
Second State of the Caspian Sea Environment Report.

(Note by the Secretariat)

Introduction

At its 5th Meeting in Ashgabat, 30 May 2014, the Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention “underlining the importance of regular Reports on the State of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (SOE)”, “requested the (interim) Secretariat, resources permitting, to coordinate and oversee the preparation of a second State of the Caspian Sea Environment Report (SOE2), based on the principles and guidelines contained in document TC/COP5/6”.

At the 1st Preparatory Committee Meeting (PrepCom1) for the 6th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention (COP6), in Baku, Azerbaijan, 24 – 27 November 2014, the Representatives of the Contracting Parties “emphasizing that the ownership of SOE reporting lies with the Governments of the Caspian States”, “requested the (interim) Secretariat, in consultation with GRID- Arendal, to initiate the preparation of an outline for the next SOE Report as well as a procedure, timeline and budget for its preparation to be reviewed at an expert meeting, for consideration and approval by the second PrepCom for COP6.

PrepCom2, Baku, Azerbaijan, 31 May – 3 June 2015, agreed with the proposal for the preparation of the SOE2, prepared by the (interim) Secretariat in consultation with GRID Arendal, and concluded that the preparations should start once funding has been secured.

The proposal for the preparation of SOE2 is attached as Annex 1.

A project proposal for the 2nd phase of the Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC) is pending approval by British Petroleum. The proposal includes a grant of around USD 47,500 for the preparation of SOE2, in the understanding that an equal amount will be generated from other sources. It is expected that BP will approve the project proposal this year.

In the proposed Program of Work for 2017-2018 the preparation of SOE2 is budgeted for USD 106,000, out of which USD 47,500 will be provided by BP and an amount of up to USD 40,000 is reserved from the Convention budget, in the understanding that all efforts should be made to reduce the allocation and fill the remaining gap of USD 18,500 by contributions in kind and introducing resource saving measures.

Suggested action.

The Conference of the Parties may wish to welcome the proposal for the preparation of SOE2, and request the Secretariat and Grid Arendal to undertake the next steps in the preparatory process and mobilize the necessary additional resources required for its completion.

Annex 1**Preparation of the second State of the Caspian Sea Environment Report**

(proposal by the Secretariat in consultation with Grid Arendal)

Rationale.

Well organized, updated and accessible information is essential for properly founded decision-making. Knowledge of the environmental conditions of the Caspian Sea, as well as of the causes and effects of changes in these conditions is an indispensable prerequisite for common policy development and action to keep the Sea clean and preserve its rich natural resource base for present and future generations. State of the environment reporting is a recognized way of capturing environmental information and making it accessible to policy makers and the public at large. The basic purpose of the State of the Environment Reporting Framework is to allow for regular reporting on an agreed set of regional indicators that show changes and trends in environmental conditions.

In the Caspian Sea region, state of the environment reporting for some time to come will remain “work in progress”, since Governments of the Caspian riparian states have not yet fully decided on the range of information needed for collective decision-making in areas of common concern. The Tehran Convention and its protocols have in broad terms identified what issues need to be addressed, but implementation plans for the protocols have not yet been prepared and a systematic monitoring process underpinning future reporting is under development. Common water quality standards and objectives as well as indicators for measuring change and progress in managing such change need to be further developed and agreed upon. Also, an inventory has to be made of the capacity available in the countries, to help determining how the requirements for monitoring and reporting can be met and what type of support is needed. Furthermore, the web-based CEIC, the common data base and information centre established to receive, store and disseminate the data and information collected, must be made fully operational. The Parties to the Tehran Convention have also agreed to develop and conclude a Protocol to assist them in creating the basis for collective decision making by enlisting the commitments of the Parties in the area of monitoring and information exchange

Methodology

The guidelines contained in document TC/COP5/6 propose that the second SOE Report may, similar to the first SOE Report, be structured according to the Driving Forces-Pressures-State-Impacts-Responses (DPSIR) methodology/framework.

As explained in the first SOE Report, the DPSIR methodology is often used to address integrated management issues in the marine environment. It is a framework, which shows the relationships

between human activity and the state and trends of the environment and human well-being. The methodology has a number of advantages, including simple, intuitive analysis of human-environment interlinkages and the multi-stakeholder approach, bringing together social and natural sciences, as well as policy and law.

Driving Forces (e.g. demographic changes, economic and societal processes) lead to more specific pressures on the environment (e.g. land use change, resource extraction, emissions of pollutants and waste, as well as modification and movement of organisms). These pressures lead to changes in the State of the environment (e.g. climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion, changes in biodiversity and pollution or degradation of air water and soils), which are in addition to those resulting from natural processes.

These changes affect the ecological services that the environment provides to people, such as the provision of clean air and water, food, and protection from ultraviolet radiation, as well as impacts on other aspects of the environment itself, including land degradation, the quality and quantity of habitats, and biodiversity. As a result of changes in ecological services, driven by demographic, social and economic factors, Impacts on the environment and human well-being are expected. The impact is usually indicated by health, economic performance, material assets, good social relations and security.

Societal Responses can influence the environmental state and their associated drivers and pressures (either intentionally or unintentionally). Societal responses essentially fall under two categories: responses directed at mitigating exposure to environmental impacts (e.g., through environmental restoration and enhancement); and responses that help society adapt directly to the impacts that occur and/or build the capacity to adapt to changes in the environment. Societal responses include formulating and implementing public policy, laws and establishing/strengthening institutions, as well as promoting advances in science and technology.

Outline.

Following the DPSIR methodology would mean that the SOE Report would include chapters addressing:

■ Driving forces referring to fundamental processes in society (socio-economic challenges and opportunities);

■ Pressures focusing on human interventions in the environment (decline in bio-resources; non-living resource extraction; external inputs: run offs; air emissions; waste);

■ The current state of the environment based on a set of indicators (state of marine water quality and incoming fresh water, state of air quality, state of sediment quality, state of biodiversity, climate change);

■ Impact analyses of the influence of environmental factors on human well-being (consequences on social and economic sector, consequences on environmental services and bio-resources), and

■ Responses assessing possible policy actions, in particular, adaptation and mitigation (regional and national governance, policy and legislation; monitoring and compliance; participation and outreach)

Content.

The first Caspian Sea SOE Report was to a large extent based on the latest information on policy and legislative measures, institutional set-up, stakeholder engagement, future challenges and barriers to the improvement of the state of the environment in the Caspian Sea region, provided by the governments through a questionnaire. It furthermore analyzed the first and second editions of the Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analyses (TDA); a number of recent documents and reports such as the Regional Water Quality Monitoring and Pollution Plans developed with the support of the EU; the WB-CASPECO Study on Economics of Bio-resources Utilization; the Caspian Vital Graphics: Opportunities, Aspirations, and Challenges; UNDP and HDR country reports; presentations of the 1st investment forum in Baku; WB case studies on environmental economic evaluation; findings of Leeds University and AGIP KCO on Caspian seals; the IOC report on the Caspian Sea; and the Strategic (Tehran) Convention Action Programme.

The guidelines contained in document TC/COP5/6 suggest that for the second SOE Report, the Unified Reporting Format-based National Reports on the implementation of the Tehran Convention and its Protocols be used, as well as relevant parts of National State of the Environment reports. The guidelines furthermore suggest that Parties would need to decide up to what extent use can be made of historic information, and how information collected by the private sector, in particular the oil and gas industry, can be obtained and should be handled.

Relevant to the content of SOE reporting are furthermore the data collected and analyzed in the context of the implementation of the Environmental Monitoring Program (EMP). The scope of this database as well as its baseline reference – the water quality standards and objectives – still have to be determined and integrated in the Protocol on Monitoring and Information Exchange. The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment will have to play a major advisory role in these matters.

Procedure and timeline.

The guidelines in document TC/COP5/6 suggest that the second SOE report be prepared under the auspices of the Tehran Convention Secretariat, with the actual work done by a team of designated national experts (NCLOs and/or designated information officers and/or experts in charge of national SOE reporting) coordinated and supported by GRID-Arendal. Two intergovernmental meetings would take place, one to consider and approve the outline and one to undertake a final review and reach consensus on the text of the report. The Report would be issued in both the English and Russian languages.

Upon approval of the outline and procedure (institutional setting) for the preparation of the SOE report and guidance as to its content, and provided that sufficient resources can be made available, the preparation process would take up to one year:

- 3 months for collecting and at a meeting of experts structuring and agreeing on the documentation;
- 3 months for analyzing, drafting and obtaining expert agreement on the draft SOE Report
- 3 months for obtaining and integrating the comments of Governments and a selected number of stakeholders
- 2 months to allow for an intergovernmental meeting to review and reach consensus on the draft SOE Report
- 1 month to finalize and prepare the SOE Report for publication and dissemination

Budget.

The budget of the entire process would amount to USD 106,000 subdivided as follows:

- Collection, translation and organizing documentation: USD 30,000 (national experts; translators; international consultant; co-ordination)
- Meeting of experts to agree on and structure documentation: USD 12,000
- Analyzing the documentation and drafting the SOE report in English and Russian: USD 25,000 (national experts; translators; international consultant; coordination)
- Obtaining and integrating Government and stakeholder comments: USD 12,000 (national experts; translators; international consultant; coordination)
- Meeting of Government Representatives and experts to review and reach consensus on the SOE report: USD 12,000

Finalizing and preparing the SOE Report for publication and dissemination, in the English and Russian languages: USD 15,000