

### The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC)

The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) is a partnership of six international organizations (the OSCE, REC, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, and NATO as an associated partner) that aims at identifying and reducing interlinked environment and security risks through strengthening cooperation among and within countries in four regions: Central Asia, Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus. Specific regional developments during the reporting quarter include the following:

#### Central Asia

On 2-3 March 2011, sixty officials and experts from the five Central Asian countries (namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) met in Almaty, Kazakhstan within the framework of the ENVSEC project “Capacity-building for cooperation on dam safety in Central Asia (Phase III).” The stakeholders agreed to continue to cooperate over the safety of their aging dams, which currently represent a looming threat to the region due to the double burden of growing populations in settlements downstream and extreme weather conditions sparked by climate change, such as floods and droughts. In addition, the stabilization of the situation in Kyrgyzstan allowed for the project “Promoting cooperation to adapt to climate

change in Chu-Talas transboundary basin” to be initiated and on 7 February, various experts from UN agencies, the Kazakhstan Hydrometeorological Service (Kazhydromet) and the Ozone Center met in Almaty to discuss the content of the background study, planned activities, and project milestones. Also initiated in January were activities under the “Capacity-building for radioactive waste management and early warning systems in the Fergana Valley,” including procurement of distance learning equipment to introduce new teaching methodologies in the field of training in radiation safety. Finally, within the framework of the project “Comprehensive study on glacial melting in Central Asia,” the current status of glaciers in the region was analyzed and reported through three project reports and a brochure, which will be published in June.

#### South Caucasus

A second regional workshop within the framework of the “Regional Climate Change Study for the South Caucasus” was held in Tbilisi on 1 February 2011 with the participation of 28 experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The workshop provided a platform to discuss the findings of the climate change vulnerability assessment study conducted in three priority sectors – water deficit in agriculture; water flow in three transboundary river basins (Khrami/Ktsia-Debeda, Alazani-Ganikh and Akstafachay-Agstev); and the health sector – as well as debate four potential climate change scenarios for the region. A bilateral meeting between Georgia and Armenia was also convened under the project “Fostering transboundary cooperation in the Kura-Aras



Water in Central Asia is a source of both risks and opportunities for communities and nations sharing the scarce natural resource.

River basin” on 4 February 2011 in Tbilisi. Experts from the two countries discussed the first draft bilateral agreement addressing joint river monitoring issues. In addition, a third bilateral consultation between Georgia and Azerbaijan took place on 31 March 2011 in Tbilisi to discuss a draft bilateral agreement between the two countries on shared transboundary water resources. Sixteen representatives of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan and Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia, and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and Georgia participated in the meeting, along with UNECE and OSCE experts.

## South Eastern Europe

With the support of the OSCE and the ENVSEC, two Aarhus Centres were opened in the region, one in Subotica, Serbia and the other in Podgorica, Montenegro during the reporting period. These centres will facilitate and promote access to environmental information and contribute to greater inclusion of civil society in discussions and decisions related to improving the state of the environment in the respective geographic areas. During the reporting period, the ENVSEC cooperated with the Slovenian Presidency of the Alpine Convention in the organization of the First Dinaric Arc Conference on 9 March 2011 in Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia, where several Ministers of the Dinaric Arc and neighboring regions adopted a resolution aimed at strengthening cooperation in the field of the sustainable development of mountain territories. The resolution marks an important step towards the development of a legal framework for the protection and sustainable development of the Dinaric Arc region. The Dinaric Arc countries requested UNEP to support this process, given its experience in facilitating similar processes such as the Carpathian Convention.

## Eastern Europe

The regional Coordination Meeting for Eastern Europe was held in Lviv, Ukraine on 16-17 February. The meeting was attended by the broad ENVSEC community from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, including seventy-five representatives from ENVSEC partner organizations, state agencies, local authorities, academia, NGOs, mass media, and donor

countries. During the discussion, participants reconfirmed most of ENVSEC’s current geographic priorities in Eastern Europe, and pointed to new security and environmental hotspots including the Khotislav chalk quarry in Belarus, the Kalush potash mining complex in Ukraine, existing and new hydro-engineering projects, a range of issues associated with nuclear power, and the environmental problems of the Black Sea coast. During the meeting, UNEP also launched a brochure advocating for ENVSEC’s “Mining for Closure” approach in the Donetsk region in Eastern Ukraine. On 18 February, the first automatic river monitoring station for the Pripyat River basin commenced to collect and send data to the Volyn Hydrometeorological Center in Lutsk, Ukraine. This station is a first step towards the development of a sound flood monitoring and forecast system in Ukraine and Belarus, supported by ENVSEC and NATO. Such a system will support the local authorities and the population in preparing and responding to floods in the region. On the same date, regional environmental authorities of Donetsk, Ukraine, presented a unique system of environmental monitoring, developed under the ENVSEC project “Assessment and capacity-building for managing environment and security risks in Donbas and Soligorsk.” Sensors installed throughout the city determine where and by how much permissible limits of pollution are exceeded, and transmit data to a server. On 21-24 March 2011, a train-the-trainer workshop on “Detection and prevention of illegal trafficking of environmentally sensitive commodities” was organized in Kyiv, Ukraine, with the participation of 50 representatives of the customs, border guard and environment authorities, Interpol national bureaus and universities from Eastern Europe as well as from several states of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus. The workshop focused on (i) theory and methods for detection and prevention of transboundary trafficking of environmentally sensitive commodities; and (ii) theory and practice of teaching the above-mentioned subjects. The event was organized as one of the activities under the ENVSEC project “Prevention of illegal cross-border transport of hazardous waste: Training of border and environmental authorities.”

\*The newsletter is prepared on the basis of the UNEP Disaster and Conflict Quarterly Progress Report 1/2011.

For more information on the Environment and Security Initiative, please contact:

Ms Laura Rio  
ENVSEC Senior Programme Manager  
UNEP Regional Office for Europe  
11-13 Chemin des Anémones  
CH-1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel: 0041 22 917 8207  
Email: [laura.rio@unep.org](mailto:laura.rio@unep.org)