



Action funded by
the European Union

EU4Environment

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine

EU4ENVIRONMENT VIRTUAL COUNTRY CONSULTATIONS

Azerbaijan

Thursday, 4 June 2020

Start: 14h Brussels/Paris time - 16h Baku time
End: 15h30 Brussels/Paris time - 17h30 Baku time

Summary Record

Action implemented by:



Summary record

Item 1. Welcome by the Chair of the meeting

Mr. Michael Rupp, Team Leader, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants on behalf of the European Commission (EC). He pointed out the importance of conducting these consultations on EU4Environment with Azerbaijan in the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, and welcomed this opportunity to provide an update on the EU4Environment activities and better align work with the country priorities. He informed the participants that similar consultations have been conducted already with Armenia, Georgia and Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Rupp emphasised that green economic development and the protection of the environment remain important on the EU agenda, as emphasised in the recent communication on the EaP Strategy adopted on 18 March 2020. He stressed that economic slow-down should not undermine efforts to protect the environment and called for strengthening work on environment and climate issues in the post-pandemic recovery, turning new challenges into opportunities. He informed the participants about a virtual first ever EaP Summit, or Leaders' Conference, planned around the initially announced date of 18 June 2020.

Mr. Rupp emphasised the European Union's comprehensive support to the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries to address the COVID-19 challenges, including an expeditious contract concluded with the World Health Organization to deliver personal protective equipment, diagnostic tests, and other necessary equipment and technical support to the EaP countries. He also informed about a new contract with the EBRD to support the Finance and Technology Transfer Centre for Climate Change (FINTECC) EU4Climate window, aiming to reduce greenhouse emissions by 150 thousand tonnes per year.

Item 2. Update on in-country situation

The participants took note of:

- Mr Faig Mutallimov, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, intervention in which he expressed, on behalf of the Ministry, his appreciation to participate in this consultation and highlighted:
 - Continuous work of the Ministry with limited staff during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current return of all staff while the restrictions lifted and being lifted (though still some restrictions are in place during the weekends);
 - Replacement of all physical meetings by a virtual format and postponement of those activities that require physical presence (ex. the UNECE EPR mission to Azerbaijan is postponed to early October);
 - Positive policy developments despite the restrictions, as for example:
 - creation of a new separate structure within the Ministry, dedicated to green growth - Green Development and Innovations Subdivision of the International Cooperation Division - and introduced in this context Ms. Aysel Rzayeva, Head of this Subdivision;
 - approval by the State Commission for Climate Change its new composition which will trigger work and actions in this direction;
 - establishment of a new commission (by the Presidential decree) on water management to address water scarcity;
 - launch of a new project to establish a biosphere reserve in Zagatala region, the first reserve in the South Caucasus;
 - The upcoming the World Environment Day which will be an important occasion to highlight the importance of addressing environmental challenges.
- Ms. Aytekin Guluzade, Ministry of Economy, intervention in which she welcomed the participants and highlighted:
 - Continuous work of the all central executive bodies under the Covid-19 restrictions;
 - Actions taken by government during pandemic and in the post-pandemic period under the Action Plan for the post-Covid-19 period "On measures to reduce negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic and related fluctuations in the world energy and stock markets on the economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, macroeconomic stability, employment issues, and business entities in the country". The Plan has three directions:
 - support for economic growth and entrepreneurship (particular measures include: interventions to reduce negative effect of pandemic on the national economy in a short term, increase transparency of economy, providing incentives for maintenance of economic activities, loans, additional support measures, making changes in legislation to create favourable conditions);
 - employment and social welfare support (protection of public sector employees from unemployment risks and their social protection; social protection of unemployed and dismissed persons; protection of most vulnerable groups), and
 - micro economy and financial stability.

Decisions and follow up:

The participants:

- Took note of the ongoing responses to the COVID-19 crisis in Azerbaijan;
- Agreed to support the current country post- COVID-19 recovery activities through EU4Environment;
- Continue ensuing timely communication on the Programme implementation and coordination on the activities.

Item 3. Update on past and on-going EU4Environment activities and plans for the rest of the year

The participants took note of:

- Updates on the implementation of activities under Azerbaijan's Work Plan by the Implementing Partners:
 - Result 1 (UNEP, UNECE) – see Slide 2-3;
 - Result 2 (UNEP, UNIDO) – see Slides 4-5;
 - Result 3 and 5.3 (OECD) – see Slides 6-7.
- Update by the EC on the Result 4 regarding the EC-World Bank contract, which is currently on hold due to legal issues around the ongoing wider framework agreement negotiations.
- Request from Azerbaijan, in relation to work on SEA/EIA under Result 1, to hold the round table on secondary implementing legislation after July period, to avoid postponing this meeting towards end 2020 or next year and delaying the adoption process for this legislation;
- EUD proposal to support UNIDO with tender process to disseminate announcement; and request from the Ministry to be informed about the launch date;
- Request for more in-depth bilateral discussion with UNEP (and possibly UNIDO) to discuss development of guidance for SMEs on benefits of eco-labelling;
- Reminder by UNEP that work on establishing Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) and eco-labelling measures was not initially selected by Azerbaijan (except for capacity development), and suggestion to discuss bilaterally the way that eco-labelling can be added under existing work streams;
- Readiness of the Partners to support the recently created SME Development Agency under Results 2 and 3;
- OECD proposal to replicate lessons learned from the Project on the Ecological Fund in Moldova to Azerbaijan under Activity 3.3.2;
- Update by Azerbaijan on the status of the request to the Ministry of Finance on data on energy-related taxes (letter was translated, the Ministry may come back with some questions, but ready to provide information which is available);
- General agreement that no major revisions of the current work plan are needed and request from Azerbaijan to receive any updates of the work plan for 2020

Decisions and follow up:

The Participants agreed to:

- Continue to implement the activities as envisaged in the Work Plan and in line with the agreed timeline, using alternative modes of operation (virtual communications/meetings and engaging local consultants);
- Follow up bilaterally on selected activities behind schedule, and provide update to Azerbaijan any adjustments of the Work Plan;
- Follow up on bilateral basis on questions related to individual activities, as summarized above (UNECE – feedback on SEA/EIA round table; UNEP – on eco-labelling and SPP; UNIDO – on upcoming tender; OECD – Activity 3.3.2 and on energy-related taxes)
- Receive updates from EC on the status of the EC/World Bank contract (Result 4).

Item 4. Preparation for the EU4Environment Regional Assembly meeting

The participants took note of:

- Update by the OECD on coordination activities, including a series of virtual consultations with the six EaP countries, and proposed options to hold the next Regional Assembly as shown on Slide 9 of the Presentation;
- Preference for a physical RA meeting, but keeping both options open in light of dynamic situation related to international policy restrictions;

- Request from Azerbaijan that in case of a virtual meeting, to make in one day, rather than two; and suggestion by the EC to keep it very concise (2h max, for example, consider two consecutive meetings of 2h max/per day).

Decisions and follow up:

The participants agreed to:

- Keep the dates of the second Regional Assembly meeting as planned on 22-23 September 2020 in a virtual format; and consider organising the in-person meeting in November-December 2020, subject to lifting of the travel restrictions;
- Continue monitoring the situation and travel restrictions.

Item 5. Communication (Result 5.2) and coordination with other projects

The participants took note of:

- Update by the OECD on communication activities as shown on Slide 10 of the presentation;
- Invitation to subscribe to the Newsletter and share with the colleagues;
- Request from Azerbaijan to receive videos and proposal to disseminate them widely among colleagues;
- Suggestion to consider translating thematic videos into national languages to reach wider national public.

Decisions and follow up:

The Participants agreed to:

- Continue implementing the communication activities, as envisaged in the Work Plan;
- Continue paying particular attention to comply with the EU's visibility requirements;
- Share videos and consider translating new visual materials into national languages;
- Promote subscriptions to the Newsletter.

Item 6. Progress on administrative issues (Result 5.1)

The participants took note of:

- Update by the OECD and UNEP on the Action Registration, National Action Coordinator (NAC) and the National Implementing Committee (NIC);
- Information that the Programme registration is not required in Azerbaijan;
- Welcome to Mr. Kamran Rzayev, National Action Coordinator (currently, on a long-term contract with UNEP), and gratitude for his support;
- Proposal to link the NIC and Result 1 Activity on the Inter-ministerial dialogue on green economy, and welcomed support of the NAC in this regard;
- Ongoing discussions between the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Economy on possible options for the NIC and green policy dialogue, and will have proposal and then 1st meeting to discuss project activities.

Decisions and follow up:

The participants agreed to:

- Take a note that the registration is not required in Azerbaijan;
- Continue with the current working arrangements for NAC;
- Discuss further options for setting up the NIC and inter-ministerial green policy dialogue (Result 1) and organize a first meeting in the near future.

Item 7. Other issues and closure

- Request by the Delegation of the EU to Azerbaijan to continue to be involved in the Programme, receive information and updates which would help building synergies and bringing local knowledge to regional programme;
- OECD on behalf of the Partners, thanked the Azerbaijani colleagues and acknowledged good contacts which are now established to support the Programme implementation and assist Azerbaijan in building greener economy;

- Mr. Michael Rupp, EC/DG NEAR briefly summarized the key outcomes of the meeting (challenging environment, valued contribution of the EU4Environment Programme, continued support to the work plan, agreement on running the virtual RA meeting, followed by a physical meeting towards end 2020; taking notes on NAC/NIC arrangements). He pointed that the work plan will be send around to see what minor adjustments can be taken.
- Mr. Rupp thanked the participants for the discussion and closed the meeting.

Decisions and follow up:

- OECD will send out the updated work plan and prepare a draft summary record for comments.

Agenda

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| 14:00-14:05
(5 min) | 1 | Welcome by the Chair of the meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mr. Michael Rupp, EC/DG NEAR |
| 14:05 - 14:15
(10 min) | 2 | Update on in-country situation <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Short presentations on the current situation by the National Focal Points (NFPs), the post COVID-19 recovery plans and their potential impacts on greening the economy<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Mr Faig Mutallimov, Acting head of international organizations and projects subdivision, International Cooperation Division, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources;● Ms. Aytekin Guluzade, Deputy head of department on cooperation with international organizations, Ministry of Economy |
| 14:15 - 14:55
(40 min) | 3 | Update on past and on-going EU4Environment activities and plans for the rest of the year <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentations by Implementing Partners (see a PPT presentation)<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Result 1 (UNEP and UNECE)● Result 2 (UNIDO)● Result 3 and 5.3 (OECD)○ Reactions from the country NFPs after each result: feasibility of using alternative modes of operation (ex. virtual meetings, web-based trainings, use of local consultants), and maintaining/postponing/advancing activities. More in-depth discussions could be carried out on a bilateral basis after the consultation. |
| 14:55 - 15:05
(10 min) | 4 | Preparation for the EU4Environment Regional Assembly meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentation of the proposed options by OECD (see a PPT presentation)<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Maintaining the planned date for the Regional Assembly in the week of 21 September 2020 (suggested 22-23 September) as a virtual meeting by Zoom (e.g. 3 hour morning sessions over two days)● an in-person meeting after travel restrictions are lifted, possibly November-December in Kyiv, Ukraine○ Reactions from the country |
| 15:05 - 15:15
(10 min) | 5 | Communication (Result 5.2) and coordination with other projects <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentation by OECD (see a PPT presentation)○ Reactions from the country |
| 15:15 - 15:25
(10 min) | 6 | Progress on administrative issues (Result 5.1) <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Presentation by OECD on the Action Registration, National Action Coordinator and the National Implementing Committee○ Reactions from the country |
| 15:25 - 15:30
(5 min) | 7 | Other issues and closure <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mr. Michael Rupp, EC/DG NEAR |

List of participants

Government representatives		
Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources	Mr Faig MUTALLIMOV Head of international organizations and projects subdivision, International Cooperation Division EU4Environment National Focal Point	
Ministry of Economy	Ms. Aytakin GULUZADE Deputy head of department on cooperation with international organizations EU4Environment National Focal Point	
	Ms. Basira HAJIYEVA Department of Cooperation with International Organisations/ Adviser	
Small and Medium Business Development Agency	Mr. Emil ISMAYILKHANOV Strategic and Project Management Department/ Head of Department	
	Mr. Natig MADATOV International Cooperation Department/Head of Department	
	Mr. Ilkin ALIYEV Strategic and Project Management Department/Head of Division	
AzPromo	Mr. Zohrab GADIROV Investment Promotion Department/ Head of Department	
DeVventures	Mohamad Nabil RAFEE	
National Action Coordinator and Partners' focal points		
EU4Environment National Action Coordinator	Mr. Kamran RZAYEV	
National Focal Point of Espoo Convention	Ms. Aysel RZAYEVA Head of Green Development and Innovations Subdivision of the International Cooperation Division	
Office at United Nations in Azerbaijan	Tarek CHENITI Head of UN Resident Coordinator	
European Commission and EU Delegation		
EC/DG NEAR	Mr. Michael RUPP Team Leader Connectivity	
	Ms. Angela BULARGA International Aid / Cooperation Officer	
EC/ENV	Ms. Madalina IVANICA Policy Officer	
EU Delegation in Azerbaijan	Ms. Ulviya ABDULLAYEVA Programme Manager Neighbourhood Policy - Cooperation	

	Mr Rainer FREUND Program Manager	
UNEP	Ms. Rie TSUTSUMI Project Coordinator	
	Mr. Alex LESHCHYNSKYY Technical Officer – Eco-innovation	
	Ms. Lesya NIKOLAYEVA Technical Officer	
	Ms. Irina DAVIS Project assistant	
UNECE	Mr. Leonid KALASHNYK Project Coordinator	
	Ms. Elena KASHINA Programme Management Assistant	
UNIDO	Ms. Carolina GONZALEZ MUELLER Project Manager	
	Ms. Tatiana CHERNYAVSKAYA Project Coordinator	
OECD	Mr. Krzysztof MICHALAK Senior Action Coordinator	
	Ms. Irina BELKAHIA Assistant Action Coordinator	
	Ms. Maria DUBOIS Communications officer	
	Mr. Jonathan WRIGHT Project Assistant	
	Ms Mari LAIKRE Project Assistant	
	Ms. Nelly PETKOVA Policy Analyst	
	Mr. David SIMEK Policy Analyst	
	Mr. Guy HALPERN Policy Analyst	
	Ms. Isabella NEUWEG Policy Analyst	
World Bank	Ms. Gulana Enar HAJIYEVA	
Interpreters		
Interpreter	Ms. Gunay RAHIMOVA	
Interpreter	Mr. Rahman RAHIMOV	