Implementation of the UNECE EIA Convention in the Caspian Region: A multi-stakeholder initiative

Elizabeth Smith



Overview

- 1. EBRD
- 2. The "Espoo" Convention
- 3. Regional challenges
- 4. Regional Initiative



1. EBRD

- Regional multilateral financial institution, founded in 1991
- Operates in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union
- Shareholding: 60 countries, EIB and EC
- Euro 20 billion of capital, adheres to sound banking principles
- Project finance, technical cooperation





Environmental Mandate

EBRD's Founding Agreement commits the Bank... to

"promote, in the full range of its activities, environmentally sound and sustainable development".

- Environmental Policy
- Public Information Policy



2. The "Espoo Convention"

- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- Legally binding international convention signed 1991 in Espoo, Finland
- Entered into force 10 Sept. 1997
- EIA based
- Project types listed in Annex 1



Espoo Process

- Country of origin identifies "likely" transboundary impact of proposed project
- 2. Notify affected countries during "scoping" stage of EIA and request information on environmental sensitivities.
- 3. If positive response from affected country—public consultation must be held in affected country—at same level as country of origin
 - Timing

? Language

Costs

? Culture





3. Regional Challenges

- Political division of the Caspian not agreed
- Communication between countries
- Convention status
 - Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan: Ratified
 - Russia: Signed but not ratified
 - Turkmenistan: Neither signed nor ratified
 - Islamic Republic of Iran: Not a member of UNECE



Oil and gas development in the Caspian Region

- Large-scale projects
- Historic contamination
- EIAs
- Oil spill modelling



Off-shore oil and gas





Historic Contamination





Cultural Complexity

- Languages: Russian, Azeri, Kazakh, Turkmen, Farsi, English
- Cultural issues—different religions, practices, gender issues
- EIA approval—30 days to 6 months
- Payment of authorities for review time



Other Challenges:

- Identification of compliance problem
- Lack of understanding of obligations under Convention
- Lack of political will to conduct notification and response
- Limited ability of companies to assist, and no guidelines for preparing information



4. Regional Initiative

- Littoral States of the Caspian Sea
- UNECE
- EBRD
- UNEP
- Caspian Environment Programme
- Project Developers



Caspian Environment Programme (CEP)

- Developed under UNEP Regional Seas Programme, UNDP, and World Bank
- All countries are members
- Cooperation on environmental issues regardless of political differences
- Website, offices in each country, good communication channels



Series of Meetings Held

- 2001-2003
- Awareness raising
- Agreement in principle to develop regional guidelines
- Assessment of needs, agreement on languages
- Development of guidance
- Guidelines endorsed by littoral states / CEP



Tools Produced

- Guidance for countries developing transboundary projects
- Guidance for affected countries
- Guidance for project developers
- Web-page on CEP website for Espoo projects
- Summary of tools for public consultation



Further Needs

- Training for local environmental authorities on requirements
- Better information on public consultation in each littoral state (methods, resources, consultants)
- Greater involvement of NGOs in next steps for developing consultation tools



Further Information

EBRD (www.ebrd.com)

UNECE (www.unece.org)

UNEP (www.unep.org)

Espoo Convention: (www.unece.org/env/eia/)

Caspian Environment Programme

(www.caspianenvironment.org)

(www.caspianenvironment.org/transboundary.htm)

