



Environment



Security

ENVSEC

in the

South Caucasus

An overview of projects



Published by the OSCE and the ENVSEC Initiative

This publication is intended to highlight some past and present ENVSEC activities in the South Caucasus. It is not meant to provide a comprehensive overview of all related activities in the region, nor is it inclusive of potential future projects.

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Partners of ENVSEC



Environment and security

Changes in the environment and competition over natural resources can lead to political disputes and threaten stability of societies. Human security is also vulnerable to environmental disasters.

Environmental co-operation in vulnerable situations can act as a bridge for improved mutual understanding, and lay the foundations for agreements on transboundary environmental management.

The concept of environmental security has been in use since a series of international reports in the 1980s and the 1990s linked environmental stress to conflicts and confidence building. The Brundtland Commission of 1987 argued that the concept of security “must be expanded to include the growing impacts of environmental stress locally, nationally, regionally, and globally”. Principle 25 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environmental Development states that “peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.”

The ENVSEC Initiative

The Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative was founded against the backdrop of this growing acknowledgement of the link between environment and security. It was launched at the fifth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Kiev in May 2003 as a joint initiative of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which were active in the transition countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

Jointly, the partner organizations provided an integrated response to the challenges posed by the close links between environmental degradation, natural resource scarcity and conflict.

The three founding ENVSEC organizations were later joined by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as an associate partner.

Each of the organizations brings its own attributes and expertise to the partnership. The OSCE, with its comprehensive security mandate and field operations, provides important political support. UNEP contributes environmental expertise. UNDP, together with its country offices, provides expertise in human security and sustainable development. UNECE, the holder of five multilateral environmental conventions, provides legal frameworks of co-operation. REC leads several environmental efforts particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. NATO, as an associate partner, contributes to capacity building and awareness-raising by using its standard mechanisms for cooperative grants under the Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme.

The ENVSEC partners co-operate on projects focused on protecting the environment and assessing risks that stem from it when left unprotected.

ENVSEC

The purpose of the ENVSEC Initiative is to contribute to the reduction of environment and security risks and strengthened co-operation among and within countries. ENVSEC pursues this goal through (a) in-depth vulnerability assessments of environmental and security risks; (b) strengthening policies, awareness and participation; (c) joint management of environmental and security risks; and (d) solutions for safe environment and sustainable development.

Methodologically, the Initiative's approach is to advocate multi-stakeholder participation during the assessment, definition and implementation stages of projects and is based on the principles of local ownership, integration of co-operation services and harmonization of donor policies and action.

ENVSEC works in four areas: natural resources and security risk management; hazardous substances and environment and security risk reduction; population pressure on environmental security and climate change adaptation; and information on environment and security and participation in risk management.

The ENVSEC Management Board is the key decision-making body of the Initiative, which is composed of representatives from each of the partner organizations with an annually rotating chairmanship. It provides direction to the Initiative on overall strategy, regional priorities, its work programme and budget.

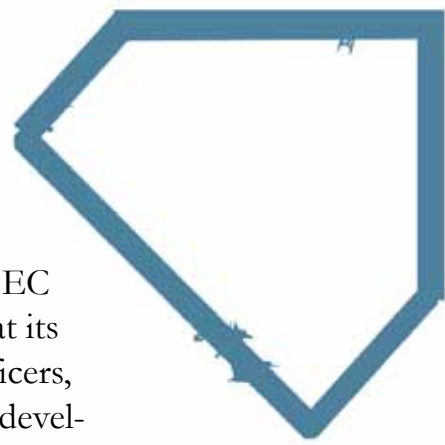
Day-to-day activities of the Initiative are co-ordinated by the ENVSEC Secretariat, consisting of the Co-ordination Unit hosted by UNEP at its Regional Office for Europe in Geneva, and four Regional Desk Officers, appointed by ENVSEC partner agencies, which are responsible for developing, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of regional work programmes and sharing information among different actors.

The Regional Desk Office function for Central Asia is performed by UNDP, for Eastern Europe by UNEP, for South-Eastern Europe by REC and for the South Caucasus by the OSCE.

In each country where ENVSEC is active, the ENVSEC National Focal Points are the backbones of the Initiative. Representing the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in each country, these National Focal Points participate in planning and monitoring the ENVSEC work programmes and projects and provide complementary expertise.

The implementation of each project is the responsibility of one or several ENVSEC partner organizations, designated by the Management Board based on their respective mandates and capacities.

At the country level, country and field offices of the OSCE, UNDP and REC participate actively in project planning and monitoring, with the support of national agencies, NGOs, academia and research institutions.



ENVSEC

South Caucasus

The ENVSEC Initiative became active in the countries of the South Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, in 2004. Its engagement in the region is motivated by the ambitious vision of facilitating co-operation and reducing the security risks related to environmental degradation. Viewing environmental concerns not only in terms of responding to immediate threats but also in terms of protecting common natural resources at risk has opened the door to co-operation with the aim of overcoming differences and finding common ground to tackle environmental and security challenges.

Armenia

Total population: 3.3 million (2010)-Source: National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia
Total area: 29,743 km²
Population density: 109.7 per km²

Platform
for
dialogue

Azerbaijan

Total population: 9.0 million (2010)-Source: State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Total area: 86,600 km²
Population density: 103.9 per km²

Building
confidence



Work Programme

The work of the ENVSEC Initiative in the South Caucasus is based on national consultations, in which a wide range of representatives from several ministries, state agencies, civil society organizations and scientists provided information on national environmental and security issues. These country consultation processes formed the basis of the South Caucasus Regional Assessment Report, which was endorsed by the Ministers of Environment of each country at the South Caucasus sub-regional Environment for Europe Meeting in Tbilisi in October 2004.

The ENVSEC Work Programme in the South Caucasus is based on the priorities identified in the South Caucasus Regional Assessment Report. These priorities are:

environmental degradation and access to natural resources in areas of conflict;
management of transboundary natural resources, natural hazards and industrial and military legacies;
population growth and rapid development in capital and other major cities; and public awareness and participation in environmental decision-making.

The partner organizations of the Initiative offer countries their combined pool of expertise and resources towards those priorities.

Transboundary
environmental
co-operation

Georgia

Total population: 4.4 million (2010)-Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

Total area: 69,700 km²
Population density: 68.1 per km²





Wildfire Disaster Risk Reduction in the South Caucasus

Wildfires are posing an increasing threat to ecosystems, livelihoods and even human health worldwide. Effects of global climate change, in particular heat waves

that coincide with low precipitation and strong winds, are contributing to the increasing incidence of wildfires.

Nevertheless, the majority of wildfires are caused by human behaviour.

WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT

Natural resources and security risk management

ENVSEC's involvement in the field of wildfire management is based on the OSCE-led Environmental Assessment Mission to fire affected territories in and around the Nagorno-Karabakh region in 2006 and the Joint OSCE/UNEP Environmental Assessment Mission to Georgia in 2008.

The assessments showed that the damage caused by wildfires in the South Caucasus can partially be attributed to the absence of effective forest fire management systems.

To assist the South Caucasus countries in enhancing their fire management capacities, the OSCE, within the framework of the ENVSEC Initiative, launched the project "Enhancing National Capacity on Fire Management and Wildfire Disaster Risk Reduction in the South Caucasus". The project is conducted in partnership with the Global Fire Monitoring Centre based in Germany.

The focus of the project is threefold: capacity building, policy development and regional and international co-operation. Active participation in regional and international networks provides the countries of the region with up-to-date expertise and access to fire suppression assistance during large fire emergencies.

In an initial stage, the project focused on national and regional training and international co-operation within the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Regional

Southeast Europe /Caucasus Wildland Fire Network. Experts from all three South Caucasus countries engaged in sub-regional seminars and consultations and international conferences on wildfires.

In the project's second phase, forest fire vulnerability assessments were conducted in Armenia and Azerbaijan for the development of national forest fire management policies. In Georgia, after intensive consultations with national stakeholders, a draft policy document on wildfire management was prepared in 2011 and submitted to the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources for adoption.

A fire management training workshop was held in Antalya, Turkey in 2010, with the participation of 30 representatives from the fire-fighting agencies of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The training was organized in co-operation with the Turkish Forestry Directorate.

In a third phase, the project will focus on further developing and implementing national fire management policies in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. This will include a regional fire management training course and support for the participation of the South Caucasus countries in major international events on wildfire management.

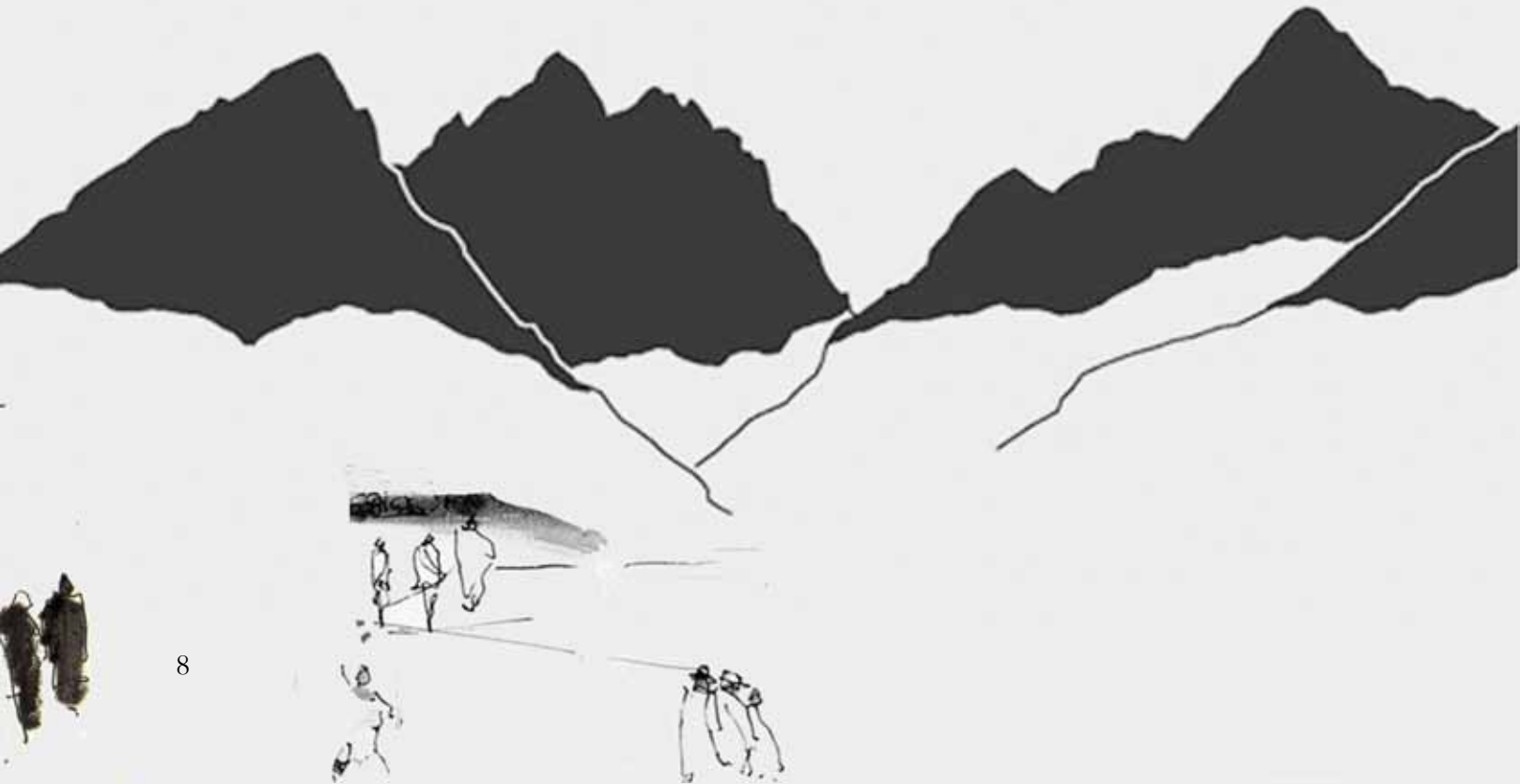
Sustainable
development
of

MOUNTAIN REGIONS

Natural resources and security risk management

ENVSEC has been instrumental in supporting the process of co-operation for the protection and sustainable development of the mountains in the wider Caucasus region in a project implemented by UNEP in close partnership with REC Caucasus and co-funded by ENVSEC. Under the project, a meeting in Vaduz, Liechtenstein in 2007 brought together high-level representatives of the countries of the wider Caucasus region and two technical level meetings were held in Bolzano, Italy in 2009.

The meetings provided significant input to establishing a basis for further co-operative work in the region for the protection and sustainable development of mountain regions in the South Caucasus.



Participatory
Management of

PROTECTED AREAS

Natural resources and security risk management

Currently consultations as to the organization of a High-Level Meeting in the region, as decided in Bolzano in 2009, are being conducted. A final decision on a High-Level Meeting has not yet been taken by the government(s) potentially interested in hosting it. UNEP plans to have a next round of technical expert consultations in the fall of 2012 in order to get an update and to advance the process.

Representatives and stakeholders from the countries of the wider Caucasus region were invited to participate in the Lucerne World Mountain Conference on 11 and 12 October 2011. They presented and discussed regional and global experience in mountain development since Rio 1992. The Conference identified challenges and opportunities for the future of global and regional sustainable mountain development. A global report on mountains as well as regional reports will be fed into the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Protected areas play an important role in promoting sustainable management of natural resources and nature conservation. Nevertheless, in some cases the establishment and enlargement of protected areas are perceived as endangering the livelihood of local communities and may become causes of discontent. As experience shows, wider involvement of civil society and local communities in the planning and management of individual protected areas reduces the risks of tensions and improves the effectiveness of the protected areas management.

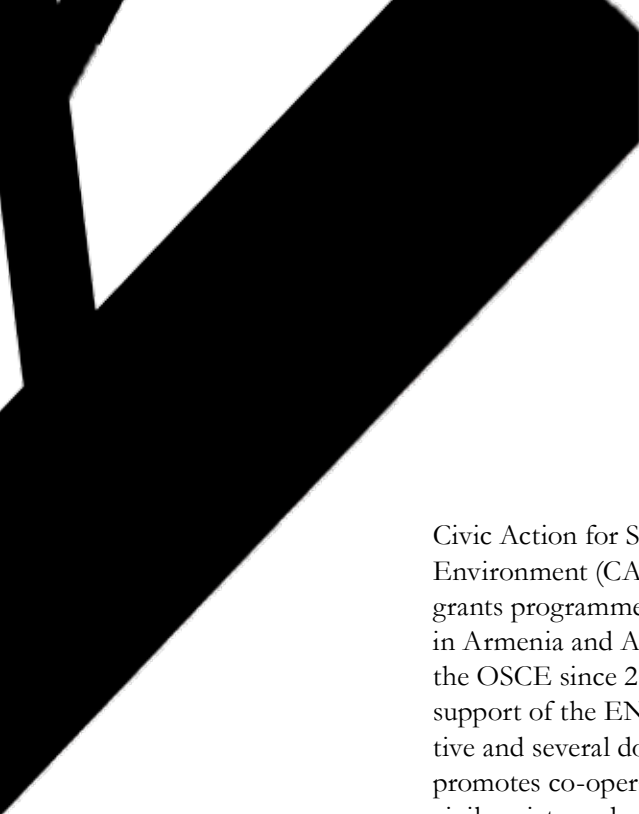
Within the framework of the ENVSEC Initiative, UNEP and the OSCE joined forces with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to strengthen national and regional capacities in protected area management, with a special focus on the participatory management of protected areas. The project conducted an institutional and legislative review of protected area management in the region. The next step will be to organize national and regional training programmes to promote the benefits of shared responsibilities. The project will also provide a forum for exchanging experiences at the regional level.

A large, stylized graphic of a tree with thick black branches and a white trunk, set against a dark red background. The tree is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page.

CASE

Civic Action for Security and Environment

Information on environment and security
and participation in risk management



Civic Action for Security and Environment (CASE) is a small grants programme implemented in Armenia and Azerbaijan by the OSCE since 2009 with the support of the ENVSEC Initiative and several donors. CASE promotes co-operation between civil society and government in support of effective environmental governance to adequately address challenges at the interface of environment and security.

At the heart of CASE is a small grants mechanism that allows civil society organizations to implement projects in close partnership with their constituencies. National Screening Boards that involve representatives of government, NGOs, UNDP country offices and OSCE field operations identify country priorities and select projects.

Most projects supported under CASE have an awareness-raising or capacity-building focus and have budgets in the 6,000 to 10,000 Euro range. The projects usually operate at grassroots level, focusing on communities with which the organizations receiving the grants are intimately familiar. Operating with very small budgets, CASE projects draw heavily on the services offered by the Aarhus Centres for stakeholder outreach, awareness raising and meeting facilitation.

The CASE approach carefully balances the twin goals of the programme: building the capacity of civil society organizations and tackling environment and security challenges.

CASE Armenia supports primarily projects on environmental education, management of hazardous waste, monitoring environmental compliance, environmental impact of the mining sector, development of local environmental action plans, sustainable farming and eco-journalism. In Armenia, the programme is an integral component of the Aarhus Centres network. The average grant size awarded under CASE Armenia is 6,000 Euro. As of March 2012, 17 NGO projects in Armenia received support through CASE.

CASE Azerbaijan focuses mainly on solid and hazardous waste management, natural hazards, citizen control mechanisms, youth participation, climate change impact on agriculture, energy efficiency and pasture degradation. The average grant size awarded under CASE Azerbaijan is 10,000 Euro. As of March 2012, 11 NGO projects in Azerbaijan received grants under CASE.

In transboundary water basins, countries share common water resources on which they depend for domestic, industrial and agriculture use. Transboundary waters create hydrological, social and economic interdependencies between countries, making water resource management an important area of regional co-operation. Water resources are affected by numerous and interlinked pressures such as population growth, agricultural practices, energy generation, industrial activities and consumption patterns.

The quality of the water in the Kura-Aras River Basin shared by all three countries of the South Caucasus region has been significantly affected by human activity in the second half of the twentieth century. The risk of natural disasters such as floods and landslides and the impact of climate change on the water flow further compromise the quality of life of populations residing in the basin.

The ENVSEC Initiative has assisted the South Caucasus countries in enhancing their technical capacity to assess the state of water resources in the basin and supported bilateral and multilateral co-operation, particularly through the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention).

inding common ground


The ENVSEC Initiative, through a joint effort by NATO and the OSCE, implemented the South Caucasus River Monitoring project from 2002 to 2008. The project aimed at re-establishing a regional transboundary river monitoring system and harmonizing sampling and testing methodologies in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Scientific institutions carried out regular monitoring and analysis of heavy metals, pesticides, radio-nuclides and organic pollutants at over 30 monitoring stations. The capacity built through this project has been successfully utilized and further developed through subsequent water initiatives in the region.

The ENVSEC project on public involvement and the establishment of an NGO forum in the Kura-Aras River Basin, implemented by UNDP between 2005 and 2007, was designed to enhance support for public participation in reducing transboundary degradation of the basin. Its objective was to increase the capacity of local communities to manage water resources in a sustainable way, through improved co-ordination and targeted educational opportunities.

In 2006, the ENVSEC Initiative, also under the leadership of UNDP, supported the identification of the major transboundary aquifer systems within the South Caucasus region and carried out a desk assessment of resources and main challenges related to the use and protection of groundwaters.

TransBOUNDARY WATER MANAGEMENT

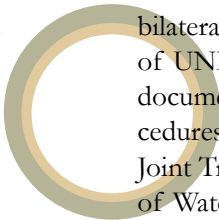
Natural resources and security risk management



Through an ENVSEC project, the OSCE and the UNECE have assisted Georgia in identifying legal, institutional and financial requirements for accession to and implementation of the UNECE Water Convention.

ENVSEC has also been assisting in the preparation of a bilateral water agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia. Four rounds of bilateral consultations were facilitated by UNECE and the OSCE in 2010 and 2011 to develop a draft agreement on the Kura River. It provides a framework for co-operation between the two countries on water pollution prevention and control, conservation of biodiversity, emergency situations, data and information sharing, and public participation.

The draft agreement also envisages the establishment of a joint commission for protection and sustainable use of water resources of the Kura River Basin.



A similar process is underway in the framework of the Armenian-Georgian bilateral water project under the auspices of UNDP. It entails preparing a guidance document on Joint River Monitoring Procedures within the Armenian-Georgian Joint Transboundary Monitoring Program of Water Quality in Ktsia (Khrami)-Debed River Basins and developing a draft Protocol on Cooperation on the Protection and Sustainable Use of Transboundary Water Resources between the Ministry of Nature Protection of Armenia and the Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Natural resources and security risk management

The UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) sets out the obligations of States Parties to assess the environmental impact of certain activities at an early stage of planning. It also lays down the general obligation of States Parties to notify and consult each other on all major projects under consideration that are likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact across boundaries.

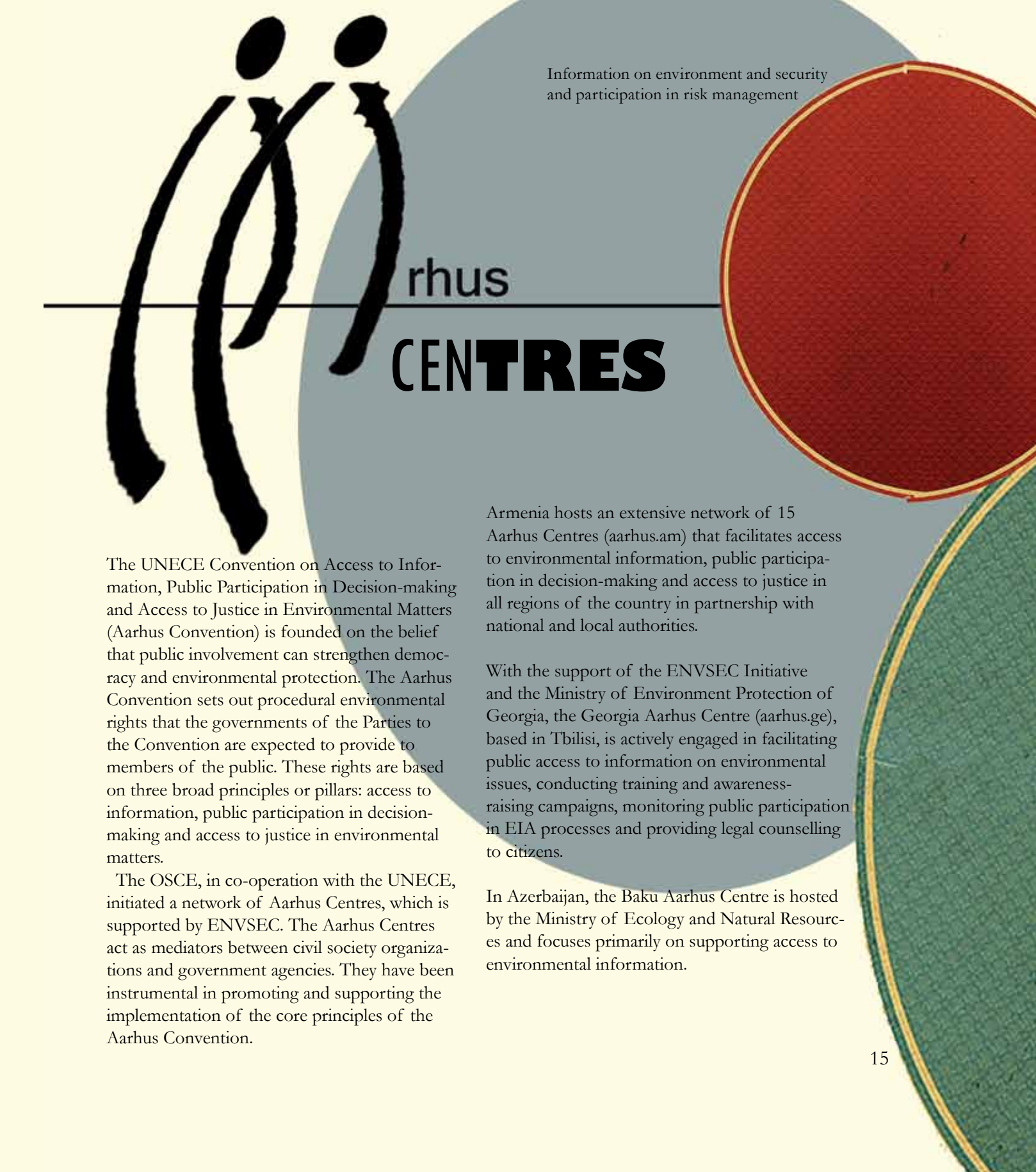
A Protocol to the Espoo Convention provides for Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs), which are conducted much earlier in the decision-making process than EIAs. The application of the SEA Protocol provides a platform for balancing the economic, social and environmental issues in planning and helps to prevent future significant and costly environmental damage. The Protocol also provides for extensive public participation in government decision-making in numerous development sectors.

In 2007, the ENVSEC Initiative provided technical support to Armenia in identifying steps for ensuring the country's full compliance with the requirements of the Espoo Convention and possible areas for amendments in the national legislation.

The ENVSEC Initiative, through a joint project of the UNECE and the OSCE, organized a sub-regional workshop in Tbilisi in May 2011, which brought together government and NGO representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey to discuss the implementation of the principles of the Espoo Convention and its SEA Protocol. The workshop also explored ways for strengthening national and regional capacities in this respect.

Through another joint project of the UNECE and the OSCE, the Initiative is currently working with the Government of Azerbaijan to strengthen national capacities for implementation of the Espoo Convention. The project is in the process of reviewing the EIA legislation in the country with a view to further strengthening the implementation of the Convention in Azerbaijan.

Another ENVSEC project, "Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – promotion and capacity development in Azerbaijan", led by UNDP, helped to develop a strategy for introducing the SEA system, a guidance document for its practical application and draft provisions for a legal framework for SEA in Azerbaijan. The project has also improved stakeholders' understanding of the SEA concept and assisted in developing capacity to apply it.



Information on environment and security
and participation in risk management

rhus CENTRES

The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) is founded on the belief that public involvement can strengthen democracy and environmental protection. The Aarhus Convention sets out procedural environmental rights that the governments of the Parties to the Convention are expected to provide to members of the public. These rights are based on three broad principles or pillars: access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.

The OSCE, in co-operation with the UNECE, initiated a network of Aarhus Centres, which is supported by ENVSEC. The Aarhus Centres act as mediators between civil society organizations and government agencies. They have been instrumental in promoting and supporting the implementation of the core principles of the Aarhus Convention.

Armenia hosts an extensive network of 15 Aarhus Centres (aarhus.am) that facilitates access to environmental information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in all regions of the country in partnership with national and local authorities.

With the support of the ENVSEC Initiative and the Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia, the Georgia Aarhus Centre (aarhus.ge), based in Tbilisi, is actively engaged in facilitating public access to information on environmental issues, conducting training and awareness-raising campaigns, monitoring public participation in EIA processes and providing legal counselling to citizens.

In Azerbaijan, the Baku Aarhus Centre is hosted by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and focuses primarily on supporting access to environmental information.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Hazardous substances and
environment and security risk reduction

Uncontrolled stocks of obsolete pesticides or other forms of hazardous waste are a legacy of the Soviet era with which many countries, including those in the South Caucasus, are still dealing.

Organic pollutants were often buried in storage facilities that have deteriorated over time, posing serious risks to the environment. One of these sites is located in Nubarashen, Armenia. When the environmental and health risks to its immediate surroundings became visible, an ENVSEC project, led by the OSCE, conducted a rapid assessment of the site and developed recommendations for immediate action.



MINING PROJECT in Armenia

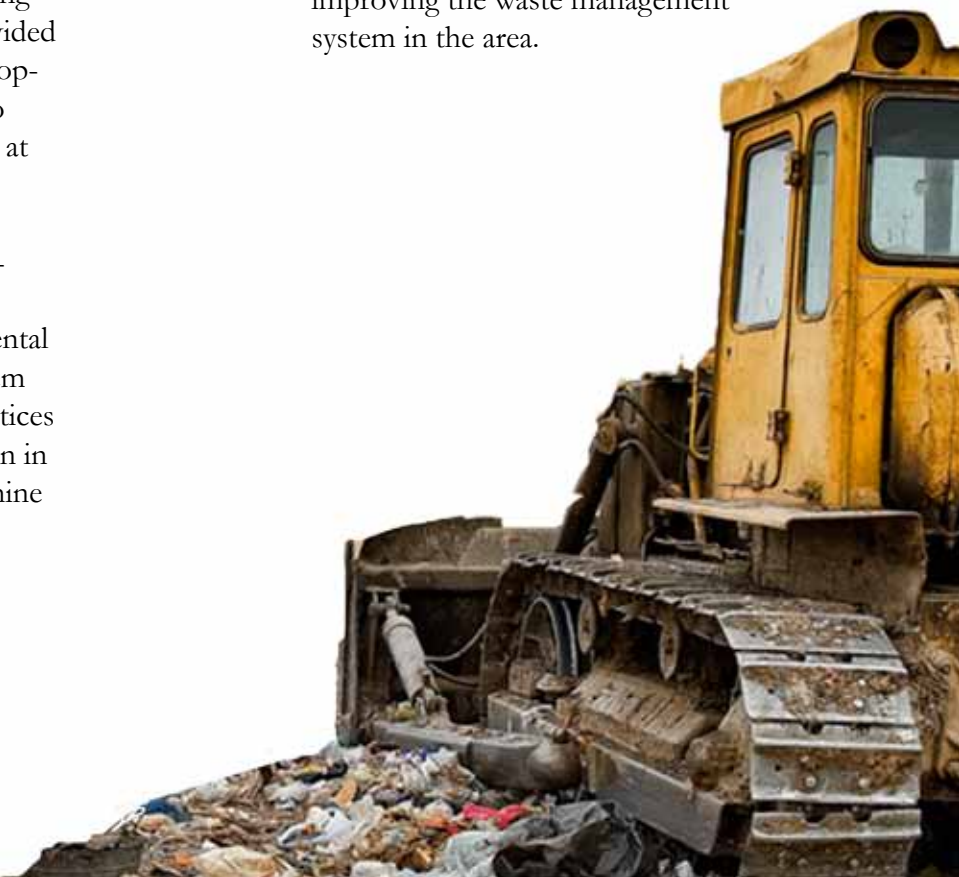
Within the framework of the ENVSEC Initiative, UNEP and the OSCE joined forces with Zoi Environment Network to implement a project to promote best mining practices in Armenia through capacity building. In 2010, a technical expert meeting on mining and environment was organized in Yerevan, followed by a field visit by experts to several mining sites in the country. The experts provided concrete recommendations for developing a joint programme of activities to improve environmental management at mining sites.

In June 2011, a study tour was organized to Albania and Montenegro for representatives of relevant governmental institutions of Armenia, enabling them to benefit from ENVSEC's best practices in the South-Eastern European region in the field of environmentally sound mine management.

WASTE assessment in Georgia MANAGEMENT

In March 2008, the OSCE and UNEP, with the support of the ENVSEC Initiative, dispatched a team of experts to Tskhinvali to carry out an in-depth assessment of waste management problems.

The assessment report included a set of recommendations for improving the waste management system in the area.





URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Population pressure on environmental security and climate change adaptation

During the past several decades, thousands of people have migrated to the large cities of the South Caucasus, creating pressures on urban infrastructures and the environment.

Migrants to the capital cities have included internally displaced persons and refugees of past conflicts and natural disasters, permanent and temporary workers from rural areas and persons from secondary urban centres searching for work and better living standards.

Considering that better urban management and planning is a first step towards building resilient cities in the South Caucasus, ENVSEC, through joint projects of the OSCE and UNEP, has applied the Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) approach that encompasses the Integrated Environmental Assessment Methodology as an instrument for informed decision-making in selected cities of Armenia and Georgia. The methodology allows establishing consensus among local stakeholders on the most critical environmental problems in a city and promotes better understanding of the interaction between urban development and the environment.

In Armenia, environmental assessments of Yerevan, Alaverdi, Gyumri and Hrazdan were conducted between 2007 and 2009.

The project “GEO-Cities Tbilisi – An Integrated Environmental Assessment of State and Trends for Georgia’s Capital City” was completed in 2011 and provided a comprehensive overview of environmental issues in the city. The project also contributed significantly to strengthening the capacity of local administrations in the country.



CLIMATE CHANGE

Changing constants into variables

Climate change has been recognized as a core development challenge that carries potentially serious implications for international peace and security.

Climate change will alter the socio-economic foundations of society. It will transform constants into variables.

The ENVSEC partner organizations with their specialized and complementary mandates and expertise can jointly assist countries in climate change adaptation within a broader discussion context of environment, security, social and economic development.

The ENVSEC, through a UNDP-led project has conducted the Regional Climate Change Impacts Study for the South Caucasus Region, published in 2011. In addition to providing regional climate change scenarios, it also assessed climate change vulnerability of agriculture (crop water and irrigation requirements), water flow in three transboundary rivers and urban areas.

The study demonstrated that in all three countries there is strong evidence of increased warming over the last century. Scenarios showed further increase of temperature in the region. The water supply is likely to decrease in transboundary Alazani (Ganikh) (Azerbaijan/Georgia), Khrami-Debed (Armenia/Georgia) and the Aghstev (Armenia/Azerbaijan) River Basins. The study also showed that due to the

projected decline of precipitation and increase in temperatures, by the end of the century stream flow is projected to decline dramatically. Models projected a significant rise of crop water and irrigation requirements. Another negative consequence of climate change in the South Caucasus revealed by the study is urban heat stress, which may become a significant climate change-induced health issue in the region.

The realization that environmental change will affect us all is an incentive for creating platforms for discussion and developing new approaches for co-operation. The shared concern for a changing environment is a catalyser for finding common ground.

The ENVSEC Initiative creates a platform for dialogue and conducts practical projects that deepen the understanding of the link between environment and security. Although the non-institutional nature of the ENVSEC partnership makes it difficult to profile, it encompasses a richness and diversity of approaches to environment and security that allow it to maximize its effectiveness in contributing to security and stability.



