

NATIONAL CASPIAN ACTION PLAN OF AZERBAIJAN REPUBLIC.

Executive Summary

Caspian Sea has a great importance for the lives of people living by its coasts. Being the biggest inland sea in the world, the Caspian Sea ecosystem affects essentially the formation of ecosystems of the surrounding territories'. At present the intensity of contamination exceeds the ecological capacity of the Sea. Therefore the assessment of the ecological condition of Sea, survey of direct and indirect negative impacts on ecosystem, survey of ecosystem response to these impacts, and the study of the ecosystem's capacity of adaptation to contamination are the necessary terms for further sustainable and rational usage of its resources.

A general objective of NCAP is to facilitate protection and rational use of natural resources of the Caspian Sea, to create favourable conditions for sustainable social and economic development of Azerbaijan Republic.

The tasks of the NCAP implementation include the identification of type and character of impacts on Caspian ecosystem on the territory of Azerbaijan, as well as determination of the sources and root and direct causes of impacts, analysis and determination of potential preventive, mitigating and rehabilitating measures.

The objectives of NCAP include improvement of environmental situation in the Azerbaijan sector of the Caspian Sea and adjacent coastal areas, reduction of adverse impact on human health, maintenance of vital functions of hydro and biospheres, participation of Azerbaijan in regional and international environmental activities.

Clarification of the main problems is the initial stage of further detailed research. The importance of problems is determined on the basis of ecological, economic, social and cultural factors, which form the basis for further analysis that includes biological, oceanographic, physical, social and other assessment of problems, identification of initial, secondary problems and root causes, and determination of interventions and appropriate activities.

The identified main problems are ranged by their impact and influence and can be clarified as transboundary problems, such as:

- a) reduction of some commercial fish stocks, including sturgeon,
- b) degradation of coastal landscape and destruction of coastal habitats;
- c) threat to biodiversity;
- d) general deterioration of environmental quality;
- e) introduced species
- f) contamination due to oil and gas production; and particular national problems, such as:
 - a) deterioration of human health
 - b) damage of coastal infrastructure and cultural-domestic objects.

NCAP includes 51 actions/urgent measures with the budget of 56.75 million USD.

Implementation of the actions will allow rapid development and implementation of:

- National environmental education strategy;
- Methods of calculation of prevented environmental damage for all components of environment and environmental activities;
- Development and distribution of methodic recommendations for setting traffic safety regulations, with consideration of environmental situation and transport pollution;
- A set of regulatory documents that limit the environmental impact assessment;
- Mechanism of attracting non-budgetary financing sources during implementation of environmental projects;
- Methods of calculation of fines for pollution of offshore area of Azerbaijan (oil spills, discharge of oil products, drilling wastes, wastes from ships etc.);
- Wide distribution of true and updated environmental information, support of public environmental movements, participation of NGO in the decision of environmental problems and implementation of environmental control and monitoring;
- Higher effectiveness of state expertise, introduction of EIA procedures, establishment of a common state environmental monitoring system;
- Support of activities on conservation of biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes;
- Establishment of an effective system of a continuous environmental education, formation of environmental culture and environmental perception.

The amount of environmental problems and problems of rational use of natural resources proves that Azerbaijan will have to carry out purposed long term work to solve these. As stated in NCAP, the government together with the public and international community intends to input maximum effort to prevent further pollution of air, soils and water of Azerbaijan, eliminate consequences of historical pollution and create favorable conditions to preserve the environment and biodiversity for future generations.

More detailed information and The NCAP in general; targets and expected results of EQOs; and list of priority programs and projects can be obtained from the website of The Caspian Environment Programme at www.caspianenvironment.org

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