

**WORKING MEETING RESOLUTION**  
Environmental Nongovernmental Organizations and Oil  
Companies  
of the Transcaspian Countries

On September 22-23, 2004, in Astrakhan, Russia, representatives of environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and oil companies of the Transcaspian countries participated in a Working Meeting. The purpose of this meeting—the first of its kind—was to initiate dialogue with one another, to identify shared interests related to the environmental protection of the Caspian Sea, and to determine mechanisms for acting upon these interests.

The Working Meeting was made possible thanks to the support of "LUKoil-Nizhnevolzhskneft" and the facilities of the Caspian Scientific-Research Fisheries Institute (KaspNIRKH), well known throughout the Caspian region as a leading scientific institution. The meeting was organized by the Caspian Marine Scientific-Research Center "Rosgidromet", with the active participation of Crude Accountability. Leading experts from Astrakhan's scientific institutions participated in the meeting. Working Meeting participants welcomed the Astrakhan Oblast Administration and the Astrakhan Oblast Division of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Natural Resources.

Taking into consideration the information presented by the scientific experts, NGOs and oil company representatives, the majority of the Working Meeting participants came to the following conclusions:

1. As a result of prolonged anthropogenic impacts, the Caspian Sea ecosystem is found in an unsustainable condition and its biological resources are severely depleted. As the anthropogenic burden increases, resulting from the potential expansion of oil and gas extraction activities, negative changes to the environmental status of the Caspian Sea may become irreversible.
2. There is little legal protection for the Caspian Sea environment as a result of: limitations in the national environmental laws of the Transcaspian governments; difficulties applying these national

- environmental laws in connection with the undefined legal status of the Caspian; and the prolonged process of ratifying the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, for which it is necessary to integrate the efforts of all interested parties.
3. To decrease the negative impacts of oil and gas extraction operations on the ecosystem of the Caspian Sea, it is not sufficient to simply conduct environmental assessments of individual oil and gas projects. Assessments must be comprehensive in nature, i.e., considering environmental impacts over the entire marine area, and incorporating all parties and phases of oil and gas extraction operations. Furthermore, the results of the assessments must be taken into consideration in joint activities of the Transcaspian government regarding protection of the marine environment.
  4. The demands made by environmental NGOs to oil companies active in the basin express the anxiety and concern shared by coastal residents regarding the fate of the Caspian, with which their well-being and health are closely connected. However, these demands sometimes emerge from the national legislation of the Caspian states.
  5. In general, oil companies fulfill the requirements of national environmental legislation, but as a result of shortcomings in this legislation, their environmental protection activities are rated by nongovernmental organizations as ineffective. The policy of openness by oil companies (in particular LUKoil) in terms of ensuring environmental safety deserves approval.
  6. The establishment of partnerships between environmental NGOs and oil companies is possible around information and social issues, and in the fields of environmental management, environmental evaluations and impact assessments. Partnership may take the form of agreements, regulated interactions by the parties, or joint action programs.

The Working Meeting participants address their recommendations to environmental NGOs, oil companies active in the Caspian Sea region, and the executive authorities responsible for environmental protection at the national levels.

It is recommended that environmental NGOs:

- Appeal to national legislative bodies with proposals for improving national environmental legislation regulating offshore oil and gas extraction operations; and
- Strengthen coordination at the national and regional levels, facilitating interaction with partners in other sectors, including oil companies.

It is recommended that oil companies:

- Raise the level of environmental safety measures by introducing internal environmental standards and certification in accordance with the international standards of ISO 14000;
- Improve public information access to all environmental aspects of company activities in the Caspian Sea basin; and
- Consider the views of environmental NGOs when forming company environmental and social policies.

It is recommended that the executive authorities responsible for environmental protection at the national levels:

- Promote the rapid ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, and the development of its supplementary protocols;
- Further the establishment of standards for the impact of oil and gas extraction activities on the marine environment, and ensure the effective application of these standards;
- Improve coordination of research about and monitoring of the Caspian Sea at the national and international levels; and
- Strengthen governmental environmental management of the activities of oil companies in the Caspian Sea, and inform the public of the results of these activities.

The Working Meeting participants approved the proposal put forth by the Caspian Marine Scientific-Research Center to create a partnership on strategic environmental assessments of oil and gas extraction operations in the Caspian Sea, with the participation of scientific institutions, oil companies and nongovernmental organizations of the Transcaspian countries. The participants recommended that

the Caspian Marine Scientific-Research Center proceed with this proposal by securing the interest of all parties.

In the overall opinion of the participants, the Working Meeting launched a dialogue between environmental NGOs and oil companies of the Transcaspian countries. This dialogue must continue in the future, having become one of the mechanisms for cooperation between all sectors whose aim is to protect the environment of the Caspian Sea. The Working Meeting participants expressed their gratitude to the initiators and organizers.