

## Summary Report

### **Informal consultations on UNECE support to transboundary water cooperation and the work of joint bodies for transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia**

8 April 2014, Geneva

Informal consultations took place in the framework of and with support of the UNECE-GIZ Program “Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Water Resources Management in Central Asia”. Informal consultations focused on specific issues and on-going projects in Central Asia in the areas covered by the Second workshop “River Basin Commissions and other Joint Bodies for Transboundary Water Cooperation: Technical Aspects” (Geneva, 9-10 April 2014) under the UNECE Water Convention.

Mr. Andrey Vasilyev, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary and Mr. Hans-Ullrich Ihm, Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia, GIZ, welcomed the participants. Mr. Bo Libert, UNECE, introduced the objectives of the meeting: (i) exchange of information, (ii) discussing options for further strengthening of regional cooperation in Central Asia on water and environment as well as implementation of the Third Aral Sea Basin Program (ASBP-3). In a tour de table, participants from the governments, EC IFAS, SIC ICWC and Chu-Talas Commission presented their expectations from the meeting.

Mr. Marton Krasznai, UNECE, presented an overview of UNECE activities on joint bodies for transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia, in particular on the strengthening of the legal and institutional frameworks for transboundary water cooperation. He reported on the activities of the first phase of the program which resulted in the development of the study on institutional and legal strengthening of IFAS and the elaboration of Conceptual Elements for a possible new institutional treaty. He also described efforts in the second phase of the program to regulate the issue of rotation in IFAS through the preparation of a draft Protocol on rotation to the 1999 IFAS Agreement. Mr. Krasznai also described the activities directed at the strengthening of the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development supported through the second phase of the program, in particular the recent efforts related to the development of the Roadmap for implementation of recommendations with regard to the strengthening of institutional and legal bases of regional cooperation within the mandate of ICSD.

Participants exchanged views on the need for regulation of rotation and raised questions on the contents of the draft Protocol. They also discussed possible modalities for the process to work on an instrument regulating the rotation issue. The need for better regulation of other procedural issues connected with the activity of EC IFAS was also raised. Participants emphasized that the process of strengthening the ICSD should also strengthen the linkages of ICSD with other bodies of the IFAS system. Many participants underlined the need for all actors (IFAS institutions, donors and international organizations) to address more prominently the initial goal of IFAS system, i.e. the saving of the Aral Sea and the mitigation of consequences of the Aral Sea disaster.

Participants discussed progress in implementation of ASBP-3. EC IFAS reported on the outcomes of monitoring of ASBP-3 implementation. EC IFAS representatives stressed the positive results with implementation of national projects (92 projects implemented, 89

projects in the process of implementation). Efforts to engage donors in implementation of regional projects were discussed. EC IFAS also reported on efforts to raise awareness about the mission and activities of IFAS among a wider range of donors. The need for regular and coordinated cooperation of IFAS institutions with donors, as a prerequisite to donor funding, was stressed, along with donor coordination being an inherent function of EC IFAS. UNECE and GIZ underlined the need for direct and regular contacts by EC IFAS with donors and international organisations. Several participants urged the representatives of Kyrgyzstan to facilitate the nomination of Kyrgyz representatives to EC IFAS. SIC ICWC reported on the implementation of projects in the framework of ASBP-3.

The discussion then focused on UNECE support to implementation of ASBP-3. Mr. Peep Mardiste, UNECE, reported on progress achieved and future perspectives of the development of EU Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues in four countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan). Participants reiterated the usefulness of the dialogues for the development of policies and legislation in the water sector. Mr. Bo Libert presented the developments in water quality project, dam safety project, and support to the Chu-Talas and Afghan-Tajik cooperation, as facilitated by UNECE.

The concluding session in the format of tour de table focused on further steps and ideas for strengthening support to regional water resources management in Central Asia. Participants informed of the needs for strengthening the work on water quality (through improving exchange of information and monitoring basis) and dam safety (through finalization of the regional agreement and strengthening of national institutions). Also, they urged UNECE and GIZ to facilitate the involvement of donors in ASBP-3 implementation. Mr. Hans-Ullrich Ihm presented the tentative outline of the next phase of the GIZ's Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia Program. The Chu-Talas Commission stressed the need for support to its secretariat, as well as to the development of a basin plan and establishment of basin council. SIC ICWC informed of the regional cooperation priorities identified at the ICWC meeting in December 2013. CAREC informed of its activities and plans on regional water resources management.

## Annex I - Agenda

### Agenda

Informal consultations on UNECE support to transboundary water cooperation and the work of joint bodies for transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia

8 April 2014, Geneva

*Consultations provide an opportunity to discuss in detail the issues and projects in Central Asia covered by the agenda of the Second workshop “River Basin Commissions and other Joint Bodies for Transboundary Water Cooperation: Technical Aspects” (Geneva, 9-10 April 2014) under the UNECE Water Convention. Participants are expected to discuss UNECE support to water management in Central Asia and ideas for future directions of work.*

- 10.00            Opening
- UNECE: overview of current programs
- Statements by national delegations, EC IFAS, SIC ICWC, ICSD, Chu-Talas Commission
- 11.30            Implementation of Third Aral Sea Basin Programme
- EC IFAS: achievements and challenges
- GIZ: support to implementation
- UNECE: National Policy Dialogues and other projects
- 13.00            Lunch
- 14.00            Further strengthening of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
- ICSD: study and roadmap
- 15.30            Next steps: opportunities for further efforts from UNECE to support water resources management in Central Asia
- Tour de Table: needs and proposals

## Annex II - List of participants

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### WAT: Consultations "Joint Bodies in Central Asia"

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**Start Date:** Tuesday, April 08, 2014

**End Date:** Tuesday, April 08, 2014

**Participants:** 21

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