

## **Transboundary water basin management: problems of implementation in CIS**

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After the collapse of the USSR, a number of transboundary watercourses have occurred and needed effective management. Water resources use issues concern many users from riparian countries and not all of them are interested in the search for a comprehensive sustainable solution.

The Helsinki Water Convention (1992) provides answers to many questions concerning best possible options when transboundary disputes between riparian states arise. Ideally, all post-Soviet countries should have become parties of the Convention; however, in fact, those, especially upstream countries, consider the Convention from the utilitarian point of view, i.e. whether it will be beneficial for them to strengthen their international positions or it will serve as an instrument to assert claims.

However, from the standpoint of environmental conservation for future generations and for sustainable development, the countries should take into account the interests of their neighbors, as well as the interests of stakeholders from those countries and their own stakeholders. Hence, the basin agreements should be comprehensive as much as possible, covering the whole spectrum of basin and water use problems. To date, no agreement related to any river basin within CIS complies with this approach.

Therefore, the CIS countries face the problem of negotiation of new basin agreements, if necessary, or revision of existing ones towards integration of all interests within the basin by establishing cross-sectoral river commissions instead of the institution of authorized representatives as exists in many cases.

The objectives of such river commissions, which are to replace the institutions of authorized representatives reflecting the views of water management organizations only, are supposed to be as follows:

- Development and implementation of integrated basin management plans;
- Involvement of key basin stakeholders to the planning and management processes;
- Enhancement of transboundary cooperation on groundwater;
- Development of coordinated management of transboundary water-related ecosystems (forests and wetlands);
- Integration of agricultural and water sectors, navigation, hydropower, tourism and other sectors in the basin management plans;
- Introduction of the Water Framework Directive in the countries bordering the European Union to use the Directive's advantages by the EU country-neighbors.

The slow implementation of adequate basin agreements is caused, in our opinion, by the following subjective factors: politicization of ecological problems at the high political level in the countries and in the sphere of international relationship; still existing monopoly of water management organizations in the water policy in many countries and poor understanding of the integrated water resources management principles by decision makers.