

Chapter 12. Regional Cooperation

12.1. Outline for the Strategic Action Plan

The purposes of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) are to set out the core obligations of the Caspian countries in managing the environment of the Sea and its coastline and to provide the framework that will enable national development in the Caspian region in a safe and efficient way. The Plan and the Framework Convention indeed have similar objectives, and many of the obligations set out in principle in the SAP will be implemented through Protocols to the Convention.

12.1.1. Obligations for Joint Environmental Management

Many of the recommendations in this report refer to actions that must be taken at a national level to improve environmental management. These actions will be necessary to enable the individual countries to meet their obligations, but the main purpose of the SAP is to set out the regional obligations of the countries.

Fisheries

The migratory fisheries resources can only be managed through cooperative effort. The most suitable form of cooperation is set out clearly in this document. It may well be that, before the governments of the Caspian countries discuss a SAP, they will already have agreed to the establishment of a Caspian Fisheries Commission. In this case, the SAP would only commit the countries to maintain support to the Commission and its organs. If no joint fisheries management agreement has been reached, then the SAP must set out the obligations to cooperate on:

- Research, including stock assessment and assessment of the food base;
- Estimation of the Total Allowable Catch of migratory species and agreement on its distribution between countries;
- Allowable fishing methods, periods and zones; and
- Joint inspection or inspection of other Caspian countries' fisheries: catch, re-stocking, and markets.

Reporting on the State of the Sea and Sources of Pollution

The monitoring of the state of the sea must be a joint responsibility, which can be carried out partly jointly (joint expeditions) and partly by national monitoring and joint assessment. The obligations of the countries should be to:

- Monitor the state of the sea in the sector controlled by that country;
- Monitor the emission of pollutants to the Sea; and
- Report the results of the monitoring to a central depository, probably the Caspian Centre for Pollution Control, Baku.

Inherent within the obligations will be the obligation to ensure that monitoring is done to the required standard and in accordance with an agreed programme. Thus, the introduction of a comprehensive monitoring programme and the improvement of analysis methods and implementation will also be an obligation of the countries.

Agreeing on a Programme to Reduce Emissions

The most damaging sources of pollution of the Sea are set out in this document and supplementary technical reports, together with recommendations as to the selection of the priority pollutants and the best approach to determining emission limit values. Although it might not be possible to include in the SAP a full staged programme for reduction of polluting emissions, the need to do this must be recognised and the SAP must set out the mechanisms through which the countries will do this including:

- Annual assessment of the State of the Sea;
- Formation of Technical Committees to recommend emission limit values for adoption by the countries for discharges into the Sea and into rivers that discharge to the Sea.

Definition of the scope of work of the Committees will not be easy, largely because of the great extent of the rivers that flow into the Caspian and the fact that some of these rivers flow through other countries (not just the 5 Caspian countries). Definition of the scope of work of the Committees would be an important element of the SAP.

Agreeing on Mutual Assistance During Emergencies

The current status of the sea is far from clear. Vessels from one country in some cases pass into the notional zones of other countries (notional shares of the sea based on a mid-line boundary) without permissions and with no problems raised, even commercially fishing there. A coastal territorial zone of 13 miles seems to be recognised and entry into port is strictly controlled. However, there have also been cases where there have been objections to activities in the centre of the sea, referring to the notional division. During emergencies such as oil spills, it is essential that equipment, materials and staff can quickly be mobilised from one part of the sea to another. The SAP must include the principles of mutual aid in times of environmental emergency, especially through the rapid granting of permissions.

12.1.2. Information Systems to Assist in Planning

The SAP should also recognise the need for joint information systems (in addition to those reporting the state of the Sea and emissions to it).

Sea Level Forecasts

Sea level changes have a huge impact on the coastal zones of the Caspian, zones that include much valuable infrastructure and many important wetland habitats. There is still a long way to go before the changes can be forecast with any accuracy, but cooperation will help to achieve this aim. The models and information systems that have been developed should continue to be shared and jointly operated. Introduction of a Regional Climate Model for the Caspian to be operated cooperatively would be important to extend the knowledge in

this field. In addition, it is necessary to continue to share hydrological and meteorological information to enable the analyses to be carried out accurately.

Storm surge warnings are also an important service that can avoid unnecessary damage and even loss of life. In making the forecasts, countries can cooperate by sharing information, the information on forecast winds and pressure fields and on measured sea levels, to allow improvement of forecasting by hindcasting.

The SAP should include a commitment to maintain cooperation in both these fields. An operating HYCOS system will be an important element of the cooperation.

Best Available Technology for Industry

Reduction of pollution emissions will rely largely on applying best available technology (BAT) into existing and new industries. A central source of information on such technologies should be established to assist industries to make the transition. The information would set out what are the best technologies and what levels of improvement can be attained by employing them. Within the SAP, the countries should recognise the role that a BAT information centre will play in the negotiation of action plans to reduce pollution.

Habitat Monitoring

The Caspian and its coastal lands are important to the migration of many bird species. Monitoring the populations of migrating birds and the condition of the habitats that they utilise requires cooperation. There are also many unique habitats in the coastal deserts. Wildlife information systems are essential but require cooperation. The establishment of a regular exchange of information and the pooling of information in one or more centres should be agreed within the SAP.

12.2. Joint Programmes

Many of the recommendations within this document and the supporting technical reports set out the needs and methods to improve environmental management and the need for inter-state cooperation in doing so. This part of the document does not set out to summarise all those recommendations, but to identify the most important joint activities.

12.2.1. Preparation for Emergencies

Apart from the need to include agreement on mutual assistance during emergencies, much can be gained from carrying out preparations for emergencies jointly: modelling the likely effects of spills, identifying areas at greatest risk and most valuable sites to be protected, and planning the deployment of equipment and materials from within and outside the region.

Although the international oil companies have a well-developed system of preparation and mutual cooperation, this does not include all Caspian national oil companies, nor the shipping companies and the owners of pipelines. There is clearly an urgent need to remedy this shortcoming.

12.2.2. Mnemiopsis

The emerging threat of *Mnemiopsis leidyi* is already affecting the Caspian's bioresources. International meetings have concluded that the most appropriate way to control the invasion would be through the introduction of a bio-control agent, and *Beroe ovata* has been identified as the most appropriate candidate. The meetings stressed that the precautionary principle should be followed in considering any possible deliberate introduction and that the guidelines recommended by FAO should be complied with in full. There is now an urgent need for scientists in the region to cooperate on monitoring the occurrence and behaviour of *Mnemiopsis* so that sufficient information will be available to allow a wise decision to be made.

12.2.3. Training in Laboratory Techniques

The first step in improving the monitoring of the state of the sea has been identified as being the introduction of Quality Assessment and Quality Control techniques, as well as improving laboratory practises and equipment and establishing a reference laboratory network. Introducing the techniques for QA/QC and modern analysis methods must be done through training programmes that are common to all laboratories in the coastal zone, or responsible for analysis of Caspian samples.

12.2.4. Meetings of Coastal Zone Administrators and Exchanges

Improved administration of the coastal zones will take some time. The rural areas have a low level of priority at the national level, and administrators can feel isolated from decision making and funding. To combat this rather depressing situation, the administrators of the coastal zone need to confer with each other to discuss common problems and to examine how the same kinds of problems have been tackled in other regions. Joint study tours, exchanges and meetings of a Caspian Coastal Group will provide a regional dimension to the problem.

12.2.5. Regional Projects

Regional Projects are difficult to finance and difficult to manage. It is thus advisable that most interventions are implemented nationally. However, in some cases it is essential that a project be regional. Examples are:

- Support to the Fisheries Commission, its Inspectorate, and research;
- The HYCOS project for joint monitoring of the sea and rivers (most other aspects of the upgrade of hydrometeorological organisations should be carried out through national projects);
- The establishment of reference laboratories that will have a regional responsibility;
- Further studies into regional issues, such as the introduction of a regional climate model and the further investigation of the effects of climate change, and the modelling of movements of pollutants in the Sea and its sediments.

12.3. Institutional Framework

All the above requires a strong regional institutional framework. Chapter 1 sets out the achievements that have been made so far in establishing a network of regional organisations that encourage inter-state cooperation in individual themes (the Caspian Regional Thematic Centres). It is important that this framework be continued and strengthened, or there is little chance that regional initiatives will have any success.

Draft agreements have been prepared for the continued work of the Centres for Bioresources Management (through a Fisheries Commission), Pollution Control, and Water Level Fluctuations. The perceived role and responsibilities of a regional body in each of these themes are quite different. Cooperation in managing the coastal zone must not be forgotten, and decisions should be taken on the role and modus operadi of an institution that would carry that responsibility.