members in integrating the ecosystem approach.

For the first time in the history of the Caspian regional cooperation, the CaspEco project facilitated a regional meeting on bioresources management of the Caspian Sea with participation of the representatives of the three most important stakeholder groups: Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of environment/Natural Resources, and Ministries of Agriculture/Departments of Fisheries and the Interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention. The meeting agreed to develop an intergovernmental fisheries agreement.

INDICATOR # 3- [INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF AND CONTRIBUTION BY COASTAL COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE BIORESOURCES CONSERVATION IN THE CASPIAN]

Eleven Matched Small Grants Programme (MSGP) and **Twenty one** Micro Environmental Grants Programme (MEG) are being implemented. About 70% of these grants programmes are completed. The small grants program (MSGP) co-financed (each grant up to \$50,000) small-scale projects at the coastal community level and resulted in measurable support for improved ecosystem based bio-resources management. The MSGP projects also contributed to sustainable livelihood at the community level and broaden stakeholder engagement in CaspEco and implementation of the Caspian Strategic Convention Action Programme and the associated national plans. These projects at the coastal community level aimed to reduce pressure on Bio-resources and promote sound bio-resources management, such as small scale aquaculture, eco-tourism, eco-friendly agriculture practices, innovative protected areas management. Some of the projects promoted sharing successful experiences across communities within and between countries. The MEGs were of smaller size of up to \$5,000, did require mandatory matching and focused on NGOs/CBOs capacity building, environmental awareness raising and learning at the local community level.

RESULTS: WATER RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

INDICATOR# 1- [STAKEHOLDERS APPLY REGIONAL, CIRCUM-CASPIAN APPROACH TO HABITAT CONSERVATION IN THE CASPIAN.]

Results-based state-of-the-art management plan for the Kura River Delta protected area and Management Plan for Seal Special Protected Areas in the Republic of Kazakhstan were initiated and will be completed by the end of 2011, but Circum Caspian approach to habitat conservation i.e. establishment of a network of Special Protected Areas of the Caspian Environment (SPACE) including the establishment of marine protected areas is pending the finalization of the Protocol on Biodiversity Conservation and its Annexes on Establishment of SPACE Network.

INDICATOR # 2- [CASPIAN STAKEHOLDERS IMPLEMENT POLICIES & MEASURES TO INCREASE REPRODUCTIVE SUCCESS OF CASPIAN'S DIADROMOUS FISH SPECIES]

The Project implemented Pilot Projects to improve existing hatcheries efficiency including location consideration, culture techniques for the Caspian salmon hatchery.

Gene-bank Pilot Project was established at the International Sturgeon Research Institute to support the conservation and sustainable use of the sturgeon gene pool and clarify the problem of genetic variability and viability within remaining populations of priority Caspian fish species and initiate work to conserve and sustainably utilize the genetic variability of sturgeon stocks.

A Caspian-wide inventory of the natural spawning ground habitat for Caspian sturgeon and Caspian salmon below and above dams and fish passage assessment was conducted to develop pilot projects proposals to be submitted to the Governments for rehabilitation of priority spawning areas and to modify fish passage facility to increase the efficiency and effectiveness and return on investment.