

IMPLEMENTING WATER OPERATORS PARTNERSHIPS IN CENTRAL ASIA AND CAUCASUS

In August of 2006, at the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and GWP signed a cooperation agreement covering, among others, the implementation of the Water Operators Partnership program in the Asia Pacific region. A key task is to set up water utilities networks as a mechanism to share knowledge and build capacity among utilities that are facing similar challenges. This will strengthen the utilities and facilitate access to finance, for example through the ADB Water Financing Program that plans to invest in excess of US\$ 2 billion annually until 2010 to improve water service delivery in the region.

A Southeast Asian Water Utilities Network (SEAWUN), a network of 47 water utilities in Southeast Asia, has already been established. This has been very successful and the aim was to replicate this network in South and Central Asia and China so that these regions can enjoy the same benefits as the Southeast Asian region.

On March 24-26, 2008 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan there was organized Regional Meeting of Central Asia and South Caucasus Water Utilities Network (CASCWUN), where representatives of 14 Water Utilities from seven CACENA countries were attended. The meeting and following on 27th March the CASCWUN Steering Committee meeting was supported by ADB and GWP CACENA. The main outcome of the meeting was agreement on CASCWUN Statutes and Program of joint activities for 2008-2009.

It was agreed that CASCWUN will serve as a venue for the exchange of experiences among water utilities in the region and will be responsible for the implementation of capacity development programs. Essential to the start of any program is the determination of the base case of a utilities' performance. An initial agreed activity therefore is a benchmarking exercise that should determine performance levels in the following core areas of water utility operations:

- service levels
- service quality
- operational efficiency
- financial management

The data secured through this exercise provides a baseline of utilities performance and allows the tracking of improvements over time on the basis of mutual enrichment within the another part of the program, which includes a number of training workshops to be jointly organized covering administrative, financial and technical aspects of utility management.

The GWP CACENA is currently exploring the possibility of securing technical assistance grants from ADB and the Government of Japan to support CASCWUN follow-up program.