Information sharing platform to better preserve the Caspian

Geneva, 14 October 2013 - The five Caspian States are now sharing a common virtual platform to exchange information and data on the Caspian environment. This is one additional tool for Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan to better preserve, together, the Caspian and its unique biodiversity.

The virtual Caspian Environmental Information Centre (CEIC) web portal was launched in its prototype form at the Fourth meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP4) to the Tehran Convention in Moscow (Russia) in December 2012, and welcomed by the Conference as an effective tool to collect, store and disseminate readily available environmental data. Now fully operational, CEIC is linked to the official website of the Convention and will play a central role in the unified reporting system and the Caspian Environmental Monitoring Programme, ensuring collective policy and decision-making to protect the Caspian Sea.

The CEIC web portal has been established by GRID-Arendal – the Center Collaborating with UNEP, based in Norway and working closely with the five Caspian states and with the support of UNEP’s Regional Office for Europe, which hosts the Interim Secretariat of the Tehran Convention on the protection of the Caspian Sea. Funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, along with financial support from BP Azerbaijan and its partners ensured the development of CEIC in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, which stipulates that a centralized database and information management system be established, as a virtual network to exchange information and data on the Caspian environment.

Operating in a larger monitoring and reporting network, CEIC has been communicating with recognized European networks such as the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) managed by the European Environmental Agency (EEA). It will also be linked to scientific databases within Caspian countries.

Access to data is provided both externally and internally on public and expert levels. In 2013 the portal has been upgraded, making it more user-friendly. It has incorporated the multimedia content management system which allows to upload a broad range of files’ types. Recently CEIC was opened for inputs from the private sector and the first package of data from BP Azerbaijan and its partners has been uploaded to the database, making it available to stakeholders and contributing to a vigorous dialogue between the sectors.
This important first stage in the development of a shared platform for Caspian states to exchange information and data has been completed, with further ambitious activities planned for the future.

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