Caspian countries come together to discuss protection of the Caspian Sea

15 November 2012

Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Kazakhstan
Turkmenistan
Azerbaijan
Russian Federation

On 5 and 6 November 2012, the Caspian Ecological Forum, hosted by Turkmenistan’s Ministry of Nature Protection, was held along the shores of the Caspian Sea in the Avaza national tourist zone, not far from the Turmenbashy Bay Ramsar Site.

Turkmenbashy Bay Ramsar Site (© Ramsar Secretariat)

Turkmenistan acceded to the Ramsar Convention in 2009 and designated 267,124 ha of the Hazar Nature Reserve as a wetland of International Importance under the name ‘Turkmenbashy Bay Ramsar Site’. Turkmenistan now has a Ramsar Working Group made up of experts and representatives of the Ministry of Nature Protection.

The event provided a platform for constructive dialogue and cooperation for the wise use of the resource-rich Caspian Sea. The forum was attended by representatives of environmental and fisheries agencies and academics of the Caspian countries, with delegations from Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Convention on Combatting Desertification (UNCCD), as well as oil and gas companies operating in the Caspian shelf also participated in the forum.

The Caspian Sea is the world’s largest landlocked water body; with its particular climatic and salinity gradients and its
isolation, it is home to about 400 endemic species, including the world's largest herd of sturgeon (90 percent of the world reserves) and the endangered Caspian Seal *Pusa caspica*.

Following the early days of the Caspian Environment Programme in 1995, The Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran Convention) was ratified by the Caspian littoral states in 2006. It is the first legally binding regional agreement ratified by all five Caspian states, and defines the general requirements and institutional mechanism for the protection of the marine environment of the Caspian Sea. Four protocols to the Convention have currently been developed by the countries, they focus on biodiversity conservation; land-based sources of pollution; preparedness, response and cooperation in combating oil pollution incidents; and environmental impact assessment in a transboundary context.

The Ramsar Secretariat would like to thank Turkmenistan for the invitation and generous hospitality, and for its dedication to ecological conservation, and expresses its readiness to assist and support all Caspian states for the wise use and protection of the Caspian Sea.

*Report by Nessrine Alzahlawi, Assistant Advisor for Asia-Oceania*