

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC)



The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) is a Partnership of six international organizations – United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as associated partner. The ENVSEC partnership aims to reduce tensions and increase cooperation through the joint management of natural resources and environmental threats in Eastern Europe, South Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia.

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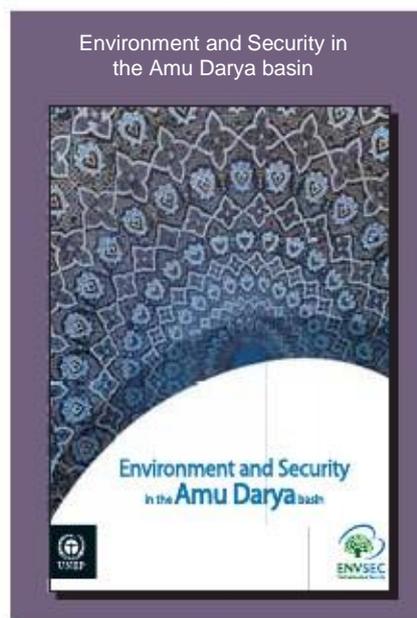
Amu Darya Basin report released

Boosting cooperation between countries sharing the waters of the Amu Darya, Central Asia's longest river, could be vital to future peace and security in the region, according to a new report released in July. Prepared by UNEP on behalf of the ENVSEC partners, Environment and Security in the Amu Darya Basin points out that water resources in the region are impacted by decades of often unsustainable development dating back to the era of the Soviet Union.

Large-scale engineering projects, such as those in the Aral Sea, dammed and diverted substantial flows from the Amu Darya river basin into activities such as cotton, wheat and fodder farming in arid and desert regions, degrading land and damaging soils. The Aral Sea, which relies in part on water from the Amu Darya, remains severely degraded with the report's estimates indicating that "the volume and surface area of the sea have now decreased tenfold".

Human health impacts due to declining water quality are also reflected in the increased incidence of kidney, thyroid and liver disease. In addition, glacier loss which began in the latter part of the 20th century, continues with many large glaciers having retreated by several hundred metres and hundreds of small glaciers having vanished altogether.

The study also found that climate change-induced shifting weather patterns are emerging as major natural resource challenges for the four main nations



concerned—Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The report acknowledges that governments in the region are starting to move on many of the challenges but that a great deal more can be achieved to promote cooperative sustainable development and reduce tensions over finite natural resources.

The recommendations include:

A good first step would be for relevant nations to ratify the UN Economic Commission for Europe's Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, which would serve the objective of establishing a legal framework and accountability for the collective management of the Amu Darya basin's resources;

Greater exchange of information between countries on proposed transboundary projects that may impact the Amu Darya as one important mechanism for building trust and promoting cooperation;

Countries in the region should consider burden sharing of maintaining water infrastructure while also promoting water efficiency measures and technologies; and

Modernization of regional energy systems and electricity grids should continue which, backed by improved energy efficiency and the development of alternative energy sources, could reduce the need for increased hydropower projects.

The report is available in English and Russian on the ENVSEC website: www.envsec.org

ENVSEC helps Belarus and Ukraine cope with flood risks

A third hydro-meteorological station was set up in Belarus in early December as part of a project to introduce computerized flood monitoring in the Pripjat River Basin, including the Chernobyl exclusion zone. The monitoring stations – two in Ukraine and one in Belarus – will provide real-time automatic flood data, replacing manual monitoring. This is welcome news for local communities and farmers in the Pripjat River Basin within the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone and on the border between Belarus and Ukraine.

The region is prone to severe flooding, and along with it, increased levels of radioactive pollution. The Styr River, an eastern tributary, provides the Rivne nuclear power station with cooling water, making monitoring for quality and temperature vital. The project aims to create seven monitoring stations by the end of 2012. Data from the three existing stations is available on-line [here](#).



The real-time monitoring system will make the data available globally and almost instantly, enabling better preparations for floods and determining ways of limiting the damage they cause

Planning for transboundary protected area in South Eastern Europe

The first trilateral stakeholder meeting in the proposed transboundary mountain protected area “Sharr/Šar Planina – Mt. Korab – Dešat/Deshat” took place on 21-22 November 2011 in Popova Shapka, FYR Macedonia. The meeting, organized by UNEP in cooperation with

the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the F.Y.R. Macedonia and a local NGO, saw the participation of almost 40 representatives from the proposed ‘Sharr/Šar Planina - Mt. Korab - Dešat/Deshat’ transboundary protected area, namely Albania, F.Y.R. Macedonia, Kosovo (UNSC Res. 1244/99), and Montenegro. This meeting helped to catalyze local partnerships and to establish common nature conservation and local development priorities for transboundary cooperation.

Improving mining site management in Armenia

As part of the ENVSEC project jointly implemented by the OSCE and UNEP on “Strengthening capacity in environmental assessment and risk reduction at mining sites in Armenia”, a delegation of Armenian officials

participated in a study tour to Albania and Montenegro from 12-16 June to look at best mining practices in these countries. The delegation, composed of government and NGO representatives, visited the Albanian mines of Rreshen and Repts and the Montenegrionian mines of Mojkovac, Zuta Prla and Suplija Stena. Local experts shared their experience on remediation and stabilization of the mine tailings and on waste disposal technologies.

Fire management in the South Caucasus

Within the framework of the project “Enhancing National Capacity on Fire Management and Wildfire Disaster Risk

Reduction in the South Caucasus”, ENVSEC supported Armenia in fighting forest fires, through wildfires risk assessment and the development and implementation of national fire management policies. In addition, an ENVSEC-supported roundtable meeting was organized by OSCE, UNDP and the Armenian Ministry of Emergency Situations



Around 50 local fire brigade representatives from Armenia were trained in international best practices and modern techniques for forest fire management

in Yerevan, Armenia on 14 September. During the event, which brought together around 100 representatives from state institutions, local government bodies, civil society and the international community, participants discussed issues affecting forest and wildland fires in Armenia, achievements in forest and fire protection, development

of emergency response capabilities and legislation, and regional and international co-operation. The discussion followed a two-day course and practical exercise held in Syunik, southern Armenia, to train around 50 local fire brigade representatives in international best practices and modern techniques for forest fire management.

Regional climate change impacts examined in the South Caucasus

The ENVSEC Initiative published a Regional Climate Change Impact Study for the Caucasus Region in November 2011. The study involves Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and covers four areas: recent historical and projected climate change impacts; climate change impacts on transboundary river basins and water resources; impacts on crops, water and irrigation requirements in critical agricultural areas; and the

effects of climate change on urban heat stress in selected cities.

A key finding of the study shows that changes in climate are already evident in the South Caucasus. It indicates that water supply will likely decrease in important transboundary river basins, affecting agriculture, and that urban heat could also jeopardize the health of local communities. This study provides a basis for enhancing regional cooperation to address common climate change concerns threatening sustainable development and security in the region.

Danube Delta survey

The governments of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine completed their first tri-national survey of the Danube Delta to improve river basin monitoring and cooperation. In September and October, 23 researchers analyzed water samples from the Prut River and other tributaries, and also screened chemical and biological samples

for pollutants and hazardous substances listed under the European Union Water Framework Directive. will be used to develop a management plan In addition to contributing to confidence-building in the tension-loaded transboundary area of the Lower Danube, results from the survey will provide new data for a joint environmental analysis in support of future integrated management for the Danube River Basin.

Dniester River Basin press tour

In July, a press tour and associated environmental training targeted more than 20 journalists from Ukraine and Moldova. With the theme, "Ecological issues in the Dniester basin and ways to solve them: the role of preventive ecological journalism", the six-day event involved site visits in Kalush, Novodnestrovsk and Chernovtsy in Ukraine. The tour and training was part

of an ENVSEC partnership effort to raise environmental awareness in the region, including in the Transnistrian conflict area, and promote better regional information exchange.

More information available at: www.envsec.org

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Journalists from Ukraine and Moldova took part in an environmental awareness raising tour in the shared Dniester River Basin