

PROCEEDINGS OF THE

16th MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE ON WATER SECTOR ISSUES IN ARMENIA

April 7, 2017
Yerevan, Armenia

The 16th Meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) of the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on Water Sector Issues in Armenia was chaired by Mr. Volodya Narimanyan, Deputy Head of the State Committee on Water Systems (SCWS) of the Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources of the Republic of Armenia. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the status of on-going NPD activities and the draft national priorities for 2017-2020 within the EUWI+ project in Armenia. The meeting also aimed to serve as platform for strengthening synergies with other international water projects implemented in Armenia.



16th Meetings of the Steering Committee of the NPD on Water Sector Issues in Armenia

In the **opening session** Mr. Narimanyan welcomed the participants of the meeting, and presented the main points of the agenda. The SC members adopted the agenda as it was presented. In the opening session Mr. Vahan Davtyan, Head of the Water Resources Management Agency (WRMA) of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia informed the SC members that he has been nominated from the Ministry of Nature Protection as the Co-Chairman of the NPD SC, given that particularly the



Results 2 and 3 of the EUWI+ project will be dealing with the water resources management and monitoring issues, which are under the coordination of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia. In addition, 4 other representatives of the Ministry, including its newly established Environmental Monitoring and Information Centre, are nominated as NPD SC members. *The SC welcomed its expansion with additional representatives from the Ministry of Nature Protection and also agreed, that starting from the next meeting the principle of Co-Chairmanship will be applied between the SCWS and WRMA.*

Opening statements were made by Mr. Gregory Tsouris from the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to Armenia, Ms. Tatiana Efimova from Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Mr. Peep Mardiste from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and Mr. Timothy Turner on behalf of the Consortium of the EU Member States.

The **first session** of the meeting related to presenting the national priorities under the EUWI+ Project. Result 1 of the proposed EUWI+ Project workplan for Armenia for 2017-2020 was presented by Ms. Efimova and Mr. Mardiste, and Results 2 and 3 of the proposed national workplan were presented by Mr. Turner and Ms. Florence Pintus, EUWI+ Project River Basin Management Expert from the French International Office of Water.

The presentation was followed by a Q&A session, during which several issues were discussed, such as the importance of provision of modern quantity and quality monitoring equipment and rehabilitation of key hydrological posts in the pilot basins, the need to have additional field surveys to cover data gaps, commonalities and differences in river basin management plans according to the EU WFD and the Armenian water legislation, the importance of the flexibility of the project, potential support to improved water use efficiency and water metering, current problems in the sanitation sector, high water losses in drinking and irrigation water supply, problems with implementation of already adopted RBMPs, and others.

Based on the results of the presentations and follow-up discussion the following SC decision was adopted:

- *The Steering Committee in principle approves the proposed workplan of the EUWI+ Project for Armenia for 2017-2020, welcomes the discussions to link the workplan to national priorities of the Armenian water sector, and requests all key beneficiary institutions to submit written comments to the draft workplan by April 17, 2017.*

The **second session** of the meeting was devoted to updating recent developments in the water sector.

Ms. Nazik Jzmachyan, Leading Specialist of the Water Basin Planning and Management Division of the Water Resources Management Agency of the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia, updated on recent developments in overall water resources management, basin planning and monitoring sectors of Armenia. She particularly talked about recent progress in development of a new chapter on sanitation in the Water Code of Armenia, supported by the EUWI+ Project, as well as formal adoption by the Government of Armenia of the RBMP Akhuryan River Basin District (March 9, 2017), initiation of the process of revision of the outline of the Model RBMP, development of a groundwater resources management plan for the Ararat valley, development of a draft program of measures to increase water use efficiency in the Ararat Valley, replication of the results of the pilot project on introduction of an automated on-line water use control system in the Ararat Valley within the EU "Environmental Protection of International River Basins" project, and recent initiatives on improving environmental flow compliance by small HPPs.



Sona Hayrapetyan, Chief Specialist of Irrigation and Collector-Drainage Systems of the State Committee on Water Systems of the Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources of Armenia, updated on recent developments in drinking water supply and sanitation, and irrigation sectors of Armenia. Particularly, Ms. Hayrapetyan informed about selection of “Veolia Djur” CJSC as the unified operator for a 15-year management contract on drinking water supply and sanitation system in Armenia, and presented the advantages of such approach. She also talked about the recent process of consolidation of WUAs, aimed at increasing efficiency of irrigation water supply to farmers and reducing administrative costs, as well as the merger of irrigation water intake companies, and the significant progress made in reservoir construction in Armenia.

The presentations were followed by Q&A session, during which the participants of the meeting exchanged ideas and discussion the policy implications for the identified sectoral priorities.

The **third session** of the meeting aimed to ensure synergies with other international water projects implemented in Armenia. Detailed presentations were made by the representatives of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and United State Agency for International Development (USAID) funded projects in Armenia.

Mr. Arsen Karapetyan from ADB presented the Second Phase of the Infrastructure Sustainability Support Program. The Program, using a programmatic approach with a policy-based loan providing budget support, ensures leverage for multi-sectoral reforms. It has two subprograms, and among other things focuses on reviewing the economic regulator to increase independence, transparency and accountability, increasing funding for maintenance expenditure and ensuring financial viability of commercial entities in the water sector, and introducing operational reforms to improve the efficiency of the water government agencies.

Ms. Lilith Harutyunyan from the USAID-funded Advanced Science & Partnerships for Integrated Resource Development (ASPIRED) Project presented the progress of the project. The purpose of the ASPIRED Project is to support sustainable water resource management and sustainable practices of water users in the Ararat Valley through the use of science, technology, innovation and partnership initiatives. The ultimate goal is to reduce the rate of groundwater extraction in the Ararat Valley to the sustainable levels. In her presentation Ms. Harutyunyan presented the progress in each of the following critical areas of the project: (i) water resource data, (ii) technology, (iii) water regulation and enforcement, and (iv) coordination across stakeholders.

Both presentations were followed by Q&A session, during which the SC members discussed the coordination between the projects and synergies with the Government priorities in water sector of Armenia, as well as the potential linkage to the EUWI+ project.

The **fourth session** of the SC meeting was devoted to presenting the self-assessment card on equitable access to water and sanitation, as well as the draft water and sanitation action plan for 2018-2020, prepared within the UNECE component of the NPD in Armenia. Introductory remarks were made by Ms. Chantal Demilecamps and Mr. Alisher Mamadzhyanov from UNECE. Afterwards, Ms. Armine Arushanyan, Chief Specialist of the Department of Water Supply and Sanitation Systems of the State Committee on Water Systems of the Ministry of Energy Infrastructures and Natural Resources, presented the results of self-assessment card on equitable access to water and sanitation in Armenia. Ms. Yelena Manvelyan, Chairperson of “Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment” NGO, made a presentation on development of action plan for 2018-2020, based on the results of self-assessment card, as well as with active employment of public participation technique



in the process. Ms. Marietta Khurshudyan, Water and Sanitation Expert, presented the process of development of action plan on equitable access to water and sanitation in Armenia, and Mr. Tigran Ogenzov, Water Management Expert, presented the draft action plan itself.

The presentations were followed by Q&A session, during which the participants of the meeting discussed issues related to self-assessment card and draft action plan, need for formal adoption of the action plan and related topics. Based on the results of the presentations and follow-up discussion, the following SC decision was adopted:

- *The Steering Committee approves the draft action plan for equitable access on water and sanitation in Armenia for the period 2018-2020, and highlights the need for its formal adoption.*

In the **closing session** of the 16th Meeting of the SC of the NPD on Water Sector Issues in Armenia the Chairman recalled the Steering Committee decisions made, as follows:

DECISIONS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

1. The SC welcomes its expansion with additional representatives from the Ministry of Nature Protection and also agrees, that starting from the next meeting the principle of Co-Chairmanship will be applied between the SCWS and WRMA.
2. The Steering Committee in principle approves the proposed workplan of the EUWI+ Project for Armenia for 2017-2020, welcomes the discussions to link the workplan to national priorities of Armenian water sector, and requests all key beneficiary institutions to submitted written comments to the draft workplan by April 17, 2017.
3. The Steering Committee approves the draft action plan for equitable access on water and sanitation in Armenia for the period 2018-2020, and highlights the need for its formal adoption.