

## **Some Actual Issues and Criteria of Water Resources Audit**

(October 6, group 2)

Control of the public expenditure on the water resources protection is one of the vital priorities of the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation.

Public policy in the field of water resources management in the Russian Federation comply with the basic principle of the EU Framework Water Directive – to achieve good qualitative status of all water resources.

Water resources management system in the Russian Federation is based on the basin approach which also goes along with the FWD principles. A unified approach to the management of water bodies becomes a crucial factor for effective intergovernmental decision-making.

Fostering the development of trans-boundary and interregional cooperation is one of the basic features of the Russian policy towards the European states. Being washed by twelve seas of three oceans as well as by inland Caspian Sea, Russia is a rightful leader in water stocks. Besides, there are more than two and a half million large and small rivers, more than two million lakes, hundreds of thousands of wetlands and other water bodies in Russia.

The problem of rational use of nonrenewable resources and protection and recovery of renewable ones, since its exacerbating depletion and pollution, turns from an internal matter of each particular country into a global issue of mankind survival that calls for more coordinated international cooperation. In this connection a special attention should be given to trans-boundary water bodies such as the Caspian, the Azov and the Black Sea basins. These sea basins encompass fourteen countries including two EU Member States. Each of these basins is unique and needs support from the international community.

Annual Activity Plans of the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation always include a number of various auditing activities in the field of public spending on water resources management. These activities include financial audit of budget funds administration as well as water resources management performance audit.

In 2005 a parallel performance audit of the use of the Caspian Sea bioresources and the measures for protection, preservation, recovery and rational use of sturgeon fish species was conducted by the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation in collaboration with Republic of Kazakhstan Accounts Committee for Control over Execution of the Republican Budget and Accounts Chamber of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The audit revealed poor level of interstate coordination in the areas critical to preservation of the Caspian unique ecosystem such as environmental monitoring, sanitary and epidemiological safety surveillance, disaster prevention and management.

The SAIs pointed out the necessity to finalize and sign an Intergovernmental Agreement on the Caspian Sea bioresources preservation and use in order to give a legal foundation for fisheries management for the littoral states with a particular attention to the areas of preservation, research and reproduction of the fish stocks.

Joint efforts aimed at improving performance of use, conservation and restoration of the Caspian Sea bioresources were recognized as a vital necessity. The cooperating SAIs are unanimous that the major steps in achieving this goal should include promotion of the Caspian littoral states' joint efforts against poaching, conduct of comprehensive bioresource research and artificial reproduction of bioresources.

In order to preserve such a unique natural phenomenon as the Caspian Sea, the SAIs proposed to unify the existing environmental legal framework. In this connection the SAIs of Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan submitted the proposal to their Parliaments.

Poor water resources ecology has been noted in the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation Report on the audit of public expenditure on the protection of the Azov – Black Sea basin ecological safety. According to the first ever published Red List of Threatened Marine Species and the results of the research on the petrochemical pollution of water bodies the Black Sea rates one of the most polluted seas in the world. Twenty European states dump waste into the sea through the Danube, the Prut and the Dnieper rivers. It's worth to be mentioned that the main load-bearing region is the most swallow Northwestern part of the Sea that generates 65% of local marine species and where main spawnings are located.

The Black Sea suffers more damage since many littoral counties use the Sea as a site for the disposal of the various forms of waste including the

material removed during dredging, drill cuttings, industrial and construction waste, explosives and chemicals, radioactive waste.

The parallel performance audit of actions undertaken within the framework of the Bucharest Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution clearly demonstrated that this issue has a great importance for the Black Sea waters.

In order to fulfill its obligations under the Bucharest and the Ramsar Conventions as well as bilateral agreements with Ukraine the Russian Federation suggested creating the Russian-Ukrainian joint natural resources and environmental monitoring system in the field of economic activities in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait.

On the whole, the parallel audit of the Caspian, the Azov and the Black Seas water resources revealed that international cooperation on the issue is not quite effective.

Generally speaking, water resources auditing activities should be focused on identifying the cause and mitigation of:

- water quality deterioration;
- shortages of potable water;
- increase of damage rate during water-related disasters such as floods, landslides, coastal erosions, etc;
- deterioration of hydraulic facilities.

Since water bodies are often of trans-boundary nature and their environmental safety depends on the actions of two or more states, the development of a unified methodology of environmental auditing harmonized with the international and national standards on auditing as well as the EU auditing standards remains an important prerequisite for SAs performance improvement.