



ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY INITIATIVE

NEWSLETTER

January – June 2009

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) is an inter-agency partnership which facilitates co-operation on critical environment issues as a way to promote peace and security in four regions: Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus, Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe. The ENVSEC partners (OSCE, UNDP, UNEP, REC, UNECE and NATO as an associate partner) have developed, through multi-stakeholder based analyses of environment and security risks and projects addressing the identified risks, a platform that turns the potential for conflict between and within states into opportunities for confidence-building and cooperation.

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ENVSEC HIGHLIGHTS

During the first half of 2009, a **general strategic assessment of the ENVSEC Initiative** was carried out by an external consultant at the request of the ENVSEC Management Board. The review concluded that the thematic focus of ENVSEC – the interaction between environmental degradation and conflict – remains highly relevant and is likely to gain in strategic importance in the years to come, and that ENVSEC remains unique as an innovative partnership of agencies offering an integrated response to environment and security challenges. The review pointed out that ENVSEC has faced typical challenges of growth at management and governance levels as the scope and complexity of its work expanded. The findings and recommendations of the review were discussed among the ENVSEC partnership and its stakeholders at a Strategic workshop on 1st July.

Concurrently to the review, the ENVSEC partners continued the implementation of the regional work programmes in Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. The annual regional coordination meetings of ENVSEC Southern Caucasus and Central Asia were respectively organized in March in Tbilisi, and in April in Bishkek.

The ENVSEC **Eastern Europe** team focused on supporting cooperation and preventing tensions on transboundary water basins by organizing a series of meetings for the coun-

tries sharing the Pripyat River, the Dniester River, the Danube delta and the Drisviaty Lake.

As part of the ENVSEC **South-Eastern Europe** team's project on reducing trans-boundary risks of hazardous activities, a draft report on "Rapid Risk Reduction at three Albanian mining sites" was presented to the donor countries in a meeting organized in Albania in January. In addition, in order to support cooperation and prevent tensions in transboundary mountain protected areas in the Balkans, a workshop was organised in Podgorica in June, bringing together over 60 national experts, protected areas professionals and managers, representatives from local communities as well as stakeholders from NGOs.

In **Central Asia**, consecutive drafts of a regional agreement on dam safety were developed and lists of related technical documents and regulations were prepared. The first regional training course on dam safety was held in Tashkent in May.

Following the joint OSCE-UNEP Assessment Mission of the environmental impacts of the recent conflict in Georgia, the ENVSEC partners in the **Southern Caucasus** supported an expert mission to study threats of soil erosion resulting from forest fires in and around Borjomi National Park. In June, they sponsored a joint fire management training for technical specialists from Georgia and Armenia in the same park.



NEWS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Progress in the implementation of the Chair's objectives and Action Plan 2009

In March, at its first meeting of the year, the ENVSEC Management Board finalized the Chair's Objectives and Action Plan for 2009. Five objectives were agreed upon: (1) Establishing a new management structure for the Initiative; (2) Reviewing the vision and strategy of ENVSEC; (3) Further enhancing the visibility of ENVSEC; (4) Focusing ENVSEC work on climate change; and (5) Improving fundraising. At the second Management Board meeting of the year, in June, the ENVSEC managers concluded that the implementation of the majority of the Chair's objectives has progressed well and timely.

An internal brainstorming workshop took place on 12 June to define the focus and added value of the ENVSEC Initiative in the field of climate change and security. The ENVSEC partners agreed on four possible areas of activity: (1) Facilitation of exchange of information and awareness-raising; (2) Support of regional cooperation and dialogue on climate change scenarios and strategies developed by the countries or other international organizations; (3) Analysis of priorities and hotspots regarding security impacts of climate change on a regional level; (4) Support of adaptation measures related to hotspots and vulnerabilities in key sectors.

In July an agreement on collaboration under the Wider Europe initiative was announced between the Foreign Ministry of Finland and the ENVSEC partners. According to the preliminary plan outlining the intended implementation of the initiative during 2009-2013, a total of EUR 9,1 million will be allocated to the ENVSEC activities.

Strategic review and workshop

Six years after the launch of the ENVSEC Initiative, a general strategic assessment of the Initiative was carried out by an external consultant at the request of the ENVSEC Management Board, between March and May 2009. The review was based on a desk study of all available and directly relevant documents, on interviews with key informants, on insights gained during ENVSEC Management Board and Donor meetings, and on visits to two ENVSEC regions (Southern Caucasus and South-Eastern Europe). The review concluded that the thematic focus of ENVSEC – the interaction between environmental degradation and conflict – remains highly relevant and is likely to gain in strategic importance in the years to come and that ENVSEC remains unique as an innovative partnership of agencies offering an integrated response to environment and security challenges. The review pointed out that ENVSEC has faced typical challenges of growth at management and governance levels as the scope and complexity of its work expanded. According to the review it is therefore important that the implementation of the 'Blueprint for strengthening the management of

the Initiative', which was adopted by the Initiative's Management Board in consultation with main donors, will be completed as soon as possible. The recommendations suggest a number of further measures to respond to some of the shortcomings revealed by the strategic review.

On July the 1st, the ENVSEC partners organized a workshop to present and discuss the findings of the Strategic review. The workshop brought together 29 participants representing ENVSEC partner organisations as well as partner and potential partner countries and institutions. The workshop was useful in doing the first selection and prioritization of the wealth of recommendations produced by the review.

While carrying the 'Blueprint for strengthening the management of the Initiative' into effect will be the first step to implement the recommendations of the review, the rest of the recommendations endorsed by the Management Board will be executed in the order of their priority as defined by the ENVSEC partners and their stakeholders. In the context of the workshop, the Initiative received sufficient pledging and commitments of support to implement the near future plans of the partnership.

The organization of the Strategic workshop has been made possible thanks to the financial support from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

CENTRAL ASIA

On 20 April, ENVSEC organized its annual Central Asia regional meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Over forty people representing Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and international organisations gathered to discuss ENVSEC's past achievements and future directions in Central Asia. The meeting participants adopted the ENVSEC Central Asia Work Programme for 2009-2012 and came up with project ideas which could fit under the new four priorities: 'dialogue and cooperation on shared resources', 'reduction of risks to security and stability from hazardous practices', 'increased resilience to security impacts of climate change', 'raising awareness and strengthening capacities and participatory mechanisms on environment and security issues'. On the programmatic side, the ENVSEC partners continued the development of projects focused on the Ferghana Valley, the Eastern Caspian region and the Amu Darya river basin.

Dialogue and cooperation on shared resources

As part of the project on 'Capacity Building for Cooperation on Dam Safety in Central Asia', consecutive drafts of a regional agreement were discussed and developed. Lists of technical documents and regulations for safety of dams and other large hydro technical facilities were prepared for Central Asian countries as a starting point for a review of technical regulations,

and the first training course for dam safety specialists was held in Tashkent, on 11-14 May.

A special website was set up and is functioning for exchange of water-related information between Russian-speaking countries under the project 'Enhancing regional exchange of water resource information (CAREWIB phase II) (http://www.cawater-info.net/index_e.htm).

The 'Amu Darya assessment project' is undertaking a detailed assessment of water management and quality situation in the Amu Darya river basin with a particular focus on the environment and security implications of projected developments as well as on identifying opportunities to strengthen basin-wide cooperation around common issues. During the reporting period, the draft

report was developed further based on comments received through an informal review by partners and countries.

Reduction of risks to security and stability from hazardous practices

As part of the development of the ENVSEC Work Programme for Central Asia in 2010-2012, a new project titled 'Support to organization of project formulation and coordination group activity for sustainable transboundary management of radioactive waste in Central Asia' was approved by the National Focal Points and the ENVSEC Management Board. This decision coincided with the High Level International Forum on Uranium Tailings in Central Asia, initiated by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and held on 29 June in Geneva, Switzerland. The implementation of the ENVSEC project is expected to start in November.



Toktogul dam in Central Asia

The project on 'Environmental Impact Assessment in a transboundary context' was completed and demonstrated, through its pilot application, the effective implementation of the EIA Convention in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. A report will be published later this year.

Increased resilience to security impacts of climate change

This priority was recently identified by ENVSEC partners. In June, ENVSEC partners hold an internal brainstorming session to discuss and agree on potential niche for ENVSEC in climate change related area in Central Asia. Following the brainstorming, the ENVSEC partners plan to undertake discussions with ENVSEC national focal points and other relevant partners in Central Asia to develop the proposal.

Raising awareness and strengthening capacities and participatory mechanisms on environment and security issues

The Aarhus Centre initiative in Kazakhstan was launched on 8 April through a meeting organized by the OSCE Centre in Astana. More than 50 representatives from the local Atyrau government, the oil and gas sector and non-governmental organizations took part in the discussion, which focused on best practices and lessons learned from other countries to determine the best Aarhus Centre model for the Caspian region.

The Aarhus Centre in Osh, Kyrgyzstan continued its regular activities and served as a tool to bring together several stakeholders around priority issues, such as the meeting organized on 12 May on the environmental problems associated with mineral industry in Jalalabat province.

A new Aarhus Centre has been established in Tajikistan through an inauguration ceremony on 10 April with the participation of high-level government representatives as well as the civil society organizations. The networking among the three Aarhus Centres of the country was initiated and formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding. The Aarhus Centres also provided substantive and administrative support to the organization of International Conference on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTR) on 20-21 May in Dushanbe.

EASTERN EUROPE

In March, the ENVSEC Eastern Europe team hosted visitors from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in Odessa and Chisinau for an assessment mission of ENVSEC's activities in the region. Conclusions were very appreciative of the results and progress achieved by the ENVSEC projects funded by Canada. ENVSEC was described as a 'unique and effective 3Ds (Diplomacy, Development, Defense) initiative with high benefits compared to the costs'.

Management of shared natural resources and ecosystems

A series of meetings, aimed at furthering cooperation and prevent tensions in the shared water basins, were arranged by UNEP, OSCE and UNECE for the countries sharing the Pripjat river (Kiev on 4-5 February, with Belarus and Ukraine), the Dniester river (Chisinau on 11 March, with Moldova and Ukraine), the Danube delta (Izmail on 18-19 March, with Romania, Ukraine, Moldova and ICPDR) and the Drisviaty lake (Visaginas on 21-22 April, with Belarus and Lithuania). The ENVSEC partners continue to support activities in all these basins.

Consultation meetings were held with authorities in Kiev (27 May), Tiraspol (24 June) and Chisinau (25 June) as part of the third phase of the project on 'Transboundary cooperation and sustainable management in the Dniester river basin'. New activities that will be started under 'Dniester III' project umbrella include: new consultations among experts on legal issues of basin management (towards a basin-wide legal agreement), protection of fish and biodiversity, monitoring and information exchange, stronger publicity work on the local level, and a feasibility study for improved joint monitoring in the basin.

The feasibility study for a management plan of the Danube delta region was finalised in June, and ENVSEC follow-up endorsed by Romanian, Moldovan and Ukrainian delegations at the 7th standing Working Group of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube river.

Finally, a technical meeting on the Upper-Pripjat basin collaboration was organized on 30 June-1 July, in Minsk. The meeting resulted in the finalization of draft regulations for water sharing between Belarus and Ukraine. A concept for cross-border monitoring of floods on the Pripjat river was introduced in April to NATO's SPS Committee, which invited the applicants (Ukraine, Belarus and Slovakia) to present a full project plan at Committee's next meeting in 2009.

Identification and reduction of cross-border risks from pollution and waste

A NATO-lead project supporting the destruction of obsolete pesticides from near-border depots in Belarus officially started in January. In February, an environmental working group gathering representatives from Moldova and its break-away region of Transnistria discussed future joint activities, including an ENVSEC-brokered plan to remove obsolete pesticides from the region.

In April, a meeting on 'Illegal trade of hazardous waste' was organized in Chernihiv, Ukraine, gathering subnational authorities from the host country and Belarus. Ideas for continuation of the project included: helping countries to evaluate the effectiveness of their border check procedures, embed the topic into established pro-

fessional training and raise awareness on the problem at stake.

The NATO-facilitated project on 'Study of radiations in the Belarus sector of the Chernobyl power plant's exclusion zone' moved into the second field season: starting with a joint sampling in May, fieldwork will continue until September.



Survey on the upper Pripjat river in March

Mainstreaming environment into security policies

In Ivano-Frankivsk, in the second half of March, an OSCE panel selected a bidder for destroying the first 3,000 tonnes of toxic and dangerous rocket-fuel oxidiser ("mélange") in Ukraine, a major operation with an estimated cost of EUR 5-6 million; environmental impact assessments (EIAs) were consecutively launched at selected sites.

At a meeting in June with the European Environmental Agency and Lund University in Brussels, the preparation of ENVSEC regional workshop to analyze environmental dimension of energy strategies in Eastern Europe and to explore modern approaches to long-term scenario analysis and planning, was discussed. The workshop will take place on 12-15 October 2009 in Lund and Copenhagen.

Promoting environmental action, dialogue and awareness on the regional and national levels, in conflict or socially-vulnerable areas

A workshop with Ukraine's Ministry of Coal took place in Kiev in June, discussing ENVSEC study of environmental impacts from mining in Ukraine's Donbas coal basin and strategic approaches to limit them; a media training facilitated by UNEP's trainers, local authorities and NGOs was also organised.

SOUTHERN CAUCASUS

On 4-6 March, ENVSEC organized its annual South Caucasus regional meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia. The meeting was well-attended by government and civil society representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. ENVSEC proposed several new environment and security project activities for the countries' considerations including regional climate change studies.

The first meeting of the ENVSEC National Advisory Group was organized on 9 June in Armenia. Consisting of representatives of various state ministries, civil society organizations, and international organizations, the National Advisory Group will be coordinated by national focal points of the Armenian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Nature Protection. The main objective of the National Advisory Group will be to develop and coordinate new initiatives addressing environment and security issues both in Armenia and in the South Caucasus region.

Environmental degradation and access to natural resources in areas of conflict

ENVSEC partners continued the development of follow-up activities related to the joint OSCE-UNEP Assessment Mission of the environmental impacts of the recent conflict in Georgia. In particular, ENVSEC supported an expert mission to study threats of soil erosion resulting from forest fires in and around Borjomi National Park. From 24-26 June, the ENVSEC Initiative sponsored a joint fire management training for technical specialists from Georgia and Armenia in the same park. Fire management specialists from the UNISDR-affiliated Global Fire Monitoring Center led the training which included both theoretical classroom instruction as well as field demonstrations of fire-fighting equipment recently donated to the Georgian government.

Management of trans-boundary natural resources

OSCE and UNECE are supporting the ratification of UNECE Water Convention by Georgia and the development of an agreement on the Kura river shared by Georgia and Azerbaijan (already a Party to the Convention). This ENVSEC project has started with efforts to

clarify the obligations of Georgia under the Convention including the corresponding economic costs. A meeting was held the 26 June with 12 representatives of the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Environmental Agency and Hydromet. Project reports presented and discussed included: an evaluation of legal and economic implications of Georgia's accession to the Water Convention, an assessment of the current status of Georgian-Azerbaijani transboundary waters cooperation, and legal options for bilateral cooperation on the Kura river.

Rapid population growth in capitals and unmanaged development in urban centers

On May 1, a workshop on preparation of the "GEO-Alaverdi" report was held. The concept of GEO-cities and its application to Alaverdi town, Armenia was presented to the workshop participants and current social-economic and environmental situation in Alaverdi was reviewed. Similar activities will be conducted in Gyumri and Hrazdan during the second half of 2009.

Under the 'Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)' project, focusing on spatial planning, an assessment report analyzing SEA capacity needs in Azerbaijan is being finalized now. It has been agreed with the World Bank office in Baku that SEA pilot project will be applied to the elaboration of the Absheron Peninsula Regional Development Framework. The process of elaboration of this framework document will start in September 2009, thus marking the start of the pilot SEA project implementation.

Strengthening of the role of civil society in environmental decision-making

The ENVSEC South Caucasus team continued its efforts to promote public participation through Aarhus Public Environmental Information Centres. In this regard, ENVSEC recently supported training for judges on the application of the UNECE Aarhus Convention in Georgia.



Training course on fire management in Borjomi National Park in June

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

In the reporting period, national consultations to review the implementation of the ENVSEC regional work programme took place in Albania (5 February) and FYR Macedonia (7 May). The current regional priorities on management of transboundary natural resources and reducing transboundary risks of hazardous activities as well as cross-cutting issues were reconfirmed and security implications of climate change identified as a potential cooperation area. ENVSEC South-Eastern Europe regional meeting will take place by the end of 2009 at the REC Headquarters in Budapest.

Management and reduction of trans-boundary risks from hazardous activities

Based on its collaboration with the Albanian government since 2004, UNEP prepared a draft report on "Rapid Risk Reduction at three Albanian mining sites", which was presented to the donor countries in a meeting organized by UNDP Albania in January.

A website was created for the project on 'Governance principles (GPs) on Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) in Hazardous Activities' (<http://www.rec.org/governanceprinciples/home.html>) and the revision of the GPs has been finalized, together with a study on the recent developments in the area of corporate responsibility. Currently the working group is under re-formulation with involvement of the EBRD, OECD and business sector, and potential candidates are under consideration for the pilot testing of the GPs.

Management of shared natural resources

On 26 February the ENVSEC partners organized the Timok River Forum meeting in Vidin, Bulgaria, which concluded with a joint statement available at: http://timok.rec.org/download/timok_river_forum_joint_statement.pdf.

In late 2008, ENVSEC partners initiated a process which is intended to lead to the preparation of a "Dinaric Arc and Balkans Environment Outlook" (DABEO, or GEO for the Balkans). An exploratory meeting with the nine countries of the sub-region and international partners, to determine the level of interest and identify *raisons d'être* and value-added of such a reporting process for the countries, was therefore organized and held in Tirana, Albania on 3-5 February.

ENVSEC activities in the first half of the year included also preparation of a questionnaire on illegal logging in the Balkans. The questionnaire was sent out to the countries, assessing their forest policies and forest management systems focusing on the aspects of illegal logging. In the framework of the international capacity building exercise on illegal logging, a training session under the Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network for Accession (ECENA) was held on 27-29 April in Hungary.



Podgorica workshop on « Transboundary Cooperation of Mountain Protected Areas in South Eastern Europe »

The Workshop on "Transboundary Cooperation of Mountain Protected Areas in South Eastern Europe – Towards the Dinaric Arc and Balkan Network of Mountain Protected Areas", was held in Podgorica on 16-17 June, bringing together over 60 national experts, protected areas professionals and managers, representatives from local communities as well as stakeholders from NGOs. The Workshop was co-chaired by HE Branimir Gvozdenovic, Minister of Spatial Planning and Environmental Protection of Montenegro and Mr. Christophe Bouvier, Director and Regional Representative, UNEP Regional Office for Europe. The meeting resulted in the donor intent to continue the programme expressed, to increase national and local ownership and stakeholders' involvement, and to design the follow-up phase and pilot action.

Strengthening regional cooperation on environmental governance through participatory and informed decision-making and implementation processes

All the above mentioned events included a wide participation of local actors, NGOs and stakeholders in order to ensure a participatory process and facilitate the information sharing between the different levels of authorities involved in the ENVSEC activities.

Climate change adaptation for reducing security risks

Based on the brainstorming workshop on ENVSEC activities on climate change adaptation held in Geneva in June 2009 within the members of the ENVSEC Secretariat, the Regional Desk Officer for South Eastern Europe prepared, in the framework of the proposal to Finland and Austria for the Balkans, a set of activities to be implemented in the region in the coming years, aiming at reducing risk posed by climate change effects by a coordinated and consulted adaptation process. The activities are expected to start in 2010, pending the approval of the project proposal by the donors.

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