**Framework Convention
for the Protection of the Marine
Environment of the Caspian Sea**

**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Fourth Meeting
Moscow, 10-12 December 2012**

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

CASPIAN ENVIRONMENT INFORMATION CENTER (CEIC)
Note by the interim Secretariat

1.   Article 19 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention) stipulates that the Contracting Parties shall, inter alia, "develop a centralized database and information management system to function as a repository of all relevant data, serve as the basis for decision-making and as a general source of information and education for specialists, administrators and the general public".

2.   The GEF/UNDP CaspEco project, launched in April 2009, included support for the development of "a Data/information sharing web-based Caspian Information Centre incorporating Caspian environment status data

3.   The Strategic Convention Action Program, adopted at COP2 in Tehran, on 12 November 2008, as a comprehensive ten year agenda and framework for the implementation of the Convention and its future Protocols included "the development of the centralized database and information management system" amongst the actions needed "to prevent, reduce and control pollution of and to protect, preserve and restore the marine environment of the Caspian Sea.".

4.   To that end the Program of Work 2009-2010, adopted at COP2 provided for the development of "a Shared Environmental Monitoring and Information system promoting data collection, monitoring, analysis, harmonization and public communication".

5.   In a meeting on 9-10 September 2009, in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, delegations of the Contracting Parties were briefed and exchanged views on the elements of a shared environmental information program for the Caspian Sea region, including a web-based information centre.

6.   At COP3, in Aktau, 12 August 2011, the Ministers and High-level Officials of the Contracting Parties "welcomed the progress in the establishment of a virtual Caspian Information Centre to be operational prior to COP4

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7.   The Program of Work 2011-2012, adopted at COP3, provided for the development and establishment of a data base for receiving, sharing and handling SOE related information, as part of the CEIC.

8.   The actual development of the Caspian Environment Information Centre to "promote the collection and act as the thesaurus of environmental data related to the state of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea" has been subject of a project concluded on 15 November 2011, sponsored by Bitish Petroleum Exploration (Caspian Sea) Limited and implemented by GRID Arendal on behalf of the interim Secretariat.

9.   By letter of 8 December 2011 the Ministers, NFPs of the Caspian littoral states were informed of the launch of the project and invited to nominate an Environmental Information Officer as the focal point for the collection and management of data and information in the country. Coordinated by GRID Arendal the Information Officers met on 2 October 2012 with representatives of the Euroean Environment Agency in Copenhagen, and on 4 and 5 October at RID Arendal in Arendal, Norway, formulated the recommendation on the Provisions for the CEIC, attached as Annex to this note.

Suggested Action:

10.   The Conference of Parties may wish to:

   a) Welcome the proposal contained in the Annex to this note for the web-based Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC) as the thesaurus of data and information submitted and collected in the context of he implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols; and

   b) Request the interim Secretariat to coordinate and ensure its full operation with the involvement and/or support of GRID Arendal, the GEF, the EU and other stakeholders, including the oil and gas industry.

Provisions related to the Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC)
Recommendation by the participants of the joint EEA – UNEP/GRID-Arendal
workshop

Background

Environmental Information Officers (EIOs) and/or delegated country representatives of the five Caspian littoral states met together at the joint European Environmental Agency (EEA) and UNEP/GRID-Arendal workshop: "Development of the Environmental Information Management System for the Caspian Littoral States" from 2nd to 5th October, 2012 in Copenhagen, Denmark and Arendal, Norway.

The main purpose of the gathering was to discuss and make recommendations concerning the structure and content of the Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC) which aims providing reliable and high-quality data for decision-makers and, as appropriate, to the public at large. The main principles of the CEIC are to support decision-making processes and to provide access to information and information sharing.

The EIOs agreed on the following recommendation for consideration and adoption by COP4.

Introduction

Article 19.5 of the Tehran Convention provides for the establishment of a centralized data base and information management system. In response and at the request of the interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention, GRID-Arendal, in close cooperation and consultation with the designated Environmental Information Officers (EIOs) of the five Caspian littoral states, elaborated the proposal for the establishment of the Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC).

ToR for CEIC

The objective of the CEIC is to make reliable and high-quality data available to decision-makers and, as appropriate, to the public at large. The information provided by the Centre will be organized along the structure and information provided by the Unified Reporting Format (URF) for the Tehran Convention and its protocols, and the Environmental Monitoring Program (EMP) for the Caspian Sea. It will also serve as the basis for the State of the Environment reporting under the Convention.

More in particular the CEIC will aim at:
- supporting the national reporting to the Tehran Convention on the basis of the Unified Reporting Format;

- supporting the cooperation and data exchange between the stakeholders in the Caspian region at the national and sub-national levels;
- supporting the provision of the reliable and high-quality data;
- standardizing and acting as an authoritative source for baseline data sets relevant to the protection of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea, obtained in the context of the EMP;
- contributing to the awareness raising and information exchange between and dissemination to the stakeholders;
- providing and organizing the data and information for regular State of the Environment Reporting;
- improving the regional cooperation and data exchange on the protection of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea in partnership with other data collection and reporting systems in the region.

The CEIC will be based on a network of collaborating institutions in Caspian littoral states, in particular Government sections, monitoring stations, the private sector and NGOs should be coordinated through the EIOs. The terms of reference of the EIO are attached.

Participants propose that overall management of the network be vested in an institution in the region under the overall supervision of the Convention Secretariat and with close links to expertise available in the wider pan-European region.

Content

The overall concept that drives the CEIC (http://www.kaspinfo.com/) is the Unified Reporting Format and the EMP. This web-based portal is implemented pursuant to the provisions of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols and in its set-up will be made consistent with the chronological order and geographical scope of the Convention.

CEIC portal shall classify the information/data provided to it into the thematic sections, such as the marine pollution, invasive species, environmental emergencies etc., as appropriate, and other supporting information, such as institutions, specialists, projects, legal instruments etc., related to the subject.

The CEIC shall be the major reference tool for the development of the mandatory national reporting and make the relevant documents available to the relevant stakeholders.

It is the responsibility of the countries to ensure that the information provided to and by the CEIC is reliable and relevant to the implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols.

Sustainable daily management of and sufficient national support to the CEIC portal will be paramount to the future success of the CEIC.

CEIC provides a secure base for presenting and archiving information. There shall be two levels of access to the information:
- Information available to the general public;
- Information available to the selected user groups.

Partnerships

Participants appreciated that dialogue with the European Environment Agency has been established.

Participants agreed that the EEA's experience in managing environmental information through the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) and the European Environmental Information and Observation Network (EIONET) can guide the Caspian states' efforts, not only by setting up and operating the CEIC, but also inclusive of larger monitoring and reporting networks.

Participants propose that partnerships with other initiatives such as EECCA Working Group of the Water Initiative should be sought and strengthened.

Participants propose that partnerships with other relevant stakeholders – such as the private sector – be lobbied and obtained.

CEIC Environmental Information Officer: Terms of Reference

Working under the supervision of the CEIC Management and in collaboration with the National Focal Point to the Tehran Convention, the CEIC Environmental Information Officer will, within the context of the overall objectives of the CEIC, conduct the following tasks:

1. Support the regional CEIC coordinator in performing the desk review inventory of data, GIS data, data-sources, stakeholders and activities in the country about the Caspian Sea environment. During the preparation of the inventory, fill the data sources template, provided by the CEIC coordinator and provide access to the relevant data, including but not limited to: databases, GIS data (shapefiles) and data-sources; necessary for the preparation of the national report to the Tehran Convention in the Unified Reporting Format, on:
    a) Pollution from Seabed Activities, Vessels, Caused by Dumping, Other Human Activities;
    b) Pollution form Land-Based Sources: National action plan, coastal sources of pollution, hazardous substances load, Pollution from watercourses and river runoff, Point sources, Diffuse sources (including former CEP database on river pollution and point sources);
    c) Oil Pollution: off-shore exploitation, related facilities, suspended wells and obsolete installations. Potential threat of inundation;
    d) Invasive Alien Species;
    e) Environmental Emergencies [provide access to information and data from the Ministry of emergency situations or form the Ministry of Transport (depending on the country)];
    f) Protection, Preservation, Restoration and Rational Use of Marine Living Resources [including scientific institutions of relevance, impact of oil exploitation and transport, legal instruments and mechanisms, indicators of ecosystem health, endemic, rare and endangered marine species, habitats, vulnerable ecosystems, protected areas and bank of genetic data (incl. the database on biological diversity of the Caspian Sea, CaspBIS)];
    g) Coastal zone management;
    h) Caspian Sea level fluctuation;
    i) Environmental Impact Assessment;
    j) Monitoring [list of indicators in use for the monitoring of the Caspian sea (match them with the EEA standardized indicators)];
    m) Research and Development [Complete and update the CEP database on scientific research on the Caspian Sea];
    n) Exchange of and Access to Information;
    o) Other relevant issues;
2. Establish connection to all stakeholders engaged in collection, storage and distribution of data on the environment of the Caspian Sea and related

socio-economic issues, providing access to data from relevant government agencies and institutions, compliance reporting and monitoring, academic research and other relevant data;

3. Establish and maintain connection to the private sector actors in the region in regards to facilitation of the access to corporate environmental data;

4. Organize the national data collection process, using the CEIC portal and publish it on the CEIC web portal [including set-up of stakeholders user accounts, coaching first user sessions, set up the data collection electronic work groups and administer the users and their tasks;

5. Organize and monitor the National Caspian Sea Information Management Network; manage data gaps , data quality, data access policy, and data sources;

6. Coordinate data collection, harmonization and adequate presentation;

7. Conduct discussions to clarify the information policy and the best practices in data exchange, arrange meetings with key data custodians;

8. Act as the information focal point with the CEIC; keep active contact with all information providers encouraging their use of CEIC web portal resources;

10. Publish and maintain the country data on the CEIC web portal;

11. Conduct discussions on information policy; promote best practices on environmental information management and the "Shared Environment Information System (SEIS)" approach from EEA;

12. Organize the translation of the relevant information in working languages of the Tehran Convention (English and Russian);

13. Provide the CEIC web portal developer with the specific requirements for the national web platform in terms of databases, forms and GIS tools;

14. Act as the national focal point and manage the help-line to support information management platform tools including contact directories, meeting schedules, Who, What, Where, GIS maps and other useful utilities.