

PROCEEDINGS OF THE

20th Meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on Water Issues in Armenia and Thematic Workshop on Nature Based Solutions

October 3-4, 2022
Yerevan, Armenia



1. Proceedings

The 20th Meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee (SC) of the National Policy Dialogue (NPD) on Water Issues in Armenia was chaired by Ms Gayane Gabrielyan, Deputy Minister of Environment of the Republic of Armenia. The meeting saw the reconfiguration of the Steering Committee following by official decree of the Minister of Environment (Decree No 304-L on 6 September 2022). Across 1.5 days (including half-day workshop on Nature-based Solutions), participants discussed and progressed water policy reform priorities for Armenia, including sharing information on ongoing donor-funded projects. It was agreed that the Steering Committee will meet again in approximately 1 year to review progress in implementation of the projects presented at this meeting including monitoring realisation of environmental, social and economic benefits. The agenda for the meeting can be found [here](#) and the list of participants [here](#).

The opening session saw welcoming remarks from Ms. Gayane Gabrielyan, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Mr Frank Hess, Head of Cooperation Section of the EU Delegation to Armenia and Mr Alexander Zinke, Environment Agency Austria and Head of the Consortium for the EU4Environment Water Resources and Environmental Data programme. The speakers welcomed the reconfiguration of the Steering Committee, recognising that water touches all areas of the economy and the importance of strong cross-sectoral participation and dialogue to progress reforms. The recent Water Code amendments were acknowledged as a good step forward for Armenia, furthering alignment with EU good practice and providing momentum and a framework for the NPD. The long-term support of the EU to Armenia's water and environmental sector was recognised and the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was noted as providing a guiding framework for environmental management. Speakers welcomed the new EU4Environment – Water Resources and Environmental Data programme, which builds on the previous success of EUWI+ and SEIS II projects and aims to support Armenia in strengthening the sustainable management of water resources and improving quality and access to environmental data.

The first and second sessions of the NPD agenda provided updates on the two components of EU4Environment Water and Data programme and presented an opportunity for Steering Committee members to consider policy questions proposed by the implementing partners. Thematic Session 1 discussed the challenges of water resources management with key discussion points, including the role of river basin management planning, improving monitoring and availability of data, linkages to water and health and transboundary cooperation in Khrami-Debed River basin and support to the review and implementation of economic instruments. Thematic session 2 captured a rich discussion on the challenges around environmental statistics and data and including specific discussion on some of the legal and institutional challenges in improving reporting and inter-institutional data availability.

Thematic session 3 provided a platform for donor coordination with updates from a range of projects, which the EU4Environment Water and Data programme is expected to coordinate closely with. Speakers represented the following projects: EU4Sevan; USAID project on Improved Water Management for Sustainable Economic Growth; a general update on UNDP projects related to water and linkages to climate change; KfW project on IWRM/Akhuryan River Construction of Kaps Reservoir and Gravity Irrigation System; AFD project on Construction and Vedi Reservoir and Irrigation Scheme and an update on the Water-related activities of the Country Water Partnership in Armenia.

On day 2, a half-day workshop on Nature based Solutions (NbS) discussed the potential of NbS to contribute towards improving the environmental performance in Armenia. Steering Committee members were invited to participate in the workshop to exchange experiences and consider how NbS might support their work to tackle relevant environmental objectives. The EU4Environment Water and Data implementing partners described the intent for work on this area under the new programme and that this introductory workshop aimed to raise awareness of the different type of NbS approaches and possibilities in this direction, ahead of more detailed and regional discussion as the programme progresses. Speakers from the European Commission's DG Environment, IUCN and the EU4Environment implementing partners presented background on latest trends in NbS and international case studies while speakers from the EU4Sevan project, the Ramsar Convention NFP for Armenia and Jinj LLC provided direct experience from within Armenia. The workshop concluded with a site visit to the Khor Virap Ramsar site, supported by Caucasus Nature Fund.

All Steering Committee members and partners were thanked for their participation and commitment to this platform. The Steering Committee was formed in September 2022 and consists of 35 members from the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economy, Public Services Regulatory Commission, Regional Administrations and Universities, Institutes and NGOs. International partners, including from projects and IFIs and donors participate as observers.

2. Participation and visibility

Across the 1.5 days over 70 participants joined the NPD and workshop either in person or in online mode. Participants were 47% female and 53% male.

Thanks to the support of the Ministry of Environment, the NPD meeting received a wide media coverage, it was broadcasted on the first Armenian public TV channel, published on the Ministry of Environment website, and the EU Delegation to Armenia posted about the NPD meeting on its Facebook page. The Ministry's support was key in relaying this event through Armenian media. Key links are reproduced below:

- Broadcast via 1st channel public TV company
- Ministry of Environment published an [article](#) on their website and [posted](#) on their FB page.
- EU Delegation to Armenia [shared the post](#) on their FB page
- The programme shared on FB the post from the Ministry and [posted about the NBS field visit](#)

The NPD meeting was held in a context particularly conducive to wider dissemination, with the recent revision of the Water Code of Armenia, the reconfiguration of the Steering Committee and the particular importance Armenia gives to EU support and cooperation.

About National Policy Dialogues

National Policy Dialogues facilitates policy discussions where stakeholders meet to advance water policy reforms. NPDs are driven by the demand from the host countries and are usually chaired by heads of respective government agencies. A variety of stakeholders participate in the meetings, such as ministries and government agencies and institutions, as well as nongovernmental organisations, the business community, parliamentary bodies, academia. Participants typically include international organisations and EU Member States active in water policy reforms in each country. Under the EU-funded EU4Environment Water Resources and Environmental Data Programme, NPDs are supported in the five Eastern Partner countries.

About EU4Environment – Water Resources and Environmental Data

This programme aims at improving people's wellbeing in EU's Eastern Partner Countries and enabling their green transformation in line with the European Green Deal and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The programme's activities are clustered around two specific objectives: 1) support a more sustainable use of water resources and 2) improve the use of sound environmental data and their availability for policy-makers and citizens. The programme is implemented by five Partner organisations: Environment Agency Austria (UBA), Austrian Development Agency (ADA), International Office for Water (OiEau) (France), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The programme is principally funded by the European Union and co-funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation and the French Artois-Picardie Water Agency based on a budget of EUR 12,75 million (EUR 12 million EU contribution). The implementation period is 2021-2024.

3. Annexes

3.1. List of participants

Steering Committee Members

Gayane Gabrielyan

Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Chairperson of the Steering Committee

Lilit Abrahamyan

Head of Water Policy Department, Ministry of Environment, Coordinator of the Steering Committee

Liana Alikhanyan

Chief Specialist, Water Policy Department, Ministry of Environment

Gayane Shahnazaryan

Deputy Director, Hydrometeorology and Monitoring Centre, Ministry of Environment

Gayane Hovsepyan

Head of Water Resources Cadastre and Monitoring Division, Water Resources Management Department, Ministry of Environment

Meri Harutyunyan

Chief Specialist of Strategic Policy Department, Ministry of Environment

Kristina Hakobyan

Chief Specialist of Atmospheric Policy Department, Ministry of Environment

Narine Hakobyan

Deputy Head of Soil and Underground Resource Policy Department, Ministry of Environment

None Budoyan

Head of Climate Policy Department, Ministry of Environment

Martiros Nalbandyan

Deputy Chairman of the Water Committee, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures

Armen Sergoyan

Head of Water Supply and Sanitation Department of the Water Committee, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures

Sona Hayrapetyan

Head of Irrigation Department of the Water Committee, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures

Nune Bakunts

Deputy Director, National Centre for Disease Control, Ministry of Health

Ruben Grigoryan

Head of Environmental Hygiene Department, National Centre for Disease Control, Ministry of Health

Hrayr Yesayan

Head of Division of Financial Planning of Current Budgetary Programs, Ministry of Finance

Viktorya Kesishyan

Head of Renewable Energy Division, Department of Energy, Ministry of Energy

Nelli Baghdasaryan

Member of the National Statistical Council

Naira Mandalyan

Chief Specialist of Environmental Statistics Division, Statistical Committee

Arkadi Amirkhanyan

Head of Nature Protection Division, Department of Agriculture and Nature Protection, Tavush Regional Administration

Artak Demirchyan

Head of Nature Protection Division, Department of Agriculture and Nature Protection, Lori Regional Administration

Garabet Kazanjian

Water Ecologist, Acopian Centre, American University of Armenia

Marat Grigoryan

Dean of the Faculty of Geography and Geology, Yerevan State University

Gagik Ghazaryan

Chief engineer, “Hayjrnakhagits” Institute

Gurgen Yeghiazaryan

Professor, Armenian National Agrarian University

Emma Anakhasyan

“Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment” NGO

Representatives of Government Agencies

Davit Zakaryan

Water Sector Project Implementation Unit, Armenian Territorial Development Fund

Varazdan Mkrtchyan

Water Sector Project Implementation Unit, Armenian Territorial Development Fund

Ani Hakobyan

Press Secretary, Ministry of Environment

Ellada Melkumyan
Chief Specialist, Public Relations Division, Ministry of Environment

Meri Aghababyan
Chief Specialist, International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Environment

Rima Harutyunyan
Chief Specialist, International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Environment

Anna Mazlumyan
Chief Specialist, Climate Policy Department, Ministry of Environment

Karen Jenderejyan
Advisor, Ministry of Environment

International Organizations and Projects

Karin Zaunberger [online participation]
European Commission Directorate-General for Environment

Frank Hess
Head of Cooperation Section, EU Delegation to Armenia

Andrea Baggioli
International Aid/Cooperation Officer, EU Delegation to Armenia

Christian Henschel
Team Leader, EU4Sevan Project, GIZ

Edgar Pirumyan
Wastewater Expert, EU4Sevan Project, GIZ

Astghik Danielyan
Program Manager, EU4Sevan Project, UNDP

Hovhannes Ghazaryan
Program Analyst,
Climate, Environment and Resilience,
UNDP

Marina Vardanyan
USAID Yerevan Office

Armen Varosyan
Chief of Party, USAID/Armenia Improved Water Management Program

Aram Karapetyan
Task Leader, USAID/Armenia Improved Water Management Program

Diana Harutyunyan
UNDP Climate Change Program Manager

Svetlana Harutyunyan
UNDP/GEF Small Grants Program Coordinator

Gayane Gharabekyan
UNDP Disaster Risk Reduction Program Coordinator

Vahan Amirkhanyan
UN FAO Project Coordinator

Hayastan Stepanyan
Urban Foundation

Armine Tukhikyan
Urban Foundation

Alisa Savadyan
CWP Armenia

Vahe Sargsyan
Austrian Development Agency Armenia Office

James Dalton [online participation]
International Union for Conservation of Nature

Mihaela Lebovics [online participation]
International Union for Conservation of Nature

Fabien Techene [online participation]
International Union for Conservation of Nature

Private Sector, NGOs, Universities, Independent Experts

Alen Amirkhanyan
Director of Acopian Environmental Centre, American University of Armenia

Karen Hakobyan
Independent Expert

Danny Haezebrouck
Independent Expert

Karen Aghababyan
Independent Expert

Eduard Mesropyan
Director, “Jinj” LLC

EU4WD Project

Alexander Zinke
Environment Agency Austria

Matthew Griffiths
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Takayoshi Kato
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Alexander Belokurov
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Johannes Mayer
Environment Agency Austria

Andreas Scheidleder [online participation]
Environment Agency Austria

Peggy Macaigne [online participation]
Environment Agency Austria

Philippe Seguin [online participation]
International Office for Water

Paul Haener [online participation]
International Office for Water

Marta Boyko [online participation]
International Office for Water

Yannick Pochon [online participation]
International Office for Water

Chloé Déchelette [online participation]
International Office for Water

Vahagn Tonoyan
EU4WD Local Representative in Armenia

Total number of participants – **72**
of which female **34 (47%)**, and male **38 (53%)**

3.2. Agenda

DAY 1		
20TH MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE		
Local Time	Item	Speaker
09:00-09:40	Registration and welcome coffee	
09:40-10:00	Opening and welcoming statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour de table - Introduction from members of Steering Committee • Adoption of Agenda 	- G. Gabrielyan, Deputy Minister of Environment of the Republic of Armenia - F. Hess, Head of Cooperation Section of EU Delegation to Armenia - A. Zinke, EU4Environment Water and Data Programme
10:00-11:30	Thematic session 1: Dialogue on water resources management in the framework of the EU4Environment Water Resources and Environmental Data project Session to include planning and progress on River Basin Management Planning, Water Quantitative Management Plan, Water Monitoring including COVID monitoring, Economic Instruments, Mobilising Finance, Water and Health, Legislative developments and Transboundary cooperation in Khrami-Debed River basin Q&A and discussion	Moderator: OECD UBA, IOW, UNECE, OECD
11:30-12:00	Coffee Break	
12:00-13:00	Thematic session 2: Dialogue on environmental statistics and open data in the framework of the EU4Environment Water Resources and Environmental Data project Session to include progress on Environmental Data and open data issues, including water accounts, environmental data, air quality, waste, land cover mapping and international co-operation. Q&A and discussion	Moderator: UBA UBA, IOW, UNECE
13:00-14:30	Lunch	
14:30-15:30	Thematic session 3: Donor coordination Part 1 on challenges and opportunities for water sector. To include presentations and dialogue with relevant projects and donors active on water in Armenia. To discuss ongoing activities and principles, achievements, challenges and future opportunities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU4Sevan project • USAID project on Improved Water Management for Sustainable Economic Growth 	Moderator: Ministry of Environment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP projects related to water (climate change, DRR) 	
	Q&A and discussion	
15:30-16:00	Coffee Break	
16:00-17:30	Thematic session 3: Donor coordination Part 2 on challenges and opportunities for water sector financing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KfW project on IWRM/Akhuryan River Construction of Kaps Reservoir and Gravity Irrigation System • AFD project on Construction and Vedi Reservoir and Irrigation Scheme • Water-related activities of the Country Water Partnership in Armenia • Projects/interventions of other organizations, donors, IFIs 	Moderator: Ministry of Environment
	Q&A and discussion	
17:30-18:00	Closing remarks and meeting summary	- Chair to provide closing statement, key messages, decisions, next steps - Provide an introductory overview of Day 2
18:00-19:30	Networking Cocktail	

DAY 2

THEMATIC WORKSHOP ON POTENTIAL OF NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT IN ARMENIA

Time	Item	Speaker
08:30-09:00	Registration & Welcome coffee/tea	
09:00-09:15	Opening remarks	- L. Abrahamyan, Head of Water Policy Department of the Ministry of Environment of Armenia - A. Belokurov, EU4Environment Water and Data Programme - K. Zaunberger, EC DG Environment
09:15-09:30	Scene-setting presentation	James Dalton, Director - Global Water Programme IUCN
09:30-10:15	Experience from Armenia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing or planned activities under EU4Sevan - Rehabilitation of Khor Virap Ramsar site, supported by Caucasus Nature Fund - Application of nature-based technologies in solving water supply and sanitation issues 	Moderator: Ministry of Environment - EU4Sevan project - Ramsar Convention NFP for Armenia - Jinj LLC
10:15-10:40	Coffee Break	
10:40-11:30	Experience from outside Armenia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managed aquifer recharge (new EU guidance) - Joint management of floods between upstream and downstream areas 	Moderator: OECD UBA IOW IUCN

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of buffer zones between water and agriculture - Payment for forest management to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation in reservoirs. - A mechanism by development co-operation partners to support NbS 	Development cooperation partners
11:30-12:00	Moderated discussion Guiding questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are existing and potential Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for river basin management in Armenia? - How have existing NbS in the country been identified, developed and implemented? - What are challenges to promoting and scaling up to NbS in Armenia? - What can the EU4Environment programme, together with development cooperation partners, do to support Armenia? 	Moderator: UNECE All participants
12:00-12:15	Closing remarks and next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possibly to highlight/agree on key priorities (e.g. types of NbS, regions, landscape) that can be included in the “roadmap” to be developed under the EU4Environment Project. 	Ministry of Environment of Republic of Armenia Representative of EU4Environment Water and Data Programme
12:15-13:15	Lunch (provided at the Double Tree by Hilton Yerevan Centre)	
13:15-17:00	Field trip to Khor Virap Ramsar site [Further information to follow, registration will be required]	

3.3. Pictures

NPD meeting on 3 October 2022



Khor Virap field visit on 4 October 2022

