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Countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus of Central Asia : Strengthening data administration on two transboundary river basins

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- International Office for Water - Cooperation - International actions - Information and documentation systems -

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With more than 50% of the territory made of transboundary basins, the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia are highly dependent on transboundary water resources for drinking water production, hydropower, irrigation, and for other uses : in these basins, it is therefore essential to develop effective IWRM policy to manage water resources in accordance with the natural equilibrium linked to water, especially as climate change threatens these resources quantitatively and qualitatively.

The implementation of these policies implies first and foremost to have a comprehensive assessment of water resources, based on consistent and homogenous information.

In this context and as part of activities related to the "Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes", whose secretariat is hosted by UNECE, MEEDDAT (French Ministry of Sustainable Development and Regional Planning) has developed, with IOWater support, a project proposal, the financing of which was approved by the FFEM Steering Committee in April 2010.

This project aims to build the data management capabilities of the main national and regional authorities in two pilot transboundary areas, using methodologies that can also be applied to other transboundary basins of Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian countries.

On the other hand, at regional level, it should allow developing tools for access to the information (portal, catalogue of data sources, web services ...) and disseminating the results and feedback obtained in the two pilot areas.

In a preliminary phase, the documents were submitted by the MEEDDAT at the "5th Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes" (Palais des Nations, Geneva, November 2009). The meeting unanimously approved the initiative, the parties having expressed their interest in future results.

The feasibility study, carried out by the "Société du Canal de Provence", allowed identifying the two pilot areas : * The Dniester River Basin : shared by Ukraine and Moldova, the Basin faces environmental problems including water quality and changes in the operating regime of the river. * The basins of the Aral Sea (Amu Darya and Syr Darya) shared by the 5 Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan) and Afghanistan, these basins have major problems of quantitative management of water resources and problems of water quality and environmental management.

Ultimately, this project is expected to be completed over a period of 18 months from mid November 2010. It will be administered by IWAC (International Water Assessment Center) and technically coordinated by IOWater. Following preliminary contacts, it will be developed on the Dniester in close collaboration with the Dniester III project financed by UNEP/UNDP /OSCE/UNECE/REC-CE, and will be part of the "Action Plan for Protection of the Aral Sea" as regards the component for Central Asia (an action plan which was the subject matter of a meeting of donors in May 2010).