

**Report of the working sessions of the second Conference of the Parties to the
Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian
Sea
12 November 2008
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran**

The meeting was opened by Mr. Rasim Sattarzadeh, representative of the acting Chairperson HE Mr. G. Bagirov. Mr. Sattarzadeh welcomed the meeting and expressed his gratitude to the host Government for the organizing and hosting the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Mr. Sattarzadeh confirmed that the Azeri Government is paying special attention to the Tehran Convention having hosted the first Meeting of the Conference of the Parties and he wished the delegations a very successful meeting.

In accordance with the draft Agenda the Meeting proceeded with the election of officers, including the Chairperson of the Meeting. Respecting the traditions, the chair was offered to the host Government which nominated Mr. Nabavi, Deputy Head of the Department of Environment and CEP NFP, to act as the Chairperson of the Meeting. The Meeting also nominated the Head of the interim Secretariat as the co-chairperson and a representative from the Kazakh delegation as Vice-chair person taking into account that the Republic of Kazakhstan will host the third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

In his welcoming speech Mr. Nabavi recalled the successful holding of the first Meeting of the Conference of the Parties praising the host country Azerbaijan for their excellent arrangements and great hospitality. While reminding the meeting of the important achievements reached in Baku, Mr. Nabavi outlined the challenges facing the delegations to the second Conference of the Parties, underlining that the time has come to build upon the earlier achievements in order to implement the Convention. A special gratitude was expressed towards the international organizations that have supported the Convention process over the past years and the continuation of their support was considered as essential. He wished the meeting great success and confirmed the readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to provide support to the Republic of Kazakhstan for the organization of the third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

In line with draft agenda the meeting discussed the organization of work and agreed that the issues of finalization of the Rules of Procedure will be discussed as a separate item.

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, observers listed in the List of observers circulated by the interim Secretariat were admitted to the meeting without any objection. Those observers included mainly the UN offices and specialized agencies such as UNDP, FAO and IMO and other international and inter-governmental bodies such as the Black Sea Commission, the Caspian Environment Programme and the EU Caspian MAP project.

Before turning to the substantive items of the agenda, the interim Secretariat addressed the issue of credentials encouraging the delegations to submit credentials in line with the Rules of Procedure, that it to say before the end of the first session. All credentials have been subsequently reviewed and accepted.

Following the adoption of the Agenda and the Organization of the work the meeting devoted most of the first day of the working session to the finalization of the Convention Strategic Action Programme which will serve as the guidance document for the implementation of the

Tehran Convention and its future Protocols over the next 10 years. The proposals and concerns of all delegations were thoroughly reviewed with the view to reach agreement on the outstanding issues, and I am happy to report that following complex negotiations and delicate compromises, the delegations succeeded in their task and the text of the SCAP has been agreed upon with the exception of two issues. These issues that today still remain in square brackets are firstly the issue related to the establishment of a Regional Center in the context of the draft Protocol on Regional Preparedness, Response and Cooperation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents. As you might know the Protocol has reached an advanced stage of negotiations but one of the main pending issues relate to the nature and status of the Regional Centre to be established under the Protocol. Consequently the delegations to the second Meeting of the Conference of the Parties decided to keep this issue in square brackets. The second element which remains unsettled related to the regional cooperation for the management, protection, rehabilitation and rational use of the marine living resources of the Caspian Sea. The delegations' opinions diverged as whether the cooperation should take place under the existing and/or future intergovernmental mechanisms of interaction. There is a common understanding that the regional cooperation in this particular area of concern needs to be further developed and other means for efficient cooperation need to be explored. However, the request from one delegation to make explicit reference to the word "future" mechanisms of interaction created difficulties for some of the delegations and it was therefore decided to leave the issue for further consideration and deliberations at the Ministerial level.

The second day of the working sessions was opened with the discussion on the Protocol Status Report as prepared by the interim Secretariat. Following the decision and statement of the first Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, considerable efforts have been undertaken over the past year to finalize the negotiations on the four draft Protocols. In light of the advanced stage of the negotiations, the delegations agreed that full support should be provided for the finalization of the protocol negotiations allowing for the Protocols' adoption and signing at the third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In the course of the discussion, the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed their readiness to host the final negotiation meeting on the Protocol Concerning Regional Preparedness, Response and Cooperation in Combating Oil Pollution Incidents, whereas the Azeri delegation confirmed their readiness to host the final meeting on the Protocol on Biodiversity Conservation expressed already during the COPII preparatory meeting which took place in Almaty in September 2008.

Item 6 of the Agenda dealing with the Scoping Paper on the interrelationship between the fisheries and the protection of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea was to great extent covered by the earlier discussion on the Strategic Convention Action Programme and the discussions that took place within the context of the preparatory meeting for the second Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Following thorough deliberations on the subject, the delegations reached a common understanding on the need to further explore possibilities for strengthening the intergovernmental cooperation for the conservation and rational use of the aquatic bioresources of the Caspian Sea. The positions of the delegations have been fully reflected in the Ministerial Statement highlighting the need to continue joint efforts to prepare an intergovernmental agreement on the issue.

Agenda item 7 on the Programme of Work and the Budget was subject to extensive discussions during the COPII preparatory meeting in Almaty allowing the delegations to the working sessions of COPII to continue the discussion on some of the items which had not yet been settled. Further to the discussions during the COPII preparatory meeting it was once again stressed that the PoW to a great extent reflects the structure of the future CASPECO project which has been prepared in close collaboration with the region. The implementation

of the PoW will therefore extensively rely on the financial support from the CASPECO project, in addition to the contributions from the Parties to the Tehran Convention. Following an “element by element” review of the PoW, the delegations reached a full agreement on all elements of the document, including the need to nominate National Convention Liaison Officers in each of the Caspian littoral states and provide support for their activities.

In the discussion on Agenda item 8 on the Convention permanent Secretariat arrangements, the delegations of Azerbaijan and I.R of Iran repeated their Governments' readiness to host the Convention permanent Secretariat, while the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan reiterated their interest. The delegation of Kazakhstan stressed its Government's willingness to contribute to an early solution. The meeting reiterated the need to reach an expeditious agreement on the location and arrangements of the permanent Secretariat at the appropriate high political level. One delegation proposed establishment of a permanent Secretariat on a rotation basis but others declined the idea.

Under Agenda item 9 the meeting was briefed on the status of the future GEF CASPECO project, confirming the advanced stage of the GEF approval process and the high likeness of having the project initiated in January 2009 with an inception meeting being organized most likely in Astana, Kazakhstan – the future “host-city” to the project coordination unit.

As far as Agenda item 10 is concerned the distinguished representative of Kazakhstan confirmed that the third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties will take place in 2010 with further details to be communicated in due time through the diplomatic channels.

Before closing the working sessions of the COPII, the meeting quickly reviewed the few outstanding issues of the Rules of procedure with all delegations agreeing on having only one vice-chairperson instead of four. It was agreed that the delegations will communicate to the interim Secretariat their preferences for a Convention logo based on the selection of logos contained in one of the COPII working documents.

Full report from the second Meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be prepared and communicated in due time by the Convention interim Secretariat.